

HUMA 2401

GLOBAL SCIENCE FICTION CINEMA

Fall 2026

MW 9:00 am – 10:20 pm

LG5202

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Baryon Tensor Posadas

Room 2355

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Office Hours: M 12-2 or by appointment

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Room 3343

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Office Hours: MW 2-3 PM or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course offers a broad introduction to global science fiction at the undergraduate level. It is designed with the goal of providing different disciplinary perspectives on understanding and appreciating the genre of science fiction, with a focus on film. Students will watch one to two films (or selections thereof) per week, in addition to attending lectures and reading supporting literature. The course explores a range of social and philosophical themes in science fiction, including colonialism, migration, gender, robotics, time travel, etc., and it is framed by the following questions: What is science fiction and why is it so popular? What is the relationship between science and fiction? How has a rhetoric of science-fictionality increasingly mediated broader historical and sociopolitical questions of our time? How has the genre been differently conceived across cultures and time periods?

COURSE EVALUATION

Attendance and participation	15%
Quizzes	10%
First Exam	25%
Second Exam	25%
Final exam	25%

Attendance and Participation

Attendance is mandatory when your health allows and active participation in the discussions is expected. Please come to the class sessions having already watched the movies and read the critical materials assigned for that session and be prepared to critically discuss them in class.

Self-isolation is the recommended course of action for anyone experiencing flu-like symptoms, whether due to possible coronavirus or to other illnesses. Please stay at home if you feel sick and contact the Health and Counseling Center (HCC) or your healthcare provider to discuss. This is especially important if you think you may have an infectious disease.

First and Second Exam

For the midterm exams on October 5 and November 2, your task is to respond to questions around some of the key issues raised in the class up to that point about the broad challenge of how to approach science fiction cinema as a field of study. Using the critical and theoretical readings as your point of departure, you will be asked to discuss key issues surrounding such topics as defining the genre of science fiction or articulating the relationship between specific social issues and their treatment in the science fiction genre. Format may include multiple choice questions, identification, short answer, or essays.

Quizzes

Every week, on even numbered weeks a short quiz will be held at the beginning of class, which will ask factual questions about the assigned readings. Coverage of the quiz will be the assigned readings for that given week.

Final Exam

Similar to the midterm exams, for the final exam, students will be asked to address a range of possible critical issues arising from the interface between science fiction and various historical, philosophical, and social concerns. Topics of the exam can include such issues as science fiction and empire, technologies of the body, gender, and cyborg feminism, religion, among others.

(Date: TBA)

LIST OF FILMS

Invention for Destruction (1958)

War of the Worlds (1953)

Nineteen Eighty-Four (1984)

Gattaca (1997)

Sleep Dealer (2008)

Children of Men (2006)

Twelve Monkeys (1995)

Dune (1984)

Arrival (2016)

Lathe of Heaven (1980)

Wandering Earth (2019)

Ghost in the Shell (1995)

All the films, as well as other materials referenced below will be made available on the course website.

SCHEDULE

Week 1 Introduction

Sep 2 Orientation

Week 2 Cognitive Estrangement

Sep 7 Film: *Invention for Destruction* (1958)

Suvin, Darko. "Estrangement and Cognition." James E. Gunn and Matthew Candelaria, ed. *Speculations on Speculation: Theories of Science Fiction*. Scarecrow Press, 2005. 23-35.

Vivian Sobchak, "Images of Wonder: The Look of Science Fiction," in *Liquid Metal: The Science Fiction Film Reader*, ed. Sean Redmond (Wallflower Press, 2004), 4-10.

Sep 9 Csicsery-Ronay, Istvan. "Introduction: Fantastic Knowledge." In *Mutopia: Science Fiction and Fantastic Knowledge*. Liverpool University Press, 2022.

Csicsery-Ronay, Istvan. "The Poetics of Modeling Duhem, Harré, and Lem (1990)." In *Mutopia: Science Fiction and Fantastic Knowledge*. Liverpool University Press, 2022.

Week 3 Science Fiction and Empire

Sep 14 Film: *War of the Worlds* (1953)

Rieder, John. "Introduction: The Colonial Gaze and the Frame of Science Fiction." *Colonialism and the emergence of science fiction*. Wesleyan University Press, 2008. 1-33.

Sep 16 Csicsery-Ronay, Istvan. "Science Fiction and Empire." *Science Fiction Studies* 30, no. 2 (July 1, 2003): 231-45.

Week 4 Science Fiction and Totalitarianism

Sep 21 Film: *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984)

Deleuze, Gilles. "Postscript on the Societies of Control." *October* 59 (January 1992): 3-7.

Sep 23 Lefait, Sébastien. *Surveillance on Screen: Monitoring Contemporary Films and Television Programs*. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC, 2012. Pp. 1-43

Week 5 Eugenics

Sep 28 Film: *Gattaca* (1997)

Frauley, Jon. "Biopolitics and the Governance of Genetic Capital in GATTACA." In *Criminology, Deviance, and the Silver Screen: The Fictional Reality and the Criminological Imagination*. Palgrave Macmillan US, 2010.

Sep 30 Cazdyn, Eric. "Bioeconomics, Culture, and Politics after Globalization." Eds. Rethmann, Petra, Imre Szeman, and William D. Coleman. *Cultural Autonomy: Frictions and Connections*. UBC Press, 2011. 49-65.

Week 6 Migration and Borders

Oct 5 **First Exam**

Oct 7 Film: *Sleep Dealer* (2008)

Mezzadra, Sandro, and Brett Neilson. *Border as Method, or, the Multiplication of Labor*. Duke University Press, 2013, pp. 1-25.

Week 7 Reproductive Futurities

Oct 12 Film: *Children of Men* (2006)

Latimer, Heather. "Bio-Reproductive Futurism: Bare Life and the Pregnant Refugee in Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men*." *Social Text* 29, no. 3 (108) (September 1, 2011): 51-72.

Oct 14 Hodapp, James M. "The specter of the postcolonial child and faux long takes in Cuarón's *Children of Men*." *The Child in Post-Apocalyptic Cinema* (2015): 171-183.

Week 8 Time Travel

Oct 19 NO CLASS

Oct 21 Film: *Twelve Monkeys* (1995)

Burling, William J. "Reading Time: The Ideology of Time Travel in Science Fiction." *KronoScope* 6, no. 1 (April 2006): 5-30.

Week 9 Religion

Oct 26 Film: *Dune* (1984)

"Religious Orientalism in *Dune*." Porter, Christopher A. *Theology, Religion, and the Universe of Dune*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2026.

Oct 28 Wander, Misha Grifka. "A Genuine Messiah: The Erosion of Political Messaging in *Dune* 2021." *Ekphrasis. Images, Cinema, Theory, Media* 28, no. 2 (2022): 85-103.

Week 10 Language and Geopolitics

Nov 2 **Second Exam**

Nov 4 Film: *Arrival* (2016)

Keyes, James. "The Quest for New Cinematic Grammar in Denis Villeneuve's *Arrival* (2016)." *Beasts of the Sky: Strange Sightings in the Stratosphere* (2025).

Week 11 Reality

Nov 9 Film: *Lathe of Heaven* (1980)

Mills, Ethan. "Ursula K. Le Guin's Science Fictional Feminist Daoism." *Journal of Science Fiction and Philosophy* 3 (2020): 1–21.

Nov 11 Shotwell, Alexis. "'All We Have Is Means': Ursula K. Le Guin's Utopianism as Ongoingness." *World Literature Studies* 16, no. 4 (2024): 3–17.

Week 12 China

Nov 16 Film: *Wandering Earth* (2019)

He, Weihua. "*The Wandering Earth* and China's Construction of an Alternative Cosmopolitanism." *Comparative Literature Studies* 57, no. 3 (November 15, 2020): 530–40.

Nov 18 Kloet, J. de. Rising, "Becoming, Overcoding: On Chinese Nationalism in *The Wandering Earth*." Palgrave Macmillan, 2022.

Week 13 Cyberpunk

Nov 23 Film: *Ghost in the Shell* (1995)

Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. First Thus edition. New York: Routledge, 1990: 149-182.

Nov 25 Chun, Wendy Hui Kyong. "Orienting the Future." *Control and Freedom: Power and Paranoia in the Age of Fiber Optics*. MIT Press, 2006. 171-246.

Week 14 Conclusions

Nov 30 Csicsery-Ronay, Istvan. "What Do We Mean When We Say 'Global Science Fiction'? Reflections on a New Nexus (2012)." In *Mutopia: Science Fiction and Fantastic Knowledge*. Liverpool University Press, 2022.

Jameson, Fredric. "Progress versus Utopia; Or, Can We Imagine the Future?." *Science Fiction Studies* 9, no. 2 (1982): 147–58.

TBA Final Exam

COURSE POLICIES**Statement on Assessment and Grading**

This course will be assessed using criterion-referencing, and grades will not be assigned using a curve. Numeric percentile grades will be converted to letter grades using the following standard:

A+	97-100	Excellent Performance
A	93-96	
A-	90-92	
B+	87-89	Good Performance
B	83-86	
B-	80-82	
C+	77-79	Satisfactory Performance
C	73-76	
C-	70-72	
D	60-69	Marginal Pass
F	0-59	Fail

Academic Integrity

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology is a community designed for scholarship - for teaching, learning, and research. Academic integrity and honesty are critical values in upholding HKUST's reputation as a community of scholars and its claim to the "intellectual property" created by staff and students. All students who join HKUST are therefore committed to an [Academic Honor Code](#).

Course AI Policy

The use of generative AI tools is not permitted in any aspect of this course.

Communication and Feedback

Under normal circumstances, assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be communicated via Canvas within two weeks of submission. Students who have further questions about the feedback (including marks) should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.

Expression and Debatement

Talking about religion and politics is tricky at a university, but that should not mean that it must become a taboo subject. To do so in a responsible and respectful manner, students should avoid expressions that clearly derogate and debase a student or students in the class on the basis of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability. At the same time, it is important to note that students should also tolerate opinions about the historical or contemporary consequences of religious or political positions when expressed in a way that is not derogatory towards others. Students uncomfortable with either of these policies should not take this course.

Policy Regarding Lecture Recordings

To protect students' privacy and to discourage a practice of voluntarily missing lectures and tutorials, this course does neither provide any recordings nor permits the recording of lecture materials. If you have to miss class, please reach out to your classmates or schedule an appointment with us to discuss the materials we covered in class.

Special Educational Needs

The University takes a proactive role in ensuring and cultivating a positive learning environment for students, where equal opportunities in academic and non-academic pursuits for each student are guaranteed.

The SEN Support under the Counseling and Wellness Center provides a wide range of support services and resources to ensure that all students have equality of opportunity, that they benefit equally from university life, and to cultivate a campus culture of inclusion.

If a student is diagnosed or suspects his/her difficulties are related to any type of SEN, he or she is strongly advised to self-identify and provide recent documentation of his or her SEN to SEN Support. Reasonable accommodations or adjustments will be worked out amongst student, instructor(s) and SEN Support. If SEN Support is not aware of a student's needs, please contact sen@ust.hk to arrange a confidential discussion. All information is handled in the strictest confidence.

Religious observances

Please notify us in advance if you need to miss class or reschedule assignments due to participation in religious holidays.