Communication 324  
Film Genre: Science Fiction & the Environment  
Spring 2014

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Office Hours: Tues., 3:00-5:00 or by appointment

Course Objectives:

From "Avatar" to "An Inconvenient Truth," this course will examine the history of science in cinema, as well as the representational strategies for adapting scientific data in films. After reviewing the history of science fiction and the environmental film genres, students will have a chance to develop science-based scripts or media proposals.

Learning Outcomes:

- The ability to define and critically identify the major structural elements, aesthetics and themes of the science fiction and documentary film genres
- Understanding the history of science-related film genres within the context of political and scientific developments
- Transforming and applying contemporary scientific data into creative narrative and non-narrative media forms

Grade Requirements and Course Expectations:
Regular attendance is strongly encouraged. A note from the doctor or infirmary will excuse you for illness. Please contact Wellness Center for documented LDAs. Work must be turned in on time. Speak with me before the deadline if you have a conflict. Always print or backup a copy of your work for yourself. Written work must be typed and completed for this course. Plagiarism follows SOC guidelines and will result in an “F” for the course.
--Your final grade will be based on the following percentages:

- Multimedia research paper: 30%
- Script or Media Proposal: 30%
- Midterm Exam: 25%
- Presentations: 10%
- Participation: 5%

**Required Readings:**


**CALENDAR**

All readings and work are due on the day assigned. Students will pick one week of readings with outside examples to present to class.

**Readings are available via library reserves and Sakai**

**Introductions—Ecocinema**

1/14 Screen: *Earth 2100* (ABC News, 2009)

http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/Earth2100/

1/16 Read: “The Ecocinema Experience intro” by Scott Macdonald
Producer notes and annotated transcripts:

http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/Earth2100/story?id=7736882&page=1


Screen: Dziga Vertov, “Man with a Movie Camera”; Godfrey Reggio, “Koyaanisqatsi”

**Wars and Robots—Machines, Vengeance & Enlightenment**


Screen: *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927)

War of the Worlds” radio broadcast, Orson Welles

1/23 Read: H.G. Wells on “Trick Effects” and H.G. Wells on “Metropolis”
Screen: H.G. Wells *Things to Come* (1936); *War of the Worlds* (1953, 2005)

**Boundaries, Objects, Images, Dinosaurs**

1/28 Read: “An Ecophilosophy of the moving image cinema as anthrobiogeomorphological machine” by Adrian Ivakhiv; optional- “Spielburg’s digital dinosaurs and the new aesthetic” by Warren Buckland

Screen: *Jurassic Park*
Discuss ideas of Aaron Durnbaugh, LUC Sustainability Director for media project ideas

**Post Hiroshima Landscapes, Disasters & Giant Ants**
2/4 Read: “J.P. Telotte, “Science Fiction in Double Focus: Forbidden Planet”
Screen: *Forbidden Planet, The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951)
2/6 Read: Susan Sontag’s “Imaginations of Disaster”
Screen: atomic documentaries; *Them!* (1954)

**Replicants and Visualizing Graphs**
2/11 Read: Robin Wood, “Blade Runner”; “Prosthetic Memory” by A Landsberg
Screen: *Blade Runner, Total Recall*
2/13 Read: “everybody knows this is nowhere: data visualization and ecocriticism”
by Sean Cubitt; excerpts *An Inconvenient Truth*

**Pregnant Aliens, Feminist Cyborgs and Resource Exploitation**
2/18 Read: Slavoj Zizek’s “Return of the Natives”; Donna Haraway’s
“A Cyborg Manifesto”; *Student notes* on Cyborg Manifesto
optional, Constance Penley, “Time Travel, Primal Scene, Critical Dystopia”
Screen: *Alien; Avatar*
2/20 Read: Catherine Constable, “Becoming the Monster’s Mother”

2/25 Midterm Exam—short answer; Open book, open notes
2/27 TBA

**Spring Break--March 4th-6th**

**The Seventies, Population Control & Trashing the Planet**
3/11 Stephen Rust’s “Hollywood and Climate Change”
3/13 Read: Rachel Carson, “The Silent Spring” excerpts; Raindance Corporation tapes
the first Earth Day

**Diseases, Travelers and Immigrants**
3/18 Read: TBA; Screen: *District 9* excerpts, *Contagion*
3/20 Screen: *Frontline’s “Hunting the Nightmare Bacteria”*

**Star Trek, Energy and Texting the Environment**
3/25 Read: “Star trek rerun, reread, rewritten: fan writing as textual poaching”
by Henry Jenkins
Screen: *Gasland, Star Trek*
3/27 Script or Media Proposal Due--Presentations

**Simulacra and Stem Cells**
4/1 Read: Tufte excerpt, “Aesthetics and Techniques in Data Graphical Design” by
Assignments:

Script or Media Projects

Students will research, write and produce either a short, narrative script, proposal and/or a media project based on scientific research that is included in a bibliography. Length may vary, but should be a minimum of 6-8 pages/images, with a limit of 20 total, including images, graphs, explanatory notes. We will work with Loyola’s sustainability director for ideas.

Multimedia Research Project

8-10 pgs of writing (images are not counted in page length). Endnotes are appropriate here. Full bibliography should be included.

For your research paper you will analyze a relevant film or media project within its historical setting. You should work on defining the genre, explaining context, identifying internal structure, analyzing broadcast/distribution history and impact. You must include images, links or creative forms of media analysis—e.g. interviews or emails with scholars, surveys of different age groups, scientists, etc... More extended media work may justify shorter written work. Discuss with Coffman.

You will present an overview of work in class.

Reading Presentations

Each student will participate in one presentation that reflects the readings and bring in outside examples for the class to consider.