HUM 409: THE FUTURE
Fall 2016
T/R 12:30-1:45
SH127

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Office Hours: T/R 10:00 AM-12:00 PM and by appointment
Office Location: AL-632

Description

Humanity, it would seem, has many futures. This course surveys how a selection of influential writers, filmmakers, artists, and intellectuals have envisioned humanity’s future (or lack thereof) from the immediate post-WWII era through the contemporary period. Our readings and viewings will focus on texts that deploy the future as a space for exploring the past, the present, and the world to come. We will examine the work of science fiction giants like Asimov and Clarke, cyberpunk visionaries such as William Gibson and Ridley Scott, Afrofuturist prophets like Parliament and Octavia Butler, and iconic Japanese visual artists such as Hayao Miyazaki and Mamoru Oshii. In the process, we will consider how these and other creators’ futuristic visions have been informed by local and global historical events, cultural developments, and evolving ideological debates. We will also explore a variety of critical engagements with and theoretical approaches to future studies, literature, the visual and musical arts, and culture.

Student Learning Objectives

• Critically engage with cultural artifacts in consideration of how they inform and are informed by significant historical events, cultural developments, and ideological debates.
• Explore and utilize various theoretical approaches to the analysis of literature, visual culture, and music in terms of thematic features, stylistic elements, aesthetics, and cultural context.
• Construct well-contextualized, theoretically informed, original analyses of cultural artifacts in group discussions (online and face-to-face) and formal writing assignments.

Prerequisite

Completion of the General Education requirement in Foundations of Learning II.C., Humanities required for non-majors

Required Texts to Purchase

*Reading materials not listed here are available on the course website.

**Requirements and Grading**

**Participation: 10%**

Students are expected to complete all readings **before** the class meeting for which they are assigned, as well as to attend all in-class film screenings. The course participation grade is contingent upon regular contribution of questions and/or comments to class discussion.

**Blackboard Discussion Posts (4X5%): 20%**

Students must participate in **all four** of the Discussion Board threads located on Blackboard. You may elect to respond directly to the prompt, or to reply to another student’s post. Each of your responses should be **approximately 150 words** minimum. Due dates for each post are listed on the Course Schedule Below.

**Response Papers (4X10%): 40%**

Students will complete **four** response papers, each of which should be **300-500 words** in length. Each paper should present a thesis statement concerning 1-2 works that we have explored in class and support this thesis through close textual/filmic analysis. Your papers should be free of extraneous plot synopsis, excessively long quotations, and opinion piece-style evaluations of works (e.g. “I really enjoyed this film”). Each of your papers must address a different work or works than your other papers. Each paper should also cite at least one scholarly source in MLA or Chicago format (if you are unfamiliar with these citation styles, style guides are available in the library and online). **Your papers should utilize standard margins, a 12-point font, and double-spacing, and should be carefully edited for technical errors, paragraph formatting, and clarity and cohesiveness of analysis. Papers will be submitted via Turnitin on the course website.**

**Midterm Exam: 15% and Final Exam: 15%**

Students will complete a midterm and final exam comprised of short answer questions and one longer essay question.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1: Introduction to the Course**

Aug 30 (T)
- Introduction to the Course

Sept 1 (R)
- **In-Class Analysis Exercise:** Katsuhiro Ōtomo, *Cannon Fodder* (1995)
- **Print and Bring Analysis Worksheet to Class**
UNIT I: APOCALYPTIC VISIONS, DYSTOPIAN LANDSCAPES

Week 2: Nuclear Themes in Post-WWII Science Fiction

Sept 6 (T)
• Michael Mandelbaum, “The Bomb, Dread, and Eternity”

Sept 8 (R)
• Short Story: Ray Bradbury, “There Will Come Soft Rains” (1950)
• Short Story: Arthur C. Clarke, “The Curse” (1953)

Week 3: Friend or Foe? Robotic Allies and Techno-Anxieties

Sept 13 (T)
• Short Story: Isaac Asimov, “Robbie” (1950)

Sept 15 (R)
• Short Story: Philip K. Dick, “Autofac” (1955)
• Eric S. Rabkin, “Irrational Expectations; or, How Economics and the Post-Industrial World Failed Philip K. Dick”

Week 4: Envisioning Environmental Apocalypse

Sept 20 (T)
• Manga: Hayao Miyazaki, Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind (1982)

Sept 22 (R)
• Gwendolyn Morgan, “Creatures in Crisis: Apocalyptic Environmental Visions in Miyazaki’s Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind and Princess Mononoke”
• DISCUSSION BOARD #1 DUE BY MIDNIGHT

Week 5: High-Tech, Low Life: Dystopian Landscapes in the Cyberpunk Imagination

Sept 27 (T)
• Film Screening: Ridley Scott, Blade Runner (1982) (1:57)

Sept 29 (R)
• Finish Film Screening: Ridley Scott, Blade Runner (1982)
• RESPONSE PAPER #1 DUE BY MIDNIGHT

Week 6: High-Tech, Low Life: Cyberpunk’s Contempt for the Flesh
Sept 4 (T)
• Finish Discussion of Blade Runner
• “Dystopias: Definition and Characteristics”

Sept 6 (R)
• Novel: William Gibson, Neuromancer (1984), Chapters 1-7

Week 7: High-Tech, Low Life: Cyberpunk, Society, and Orientalist Aesthetics

Oct 11 (T)
• Novel: William Gibson, Neuromancer, Chapters 8-15
• Roger Burrows, “Cyberpunk as Social Theory: William Gibson and the Sociological Imagination”

Oct 13 (R)
• Novel: William Gibson, Neuromancer, Chapters 16-24
• Timothy Yu, “Oriental Cities, Postmodern Futures: ‘Naked Lunch,’ ‘Blade Runner,’ and ‘Neuromancer’”

Week 8: Atomic Pasts, Atomic Futures: Nuclear Visions in Japanese Cyberpunk

Oct 18 (T)
• Film Screening: Katsuhiro Ōtomo, Akira (1988) (2:04)

Oct 20 (R)
• Finish Film Screening: Katsuhiro Ōtomo, Akira (1988)
• DISCUSSION BOARD #2 DUE BY MIDNIGHT

Week 9: Japanese Cyberpunk Continued and Midterm Exam

Oct 25 (T)
• Finish Discussion of Akira
• Susan Napier, “Panic Sites: The Japanese Imagination of Disaster from Godzilla to Akira”

Oct 27 (R)
• MIDTERM EXAM
• RESPONSE PAPER #2 DUE BY MIDNIGHT

UNIT II: EMBODIMENT AND IDENTITY

Week 10: Posthuman Becomings: Race, Gender, and SF
Nov 1 (T)
• **Novel:** Octavia Butler, *Dawn*, Parts I and II: Womb and Family (1987)

Oct 3 (R)

**Week 11: Posthuman Becomings Continued and Afro-Futurism on the Music Scene**

Nov 8 (T)
• **Novel:** Octavia Butler, *Dawn*, Part IV: The Training Floor (1987)
• Laura Bollinger, “Symbiogenesis, Selfhood, and Science Fiction”

Nov 10 (R)
• **Pre-Class Listening:**
    [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dzGaJyiJW4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4dzGaJyiJW4)
  ✓ Janelle Monáe, “Tightrope” and “Many Moons”:
    [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_GlpeFqMLZI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_GlpeFqMLZI)
    [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHgbzNHVg0c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LHgbzNHVg0c)
• Kurt Baer, “The Mothership Connection: Mythscape and Unity in the Music of Parliament”
• Daylanne K. English and Alvin Kim, “Now We Want Our Funk Cut: Janelle Monáe’s Neo-Afrofuturism”

**Week 12: Cycles of Violence: Imagining Ethnic and Racial Conflict in Contemporary SF**

Nov 15 (T)
• **Short Story:** Project Itoh, “The Indifference Engine” (2007)
• De Witt Douglas Kilgore, “Difference Engine: Aliens, Robots, and Other Racial Matters in the History of Science Fiction”

Nov 17 (R)
• **Novella:** Nnedi Okorafor, *Binti* (2015)
• **DISCUSSION BOARD #3 DUE BY MIDNIGHT**

**Week 13: Cyborg Theory and the Promises of Postmodernity**

Nov 22 (T)
• Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto”

Nov 24 (R)
• **NO CLASS (Fall Break)**
• **RESPONSE PAPER #3 DUE BY MIDNIGHT**
Week 14: The Cyborg Subject: Perils and Potentialities

Nov 29 (T)
• Film Screening: Mamoru Oshii, *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) (1:23)

Dec 1 (R)
• Finish Film Screening: Mamoru Oshii, *Ghost in the Shell* (1995)
• Carl Silvio, “Refiguring the Radical Cyborg in Mamoru Oshii’s ‘Ghost in the Shell’”

Week 15: Experiments in Virtuality: Decoding the Unconscious

Dec 6 (T)
• Short Story: Takeno Masato, “The Yamada Diary” (2007)
• N. Katherine Hayles, “Traumas of Code”

Dec 8 (R)

Week 16: Experiments in Virtuality: The Boundless Flows of Cyberspace

Dec 13 (T)
• Short Story: Tobi Hirotaka, “Autogenic Dreaming” (2009)
• DISCUSSION BOARD #4 DUE BY MIDNIGHT

Dec 15 (R)
• NO CLASS MEETING
• RESPONSE PAPER #4 DUE BY MIDNIGHT

FINAL EXAM DATE TBA

Foundations of Learning in Humanities and Fine Arts

This course is one of nine lower-division Foundations of Learning courses in your General Education (GE) program-of-study. Foundations of Learning courses cultivate skills in reading, writing, research, communication, computation, information literacy, and use of technology. They furthermore introduce you to basic concepts, theories and approaches in a variety of disciplines in order to provide the intellectual breadth necessary to help you integrate the more specialized knowledge gained from your major
area of study into a broader world picture. More specifically, this Humanities course is one of four Foundations courses that you will complete in GE Area C Humanities and Fine Arts. Upon completion of these courses, you should be able to demonstrate the following GE Area C Student Learning Outcomes as well as the course-specific Student Learning Outcomes:

1) analyze written, visual, or performed texts in the humanities and fine arts with sensitivity to their diverse cultural contexts and historical moments;

2) describe various aesthetic and other value systems and the ways they are communicated across time and cultures;

3) identify issues in the humanities that have personal and global relevance;

4) demonstrate the ability to approach complex problems and ask complex questions drawing upon knowledge of the humanities.

Classics & Humanities Scholarship Opportunities

The Friends of Classics Charter Scholarship
The Martha Biehl Memorial Scholarship
The Robert and Paula Cottam Scholarship
The Viola Granstaff Memorial Scholarship
The Jack McGrory Study Abroad Scholarship

Go to the SDSU Scholarships Home Page and search under Classics or Humanities: http://www.sa.sdsu.edu/scholarship/index.html

Academic Honesty

The University adheres to a strict policy regarding cheating and plagiarism. These activities will not be tolerated in this class. Become familiar with the policy and what constitutes plagiarism (http://studentaffairs.sdsu.edu/srr/cheating-plagiarism.html). Any cheating or plagiarism will result in failing this class and a disciplinary review by the University. These actions may lead to probation, suspension, or expulsion. Examples of Plagiarism include but are not limited to:

- Using sources verbatim or paraphrasing without giving proper attribution (this can include phrases, sentences, paragraphs and/or pages of work)
- Copying and pasting work from an online or offline source directly and calling it your own
• Using information you find from an online or offline source without giving the author credit
• Replacing words or phrases from another source and inserting your own words or phrases
• Submitting a piece of work you did for one class to another class

Students With Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to contact Student Disability Services at (619) 594-6473. You can also learn more about the services provided by visiting the Student Disability Services website. To avoid any delay in the receipt of your accommodations, you should contact Student Disability Services as soon as possible. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, and that accommodations based upon disability cannot be provided until you have presented your instructor with an accommodation letter from Student Disability Services. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Student Services

A complete list of all academic support services is available on the Academic Success section of the SDSU Student Affairs website.

For help with improving your writing ability, the staff at the SDSU Writing Center is available in person and online.

Counseling and Psychological Services offers confidential counseling services by licensed psychologists, counselors, and social workers. More info can be found at their website or by contacting (619) 594-5220. You can also Live Chat with a counselor http://go.sdsu.edu/student_affairs/cps/therapist-consultation.aspx between 4:00pm and 10:00pm, or call San Diego Access and Crisis 24-hour Hotline at (888) 724-7240.

Turnitin

Students agree that by taking this course all required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com for the detection of plagiarism. All submitted papers will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. You may submit your papers in such a way that no identifying information about you is included. Another option is that you may request, in writing, that your papers not be submitted to www.turnitin.com. However, if you choose this option you will be required to provide documentation to substantiate that the papers are your original work and do not include any plagiarized material.
Blackboard Technical Support

Student support for Blackboard is provided by the Library Computing Hub located on the 2nd floor of Love Library. They can be reached at 619-594-3189 or hub@mail.sdsu.edu.