

**University of Calgary**  
**Department of Communication, Media and Film**

**FILM 305 L01**  
**Topic in Genre: Science Fiction**  
**Winter 2020**

**Mon., Jan. 13 – Wed., April 8 (excluding Feb. 12 & 14 and April 13)**  
~~**(Lecture and Screening: Mon 5:00-7:45pm Tutorial: Wed 5:00-6:50pm)**~~

**Instructor:** Mohsen Nasrin

**Office:** SS254

**E-Mail:** [mohsen.nasrin@ucalgary.ca](mailto:mohsen.nasrin@ucalgary.ca)

**Web Page:** D2L available through  
MyUofC portal

**Office Hours:** ~~Mon 4:00-4:30 or by~~  
~~appointment.~~  
\*After March 16<sup>th</sup> students  
may contact the instructor to  
arrange a virtual  
conversation.

**Course Description:**

Topics will focus on the style, narrative form, and historical evolution of selected genres, for example, the Documentary, the Western, the Melodrama, the Musical, etc. This term the selected topic is Science Fiction.

This course provides students with a survey of Science Fiction cinema, one of the most popular and enduring genres in the history of cinema. In this course, we will identify and engage with both thematic areas and iconographic elements of the genre. Moreover, as well as focusing on the genre's forms and conventions, this course aims towards understanding genre as a larger cultural construct. Genres are not fixed, set categories; they are flexible, fluid concepts, and therefore, can be better understood by appreciation of broader social context. This course is not limited to the study of mainstream science-fiction films and studies the genre with regards to different national cinemas.

**Textbooks and Readings**

Readings will be posted on D2L weekly.

\*An online streaming for watching the movies will be created for the students on D2L after March 16<sup>th</sup>.

\*The Powerpoint lecture notes after March 16<sup>th</sup> are accompanied with audio commentaries. All students are encouraged to listen to the commentaries after reading reading-materials.

### **Internet and electronic communication device information**

During class, students must turn off all cell phones, pagers, etc. Laptops may only be used for notetaking.

### **Assignments and Evaluation – NO CHANGES**

**Discussion Board Posts: (20%)**

**Film Introduction (as scheduled): (20%)**

**Essay (March 18th): (30%)**

**Final Exam (Take Home): (30%)**

**Discussion Board Post:** Students are expected to be active in class. As well they are expected to participate in the virtual campus discussion. Every four weeks you will be required to create one substantive original post regarding screenings, readings or class discussions and every two weeks you are required to respond to another student's post. The original post will be due Saturdays of **Weeks 4, 8, and 12** by 11:59 PM and the responses are due by Monday at 11:59 PM. Each post should be at least two paragraphs in length and respond thoughtfully to the prompts by incorporating concepts from the reading and examples from screenings. The discussion board posts are also where you can accumulate extra credit. To get the extra credit, you must go above and beyond the discussion board requirements and contribute significantly to the discourse. Engaging with course concepts at an advanced level (specifically by referring to the key points of the readings) is a good way to get extra points. As always, please be civil in your discussions.

In sum there should be at least **3 original posts** and **6 responses**. (First post by the end of Week 4, Second post by the end of Week 8 and Third post by the end of Week 12)

\*From March 16, students may post responses to the group presentation as well and will earn points in a similar way for this assignment.

### **Film Introduction:**

For this project, you will collaborate with your group (4-5 people) and on each Thursday there will be a group presentation on a film related to the topic of the week. Each group has 20-30 minutes to introduce a movie that can be analyzed in relation to the reading and the topic of the week. Following this, each group has to create a single document – a production folder – that will be submitted collectively. The production folder should be submitted on the same day of the

presentation. This document will analyze a single film from different angles, and will evaluate the film as an aesthetic and cultural artifact. Each member of the group will select a different approach (such as national, historical, auteurs, ideological and formal).

Grading will consist of two parts:

- Each individual presenter's contribution to the project, including depth of analysis, integration of appropriate scholarly sources, and structure of a presentation. (10%)
- An overall grade for collaboration, focusing on the ability of each section to build upon one another; introductory and concluding elements; and the ability of your group to work together and equitably divide labor. (10%)

Keep in mind that this assignment is **collaborative**. It is as important that you individually construct a well-argued, detailed, and relevant presentation as it is that your partners do so as well. (The details of the assignment will be discussed further in class)

**\*Student must record their presentations after March 16<sup>th</sup> and submit the on Wednesdays. They have 24 hours to answer the instructor's questions and other students' responses in D2L. (A section for discussing the presentation is created on D2L)**

Groups may contact the instructor in advance to explain which format of recording for them is the most convenient.

The production folder may be submitted as an email attachment on the same day of presentation.

### **Essay:**

Select a Science Fiction film that is not shown in class and analyze it in relation to one of the topics covered in this course. The essay should be **five to six pages** in length and double-spaced. Further instructions on its format will be provided later.

- You may not select the same topic as your class presentation.

**Final Exam (Take Home):** Essay format. (You need to refer to films screened in class as well as films introduced by the students in you answers). The questions will be posted on April 8<sup>th</sup> and you will have one week to complete your answers (by Wednesday April 15). Further instructions on its format will be provided later.

**Some tips on how to write a film essay:** Your paper should not be merely a "review" of the films. Comments like "the acting is great!" or "the cinematography is splendid!" are not quite appropriate. You must analyze the works. When analyzing films, ask yourself questions such as: "What effects do the cinematography, sound and editing have on the audience?"; "Do the characters symbolize something beyond their individual personality?"; "Is the filmmaker trying to convey a political or ideological message through her/his film?"; "How is the story structured (straightforward, linear structure with clear narrative progression or circular, elliptical story with complex relationships among characters), and how does this structure affect the spectator's response?". It is usually a good idea to read a few articles on the films you are analyzing so as to get a sense of the issues at stake in the works. The best place to start if you want to find

articles on films and filmmakers is the FILM LITERATURE INDEX, which gives bibliographical information on film-related publications from 1973 to the present.

**Registrar-scheduled Final Examination:** NO

### **Submission of Assignments**

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments and hand in your essays directly to your instructor or tutor. If you are unable to do so, please use the drop box in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox. **Note:** It is your responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment and to ensure that you submit the proper version (particularly in courses requiring electronic submission).

Be prepared to provide photo ID to pick up assignments in SS 320. Private information related to individual students is treated with the utmost regard by University of Calgary faculty. Student assignments will be accessible only by the authorized course faculty, and personal information is collected in accordance with the ***Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act***. Please note that instructors may use audio or video recorded for lesson capture, assessment of student learning, and self-assessment of teaching practices.

### **Policy for Late Assignments**

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of 5% or a partial letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

### **Student Accommodations**

Students seeking an accommodation based on disability or medical concerns should contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS); SAS will process the request and issue letters of accommodation to instructors. For information on support services and accommodations for students with disabilities, visit [www.ucalgary.ca/access/](http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/). Students who require an accommodation based on a protected ground other than disability should communicate this need in writing to their Instructor. The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.pdf>.

Students seeking accommodation for transient illnesses (e.g., the flu) or another legitimate reason should contact their instructors. Whenever possible, students should provide supporting documentation to support their request; however, instructors may not require that a medical note be presented. For the policy on supporting documentation the use of a statutory declaration, see Section M.1 of the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/m-1.html>. Also see FAQs for Students: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/appeals/student-faq>

### **Expectations for Writing**

Department policy directs that all written assignments and, to a lesser extent, written exam responses be assessed at least partly on writing skills. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) but also general clarity and organization and proper documentation of research sources. For further information, please refer to the *University of Calgary Calendar* section on writing across the curriculum: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/e-2.html>

## Grading & Department of Communication, Media and Film Grade Scale

The following table outlines the grade scale percentage equivalents used in the Department of Communication, Media and Film. Final grades are reported as letter grades. For components graded using percentages or numerical scores, those values will be used directly in calculating the final course grade, while for components graded using letter grades, the letter grades will be converted to the midpoint values listed in the final column of the table below in calculating the final course grade.

In this course, *letter grades will be used for written assignments, while percentage grades will be used for the final exam.*

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Dept of CMF grade scale equivalents*	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations*
4.00	Outstanding performance	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent performance	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70	Approaching excellent performance	A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30	Exceeding good performance	B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good performance	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70	Approaching good performance	B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30	Exceeding satisfactory performance	C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory performance	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70	Approaching satisfactory performance	C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Marginal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00	Minimal pass. Insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%
0.00	Failure. Did not meet course requirements.	F	0 - 49.99%	0%

\* Column 4: If percentages are used to calculate final grades, then grades falling within these ranges will be translated to the corresponding letter grades. Column 5: These percentage equivalents will be used for calculating final grades unless an alternative method of final grade calculation is outlined above.

## Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. **In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end**

**and other people's words and ideas begin.** Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there.

For information on citation and documentation styles (MLA, APA, Chicago, IEEE, etc.), visit the Student Success Centre resource links at <https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success/writing-support> or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) Research and Citation Resources at [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/resources.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/resources.html)

If you need help with your writing or have questions about citing sources, please consult your instructor or visit the Student Success Centre, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Taylor Family Digital Library. To book an appointment, go to [https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm\\_source=ssc&utm\\_medium=redirect&utm\\_campaign=redirect](https://ucalgary.ca/student-services/student-success?utm_source=ssc&utm_medium=redirect&utm_campaign=redirect)

### **Instructor Intellectual Property & Copyright Legislation**

Course materials created by the instructor (including course outlines, presentations and posted notes, labs, case studies, assignments and exams) remain the intellectual property of the instructor. These materials may NOT be reproduced, redistributed or copied without the explicit consent of the instructor. The posting of course materials to third party websites such as note-sharing sites without permission is prohibited. Sharing of extracts of these course materials with other students enrolled in the same course section and term may be allowed under fair dealing. Check with the instructor if you have any questions about sharing materials with classmates.

All students are required to read the University of Calgary policy on Acceptable Use of Material Protected by Copyright ([www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf](http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/acceptable-use-of-material-protected-by-copyright.pdf)) and requirements of the copyright act (<https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-42/index.html>) to ensure they are aware of the consequences of unauthorized sharing of course materials (including instructor notes, electronic versions of textbooks etc.). Students who use material protected by copyright in violation of this policy may be disciplined under the Non-Academic Misconduct Policy.

### **Academic Misconduct**

For information on academic misconduct and its consequences, please see the *University of Calgary Calendar* at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

### **Research Ethics**

Whenever you perform research with human participants, including surveys, interviews, or observations as part of your university studies, you are responsible for obtaining research ethics approval and for following university research ethics guidelines. In some cases, your instructors may apply for course-based research ethics approval for certain assignments, and in those cases, they must review and approve your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, please see <https://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/arts-researchers/resources-researchers-and-instructors/ethics>

## **Deferrals of Course Work and Requests for Reappraisal**

For university regulations and procedures related to deferrals of exams and course work, requests for reappraisals, and other matters, please see the relevant sections in the *University Calendar*: <https://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/academic-regs.html>

## **Student Support Services and Resources**

Please visit <https://www.ucalgary.ca/registrar/registration/course-outlines> for information about student support services and resources, including Wellness and Mental Health Resources, Student Success programs and services, the Student Ombuds Office, the Student Union, and Safewalk.

For resources on D2L, visit <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students>. IT support is available at [itsupport@ucalgary.ca](mailto:itsupport@ucalgary.ca) or by calling 403-220.5555.

## **Schedule of Lecture Topics and Readings**

### **W1: Jan 13-15: Dystopia and the Others**

Screening: *Equals* (Drake Doremus, 2015)

Williams, Linda Ruth. "Dream girls and mechanic panic: dystopia and its others in Brazil and Nineteen Eighty-Four" in *British Science Fiction Cinema*. 1999. (Online Access available via Taylor Family Digital Library)

### **W2: Jan 20-22: Alien Identities in the Cold War**

Screening: *Invasion of Body Snatchers* (Walter Wanger, 1956)

Jancovich, Mark. "The end of civilization as we know it: from mass destruction to depersonalization." In *Rational Fears: American Horror in the 1950s*. Manchester University Press. 1996.

### **W3: Jan 27-29 Space Exploration**

Screening: *Solaris* (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1972)

Mclenachan, Thomas. "Truth is Stranger than Science Fiction: The Quest for Knowledge in Andrei Tarkovskii's *Solaris* and *Stalker*" in *SLOVO*, VOL. 26, NO. 2 (AUTUMN 2014), 8-29

### **W4: Feb 3-5 Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Cinema**

Screening: *Late August at Hotel Ozone* (Jan Schmidt, 1976)

Robert A. Booth. "Organism and Human Bodies as Contagion in the Post-Apocalyptic State" in Barbara Gurr. *Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Post-Apocalyptic TV and Film*. 2015. 17-31.

### **W5: Feb 10-12 Time Travel Narrative**

Screening: *Je t'aime, je t'aime* (Alain Resnais, 1968)

Stevenson, Corey. "The time that binds: Science fiction cinema and the social experience of time." Carleton University (Canada), ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2004. 78-90

**Feb 17-19 (Study Break)**

**W6: Feb 24-26: Biological Hybridity**

Screening: *The Fly* (David Cronenberg, 1986)

Shaviro, Steven. "Bodies of Fear. David Cronenberg" in *Cinematic Bodies*. University of Minnesota Press, 1993. 140-171

**W7: Mar 2-4 Brain in a Vat**

Screening: *Dark City* (Alex Proyas, 1998)

Tryon, Charles. "Virtual Cities and Stolen Memories: Temporality and the Digital in *Dark City*" in *Film Criticism*, Vol. 28, Iss. 2, (Winter 2003/2004): 42-62,71.

**W8: Mar 9-11: Artificial Intelligence**

Screening: *Ex Machina* (Alex Garland, 2014)

Jelača, Dijana. "Alien Feminisms and Cinema's Posthuman Women" in *Journal of Women in Culture & Society*. Winter 2018, Vol. 43 Issue 2, p379-400. 22p.

**W9: Mar 16-18 Cyber Punk**

Screening: *Akira* (Katsuhiro Otomo, 1998)

Sato, Kumiko. "How Information Technology Has (Not) Changed Feminism and Japanism: Cyberpunk in the Japanese Context" in *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 3, *Cybernetic Readings* (2004), pp. 335-355.

**W10: Mar 23-25: New Media and Video Game**

Screening: *eXistenZ* (David Cronenberg, 1999)

Young, Paul. "The Negative Reinvention of Cinema: Late Hollywood in the Early Digital Age" in *The Cinema Dreams Its Rival*. 2006. 193-247.

**W11: March 30-April: Postmodern Spectacle of Science Fiction**

Screening: *The Fifth Element* (Luc Besson, 1997)

Sobchack, Vivian. "Postfuturism" in *Liquid Metal: The Science Fiction Film Reader* (London: Wallflower Press, 2004) pp. 220-227.

**W12: Apr 6-8: Parody**

Screening: *Sleeper* (Woody Allen, 1973)

Babish, Stephen. "Concrete Futures: Science Fiction Cinema and Modernist Architecture at the Dawn of Postmodernity." 2016. 106-117