

FILM 407: Studies in Film Genre

Trimester 2

Monday 12 July to Saturday 13 November 2010

30 Points



TRIMESTER DATES

Teaching dates:	Monday 12 July 2010 to Friday 15 October 2010
Mid-trimester break:	Monday 23 August to Sunday 5 September 2010
Study week:	Monday 18 October to Friday 22 October 2010
Last piece of assessment due:	Friday 29 October 2010

WITHDRAWAL DATES

Information on withdrawals and refunds may be found at
<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/admisenrol/payments/withdrawalsrefunds.aspx>

STAFF

Sean Redmond, Room 107 85FT: sean.redmond@vuw.ac.nz Tel: x6520 Office Hours: Monday 2-3

CLASS TIMES AND ROOMS

Monday, 10-1pm, Room 108 85FT
Thursday, 1-4pm, Room 108 85FT

COURSE CONTENT

In 2010 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 two, 3 hour, weekly sessions 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.

COMMUNICATION OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

At the start of lectures; in tutorials; posted on blackboard; and via email.

EXPECTED WORKLOAD

For a 30-point course you are expected to devote a total of around 300 hours to course work. For Film 407 this commitment will be spread over the 12 weeks of teaching, the two week mid-trimester break, and the first week of the examination period. Therefore you should probably expect to spend, on average, about 20 hours per week in attending classes, reading, viewing films, essay writing and preparing for seminars.

GROUP WORK

The first assignment for this course involves a pair presentation on an aspect of science fiction special effects. Pairs will be organised in week 3 of the course. The presentations are given a single mark based upon the presentation and the support notes that are handed in after the presentation has been delivered.

READINGS

Essential texts:

Student Notes, \$44.00

Recommended reading:

Sean Redmond *Liquid Metal: the Reader in Science Fiction Cinema*, Wallflower Press, 2004

For the first two weeks of trimester all undergraduate textbooks and student notes will be sold from the Memorial Theatre foyer, while postgraduate textbooks and student notes will be available from the top floor of vicbooks in the Student Union Building, Kelburn Campus. After week two all undergraduate textbooks will be sold from vicbooks and student notes from the Student Notes Distribution Centre on the ground floor of the Student Union Building. Customers can order textbooks and student notes online at www.vicbooks.co.nz or can email an order or enquiry to enquiries@vicbooks.co.nz. Books can be couriered to customers or they can be picked up from nominated collection points at each campus. Customers will be contacted when they are available.

Opening hours are 8.00 am – 6.00 pm, Monday – Friday during term time (closing at 5.00 pm in the holidays). Phone: 463 5515.

ASSESSMENT

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

Film Honours students should note that assessment for particular courses is provisional pending consideration of the student's coursework as a whole and external moderation.

Assignment One: Reading, Sensing The Special Effect

Pair Presentation: 8-10 mins duration (20%)

Due Date: to be presented in the seminar, Thursday 19 August, week 6

Either:

A textual based 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. Further information will be given out in week 3 of the course.

Assignment Two: Reading Science News

Individual Presentation: 8-10 mins duration (in seminars, on-going throughout trimester two) (20%)

Scan the news and information sites for break-through science stories. Choose one story that you think would make for a great science fiction film and which you think speaks to fears or hopes (about the power of science) in the contemporary world. Introduce your story in the presentation, explore its possible cultural impact, and then pitch your idea for how it might be used in your science fiction film. Give your film a title, a plot synopsis, stills or images you can gather, so that it is both described and visualised.

Assignment Three: Timelords, Time travel, Superheroes, and Sounding Science Fiction

Written Assignment: 2,500 words (20%)

Due Date: Friday 24 September

Either

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

Or

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

Or

Analyse the sound design of one science fiction film that you are familiar with.

Or

A question of your own devising.

Assignment Four: Critical Essay

Written Assignment: 4,000 words (40%)

Due Date: Friday 29 October

FILM 407 STUDIES IN FILM GENRE: SCIENCE FICTION

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.

The marking criteria for each assignment will be distributed in class during the course.

Handing in Assignments:

Assignments should be placed in the drop slot at the Film, Theatre and Media Studies administration reception area in 83 Fairlie Terrace. You must keep a copy of your assignment before submitting it.

ASSIGNMENT COVER SHEETS

Assignment cover sheets and extension forms can be found on Blackboard or outside the Programme office.

PENALTIES AND EXTENSIONS

Extensions will be granted only in exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. Issues of workload do not constitute exceptional and unforeseen circumstances. 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. Tutors cannot grant extensions. Work that is submitted late without an extension is subject to penalties:

Work submitted after the deadline will be penalised by a 2.5 percent deduction from your total mark per work day. Late work also receives only minimal comments from your marker.

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.

CLASS REPRESENTATIVES

A class representative will be elected in the first class, and that person's name and contact details will be available to VUWSA, the Course Coordinator and the class. The class representative provides a communication channel to liaise with the Course Coordinator on behalf of students.

STATEMENT ON LEGIBILITY

You are expected to present work that meets appropriate standards. Work submitted during the course (i. e. work that is internally assessed) should be typed or prepared on a computer.

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.

FILM 407 STUDIES IN FILM GENRE: SCIENCE FICTION

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>

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

You should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the Victoria University Calendar or go to the Academic Policy and Student Policy sections on: <http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/policy>

The AVC (Academic) website also provides information in a number of areas including Academic Grievances, Student and Staff conduct, Meeting the needs of students with impairments, and student support/VUWSA student advocates. This website can be accessed at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/avcacademic/Publications.aspx

COURSE PROGRAMME: TRIMESTER 2

Week 1	Monday 12 th July	Part One: Speculative and Spectacular Pleasure What is Genre? What is Science Fiction? <i>The Thing</i> (Carpenter, 1979)
	Thursday 15 th July	The Ride of Your Life: Blockbuster Science Fiction <i>Star Wars</i> (Lucas, 1977)
Week 2	Monday 19 th July	In Search of Wonder: Special Effects <i>A Trip to the Moon</i> (Méliès, 1902) <i>Total Recall</i> (Verhoeven, 1990)
	Thursday 22 nd July	Expanding Science Fiction: Digital Effects <i>Jurassic Park</i> (Spielberg, 1993)
Week 3	Monday 26 th July	Sublime Science Fiction: Affective Dreams <i>Sunshine</i> (Boyle, 2007)

Thursday **Part Two: Time Travel, Time Lords and Superheroes**
 29th July Time Travel and the Primal Scene
La Jetee (Marker, 1962), *Back to the Future* (Zemeckis, 1985)

Week 4 Monday Time Lords and Alien Messiahs
 2nd Aug. *Blink* (2007), *Timecrimes* (Vigalondo, 2007)

Thursday Superheroes Save the World
 5th Aug *Spiderman* (Raimi, 2002)

Week 5 Monday Race, Gender and the Superhero
 9th Aug. *Wonder Woman*

Thursday Queering Science Fiction
 12th Aug. *Barbarella* (Vadim, 1968), *Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe* (1940, episode 1)

Week 6 Monday Cultish Science Fiction and Forever Fandom
 16th Aug. *The Last American Astronaut* (McAbee, 2001)

Thursday Group Presentations
 19th Aug.

Mid Trimester Break: Monday 23 August to Sunday 5 September 2010

Week 7 Monday **Part Three: Sounding Science Fiction**
 6th Sept. Infinite Vectors: Sounding Science Fiction
2001: A Space Odyssey (Kubrick, 1968)

Thursday Sublime Sounding Science Fiction
 9th Sept. *Alien* (Scott, 1979)

Week 8 Monday Making Science Fiction Sounds Workshop
 13th Sept.

Thursday **Part Four: The Promise of the Future: the City in Science Fiction**
 16th Sept. The Promise of the Future: City Modernism and Utopia
Things to Come (Menzies, 1936)

Week 9 Monday The Promise of the Past: Postmodern Waste and Despair
 20th Sept. *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982)

Thursday Apocalyptic Dread: the post 9/11 City
 23rd Sept. *Children of Men* (Cuaron, 2006)

Week 10 Monday **Part Five: Paranoia Science Fiction: Shh! They Are out to Get You**
 27th Sept. Red Invasion
The War of the Worlds (Haskin, 1953)

	Thursday 30 th Sept.	Are you paranoid? <i>La Antena</i> (Sapir, 2007)
Week 11	Monday 4 th Oct.	Part Six: The End of the Body: Thinking it all Away Flesh and Metal: the Cyborg <i>Terminator II</i> (Cameron, 1991))
	Thursday 7 th Oct.	Virtual States of Being-in-the-world <i>Ghost in the Shell</i> (Oshii, 1995)
Week 12	Monday 11 th Oct.	Science Fiction Ethics: You Choose <i>Gattaca</i> (Niccol, 1997)
Week	Thursday 14 th Oct.	Thinking it All Away: Free Will and Determinism <i>Minority Report</i> (Spielberg, 2002)



Guinness and Potato productions 2010