

FM 233

Film's Future Worlds

Seminar Leader: Matthias Hurst

Email: m.hurst@berlin.bard.edu

Office Hours (P 98, Room 003): Tuesday, 13.30 – 15.00, or by appointment

Course Times: Monday, 17.30 – 19.00; Tuesday, 19.30 – 22.00 (weekly film screening); Wednesday, 17.30 – 19.00

Course Description

Itself a technology of the modern age, film has often set itself to imagine worlds beyond its contemporary moment. Sometimes inspired by pessimistic visions of literary works like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932), George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), or Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep?* (1968), and sometimes based on the extrapolation of social and ecological developments and on the imagining of new and powerful techniques of social control, films about the future frequently have a dystopian orientation, envisaging the dissolution of individuality within structures of mechanization and social alienation. Dystopias tend to comment on the present, to locate the roots of later oppression in the illusions or blindnesses of our own time. We examine the historical and political influences on visions of the future. We also look at the ways in which constructing the future contributes to the techniques of cinema, and at interpretative approaches to film's hypotheses about transformations across time. Films that shape our ideas of a dystopian future are, for instance, *Metropolis* (1927), *Things to Come* (1936), *Fahrenheit 451* (1966), *THX 1138* (1971), *Soylent Green* (1973), *Zardoz* (1974), *Logan's Run* (1976), *Blade Runner* (1982), *1984* (1984), *Brazil* (1985), *The Handmaid's Tale* (1990), *Gattaca* (1997), *The Matrix* (1999) *Children of Men* (2009), *Metropia* (2009), *Snowpiercer* (2013).

Requirements

Basic knowledge of film history, film theory and film analysis.

Attendance is mandatory for all seminars and film screenings. Students are expected to come to seminars and film screenings punctually and prepared, to participate actively in the class discussions and to do all the course assignments on time.

* Please, do not use cell phones, smart phones or similar electronic devices during seminars and screenings!

Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the staunchest regard for academic integrity and expects good academic practice from students in their studies. Instances in which students fail to meet the

expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

Attendance

Attendance at all classes and film screenings is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

More than two absences will affect the grade for the course.

Absences are registered in all classes, and lateness is registered as absence. Students should notify the instructor if they are unable to attend class.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences, whether excused or unexcused.

The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPRING 2021: Students must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. The instructors will make all reasonable efforts to offer alternatives to in-person attendance where needed, including remote participation or asynchronous options.

Assessment / Writing Assignments

Individual presentations in class (starting in week 5), based on individual research

Midterm essay (1500-2000 words), due in week 8, Saturday, March 27, 2021, 15.00 (3.00 pm)

Final essay (3000-3500 words), due in week 15, Wednesday, May 19, 2021, midnight (11.59 pm)*

* Senior Students: Deadline for final essay: Monday, May 17, 2021, midnight (11.59 pm)

The topic of the final essay will be a film analysis/interpretation, based on one of the films screened or discussed throughout the semester.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where an instructor agrees to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline.

Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

Grade Breakdown

Participation:	25 %
Midterm Essay:	25 %
Presentations:	25 %
Final Essay:	25 %

If one of these components is graded F, the final course grade cannot be higher than C-.

If two components are graded F, the final grade will be F (i.e. the whole class will be failed).

Schedule

* Tentative schedule depending on official Corona policies, availability of films and students' choice of presentations

Week 1:

Introduction: Science Fiction: Utopia and Dystopia (1)

No film screening in week 1!

Week 2:

Introduction: Science Fiction: Utopia and Dystopia (2)

The *Ur-text* of Dystopian Science fiction Films

Screening: *Metropolis* (1927, Fritz Lang)

Week 3:

Screening: *Things to Come* (1936, William Cameron Menzies)

Week 4:

Big Brother Is Watching You!

Screening: *1984* (1984, Michael Radford)

Week 5:

Start of individual presentations

Screening: *Fahrenheit 451* (1966, François Truffaut)

Week 6:

Monday, March 8, 2021: Public Holiday! No class on Monday, March 8, 2021.

Screening: *Soylent Green* (1973, Richard Fleischer)

Week 7:

Screening: *Zardoz* (1974, John Boorman)

Week 8:

Screening: *Logan's Run* (1976, Michael Anderson)

Spring Break: Monday, March 29 – Monday, April 5, 2021

Week 9:

No class on Monday, April 5, 2021!

Screening: *Brazil* (1985, Terry Gilliam)

Week 10:

Screening: *The Handmaid's Tale* (1990, Volker Schlöndorff)

Week 11:

Screening: *Gattaca* (1997, Andrew Niccol)

Week 12:

Screening: *Children of Men* (2006, Alfonso Cuarón)

Week 13:

Screening: *Metropia* (2009, Tarik Saleh)

Week 14:

Screening: *Snowpiercer* (2013, Bong Joon-ho)

Week 15: Completion Week (May 17 – May 21, 2021)

Deadline for final essay (3000-3500 words): Wednesday, May 19, 2021, midnight (11.59 pm)

* Senior Students: Deadline for final essay (3000-3500 words): Monday, May 17, 2021, midnight (11.59 pm)

Literature:

Allen, Richard, and Murray Smith (eds.). *Film Theory and Philosophy*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Altman, Rick. "A Semantic/Syntactic Approach to Film Genre." In: Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*. Fifth Edition. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 630-641.

Altman, Rick. *Film/Genre*. London: BFI Publishing 1999 (reprint 2004).

Anijar, Karen. *Teaching toward the 24th Century. Star Trek as Social Curriculum*, New York/London: Falmer Press, 2000.

- Baudry, Jean-Louis. "The Apparatus: Metapsychological Approaches to the Impression of Reality in the Cinema." In: Philip Rosen (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 299-318.
- Braudy, Leo, and Marshall Cohen (eds.). *Film Theory and Criticism. Introductory Readings*. Fifth Edition. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Blandford, Steve, Barry K. Grant and Jim Hillier. *The Film Studies Dictionary*. London/New York: Arnold, Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Booker, M. Keith. *Science Fiction Television*. Westport/London: Praeger, 2004.
- Decker, Kevin S., and Jason T. Eberl (eds.). *The Ultimate Star Trek and Philosophy. The Search for Socrates*. Malden/Oxford/Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2016.
- Demerjian, Louise MacKay (ed.). *The Age of Dystopia. One, Genre, Our Fears and Our Future*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016.
- Easton, Lee, and Randy Schroeder (eds.). *The Influence of Imagination. Essays on Science Fiction and Fantasy as Agents of Social Change*. Jefferson/London: McFarland & Company, 2008.
- Eberl, Jason T., and Kevin S. Decker (eds.). *Star Trek and Philosophy. The Wrath of Kant*. Chicago/La Salle: Open Court, 2008.
- Falzon, Christopher. *Philosophy Goes To The Movies. An introduction to philosophy*. London/New York: Routledge, 2003. [Chapter 5: „Modern Times – Society, Science and Technology“, pp. 149-180]
- Fischer, William B. *The Empire Strikes Out: Kurd Lasswitz, Hans Dominik, and the Development of German Science Fiction*. Bowling Green (Ohio): Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984.
- Freud, Sigmund. "The 'Uncanny'." In: *Art and Literature. Jensen's Gradiva, Leonardo da Vinci and Other Works*. The Penguin Freud Library Vol. 14, edited by Albert Dickson. London/New York: Penguin, pp. 335-376.
- Gallardo, Pere, and Elizabeth Russell (eds.). *Yesterday's Tomorrows. On Utopia and Dystopia*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014.
- Hayward, Susan. *Cinema Studies. The Key Concepts*. Third Edition. London/New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Hill, John, and Pamela Church Gibson (eds.). *The Oxford Guide to Film Studies*. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. London: Penguin Random House, 2007
- Jackson, Rosemary. *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*. London/New York: Routledge, 1998.
- King, Geoff, and Tanya Krzywinska. *Science Fiction. From Outerspace to Cyberspace*. London/New York: Wallflower, 2002.
- Kirby, David A. *Lab Coats in Hollywood. Science, Scientists and Cinema*. Cambridge (Massachusetts)/London: MIT Press, 2011.
- Kirby, David. „The Future is Now: Diegetic Prototypes and the Role of Popular Films in Generating Real-world Technological Development.“ In: *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (February 2010), pp. 41-70.

- Kuhn, Annette (ed.). *Alien Zone. Cultural Theory and Contemporary Science Fiction Cinema*. London/New York: Verso, 2003.
- Minden, Michael, and Holger Bachmann (eds.). *Fritz Lang's Metropolis. Cinematic Visions of Technology and Fear*. Rochester/Woodbridge: Camden House, 2000.
- Monaco, James. *How To Read a Film. Movies, Media, Multimedia*. Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Mulhall, Stephen. *On Film*. London/New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." In: Philip Rosen (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 198-209.
- Nelmes, Jill (ed.). *An Introduction to Film Studies*. Third Edition. London/New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Newman, Kim (ed.). *Science Fiction/Horror. A Sight and Sound Reader*. London: British Film Institute, 2002.
- Orwell, George. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Burnt Mill, Harlow: Longman, 1983.
- Penley, Constance, Elisabeth Lyon, Lynn Spigel and Janet Bergstrom (eds.). *Close Encounters. Film, Feminism, and Science Fiction*. Minneapolis/Oxford: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.
- Rickman, Gregg (ed.). *The Science Fiction Film Reader*. New York: Limelight Editions, 2009.
- Roberts, Adam. *Science Fiction*. London/New York: Routledge, 2003.
- Rose, Mark (ed.). *Science Fiction. A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1976.
- Rosen, Philip (ed.). *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology. A Film Theory Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- Rowlands, Mark. *The Philosopher at the End of the Universe. Philosophy Explained Through Science Fiction Films*. London: Ebury Press, 2005.
- Sanders, Steven M. (ed.). *The Philosophy of Science Fiction Films*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009.
- Sobchack, Vivian. *Screening Space. The American Science Fiction Film*. Second Edition. New Brunswick/New Jersey/London: Rutgers University Press, 2004.
- Suin, Darko. *Defined By A Hollow. Essays on Utopia, Science Fiction and Political Epistemology*. Oxford/Bern/Berlin et al.: Peter Lang, 2010.
- Telotte, J. P. *Science Fiction Film*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001.
- Voigts, Eckart, and Alessandra Boller (eds.). *Dystopia, Science Fiction, Post-Apocalypse. Classics – New Tendencies – Model Interpretations*. Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2015.
- Wegner, Phillip E. *Shockwaves of Possibility. Essays on Science Fiction, Globalization, and Utopia*. Oxford/Bern/Berlin et al.: Peter Lang, 2014.
- Zamyatin, Yevgeny. *We*. London: Penguin Random House, 2020.

Essay Deadlines

Midterm essay (1500-2000 words), due in week 8, Saturday, March 27, 2021, 15.00 (3.00 pm)

Final essay (3000-3500 words), due in week 15, Wednesday, May 19, 2021, midnight (11.59 pm)

* Senior Students: Deadline for final essay (3000-3500 words): week 15, Monday, May 17, 2021, midnight (11.59 pm)