

## CFP: *Survival Mode: Anticipating Social Problems through Science Fiction*

Co-editors Isiah Lavender III and Will Slocombe seek essays that explore how global sf (literature / film / tv / games) addresses contemporary and future social problems for a new collection called “*Survival Mode: Solving Social Problems through Science Fiction*.” Put simply, what social problems can we think about through science fiction? And how can it help us to solve them?

Our assumption here is that science fiction can posit and illustrate futures in which social problems are identified, addressed, and potentially even solved. We define “social problems” as topics and issues that have a bearing on societies and communities around the world (e.g. impact of Artificial Intelligence, water quality and shortages, poverty, systemic and structural inequalities, epidemics and pandemics, etc.). That said, questioning such assumptions is valuable, and so chapters in the collection can critically engage with this idea, for example:

1. What are the benefits (and limitations) of using science fiction in this regard, as social commentary or vision of the future?
2. Which science fictions are addressing whose problems?
3. Do particular groups of texts or generic clusters deal with the same problems in similar or markedly different ways?

If science fiction provides a useful starting point to address such problems, then what problems does it help us to address, and how? There are global problems to consider such as pollution, overpopulation, planetary warming, germs, and water shortages, among others, in which science fiction has offered speculative answers. There are also problems generated by our social institutions such as mass incarceration, border crises, decolonization, nuclear proliferation, terrorism, religious persecution, class warfare, racism, etc. where science fiction has also attempted to provide solutions. For example, what could we learn from reading and thinking about Chen Quifan’s *Waste Tide* (2013) to address the issue of e-waste? What about mass incarceration as it relates to Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah’s *Chain-Gang All-Stars* (2023)? In terms of water shortages, what might we take from a novel like Paolo Bacigalupi’s *The Water Knife* (2015)? Truly, there is no shortage of stories from which to consider a plethora of existing twenty-first century – and farther into the future – social problems.

This 100,000-word volume will provide a study of contemporary social issues, highlighting problems and suggesting solutions, through the lens of science fiction. Among other things, we welcome proposals that address areas such as the following (loosely based on the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals, which themselves can be queried):

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| 1. Poverty                                | 10. Sustainable Energy, its affordability and reliability |
| 2. Hunger, food insecurity, and nutrition | 11. Economic systems and employment                       |
| 3. Sustainable agriculture                | 12. Games and leisure activities                          |
| 4. Health, well-being, fitness industries | 13. Infrastructure, industrialization, and innovation     |
| 5. Aging                                  | 14. Racism and global inequalities                        |
| 6. Education access and lifelong learning | 15. Urban planning  |
| 7. Gender equality and empowerment        | 16. Consumption and production                            |
| 8. Water management                       | 17. Climate change  |
| 9. Sanitation                             |   |

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| 18. Ocean sustainability                          | 23. Animal welfare                                  |
| 19. Forest management                             | 24. Artificial intelligence and scientific advances |
| 20. Desertification                               | 25. Germs, viruses, bacteria, and diseases          |
| 21. Biodiversity                                  | 26. Sustainable development                         |
| 22. Peace, justice, inclusion, and accountability |   |

The editors invite submissions that respond to the focus of the volume and also welcome general inquiries about a particular topic's suitability. Accepted chapters will be approximately 5,000 words in length, including the "Works Cited," and prepared in MLA style, and forwarded as MS Word attachments. We are working closely with an acquisitions editor at Liverpool University Press, who has already expressed an interest in this volume. Please submit a 250- to 300-word abstract, a working bibliography, and a brief CV electronically as MS Word attachments to Isiah Lavender III at [ilavende@syr.edu](mailto:ilavende@syr.edu) and to Will Slocombe at [wgs@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:wgs@liverpool.ac.uk) by **15 October 2025**.