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Because Ideas Matter...

The faculty and staff of Butler University's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences presents

Recommended Readings

The Science Fiction Handbook
by M. Keith Booker and Anne-Marie Thomas (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009)

Reviewed by James McGrath

The Science Fiction Handbook by M. Keith Booker and Anne-Marie Thomas offers a great overview of sci-fi that engages its many philosophical and other interesting academic questions. Each major section provides an angle on science fiction that could have been a book in its own right. After the introduction, part 2 focuses on subgenres (such as apocalyptic, dystopian, utopian and cyberpunk), part 3 on representative authors, and part 4 on individual texts. As a result, one can dip into the book easily as a reference work and find general and/or detailed information on a theme, an author, or a work of interest. Although the focus is on literature, movies and TV shows are also included.

As someone particularly interested in religion in science fiction, I was delighted to find significant mentions and treatments of this topic throughout the book. Whether one enjoys stories of time travel or alternate universes, alien invasion and apocalyptic or politically satirical sci-fi, religion often plays a role in the narrative. An additional delightful feature of the book is the inclusion of multicultural sci-fi rather than simply "Western" works, as well as highlighting the ways in which sci-fi authors have addressed and helpfully problematized issues related to gender and sexuality.

In short, I highly recommend the book, which drew to my attention works of science fiction that I haven't read and left me wanting to go out and read them.

- James McGrath is an Associate Professor of Religion at Butler University.