FILM3170
SCIENCE FICTION FILM

Course Coordinator: William Schaffer
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Course Overview
Semester Semester 2 - 2006
Unit Weighting 10
Teaching Methods Lecture

Brief Course Description
Presents an overview of the science fiction film genre from its origins to the present day. The emphasis will be on American science fiction films, although several important films from other countries will also be screened.

Contact Hours
2 hour seminar per week, plus film screening

Course Objectives
To enable students to:
(1) understand the relationship of the science fiction genre to its various cultural and historical contexts;
(2) analyse these relationships in the case of specific films; and
(3) discuss these issues in the light of current debates in film studies.

Course Content
Topics include:
* problems of genre definition;
* the sudden rise of the genre in the 1950?s;
* the genre?s postmodern turn in the 1980?s;
* the prevalence of remakes within the genre; and
* the genre's recent preoccupation with technologically mediated bodies and identities.
Assessment Items
1. A quiz, worth 20%
2. A minor essay, worth 30%
3. A major essay, worth 50%

Assumed Knowledge
Assumed knowledge for FILM317 is 20 credit points of Film Studies at the 100 level.

Callaghan Campus Timetable
FILM3170
SCIENCE FICTION FILM
Enquiries: School of Humanities and Social Science
Semester 2 - 2006
Film Screen Friday 11:00 - 13:00 [MC132] Commencing Week 3
and Seminar Friday 13:00 - 15:00 [MC132] Commencing Week 2

Plagiarism
University policy prohibits students plagiarising any material under any circumstances. A student plagiarises if he or she presents the thoughts or works of another as one's own. Without limiting the generality of this definition, it may include:
· copying or paraphrasing material from any source without due acknowledgment;
· using another's ideas without due acknowledgment;
· working with others without permission and presenting the resulting work as though it was completed independently.

Plagiarism is not only related to written works, but also to material such as data, images, music, formulae, websites and computer programs.
Aiding another student to plagiarise is also a violation of the Plagiarism Policy and may invoke a penalty.

For further information on the University policy on plagiarism, please refer to the Policy on Student Academic Integrity at the following link -

The University has established a software plagiarism detection system called Turnitin. When you submit assessment items please be aware that for the purpose of assessing any assessment item the University may -
· Reproduce this assessment item and provide a copy to another member of the University;
· Communicate a copy of this assessment item to a plagiarism checking service (which may then retain a copy of the item on its database for the purpose of future plagiarism checking);
· Submit the assessment item to other forms of plagiarism checking

Written Assessment Items
Students may be required to provide written assessment items in electronic form as well as hard copy.

Extension of Time for Assessment Items, Deferred Assessment and Special Consideration for Assessment Items or Formal Written Examinations
Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date, as advised in the Course Outline, unless the Course Coordinator approves an extension of time for submission of the item. University policy is that an assessment item submitted after the due date, without an approved extension, will be penalised.

Any student:
1. who is applying for an extension of time for submission of an assessment item on the basis of medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment; or
2. whose attendance at or performance in an assessment item or formal written examination has been or will be affected by medical, compassionate, hardship/trauma or unavoidable commitment;
must report the circumstances, with supporting documentation, to the appropriate officer on the prescribed form.
Please go to the Policy and the on-line form for further information, particularly for information on the options available to you, at:
Students should be aware of the following important deadlines:

- **Requests for Special Consideration** must be lodged no later than 3 working days after the date of submission or examination.
- **Requests for Extensions of Time on Assessment Items** must be lodged no later than the due date of the item.
- **Requests for Rescheduling Exams** must be lodged no later than 5 working days before the date of the examination.

Your application may not be accepted if it is received after the deadline. Students who are unable to meet the above deadlines due to extenuating circumstances should speak to their Program Officer in the first instance.

**Changing your Enrolment**

The last dates to withdraw without financial or academic penalty (called the HECS Census Dates) is:

For semester 2 courses: **31 August 2006**

Students may withdraw from a course without academic penalty on or before the last day of semester and prior to the commencement of the formal exam period. Any withdrawal from a course after the last day of semester will result in a fail grade.

Students cannot enrol in a new course after the second week of semester/trimester, except under exceptional circumstances. Any application to add a course after the second week of semester/trimester must be on the appropriate form, and should be discussed with the Student Enquiry Centre.

To change your enrolment online, please refer to [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/enrolment/changingenrolment.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/enrolment/changingenrolment.html)

**Contact Details: Faculty Student Service Offices**

**The Faculty of Education and Arts**
Room: GP1-22 (General Purpose Building)
Phone: 02 4921 5314

**Ourimbah Focus**
Room: AB1.01 (Administration Building)
Phone: 02 4348 4030

**The Dean of Students**
Dr Jennifer Archer
Phone: 02 4921 5806
Fax: 02 4921 7151
[resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au](mailto:resolutionprecinct@newcastle.edu.au)

**Deputy Dean of Students (Ourimbah)**
Dr Bill Gladstone
Phone: 02 4348 4123
Fax: 02 4348 4145

Various services are offered by the University Student Support Unit:

**Alteration of this Course Outline**

No change to this course outline will be permitted after the end of the second week of the term except in exceptional circumstances and with Head of School approval. Students will be notified in advance of any approved changes to this outline.


**STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR CHRONIC ILLNESS**

The University is committed to providing a range of support services for students with a disability or chronic illness.
If you have a disability or chronic illness which you feel may impact on your studies, please feel free to discuss your support needs with your lecturer or course coordinator. Disability Support may also be provided by the Student Support Service (Disability). Students must be registered to receive this type of support. To register please contact the Disability Liaison Officer on 02 4921 5766, or via email at: student-disability@newcastle.edu.au

As some forms of support can take a few weeks to implement it is extremely important that you discuss your needs with your lecturer, course coordinator or Student Support Service staff at the beginning of each semester.

For more information related to confidentiality and documentation please visit the Student Support Service (Disability) website at: www.newcastle.edu.au/services/disability

Online Tutorial Registration:
Students are required to enrol in the Lecture and a specific Tutorial time for this course via the Online Registration system:

Registrations close at the end of week 2 of semester.

Studentmail and Blackboard: [www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/](http://www.blackboard.newcastle.edu.au/)
This course uses Blackboard and studentmail to contact students, so you are advised to keep your email accounts within the quota to ensure you receive essential messages. To receive an expedited response to queries, post questions on the Blackboard discussion forum if there is one, or if emailing staff directly use the course code in the subject line of your email. Students are advised to check their studentmail and the course Blackboard site on a weekly basis.

Written Assignment Presentation and Submission Details
Students are required to submit assessment items by the due date. Late assignments will be subject to the penalties described below.

**Hard copy submission:**
- **Type your assignments:** All work must be typewritten in 11 or 12 point black font. Leave a wide margin for marker’s comments, use 1.5 or double spacing, and include page numbers.
- **Word length:** The word limit of all assessment items should be strictly followed – 10% above or below is acceptable, otherwise penalties may apply.
- **Proof read your work** because spelling, grammatical and referencing mistakes will be penalised.
- **Staple the pages** of your assignment together (do not use pins or paper clips).
- **University coversheet:** All assignments must be submitted with the University coversheet: [http://www.newcastle.edu.au/school/hss/studentguide/index.html](http://www.newcastle.edu.au/school/hss/studentguide/index.html)

- **Assignments are to be deposited at any Student Hubs. Hubs are located at:**
  - Level 3, Shortland Union, Callaghan
  - Level 2, Student Services Centre, Callaghan
  - Ground Floor, University House, City
  - Ground Floor, Administration Building, Ourimbah

  Any changes to this procedure will be announced during the semester.

- **Do not fax or email assignments:** Only hard copies of assignments will be considered for assessment. Inability to physically submit a hard copy of an assignment by the deadline due to other commitments or distance from campus is an unacceptable excuse. Assignments mailed to Schools are accepted from the date posted.

  **Keep a copy of all assignments:** All students must date stamp their own assignments using the machine provided. Mailed assignments to schools are date-stamped upon receipt. However, it is the student’s responsibility to produce a copy of their work if the assignment goes astray after submission. Students are advised to keep updated back-ups in hard copy and on disk.

**Online copy submission to Turnitin**
In addition to hard copy submission, students are required to submit an electronic version of the following assignments to Turnitin via the course Blackboard website.

Prior to final submission, all students have the opportunity to submit one draft of their assignment to Turnitin to self-check their referencing.

Assignments will not be marked until both hard copy and online versions have been submitted. Marks may be deducted for late submission of either version.
Penalties for Late Assignments
Assignments submitted after the due date, without an approved extension of time will be penalised by the **reduction of 5% of the possible maximum mark** for the assessment item for each day or part day that the item is late. Weekends count as one day in determining the penalty. Assessment items submitted **more than ten days** after the due date will be awarded **zero marks**.

Special Consideration/Extension of Time Applications
Students wishing to apply for Special Consideration or Extension of Time should obtain the appropriate form from the Student Hubs.
http://www.newcastle.edu.au/study/forms/index.html

No Assignment Re-submission
Students who have failed an assignment are not permitted to revise and resubmit it in this course. However, students are always welcome to contact their Tutor, Lecturer or Course Coordinator to make a consultation time to receive individual feedback on their assignments.

Remarks
Students can request to have their work re-marked by the Course Coordinator or Discipline Convenor (or their delegate); three outcomes are possible: the same grade, a lower grade, or a higher grade being awarded. Students may also appeal against their final result for a course. Please consult the University policy at:

Return of Assignments
Students can collect assignments from a nominated Student Hubs during office hours. Students will be informed during class which Hubs to go to and the earliest date assignments will be available for collection. Students must present their student identification card to collect their assignment.

Preferred Referencing Style
In this course, it is recommended that you use the use the Harvard in-text referencing system (similar to the APA system) for referencing sources of information used in assignments. Inadequate or incorrect reference to the work of others may be viewed as plagiarism and result in reduced marks or failure.

An in-text citation names the author of the source, gives the date of publication, and for a direct quote includes a page number, in parentheses. At the end of the paper, a list of references provides publication information about the source; the list is alphabetised by authors' last names (or by titles for works without authors). Further information on referencing and general study skills can be obtained from:

Student Representatives
We are very interested in your feedback and suggestions for improvement. Student Representatives are the channel of communication between students and the School Board. Contact details of Student Representatives can be found on the School website.

Student Communication
Students should discuss any course related matters with their Tutor, Lecturer, or Course Coordinator in the first instance and then the relevant Discipline or Program Convenor. If this proves unsatisfactory, they should then contact the Head of School if required. Contact details can be found on the School website.

Essential Online Information for Students
Information on Class and Exam Timetables, Tutorial Online Registration, Learning Support, Campus Maps, Careers information, Counselling, the Health Service and a range of free Student Support Services can be found at:
Assessment Items for Science Fiction Film  317, 2004

Remember, no one wants you to end up looking like a sad emoticon, so please take note of all the advice provided below ;-) 

20% QUIZ: final lecture

On the date of the final lecture students will be given a quiz designed to test their overall awareness of films screened, readings provided, and issues discussed during lectures. Questions may address such matters as the name of a director or major character in a film screened or discussed at length within the course, the principal theme explored in a reading, or the unifying concept employed in a particular seminar. Any student who has viewed screenings, attended lectures, and read readings should have very little difficulty in doing well in this test.

Nb. students cannot pass the course under any circumstances without partaking in the quiz!

In the event that any student is unable to attend the final lecture, a special personal quiz (of equal difficulty) will be administered at another date.

NOTE: IN THE CASE OF ALL QUESTIONS FOR BOTH MINOR ESSAYS AND MAJOR ESSAYS, STUDENTS MUST :

1. centrally address at least one film screened in the course.

2. respond critically at some level to at least one reading provided for the course.

3. respond critically at some level to at least one seminar conducted within the course.

Critical argument need not always involve negative comment (though it certainly may). Rather, criticism implies the deliberate and active testing of assumptions (including, where possible, one’s own). Your ‘critical responses’ to an academic argument should involve an initial referring and explication of that argument and its assumptions, followed by any one or more of the following procedures: testing and confirmation through extension of the general argument in the context of other films; testing and qualification of the argument in terms of variations and possibilities that have not been accounted for (including those suggested by other academic arguments or your own...
observation); *testing and refutation* of the argument through demonstration that its general assertions are incoherent or do not allow for the observable qualities of actual films.

Students should also use their own observations in testing academic arguments. This means that you are expected to test general arguments in terms of particular moments from films that you have *noticed for yourself*. These requirements are imposed because your lecturer is genuinely interested in what YOU have to contribute to current debates. He is therefore interested in seeing your own responses to the arguments of others, articulated in terms of your own viewing of specific films. Your lecturer has *no* interest, however, in seeing you simply assert your own opinion or simply reproduce the thoughts and observations of others (including his own).

These requirements will be explained further in lectures.

**30% MINOR ESSAY QUESTIONS: 1,500 WORDS, due October 7**

**VERY IMPORTANT: STUDENTS MUST ADDRESS AT LEAST ONE FILM PRODUCED PRIOR TO THE 1960s FOR ALL MINOR QUESTIONS**

1. If genre is defined by repetition, and creativity is defined by originality, can a ‘mere’ genre film be seriously treated as a work of art? Consider with reference to at least two science fiction films. You may choose to highlight patterns of repetition and transformation between the films in question.

2. Are special effects just a cinematic cheap thrill? Explore the ways in which special effects are exploited in at least two science fiction films. Try not to restrict your discussion to matters of technique.

3. Compare and contrast the way in which the Arms Race is represented in at least two science fiction films.

4. Compare and contrast the figure of the robot in at least two science fiction films.

5. Examine the representation of sexuality in at least two science fiction films.

**MAJOR ESSAY QUESTIONS: 2,500 WORDS, due November 10**

1. Examine the repetitions and transformations undergone by one or more motifs which recur with significant frequency throughout the history of science fiction film.

2. Does the hypothesis of time-travel invariably serve as little more than a vehicle for technological fantasy or does it sometimes provide a context for the exploration of questions of human desire and memory? Refer to Chris Marker’s *La Jetée* as well as one other film of your own choosing.

3. Reviewing a century of science fiction film, produce a Brief History of the End of the World. Emphasise transformation as well as repetition in your examination of the apocalyptic obsessions of the genre.

4. It can be argued that our culture has generally displayed a schizophrenic attitude to the emergence of such technological innovations as genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, and virtual reality. Representations of these new artificial forms tend to be polarised between the image of a world in which humans will at last be liberated from physical limitations and one in which humans will find they have become slaves to machines. Discuss.


6. Compare and contrast the ways in which design is used to explore the possibilities of hyper-urban existence and postmodernity in *Bladerunner, The Fifth Element,* and *Dark City.* (you may choose other films, in consultation with Bill).
7. Critics have often expressed bafflement when trying to account for the evident popular appeal of ‘chest-busting’ science fiction films such as the *Alien* series, *The Thing*, and the *Species* films. Can you account for this curious attraction of the repulsive?

8. Compare and contrast the sexual politics of *The Thing* and *Alien* OR the *Terminator* films.

9. What can science fiction film do that science fiction literature cannot? Use examples of your own choosing in exploring this very contentious question and do not restrict your response to the description of obvious technical differences.

10. *What is the Matrix?* Approach this question for its relevance to our everyday world, in terms of aesthetic, thematic, and ideological contexts.

11. Discuss the *logic of security* as it has been explored in the history of sci-fi film.

12. Prepare a question of your own choosing in consultation with the lecturer. PLEASE NOTE: you are not permitted to invent your own questions without clearing these with the lecturer. Essays based on questions that have not been approved in advance will not be accepted for marking in any circumstances.
Seminar Topics, Screenings, and Readings

[Nb. screening of supplementary clips will depend upon weekly availability of videos. Students are strongly urged to seek out the full versions in the library or their local video stores.]

1. **ANOTHER DIMENSION: TRIPPING ON FILM: NO SCREENING SESSION**

   George Méliès, *Trip to the Moon* (1902)  
   clips from Peter Hyams, *Capricorn One*, (1978)  
   (short screenings on video during seminar)  

2. **THE VICIOUS PROSTHESIS: SEDUCED BY A MACHINE**

   Fritz Lang, *Metropolis* (1926)  
   clips from Larry Cohen, *Demon Seed*, (1977)  

3. **FROM MOMENT TO MOMENT: WORLDS IN TRANSMISSION**

   Fred McLeod Wilcox, *Forbidden Planet*, (1956)  
   clips from the TV show, Rod Serling, *The Twilight Zone*, (1959)  

4. **OUTER SPACE/INNER TIME:**


5. **REVIEW SEMINAR/GROUP WORK: NO SCREENING SESSION**

6. **THERE IS ANOTHER: THE EMPIRE OF MERCHANDISING**

   George Lucas, *Star Wars*, (EPISODE FOR SCREENING TO BE DECIDED BY STUDENTS)  

7. **IT CAME FROM WITHIN: THE BODY AS ENVIRONMENT**


8. **LOOPS: THE ENDS OF TIME**


9. **REVIEW SEMINAR/GROUP WORK: NO SCREENING SESSION**

10. **THE RUINS OF FUTURITY: ALLEGORIES OF POSTMODERNITY**


11. **PARANOIA UNLIMITED: ALL IS CODE.**


12. **WHERE DO THEY GET THOSE TOYS?: SUPER HEROES**


clips from various versions of Superman, Batman, Spiderman, and James Bond!

reading to be provided

**THE MANDATORY QUIZ WILL BE GIVEN DURING THE FINAL SEMINAR SESSION**