

University of Pittsburgh
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures
Slavic 0660-7010
Sci-Fi: East and West

*The following course overview serves as **a contract** between the student and the instructor teaching this course. Please read the entire text carefully and let the instructor know if you have any questions about it **as soon as possible**.*

Spring 2014, CRN Instructor: Dr. Olga Klimova On-campus office hours: TBA Office: Cathedral of Learning 1417 e-mail: vok1@pitt.edu	Class meetings: Saturdays, January 24, February 21, March 28 Room: G19A Cathedral of Learning Time: 9:30am-12:30pm
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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course compares Slavic and Anglophone science fiction in literature and cinema. It examines how a given culture's dominant concerns are articulated in a genre popular in the East (i.e., Eastern Europe and Russia) and West (i.e., America, Germany, and England). Those concerns emerge in works that imaginatively posit "fantastic" situations rooted in spatial, temporal, ecological and technological explorations beyond those currently verified by science. On the basis of a wide range of novels, stories, and films we shall discuss such topics as progress, utopia, human perfectibility, gender inequality, construction of femininity and masculinity, the limits of science, the nature of knowledge, ecology, and verifiability.

More broadly, the goals of this course are to improve students' critical and analytical skills by incorporating a variety of critical perspectives (Marxism, Feminism, etc.) as we read, explain, and problematize the course's texts, bringing to light ideological bias, relevance, social commentary, historical context, and narrative coherence. In studying critical theoretical framework, the students will explore the texts' representations of societies, economies, genders, ideologies, and scientific assumptions.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students are required (1) to complete the assignments scheduled by specific deadlines—normally that means read 80-120 pages and/or watch 1-2 film(s) per week; (2) to participate actively and intelligently on a **REGULAR** basis on the course discussion board; (3) to take the 2 online exams; (4) to take weekly reading and watching quizzes (10 total); (5) to prepare 1 group project; (6) to attend three in-class (or synchronous online) meetings during the semester.

CLASS FORMAT:

This course carries three credits and satisfies the School of Arts and Sciences and College of General Studies requirement in foreign/comparative culture. It meets online asynchronously throughout the semester and includes 3 face-to-face (or synchronous online) sessions on three Saturdays during the semester. Besides readings in the forms of books to purchase and readings

posted on CourseWeb, you will be expected to watch films on your own. The materials and assignments for each week will become available by 12am on Saturday. Almost every week, there will be a reading and/or viewing quiz that you will have to take by 11:59pm on Wednesday (after that, they won't be available). There will also be two online exams that will include multiple-choice, mix-and-match, and essay questions.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

In addition to the required texts for the course (available at University Book Center or on Amazon.com), required readings will also be available on CourseWeb or otherwise.

H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (England)

Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We* (Russia)

Stanislaw Lem, *Futurological Congress* (Poland)

Mikhail Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog* (Russia)

Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, *Roadside Picnic* (Russia)—on CourseWeb

Karl Capek's *War with the Newts* (Czech Republic)

Viktor Pelevin, *Omon Ra* (Russia)

Octavia Butler, "Bloodchild" (USA)—on CourseWeb

Ursula K. LeGuin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (USA)—on CourseWeb

Phillip K. Dick, "We Can Remember It For You Wholesale" (USA) —on CourseWeb

William Gibson, "Johnny Mnemonic" (USA-Canada) —on CourseWeb

REQUIRED FILMS:

All films are on reserve in the Media Center in Hillman Library and should be watched there. You may also check your local library and check out these films to watch them at home. You can also try to find and watch these films on Netflix, Youtube, and through other online sources.

Fritz Lang, *Metropolis* (Germany), enhanced by Giorgio Moroder

Iakov Protozanov, *Aelita, Queen of Mars* (Russia)

Andrei Tarkovskii, *Solaris* and/or *Stalker* (Russia)

Ridley Scott, *Blade Runner* (USA)

Juliusz Machulski, *Sex Mission* (Poland) or Antonio Leonviola, *Thor and the Amazon Women* (Italy/Yugoslavia)

Georgii Danellia, *Kin-dza-dza* (Russia)

Garth Jennings, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (England)

Aleksei Fedorchenko, *First on the Moon* (Russia)

COURSE WEBSITE:

This course was developed using a web course tool called Blackboard. All course materials, tasks, assignments, exams, etc. (except for the required books) will be online. You will use your main Pitt account to log in to the course at CourseWeb (<http://CourseWeb.pitt.edu>). This course site will be available to you from the first day of the term.

To access the weekly modules, use the folders in the left-hand menu. There you'll find an introduction, and discussion board for each module; some modules will also have an assignment. For easier access to the discussion boards, a list of all discussion forums from all modules is accessible through the "Discussion Boards" button.

If you have not used Blackboard before, in order to get started with a Blackboard course, please see the Blackboard Student Manual <http://help.blackboard.com/>. If you need further help, the Pitt Technology Help Desk Team provides technical support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They can be reached at 412-624- HELP, helpdesk@pitt.edu, <http://technology.pitt.edu/help/help-desk.html>.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE INSTRUCTOR:

Please check the Course Announcement section on CourseWeb each time you enter the course page. This is where any changes/adjustments to the course will be posted, along with any other important course clarifications or information.

Questions about task instructions, course materials, technical difficulties, etc. should be posted to the Whole Class Q&A (Question and Answer) forum in the CourseWeb site. Use this for questions, and I will monitor periodically, but students are encouraged to answer each other's questions if they can.

The instructor will try to answer all emails and forum questions within 24-48 hours Monday-Friday and within 48-72 hours over the weekends.

EVALUATION AND GRADES:

Reading/viewing quizzes (10):	20%
Two online examinations:	30%
Participation (both online discussions and in-class meetings):	30%
1 group project:	20%
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TOTAL:	100%

The following grading standards will be used in assigning grades in this course:

93-100	A	80-82	B-	68-69	D+
90-92	A-	78-79	C+	65-67	D
88-89	B+	73-77	C	64-54	E
83-87	B	70-72	C-	53 and below	F

CLASS PARTICIPATION (Discussion Board and in-class meetings):

Participation is an essential part of this course. You **MUST** participate in the course's discussions. Class discussions will take place in the Discussion Board of Blackboard for each module. I will post discussion questions to start each thread. These questions will be mainly

about the assigned readings and your interpretations of them. I may also post follow-up questions and clarifying posts as the week goes on. **Everyone must write at least FOUR posts per week, spread over at least TWO threads. TWO** of those posts should be in response to other students' posts, not instructor questions. Please begin posting your responses early in the week so that you can respond to each other's comments. To earn full credit for the week, you must post your response to the instructor's prompts by 11:59pm on Fridays, and respond to at least two responses of your fellow students by 11:59pm on Sundays. The discussion threads will remain open throughout the semester, and I encourage you to review all the posts, especially in preparation for the two exams. Your posts must be thoughtful and reference the assigned material specifically.

Each post must have content to count towards your grade assessment; simply writing "Yes, I agree" or other such comments is insufficient. I will assess each student's participation in each module for a weekly discussion grade. I will consider post length and number of posts, but I will also judge posts on thoughtfulness, thoroughness of understanding, depth of analysis, and how much each post contributes to the discussion at hand, moving it forward in useful and interesting ways.

"C" grades will be awarded for adequate participation—if a student has met the basic requirements of saying four things over four threads, but the posts have not been particularly thoughtful or thorough, or demonstrate that the student has not read carefully or considered the readings with any real effort. "A" grades will be awarded to students whose posts are well-reasoned, carefully written, demonstrate careful reading and considered analysis, and contribute something particularly useful to the class's understanding of the subject. "B" grades, of course, will fall in between. Extra participation (more than four posts, as described above) is not necessary to earn an "A" grade, but I will consider extra participation (that is useful and on-topic) in my final assessments.

Bear in mind that even though you may not participate in every discussion thread, I expect **ALL** students to read through **ALL** of the threads each week. For exams, you will be responsible for knowing **ALL** of the information on the **ENTIRE** board, even discussion threads you did not participate in.

Finally (and I hope this goes without saying), the discussion boards are our classroom, and I expect you to behave as you would in any other class (i.e., be respectful and courteous to one another).

To receive full credits, you also **HAVE** to attend all three in-class/synchronous online sessions, during which we will be watching films, discussing the assigned texts, and working on the group project. Your participation during these three sessions will also be counted toward your final participation grade.

EXAMS:

In this course there will be two exams. The exams will consist of multiple-choice, mix-and-match, and/or essay questions. You are expected to give long answers (several paragraphs) to the essay questions. It is very important that you both present your knowledge about the issues asked and provide your own ideas in a critical and analytical way. You must be able to clearly state, analyze, and even problematize the issues you have encountered in the readings and discussed in class, and situate them in relationship to the course's larger themes and patterns. You must specifically reference our assigned texts when answering your exam questions, completely citing our authors in MLA format; you may also, if you wish, draw on outside sources, using appropriate citation. The first exam will open on Friday, February 20 and will be due at 11:59pm on Sunday, February 28, the second one—opens on Friday, April 10, and will end at 11:59pm on Sunday, April 18.

NO MAKE-UP EXAMS WILL BE ADMINISTERED. IF A STUDENT MISSES AN EXAM, S/HE WILL RECEIVE A ZERO FOR THAT EXAM.

QUIZZES:

Almost every week there will be a reading or viewing quiz, based on the assigned material for that week. You will complete it online on our CourseWeb page. The deadline is 11:59pm on Thursdays (except the first quiz, which is due at 11:59pm on Saturday, January 10), and there are NO makeup quizzes or extensions (unless official documented reasons).

GROUP PROJECT:

Students will have to work on and submit one group project at the end of the semester. You will work with partners for this assignment (appr. 3 students in each group). You have to create a group wiki page on Blackboard for two of the novels or films that we have read or watched in this class.

Choose a specific topic, theme on which your group will be working. Choose two Sci-Fi works from the course (one Western and one Slavic) and discuss how these Sci-Fi works address this specific issue. Write a description of each film/novel (a synopsis), and add all the credits (authorship, directing, montage, acting, year if available etc.), add photos and images from Internet. Make sure that you add captioning to each of the visual (the name, a short description of the scene, and the link to the original source). Do some research online and add to your page various reliable (!!!) links to on-line sources that are related to your topic and your Sci-Fi texts. Additionally, put together and add a brief annotated bibliography on these novels and/or films. Include scholarly articles and academic books. Add one sentence to annotate each bibliographical entry (what this article/book about). You can add any other additional information if you wish, such as Youtube videos or links to the novel/film, documentaries about it, interviews with writers/filmmakers and/or actors, etc.

You will have a chance to work on this project in your group in our face-to-face/synchronous Saturday sessions. The more detailed instructions will be distributed later in the semester.

The deadline for this assignment is at 11:59pm on **Friday**, .

DISABILITY POLICY:

If a student has a disability that requires special teaching, testing accommodations, or other classroom modifications, he or she must notify the instructor and the Office of Disabled Student Services (DDS) as early as possible in the semester. The student may be asked to provide documentation of the disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify DDS, call 648-7890 (Voice or TDD) to schedule an appointment. The office is located in 216 William Pitt Union.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. As “Student Obligations and Adjudication” (University Policy 02-03-03) states, “students have an obligation to exhibit honesty, and to respect the ethical standard of his (their) chosen profession in carrying out (their) academic assignments.” According to the University of Pittsburgh’s policy, a student “violates this obligation” if he/she: “a) presents as one’s own, for academic evaluation, the ideas, representations, or works of another person or persons without customary and proper acknowledgement of sources; b) submits the work of another person in a manner which represents the work to be one’s own; c) knowingly permits one’s work to be submitted by another person without the instructor’s authorization”.

The penalties for academic misconduct like plagiarism can be very severe. The immediate consequence of plagiarism will be receiving a grade zero for the particular assignment and can lead to an F for the course. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason during the semester will also be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity.

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, from the February 1974 Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom reported to the Senate Council, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz or exam will be imposed. View the complete policy at www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/02/02-03-02.html and see also: <http://www.as.pitt.edu/fac/policies/academic-integrity>

COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to revision by instructor)

Week/Dates	Topic/Titles/Themes	Assignments/Meetings
PRE-WEEK/ WEEK 1 January 3-10	Introduction. Film and Literature Analysis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit your self-introduction +photo/video by 11:59pm on Friday, January 9 • Reading Quiz 1 on syllabus, PowerPoint slides, and a handout, at 11:59pm on Saturday, January 10
	The definition of the genre. Analyzing film/analyzing fiction.	
WEEK 2 January 11-17	Iakov Protozanov, <i>Aelita</i>, <i>Queen of Mars</i>. Fritz Lang, <i>Metropolis</i>.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading/Viewing Quiz 2, 11:59pm on Thursday • Blog entry by 11:59pm on Friday • Responses to blog entries by 11:59pm on Sunday
	A vision of the future: modernity: machines, city, social class. Gender disposition in sci-fi. Social classes in sci-fi. Reflection of aspects of Western philosophy and dominant social tendencies and concerns.	
WEEK 3 January 18-24	H.G. Wells, <i>The Time Machine</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ First face-to-face/synchronous meeting: Saturday, January 24 at 11:59:30am-12:30pm • Reading/Viewing Quiz 3, 11:59pm on Thursday • Blog entry by 11:59pm on Friday • Responses to blog entries by 11:59pm on Saturday
	Movement through time: Victorian industry and dystopia. Visualizing the future; vertical spatialization of technological developments (above and below ground); the film's technological solutions. Narrative frame.	
WEEK 4 January 25-31	Yevgeny Zamyatin, <i>We</i>.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading/Viewing Quiz 4, 11:59pm on Thursday • Blog entry by 11:59pm on Friday • Responses to blog entries by 11:59pm on Saturday
	Totalitarianism and social control; gender roles, math and sciences vs. art and music. Dystopia in sci-fi. Satire in sci-fi.	
WEEK 5 February 1-7	Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, <i>Roadside Picnic</i>. Andrei Tarkovskii, <i>Solaris</i> and/or <i>Stalker</i>.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog entry by 11:59pm on Friday • Responses to blog entries by 11:59pm on Sunday
	Philosophical sci-fi. Ecological	

	crisis/economical crisis. Mutations and human responsibility. Exploring cosmos or confronting the self; nature of “the alien”; data/information/knowledge; synthesis of genres.	
WEEK 6 February 8-14	Stanislaw Lem, <i>Futurological Congress</i>. Irony and paradox. Skepticism about totalizing systems and misuse of science and reason. Bentham’s theory of utility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading/Viewing Quiz 5, 11:59pm on Thursday • Blog entry by 9 pm on Friday • Responses to blog entries by 11:59pm on Sunday
WEEK 7 February 15-21	Mikhail Bulgakov, <i>Heart of a Dog</i>. Science and human/animal experimentation in sci-fi. Totalitarianism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Second face-to-face/synchronous meeting: Saturday, February 21 at 9:30am-12:30pm • Reading/Viewing Quiz 6, 11:59pm on Thursday • Blog entry by 11:59pm on Friday • Responses to blog entries by 11:59pm on Saturday
WEEK 8 February 22-28	EXAM ONE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit exam 1 by 11:59pm on Sunday,
WEEK 9 March 1-7	Octavia Butler, “Bloodchild.” Juliusz Machulski, <i>Sex Mission</i>/ Antonio Leonviola, <i>Thor and the Amazon Women</i> Body, gender, reproduction. Gender deconstruction. Sexual identity and kinship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog entry by 11:59pm on Friday • Responses to blog entries by 11:59pm on Saturday
March 8-14	SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS	
WEEK 10 March 15-21	Ursula K. LeGuin, <i>The Left Hand of Darkness</i>. Colonization; body, gender, reproduction. Sexual identity and androgyny.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading/Viewing Quiz 7, 11:59pm on Thursday • Blog entry by 11:59pm on Friday • Responses to blog entries by

		11:59pm on Saturday
WEEK 11 March 22-28	Karl Capek's <i>War with the Newts</i>. Exploitation and evolution. The representation of war in sci-fi. Satire and social commentary. Fascism, racism, and capitalism	❖ Third face-to-face/synchronous meeting: Saturday, March 28 at 9:30am-12:30pm <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading/Viewing Quiz 8, 11:59pm on Thursday • Blog entry by 11:59pm on Friday • Responses to blog entries by 11:59pm on Sunday
WEEK 12 March 29-April 4	Viktor Pelevin, <i>Omon Ra</i>, Aleksei Fedorchenko, <i>First on the Moon</i>. Mocumentary and sci-fi. Space programs and space race. Cold war discourse in sci-fi.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog entry by 11:59pm on Friday • Responses to blog entries by 11:59pm on Sunday
WEEK 13 April 5-11	Phillip K. Dick, "We Can Remember It For You Wholesale," William Gibson, "Johnny Mnemonic," Ridley Scott, <i>Blade Runner</i>. Postmodernism and Cyberpunk. Dystopia and anti-utopia. Robots and humans. Cyborgs in Sci-Fi. Information technology and memory manipulation. Genre mixture: film noir style.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading/Viewing Quiz 9, 11:59pm on Thursday • Blog entry by 11:59pm on Friday • Responses to blog entries by 11:59pm Sunday
WEEK 14 April 12-18	EXAM TWO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit Exam 2 by 11:59pm on Sunday
WEEK 15 April 19-25	Garth Jennings, <i>The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy</i>. Georgii Danellia, <i>Kin-dza-dza</i>. Sci-fi in various media. Comedy, sci-fi, and genre conventions. Artificial intelligence. Nature and science.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading/Viewing Quiz 10, 11:59pm on Thursday • Blog entry by 11:59pm on Friday • Responses to blog entries by 11:59pm on Sunday • Group project due by 11:59pm on Friday