

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

Elizabeth Coffman
Office: SOC 219 WTC
E-Mail: ECoffma@luc.edu

Room: Cudahy 318; Mund 503
Tues: 1-2:15; Thurs: 1-3:45
Phone: 312-915-6716

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:

Excerpts from *Ecocinema Theory and Practice*, ed Rust, Momami, Cubitt, Routledge Press, 2013; *The Science Fiction Film Reader*, ed. Gregg Rickman, Limelight Publications, 2004. *Liquid Metal: the Science Fiction film reader*, ed Sean Raymond, Wallflower Press, 2004, *The Visual Display of Quantitative Information*, Edward Tufte, Graphics Press, 2001; *Science Fiction Film*, by J.P. Telotte, Cambridge University Press, 2001; *Screening Space: The American Science Fiction Film* by Vivian Sobchack, Rutgers, 1997 (Available on reserve, Amazon.com and on Sakai);

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>
http://a.abcnews.com/images/Technology/Web_Version_Earth_2100_Annotated_1.pdf
Screen: Dziga Vertov, "Man with a Movie Camera"; Godfrey Reggio, "Koyaanisqatsi"

Wars and Robots— Machines, Vengeance & Enlightenment

- 1/21 Read: Science Fiction Film--Rickman intro; Vivian Sobchack, "Images of Wonder: the Look of Science Fiction"; optional Jerold Adams, "[The Dialectic of Enlightenment in *Metropolis*](#)" pps 153-170 online
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 anthrobiogeoamorphic machine" by Adrian Ivakhiv"; optional- "Spielburg's digital dinosaurs and the new aesthetic" by Warren Buckland
Screen: *Jurassic Park*

1/30 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"

Screen: *Soylent Green* (1973), *Logan's Run*; *A Clockwork Orange* (1971)

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

Henrietta Lacks
Screen: Kartemquin Films, "Terra Incognita: Mapping Stem Cell Research"
4/3 TBA

Aerial Views

4/8 Read: Helen Hughes, "Visual Rhetoric of Climate Change Documentaries"
Screen: *Veins in the Gulf*
4/10 TBA

4/15 TBA
4/17 Easter

4/22 **Presentations of Multimedia Research Papers**

4/24 **Presentations of Multimedia Research Papers**

4/29 **Final Project due**; Final Exam date, 4:15

Special Needs: If there is any student who has special needs because of any disability, please go to the Dean of Students to report your needs and provide documentation of your disability for certification. Please feel free to discuss with me in private.

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.