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

Fall 2019 **Instructor**: Kiun Hwang **Office hours**: Wed 1-2, Thu 5-6, or by appointment	**Room**: CL142 **Time**: 6:00-8:25pm **Office**: 1235 Cathedral of Learning **e-mail**: kih12@pitt.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course compares Slavic and Anglophone science fiction in literary and visual texts. 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, postmodernism, 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 in the course discussions; (3) to attend all class meetings during the semester; (4) to complete at least 8 discussion board writings (5) to submit the final paper of 8 to 10 pages (6) to complete a group project—a digital essay.

CLASS FORMAT:

This course carries three credits and satisfies the School of Arts and Sciences' requirement in foreign/comparative culture. It meets once a week for 2 hours and 25 minutes throughout the semester, and combines lecture and discussion, with films viewed in class as well as outside. Besides readings in the forms of books to purchase and readings posted on CourseWeb, you will be expected to watch films on your own.

REQUIRED TEXTS:
In addition to the required texts for the course (on Amazon.com), required readings will also be available on CourseWeb or otherwise.

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H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (England)
Evgeny Zamiatin, *We* (Russia)
Stanislaw Lem, *Cyberiad* (Poland)
Mikhail Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog* (Russia)
Karl Capek's *War with the Newts* (Czech Republic)
Viktor Pelevin, *Omon Ra* (Russia)
Octavia Butler, "Bloodchild" (USA)—on CourseWeb
Ursula Le Guin "The Matter of Seggri" (USA)—on CourseWeb
Philip K Dick, "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale" (USA)

REQUIRED FILMS:
You can watch most of these films on Netflix, Youtube, and through other online sources.
All films are also 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. For some of the films, we might have to schedule an additional screening on campus.

Fritz Lang, *Metropolis* (Germany)
George Pal, *The Time Machine* (USA)
Aleksei Fedorchenko, *First on the Moon* (Russia)
Andrei Tarkovskii, *Stalker* (USSR)
Pavel Klushantsev, *Road to the Stars* (USSR)
Stanley Kubrik, *2001 Space Odyssey* (USA)
Georgii Daneliia, *Kin-dza-dza* (USSR)
Gennadii Tishchenko "Vampires of Geon" (USSR)
Paul Verhoeven, *Total Recall* (USA)
Ridley Scott, *Alien* (USA)
James Cameron, *Aliens* (USA)
Don Hertzfeldt's "World of Tomorrow" (2015)
Tim Miller's *Love, Death & Robots* (2019)

COURSE WEBSITE:

In this course, we will be using a web course tool called Blackboard. All course materials, announcements, quizzes, and grades 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.

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-desk

EVALUATION AND GRADES:

Attendance and Participation	25%
8 Discussion Board Posting	20%
Group Project and Presentation	30%
Final Paper	25%
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

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

Students are expected to attend all classes. Missing classes jeopardizes your participation record. Each student gets one "FREE" absence. After one missed class, each additional absence counts as a zero in class participation for that day. More than three absences automatically translate into an F for the course. If serious illness prevents class attendance, documentation of that fact is required in the form of a letter from a doctor, stating that ON THE DAY AT THE TIME THE CLASS MEETS the student was too ill to attend. In order for the student's absence to be excused, that letter must be submitted THE DAY THE STUDENT RETURNS TO CLASS.

It is the students' responsibility to find out from their classmates whether important information or materials were handed out during a session they missed. Students therefore should obtain the telephone number and/or E-mail address of least one of their classmates.

Neighbor's tel. _____ Neighbor's E-mail_____
Students experiencing special problems in the course should make an appointment with the instructor during office hours

Disruptively tardy arrivals and early departures will count against participation as absences unless the instructor is informed of appropriate reasons before class. Inappropriate, distracting, inattentive, rude, and disruptive classroom behaviors, e.g. talking out of order, surfing the internet, texting, sleeping, etc., are potentially serious infringements of the University's Academic Integrity Code (see below) and will not be tolerated.

PARTICIPATION is also an important part of this course. You should participate in our class discussions. Your responses must be thoughtful and reference the assigned material specifically. I will judge your responses on thoughtfulness, thoroughness of understanding, depth of analysis, and how much it contributes to the discussion at hand, moving it forward in useful and interesting ways. You will also have a chance to discuss some questions in small groups during our class meetings. Your participation in small group discussions will be also counted toward your participation for that class meeting.

DISCUSSION BOARD:

Students should submit direct critical/analytical responses to the texts assigned on the discussion board. Most weeks, the instructor will create the threads about the specific topics and issues raised in the texts assigned for that week. Overall, the eleven threads will be created and students should post, at least, eight responses out of twelve opportunities. Keep in mind that responses are due 11:59 AM (noon) on the pertinent day. Late submission will not be accepted. The responses may be loosely structured since they are supposed to help you prepare for the class and stimulate the class discussion.

GROUP PROJECT:

Students will be working on and submitting one final group project in the middle of the semester. You will work with partners on this assignment (appr. 2-3 students in each group). You will make a presentation up to 15-20-minute-long. In your presentation, you should make an argument about subject matter (have a thesis and support that thesis just like a written paper) and treat it as a piece of communication intended for practical use. For that reason, you should keep in mind four fundamental rhetorical concerns: your audience (who will listen to the presentation), purpose (your aim for the presentation), genre (consider genre expectations), and context (the social, political, and technological).

Choose a specific topic/theme relevant to our course, on which your group will be working. The detailed instructions on how to complete this assignment will be distributed later in the semester.

GROUP: About two weeks into the course, you will form groups of three or four (enrollment permitting). Each group will choose a research topic that is related to, but not drawn directly from, the material on the syllabus. As a group, you must research this topic and put together and discuss the topic and situates it in relation to the themes and ideas of the course. You may delegate responsibilities as you see fit in your groups, however everyone must participate, and I will ask each group to submit a brief description with their presentation of the role each group member played in its preparation.

COMMENTS/CRITICS: Every student must write a one-paragraph critique of each group's (except their own's) presentation, discussing how informative, well-organized, and integrated into the themes of the course, to be submitted on CourseWeb

ASSESSMENT: I will assess them in terms of the accuracy of their information, the depth in which and the clarity with which the information is covered, creativity, and the degree to which the presentations connected and integrated their information with the rest of the course. Everyone in the group will receive the same grade unless it is in some way clear that a particular group

member was unwilling to participate fully; an individual could hypothetically receive a lower grade than their fellows if I determine that they were hostile to the project, but in general, assume that your performance directly impacts the grades of your group members, and participate accordingly.

Submitting Assignments:
-Proposal due Oct 25
-Oral Presentation on Nov 15
-Comments/critics on each groups' projects due Nov 15 by 11:59pm to Courseweb

FINAL PAPER (8-10 pages):
The final paper should be written on EASTERN EUROPEAN or RUSSIAN literature or film. Students are required to consult at least two scholarly sources in their work. The paper should show a logical structure of argument and a high degree of organization, and be written in proper academic English. If you desire help with the writing or revision process, you are welcome to make an appointment with the writing center or to request that I help you in specific areas that you yourself target, to be discussed during office hours. You should submit your paper in HARD COPY FORMAT. NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCPTED. We will be using the following reference manual as a guide for the writing assignment: *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Paper*. 8th ed. (2016)

Submitting Assignments:
-Proposal & Bibliography due Nov 14
-Final Paper due Dec 12 by 5 pm

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 Disability Resources and Service 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, call to schedule an appointment. The office is located in 140 William Pitt Union, p*hone:* Phone: 412-648-7890, video phone: 412-228-5374.

PLAGIARISM:
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.
For the references, please, check and The Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Science's Academic Integrity Code at https://as.pitt.edu/faculty/policies-and-procedures/academic-integrity-code and the Guidelines on Academic Integrity at https://provost.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/academic_integrity_guidelines.pdf.

COURSE SCHEDULE

* subject to revision by the instructor

Week/Dates	Topic/Titles/Themes
WEEK 1 **August 29**	**Syllabus and Course Requirements. Introduction into Sci-Fi.**
	The definition of the genre. Sci-Fi and socio-historical context. Cultural Studies. Watch: George Melies, *Trip to the Moon* (1902)
WEEK 2 **September 5**	**Aleksandr Bogdanov, *Red Star* (1908)** **Fritz Lang, *Metropolis* (1927)**
	Social classes in sci-fi. Reflection of aspects of Western philosophy and dominant social tendencies and concerns. A vision of the future: modernity: machines, city, social class. Gender disposition in sci-fi.
WEEK 3 **September 12**	**Evgenii Zamiatin, *We* (1921)**
	Totalitarianism and social control; gender roles, math and sciences vs. art and music. Dystopia in sci-fi. Satire in sci-fi.
WEEK 4 **September 19**	**H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (1895)** **George Pal, *The Time Machine* (1960)**

	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 5 September 26	**Mikhail Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog* (1925)**
	Science and human/animal experimentation in sci-fi; forging the New Man; comparison with *Island of Lost Souls*; Totalitarianism and socialist realism. Revolution and social reversals
WEEK 6 October 3	**Karl Capek, *War with the Newts* (1936)**
	Exploitation and evolution. The representation of war in sci-fi. Satire and social commentary. Fascism, racism, and capitalism. ***Proposal for Group Project Due**
WEEK 7 October 10	**Strugatskii Brothers, *Roadside Picnic* (1972)** **Andrei Tarkovskii, *Stalker* (1979)**
	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 8 October 17	**Pavel Klushantsev, *Road to the Stars* (1957)** **Stanley Kubrik, *2001 Space Odyssey* (1968)**
	Artificial intelligence; Technology and human evolution; the space race of the 1960s; music in cinema; Nietzsche; cinematic effects
WEEK 9 October 24	**Group Project Presentation 1** **Stanislaw Lem, *Cyberiad* (1961)**
	Comedy, Fables, Picaresque adventure, and genre conventions. Artificial intelligence. Robotic and computer technology. ***Comments/critics by 11:59 pm**

WEEK 10 **October 31**	**Group Project Presentation 2** **Georgii Daneliia, *Kin-dza-dza* (1986)** **Gennadii Tishchenko "Vampires of Geon" (1991)**
	Dystopian Soviet satire. Nature and science. Space travel and aliens. Questions of race in science fiction. ***Comments/critics by 11:59 pm**
WEEK 11 **November 7**	**Ridley Scott, *Alien* (1979)** **James Cameron, *Aliens* (1986)** **Octavia Butler, "Bloodchild" (1995)** **Ursula Le Guin "The Matter of Seggri" (1994)**
	Body, gender, reproduction. Gender stereotypes and gender deconstruction. Sexual identity and kinship. Patriarchate vs matriarchate.
WEEK 12 **November 14**	**Philip K Dick, "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale" (1966)** **Paul Verhoeven, *Total Recall* (1990)**
	Postmodernism and Cyberpunk. Cyborgs in sci-fi. Genre mixture: film noir. Information technology and memory manipulation. ***Proposal & Bibliography for the Final Paper Due**
WEEK 13 **November 21**	**Viktor Pelevin, *Omon Ra* (1992)** **Aleksei Fedorchenko, *First on the Moon* (2005)**
	Mocumentary and sci-fi. Space programs and space race. Cold war discourse in sci-fi.
WEEK 14 **November 28**	Thanksgiving Break
WEEK 15 **December 5**	**Don Hertzfeldt's "World of Tomorrow" (2015)** **Tim Miller's *Love, Death & Robots* (2019)**

	Conclusions
	*Final Paper Due Dec 12 by 6 pm