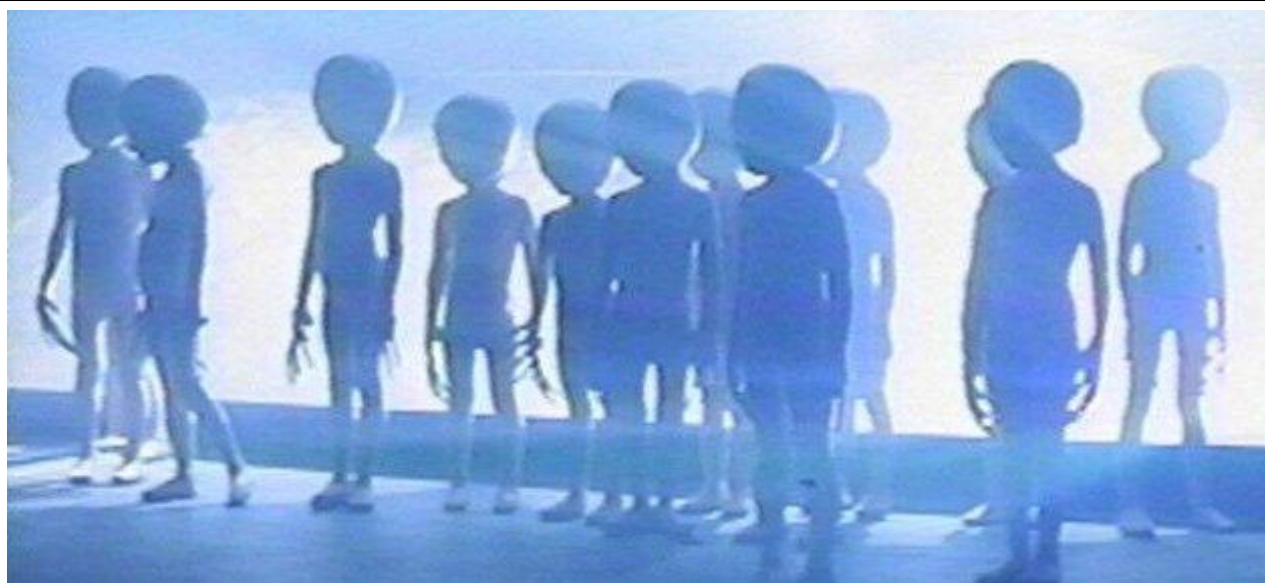


# FILM 407: Studies in Film Genre

**Trimester 1 & 2 2009**

(Monday 2 March – Friday 5 June 2009; Monday 13 July – Friday 16 October)

**30 Points**



## *Science Fiction*

### STAFF

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### CLASS TIMES AND ROOMS

Monday, 1-4pm, Room 108 85FT

### COURSE CONTENT

In 2009 the course will explore science fiction film and television through a number of inter-linking case studies and tropes including, narrative, spectacle and special effects/affect, sounding science fiction, the meaning of time travel, the relationship between superheroes and myth, the posthuman in science fiction, critical dystopia, paranoia futurism, and queer science fiction. There will be an emphasis on creative application throughout the course.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course students should be:

Familiar with the arguments and debates that underpin the study of science fiction film and television;

Able to critically analyse the narrative, thematic, and audio-visual conventions of the science fiction text;

Able to examine the cultural, phenomenological, philosophical, and ideological issues that science fiction raises or explores;

Able to creatively apply their knowledge to practical exercises in sound, special effects, and marketing. Able to answer the related questions: what is genre? What is science fiction? What pleasures are on offer for fans of science fiction film and television?

## COURSE DELIVERY

The 3 hour, weekly session will comprise of a screening, followed by a mini-lecture or critical summary, group discussion, presentations, creative work, and group or pair assignments. The emphasis is on shared exploration of the themes of the week.

## EXPECTED WORKLOAD

The university anticipates that you should be able to devote at least 12 hours per week to a two-trimester 30-point course at Honours level. Therefore you should probably expect to spend, on average, about 9 hours per week (apart from class time) in reading, viewing films, essay writing and preparing seminars.

## READINGS

Student notes available from the University bookshop.

## MATERIALS AND EQUIPMENT

For the sounding science fiction creative assignment access to a technology that takes still images and a device that records and playback sound is desirable.

## ASSESSMENT

All assessment will be internal. Full details of each assignment can be found on Blackboard

### Assignment One: Reading The Special Effect

Individual Presentation: 8-10 mins duration (15%)

Due Date: to be presented in the seminar, week 6

*Either:*

A textual analysis of a special effect or series of special effects in one science fiction film of your choice

*Or*

A reception/consumption analysis of a special effect or series of special effects in one science fiction film of your choice

*Or*

A textual and reception analysis of a special effect or series of special effects in one science fiction film of your choice

*Or*

A technological examination of the production or creation of a special effect or series of special effects in relation to one or more science fiction film(s) of your choice.

*Presentation notes should be handed in and full bibliography included.*

### Assignment Two: Timelords and Superheroes

Individual Presentation: 8-10 mins duration (15%)

Due Date: to be presented in the seminar, week 12

*Either*

Choose one Alien Messiah figure, or Superhero that you are familiar with and explore their ideological and historical meaning(s)

*Or*

Creatively design and fictionally situate an Alien Messiah or Superhero that speaks to the contemporary age

*Or*

Examine time travel in one or more science fiction films of your choice.

*Presentation notes should be handed in and full bibliography included.*

**Assignment Three: Architectural Promise**

Written Assignment: 2,000 words (15%)

Due Date: Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September

Analyse the representation of the cine-architecture in one or more science fiction films of your choice.

**Assignment Four: Sounding Science Fiction (Creative Exercise)**

Individual Presentation: 8-10 mins duration (15%)

Due Date: to be presented in the seminar, week 11, trimester 2

Sound design a 12-16 shot sequence from a science fiction film of your own creation, presenting and explaining your work and decision-making at the same time.

**Assignment Five: Critical Essay**

**Written Assignment: 3,500 words (30%)**

**Due Date: Monday November 9<sup>th</sup> November**

Title of your own devising (in consultation with me) (the question you choose should not double-up on work undertaken for any of the other assignments)

**Relationship Between Assessment and Objectives**

All assessment has the twofold objective of assessing students' progress in the course and of providing feedback to assist students to achieve the course objectives.

The essays are intended to foster the students' abilities to critically assess varying phenomena of science fiction, and to demonstrate their familiarity with the primary texts (films, screenings) as well as the surrounding theories of the genre. The presentations are intended to provide students with the opportunity to present their work orally to peers, while the creative exercise is intended to demonstrate application of knowledge.

**ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEETS**

Assignment cover sheets and extension forms can be found on Blackboard or outside the Programme office. Remember to fill in your tutor's name.

**PENALTIES AND EXTENSIONS**

Work submitted late without an extension will be penalised two percent per working day. Except under exceptional circumstances, no work will be accepted more than two weeks after the due date unless specific prior arrangements have been made.

**Extensions**

If you require an extension, you must complete an extension request form (available on your course Blackboard site) prior to the assignment due date. This must be accompanied by relevant documentation (e.g. a doctor's certificate) where appropriate. Extension requests must be submitted to the Course Co-ordinator. Tutors cannot grant extensions.

**PRESENTATION OF WORK**

All written work should be double spaced and printed on both sides of the paper. Each page should be numbered, and a full bibliography included at the end of the assignment.

**MANDATORY COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

To be eligible to pass the course you must complete all assignments and attend at least 20 of the 24 seminars.

## ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND PLAGIARISM

Academic integrity means that university staff and students, in their teaching and learning are expected to treat others honestly, fairly and with respect at all times. It is not acceptable to mistreat academic, intellectual or creative work that has been done by other people by representing it as your own original work.

Academic integrity is important because it is the core value on which the University's learning, teaching and research activities are based. Victoria University's reputation for academic integrity adds value to your qualification.

The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as if it were your own, whether you mean to or not. 'Someone else's work' means anything that is not your own idea. Even if it is presented in your own style, you must acknowledge your sources fully and appropriately. This includes:

- Material from books, journals or any other printed source
- The work of other students or staff
- Information from the internet
- Software programs and other electronic material
- Designs and ideas
- The organisation or structuring of any such MATERIAL.

Find out more about plagiarism, how to avoid it and penalties, on the University's website:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/study/plagiarism.aspx>

## COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Any additional information, or changes to the course, will be announced in class and posted on the course notice board 85 FT, and on Blackboard.

## FACILITIES AND AWARDS

Students are encouraged to make full use of the Robert Lord Library at 77FT; however, please note that **library materials do not leave the building**. There is a coin-operated photocopy machine on Level 3. The Green Room is also available to students working in the building. You are expected to clean up after yourself, including returning to the Green Room any mugs removed from there.

The Prize for Film Studies, arising from a fund established by the Wai-te-Ata Press, will be awarded to the best student of film history, criticism or production.

## GENERAL UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND POLICIES

A copy of the General University Statutes and Policies can be found on Blackboard.

**COURSE PROGRAMME: TRIMESTER 1**

|   |                                    |   |
|---|------------------------------------|---|
| Week 1  | Monday<br>2 <sup>nd</sup><br>March | <b>Part One: Speculative and Spectacular Pleasure</b><br>What is Genre? What is Science Fiction?<br><i>The Day the Earth Stood Still</i> (Wise, 1951) |
| Week 2  | 9 <sup>th</sup> March              | In Search of Wonder: Special Effects<br><i>A Trip to the Moon</i> (Méliès, 1902)<br><i>Terminator 2</i> (Cameron, 1991)                               |
| Week 3  | 16 <sup>th</sup><br>March          | Expanding Science Fiction: Digital Effects<br><i>Metta Mutt from Mars</i> (2006)<br><i>Minority Report</i> (Spielberg, 2002)                          |
| Week 4  | 23 <sup>rd</sup><br>March          | The Ride of Your Life: Blockbuster Science Fiction<br><i>Transformers</i> (Bay, 2007)   |
| Week 5  | 30 <sup>th</sup><br>March          | Sublime Science Fiction: Affective Dreams<br><i>2001</i> (Kubrick, 1968)  |
| Week 6  | 6 <sup>th</sup> April              | First Assignment: In Class Pair Presentation  |
| <b>Mid Trimester Break:</b> (Good) Friday 10 April – Friday 24 April 2009 |                                    |   |
| Week 7  | 27 <sup>th</sup> April             | <b>Part Two: Time Lords and Superheroes</b><br>Time Travel and Time Lords<br><i>Blink</i> (2007)<br><i>La Jetée</i> (Marker, 1962)                    |
| Week 8  | 4 <sup>th</sup> May                | Superheroes Save the World<br><i>Spiderman</i> (Raimi, 2002)  |
| Week 9  | 11 <sup>th</sup> May               | Black Superheroes Funk the World<br><i>Blade</i> (Norrington, 1998)   |
| Week 10   | 18 <sup>th</sup> May               | Queering Science Fiction Heroes<br><i>Barbarella</i> (Vadim, 1968)<br><i>Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe</i> (1940, episode 1)                     |
| Week 11   | 25 <sup>th</sup> May               | Cultish Science Fiction and Forever Fandom<br><i>The Last American Astronaut</i> (McAbee, 2001)   |
| Week 12   | 1 <sup>st</sup> June               | Presentations   |

**Examination Period:** Friday 12 June – Wednesday 1 July 2009

**COURSE PROGRAMME: TRIMESTER 2**

|   |                                   |  |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|
| Week 1  | Thursday<br>16 <sup>th</sup> July | <b>Part Three: Sounding Science Fiction</b><br>Infinite Vectors: Sounding Science Fiction<br><i>Ghost in the Shell</i> (Oshii, 1995)                             |
| Week 2  | 23 <sup>rd</sup> July             | Making Science Fiction Sounds plus Guest Speaker   |
| Week 3  | 30 <sup>th</sup> July             | <b>Part Four: The Promise of the Future: Wastelands of Despair</b><br>The Promise of the Future: Science Fiction Architecture<br><i>Dark City</i> (Proyas, 1998) |
| Week 4  | 6 <sup>th</sup> August            | The Promise of the Past: Architectural Fascism<br><i>Starship Troopers</i> (Verhoeven, 1997)   |
| Week 5  | 13 <sup>th</sup><br>August        | Eco-Apocalypse at the Delicatessen<br><i>Delicatessen</i> (Caro, 1991)   |
| Week 6  | 20 <sup>th</sup><br>August        | Apocalyptic Dread: Signs of the end of the World<br><i>Children of Men</i> (Cuaron, 2006)  |
| <b>Mid Trimester Break: 24 August – Friday 4 September 2009</b> |                                   |  |
| Week 7  | 10 <sup>th</sup><br>September     | Shh! They Are out to Get You<br><i>La Antena</i> (Sapir, 2007)   |
| Week 8  | 17 <sup>th</sup><br>September     | <b>Part Five: The End of the Body</b><br>Flesh and Metal: the Posthuman Part One<br><i>Tetsuo</i> (Tsukamoto, 1989)  |
| Week 9  | 24 <sup>th</sup><br>September     | The Transgressive Cyborg: Part Two<br><i>Star Trek: I, Borg</i> (1992)<br><i>Serial Experiments: Lain</i> (1998)   |
| Week 10   | 1 <sup>st</sup><br>October        | The Death of Science Fiction Whiteness<br><i>The Invasion of the Body Snatchers</i> (Siegal, 1956)   |
| Week 11   | 8 <sup>th</sup><br>October        | Presentations  |
| Week 12   | 15 <sup>th</sup><br>October       | Thinking it All Away: The Philosophy of Science Fiction<br><i>The Matrix</i> (The Wachowskis, 1999)  |

**Examination Period:** Friday 23 October – Saturday 14 November 2009

**Guinness and Potato Productions 2009**