

Sci-Fi: East and West (*Slavic 0660*)
CRN: 13722
MW 3:00-4:15
CL G8

Instructor: Andrew Chapman
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Office: CL1417 (Slavic Department)
Office hours: MT 11:45-12:45
and by appt

Course Description:

This course compares Slavic and Anglophone science fiction on page and screen. It examines how a given culture's dominant concerns are articulated in a genre popular in the East (i.e., Eastern Europe) and West (i.e., America and England). Those concerns emerge in works that imaginatively posit "fantastic" situations rooted in spatial, temporal, and biological explorations beyond those currently verified by science. On the basis of a wide range of novels, stories, and films we shall discuss such topics as progress, utopia, human perfectibility, the limits of science, and the nature of knowledge. Throughout the course we shall focus on three key issues:

- (1) The role of science to organize and structure social relations.
- (2) Technology as a means to create an alternative or virtual reality.
- (3) Gender relations in Sci-Fi, particularly male desire to bypass women in the process of reproduction.

Course Requirements:

Students are required (1) to complete the assignments scheduled for each class meeting—normally that means read 60-100 pages or watch a film—and be prepared to summarize and discuss them in class on the pertinent day; (2) to take the 4 scheduled exams; (3) to take the regular, unannounced quizzes administered throughout the semester. **THERE IS NO FINAL EXAM.** Class participation is strongly encouraged and will count for a small portion of the final grade. Due to the class size, participation does not have to be frequent, but should be **CONSISTENT, INTELLIGENT, AND SUSTAINED THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER.**

Credits and attendance:

This course carries three credits and satisfies the CAS requirement in foreign/comparative culture. It meets twice a week throughout the semester and combines lecture and discussion (the latter for extra credit). Since attendance is critical to course performance, more than **three** unexcused absences will automatically result in a lower grade (each additional absence will reduce the grade by a notch: B to B-, C+ to C, etc.). **Six** absences automatically translate into an F for the course. Students must sign an attendance sheet at the beginning of class. If serious illness prevents class attendance, documentation of that fact is required in the form of a letter from a doctor, stating that **ON THE DAY AT THE TIME THE CLASS MEETS** the student was too ill to attend. In order for the student's absence to be excused, that letter must be submitted **THE DAY THE STUDENT RETURNS TO CLASS.**

It is the students' responsibility to find out from their classmates whether important information or materials were handed out during a session they missed. Students therefore should obtain the telephone number and/or E-mail address of least one of their classmates.

****Neighbor's tel. _____ Neighbor's E-mail _____****

Students experiencing special problems in the course should make an appointment with the instructor during office hours (see top of p. 1).

Course Web Sites:

Course materials will be available either in link form via Blackboard (<http://courseweb.pitt.edu/>). Additional resources (not required) are available at the following locations:

Sci-Fi Bibliography: <http://www.pitt.edu/~goscilo/Sci-Fi/SecondarySources.html>

Book cover images: <http://www.pitt.edu/~goscilo/Sci-Fi/BookCovers.html>

Stills and Images Gallery: <http://www.pitt.edu/~goscilo/Sci-Fi/FilmStills.html>

Grading:

Grades will be based on student performance in the following: (1) four exams 60% (multiple choice + one short essay); (2) unannounced quizzes 35% and (3) participation 5 %.

Grading scale:

A 93-100	A- 90-92	B+ 86-89	B 83-85	B- 80-82	C+ 76-79	C 73-75
C- 70-72	D+ 66-69	D 63-65	D- 60-62	F 59-0		

NO MAKE-UP EXAMS OR QUIZZES WILL BE ADMINISTERED. IF A STUDENT MISSES AN EXAM OR QUIZ OWING TO ABSENCE, S/HE WILL RECEIVE AN 'F' FOR THAT EXAM OR QUIZ.

Academic Integrity:

By remaining enrolled in the course, students not only agree to abide by the above stipulations, but also understand that the instructor will follow rigorously the rules regarding cheating, plagiarism, etc. spelled out by the University's Academic Integrity *Policies* (Policy 02-03-03 and *Procedures* (Procedure 02-03-03) <http://www.bc.pitt.edu/policies/policy/02/02-03-02.html>. It is the students' responsibility to familiarize themselves with these regulations and to observe them. Any infraction, including fraudulent signing of the attendance sheet on a classmate's behalf, will be penalized according to these rules.

Disability:

Students officially registered with the Disability Resources and Services (DRS: William

Pitt Union 216) should inform the instructor of their disability during the first week of class. Anyone who needs to register should contact DRS at 412-648-7890. Information about URL is available at <http://www.drs.pitt.edu/>.

Official University Events:

Athletes and musicians who have out-of-town/state games or performances scheduled by the University should submit a copy of their official schedule of commitments during the first week of class.

Reading List:

H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*
Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*
Stanislaw Lem, *Futurological Congress*
H.G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*
Stanislaw Lem, *Solaris*
H.G. Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*
Mikhail Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog*
Alexander Belyaev: *Amphibian* (available online)
Daniel Chandler, "An Introduction to Genre Theory"

Viewing List: All films except *Hollywood Aliens and Monsters* (which will be viewed in class) are on reserve in the Media Center in Hillman Library and may be watched there (or at home, if you prefer to rent them, order on netflix, purchase, etc.).

Fritz Lang, *Metropolis* (1926), enhanced by Giorgio Moroder (1984)
George Pal, *The Time Machine* (1960)
James Cameron, *The Terminator* (1984)
James Cameron, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (1991)
Ridley Scott, *Alien* (1979)
David Cronenberg, *The Fly* (1986)
Don Siegel, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956)
Robert Wise, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951, clips in class)
Vladimir Chebotarev and Gennadii Kazanskii *Human Amphibian* (1962, clips in class)
E. Wood. *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1959, in class viewing)
Timur Bekmambetov, *Night Watch* (2004)
Georgii Daneliia, *Kin-dza-dza* (1986)

Syllabus (Aug. 27-Dec. 15): Subject to change, with advanced notice.

* INDICATES homework to be prepared for the day specified. In other words, you need to complete the homework FOR that day, so as to be ready to discuss it during the relevant class.

M Aug 31 Practical matters (syllabus). Introduction: What is sci-fi? How does it reflect aspects of Western philosophy and of dominant social tendencies and concerns?

SECTION I : TEMPORAL BOUNDARIES I, UTOPIAN/DYSTOPIAN VISIONS

- W Sept 2 *F. Lang, *Metropolis*. A vision of the future: modernity: machines, city, social class. Be prepared to discuss the film in terms of the binarism/dualities in which the film is conceived and which will structure later works on screen and page: science vs. nature; machine vs. man; logic vs. feeling, order vs. spontaneity, etc. Pay attention to cinematic representation of a modern technological world dominated by machines that control space, time, and reproduction. Clips from Georges Melies A Trip to the Moon (1902) and Yakov Protazanov's *Aelita* (1924)
- M Sept 7 **NO CLASS: LABOR DAY**
- W Sept 9 *Ye. Zamyatin, *We* (pp. v-106). Elements paralleling visuals of *Metropolis*? Totalitarianism anticipating the Soviet Union's systemic control; role of dystopia in sci-fi; satire. Zamyatin and entropy
- F Sept 11 **FALL TERM ADD/DROP PERIOD ENDS**
- M Sept 14 *Ye. Zamyatin, *We* (pp. 107-232). Conclusion vs. conclusiveness: open endings.
- W Sept 16 *S. Lem, *The Futurological Congress*: pp. 1-75. Irony and paradox in Lem's treatment of themes; skepticism about totalizing systems and misuse of science and reason.
- M Sept 21 *S. Lem: pp. 76-149. Conclusion and its implications
Dystopias: compare those in Lang, Zamyatin, and Lem.
- W Sept 23 **EXAM 1**

SECTION II : TEMPORAL BOUNDARIES II, TIME TRAVEL

- M Sept 28 Movement through time: Victorian industry and dystopia
*H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine*. Conceptual binarism; debt to Darwin; view of history and science; symptomatic of British Victorianism; predictive powers. Narrative frame.
- W Sept 30 *G. Pal, *The Time Machine*. Visualizing the future; spatialization of technological advances (above and below ground); the film's own technological problems. Narrative frame.
- M Oct 5 *J. Cameron, *The Terminator*. Chronotopes: Indivisibility of space and time: Cyborgs and robots in sci-fi; artificial intelligence vs. animal intuition.

W Oct 7 *Cameron, *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*. Exchange of gender roles

SECTION III: ALIEN INVASION

M Oct 12 *H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (Book One)

W Oct 14 *H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds* (Book Two)

M Oct 19 *D. Siegel, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. Communist threat as alien invasion; American values of the 1950s; mind and body.
Clips from *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951)
Exam review

W Oct 21 **EXAM II**

SECTION IV: SPACE EXPLORATION

M Oct 26 *S. Lem, *Solaris*: pp. 7-114. Exploring cosmos or confronting the self; nature of 'the alien'; data/information/knowledge. Genre of mystery vs. philosophical conundrum.

W Oct 28 *S. Lem, *Solaris*: pp. 115-223. Clips from films of *Solaris*: view from the East in A. Tarkovsky's 1972 version; view from the West in S. Soderbergh's 2002 adaptation.

M Nov 2 *R. Scott, *Alien*. Capitalist colonization and its discontents; problems of propagation.

W Nov 4 *G. Daneliia, *Kin-dza-dza* (1986, online). Dystopian Soviet satire. What is the role of science in the film? How is space travel/alien portrayed? Questions of race in science fiction.

Part one

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-2251461878127683608#>

Part two

<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-2251461878127683608#docid=8606387789179029392>

SECTION V: BIOLOGICAL BOUNDARIES

M Nov 9 *H.G. Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. The impersonal brutality of "God's world"; Darwin; biological engineering. Narrative frame.

W Nov 11: **LECTURE CANCELLED: QUIZ AND COURSE EVALUATIONS**

*M. Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog*. Revolution and social reversals; forging the New Man; comparison with Wells's *Island...*

M Nov 16: * D. Cronenberg, *The Fly*.

W Nov 18: **EXAM III**

SECTION 6: QUESTION OF GENRE vs. SCI-FI ELEMENTS

M Nov 23: *D Chandler, "An Introduction to Genre Theory" (online)
<http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/intgenre/intgenre1.html>

E. Wood. *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (in class viewing). Sci-fi and horror. "The worst film ever made."

Nov. 25-29 **NO CLASSES: THANKSGIVING BREAK**

M Nov 30 *T. Bekmambetov, *Night Watch*. Multi-planed metaphysics; Russia; goulash of genres, concepts, and special effects. Does the film qualify as sci-fi?

W Dec 2 L. Gaidai. *Ivan Vasilievich Changes his Profession*.

M Dec 7 Exam review. Discussion on eastern vs. western sci-fi.

W Dec 9 **EXAM IV**