COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will screen, read and discuss a range of utopian/dystopian visions of the future as forecast in popular cinema and literature. The screenings will explore a range of films from 'sci fi' to fantasy and 'cli-fi', extending from the 1950s to the present, the 'near present' and far into the future. Varied questions and issues will be discussed, such as: the increasing prevalence of apocalyptic endings to present and future worlds; contrasts between a fragile democratic 'now' vs. an authoritarian techno-future; race, gender and sexuality in the 'scientifically' engineered and overdetermined future; class, labor and social privilege among replicants, cyborgs and humans; the 'post-human condition'; the consumption of virtual reality, cyber-sex, and other commodities; post-technological tribalism; future 'hoods' & cityscapes; warnings of cyber-surveillance, techno-collapse and eco-disaster. The course will also examine the meaning of 'utopia,' how is it 'imagined,' and whether or not is it still possible. Screenings will include: 1984, Invasion of the Body Snatchers, Alphaville, Solaris, Fight Club, Blade Runner, District 9, Gattaca, The Hunger Games and Snowpiercer.

Bearing in mind the larger goal of providing students with a formative intellectual experience that empowers them to build critical, analytical and communication skills, this course will focus on fostering art appreciation; exposing students to a variety of artistic expressions and multicultural perspectives; and enabling them to interpret and analyze films in keeping with contemporary aesthetic, cultural and philosophical concerns. The course will familiarize students with fundamental concepts and vocabulary in Cinema Studies as it relates to the language of film and film genre. This will sharpen their ability to analyze the manner in which formal and stylistic elements are used to create meaning, and provide commentary on events that unfold in a film’s narrative. Students will also gain proficiency in discussing the ideological and commercial aspects of cinema, and its impact on issues of class, race, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. Finally, the course will enable students to develop their critical reasoning abilities and demonstrate understanding of key concepts and debates pertaining to the overarching theme of utopia/dystopia.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Class Participation (20%)
Attendance at all lectures and recitations conducted synchronously is expected and required. More than 1 unexcused absence (from lecture and/or recitation) will adversely affect the participation component of students’ overall course grade, and they may be liable to an automatic failing grade in the course even if they have completed all other course requirements.
Excusable absences include medical reasons, personal emergency and religious holidays, which have to be suitably documented. In keeping with the commitment to holistic assessment, the Core has designed a rubric for assessing participation. Please see the rubric and participation guidelines appended to the syllabus.

Three Critical Response Papers (10% each)
Essay style papers, 500-750 words each (12-point font, double-spaced), covering at least one film and two assigned readings for the week. The responses should be thoughtful, and critically address and interrogate an issue raised by the screening and the readings. Sources should be cited correctly.
Submission Dates: 2nd Oct (FRI), 20th Nov (FRI) and 4th Dec (FRI) by 5pm New York time.

One Assignment for Scene Analysis (10%)
A scene from a film that is on the syllabus will be uploaded to NYU Classes, along with prompts about specific formal and aesthetic aspects of that scene (eg: use of sound, function of editing, aspects of cinematography etc). In no less than 500 words, the scene should be analyzed using the prompts as a guideline. The scene will be made available a week before the assignment is due. Submission Date: 16th Oct (FRI) by 5pm.

Midterm Paper (15%)
Choose any ONE out of three prompts and write an essay style mid-term paper. Prompts will be given a week in advance. Papers should be 1200 words, double-spaced, 12-point font. Submission Date: 6th Nov (Friday) by 5pm.

Final Paper (25%)
Pick a topic (theme or issue) and a film of your choice from the syllabus, and write a 2000 words final paper (12-point font, double-spaced), which engages critically with the film and the associated readings. The paper can be a comparative analysis of two films from the syllabus. You are encouraged to refer to specific scenes from the films to substantiate your argument or bolster the discussion. Sources must be cited correctly. Submission Date: 16th Dec (WED) by 12 noon.

Students are encouraged to make appointments to meet the instructor during office hours in order to discuss the final paper, and any other concerns that the student has regarding the course.

COURSE READINGS: All course readings will be available digitally in NYU Classes.

SCREENINGS: Links to all films (including clips shown in class) will be available in NYU Classes for Online Streaming. These have to be watched asynchronously.

GRADING POLICIES
• The grade of A marks extraordinary academic performance in all aspects of a course and is reserved for clearly superior work.
• The mark of B+ is reserved to signify very good work; and the B range denotes good work.
• The grade of **C** denotes satisfactory work—regular attendance, ordinary effort, a minimum of demonstrated improvement across the semester.

• Grades below **C** are reserved for less than satisfactory and, in the **D** range, for poor work and effort, and mark a need for improvement.

• The grade of **F** indicates failure to complete the requirements for a course in a creditable manner.

• The temporary mark of **I** (Incomplete) is given only when sudden and incapacitating illness, or other grave emergency, prevents a student from completing the final assignment or examination for a course. It must be requested by the student in advance; all other course requirements, including satisfactory attendance, must have been fulfilled; and there must be a reasonable expectation that the student will receive a passing grade when the delayed work is completed.

**LATE WORK POLICY**
Students are responsible for keeping backup copies of their work. Consistently late paper submissions will be penalized with a grade reduction from the ‘participation’ component of the course. Students requesting an extension should contact the instructor well in advance to discuss the matter.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**
Make sure to document all quoted and paraphrased sources (author, title of essay/chapter/journal article, title of anthology/monograph/journal, and page number/s).
A “paper trail” to sources must be made available to your reader by providing either parenthetical references (“in-text” citations) or footnotes; and a list of references (including publishers and years of publication) at the end of the paper (under the rubric “works cited”). Failure to properly document your sources constitutes plagiarism, a serious offense that will be reported to the Director of the Foundations of Contemporary Culture, and might lead to a reduction in grade or even a final grade of F. This rule applies to all written work. Please see the Statement of Academic Integrity appended to the syllabus.

Please note that the Modern Language Association (MLA) publishes a style guide that is widely used for citations and references in the humanities. As it is easy to use, you are recommended to apply the MLA system of documentation. [https://style.mla.org](https://style.mla.org)

**WELLNESS**
Your health and safety are a priority at NYU. If you experience any health or mental health issues during this course, we encourage you to utilize the support services of the 24/7 NYU Wellness Exchange 212-443-9999. Also, all students who may require an academic accommodation due to a qualified disability, physical or mental, please register with the Moses Center 212-998-4980. Please let your instructor know if you need help connecting to these resources.
New York University is dedicated to providing its students with a learning environment that is rigorous, respectful, supportive and nurturing so that they can engage in the free exchange of ideas and commit themselves fully to the study of their discipline. The College Core is committed
to enforcing University policies prohibiting all forms of sexual misconduct as well as discrimination on the basis of sex and gender. Detailed information regarding these policies and the resources that are available to students through the Title IX office can be found by using the this link. https://www.nyu.edu/about/policies-guidelines-compliance/equal-opportunity/title9.html

**SCHEDULE**

**Week: 9/2: Introduction**

**Week: 9/9: No Class (Wednesday following Monday’s schedule)**

**Week: 9/16**
**Screening: 1984 (Michael Radford, 1984)**
Readings:
- R. Barton Palmer, “Imagining the Future, Contemplating the Past: The Screen Versions of 1984” (pp. 171-190), *The Philosophy of Science Fiction Film*, Steven M. Sanders, University of Kentucky Press, 2008.

**Week: 9/23**
**Screening: Brazil (Terry Gilliam, 1985)**
Readings:

Week: 9/30
Screening: Alphaville: A Strange Adventure of Lemmy Caution (Jean-Luc Godard, 1965)
Readings:
- Alan Woolfolk, “Disenchantment and Rebellion in Alphaville” (pp. 191-205), The Philosophy of Science Fiction Film, Steven M. Sanders, University of Kentucky Press, 2008.


Week: 10/7
Screening: Koyaanisqatsi: Life Out of Balance (Godfrey Reggio, 1982)
Readings:
- Henry David Thoreau, “Excursions” (pp.25-26); Fredy Perlman, “Against His-story, Against Leviathan!” (pp.27-30); Sigmund Freud, “Civilization and Its Discontents” (pp.108-109) in Against Civilization: Readings and Reflections, John Zerzan (ed.), Feral House, 2005.


Week: 10/14
Screening: Zardoz (John Boorman, 1974)
Readings:
- Drew M. Dalton, “Zardoz and the Problem of Infinity: Heidegger and Levinas Beyond Death and Love” (pp. 73-87), Heroes, Monsters and Values: Science Fiction films of the 1970s, Michael Berman and Rohit Dalvi (eds.), Cambridge Scholars Publisher, 2011.

[Recommended Reading] Frederick Turner, “Beyond Geography: The Western Spirit Against the Wilderness” (pp.58-64); and John Zerzan, “Elements of Refusal” (pp.68-73) in Against Civilization: Readings and Reflections, John Zerzan (ed.), Feral House, 2005.
Week: 10/21
Screening: Solaris (Andrei Tarkovsky, 1972)
Readings:
- Leon Marvell, “Tarkovsky’s Solaris and the (im)possibility of a Science Fiction Cinema” (pp. 132-145), Endangering Science Fiction Film, Sean Redmon and Leon Marvell (eds.), Taylor Francis Group, 2015.


Week: 10/28
Screening: Fight Club (David Fincher, 1999)
Readings:


Week: 11/4
Screening: Invasion of the Body Snatchers (Don Siegel, 1956)
Readings:
Week: 11/11
Screening: District 9 (Neill Blomkamp, 2009)
Readings:


Week: 11/18
Screening: Blade Runner (Ridley Scott, 1982)
Readings:


Week: 11/25
Screening: Gattaca (Andrew Niccol, 1997)
Readings:

[Recommended Reading] Evie Kendal, “Utopian Visions of ‘Making People’: Science Fiction and Debates on Cloning, Ectogenesis, Genetic Engineering, and Genetic Discrimination,” *Biopolitics*

Week: 12/2
Screening: The Hunger Games (Gary Ross, 2012)
Readings:

- Mary C. Burke and Maura Kelly, “The Visibility and Invisibility of Class, Race, Gender, and Sexuality in The Hunger Games” (pp. 59-70), Race, Gender and Sexuality in Post-Apocalyptic Television and Film, Barbara Gurr and Brayton Polka (eds.), Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.


Week: 12/9
Screening: Snowpiercer (Bong Joon-ho, 2013)
Readings:


Final Papers due on Wednesday 16th December by 12 noon.