This course compares Slavic and Anglophone science fiction on page and screen. We will examine how a given culture’s dominant concerns are articulated in a genre popular in the East (i.e., Eastern and Central Europe) and the West (i.e., America and Great Britain). These concerns emerge in works that imaginatively posit “fantastic” situations rooted in spatial, temporal, and biological explorations beyond those currently verified by science. Based on a wide range of novels, stories, essays, TV shows, and films, we will discuss such topics as progress, utopia/dystopia, human perfectibility, the limits of science, gender, the nature of knowledge, and human/other identity.

Although the reading load for this course may seem heavy at times, the texts are interesting and enjoyable. Additionally, the longer readings are scheduled after breaks or weekends, and many of the longer books are preceded by film viewings to make it easier to keep up with the readings.

Comprising three credits, this course meets twice weekly and satisfies the General Education requirement in Literature and Foreign Culture (E. Europe, Regional [non-Western], and Comparative).

COURSE FORMAT

This course will be conducted as a combination of lecture and discussion. Most films will be viewed on your own time outside of class, it is a rare instance that we view a film in its entirety during class time. Preparation is vital for meaningful class discussion, so keeping up with the reading schedule is imperative.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Students are required to:
1. Complete the assignments scheduled for each class meeting, and be prepared to summarize and discuss the material in class on the appropriate day;
2. Participate actively and intelligently in class discussions; For those uncomfortable with in-class, there is an alternative option (See “Participation”)
3. Take the three scheduled exams, as well as the regular, unannounced quizzes administered throughout the semester;
4. Participate in group work sessions including a group project/presentation that will be presented prior to the Thanksgiving holiday (information to follow)

**GRADES**

The final grade will consist of the following:

1.) 3 Exams: 50%
2.) Up to 14 Announced AND Unannounced Quizzes (The lowest 4 scores will be dropped): 20%
3.) Group Presentation: 15%
4.) Participation: 15%

**ATTENDANCE**

Since attendance is critical to course performance, more than 2 unexcused absences will result in the final grade lowering by one half a letter grade, more than 6 unexcused absences will result in an automatic “F” for the course. Attendance will be taken in the form of a sign-in sheet usually within the first 10 minutes of class time. If you are late to class and miss the sheet, it is your responsibility to inform me immediately after class that same day that you missed the sign-in, otherwise you will be marked as absent. 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 and time the class meets, you were too ill to attend. This letter must be submitted on the day you return to class. Any excuse for an absence must be presented immediately upon your return—I mean it!

It is your responsibility to find out from classmates what information was discussed or materials were handed out during a missed session. If you are experiencing extenuating circumstances, please make an appointment with me.
EXAMS AND QUIZZES

There will be three Exams, the average of which will be 50% of your final grade. Exam 3 will be scheduled during finals week, however it is not cumulative. Exams will consist of 30 to 40 multiple choice and will cover lecture information, discussion, and sometimes questions formulated by your own class groups. Although I strive for utmost clarity, I am open to differing interpretations of exam questions and potential answers.

Films viewed outside of class time either at the library or on your own are as subject to exam and quiz questions as in-class material, therefore it is crucial that you view these. I would encourage you to partner up with some friends and grab some popcorn so you may all have a chance to view required films prior to our discussions and exams.

Quizzes may consist of one or a combination of the following: short answer, multiple choice, and/or true and false questions. It is a good idea to bring a different color pen or highlighter with you to class as it is common that we self-correct quizzes in class. Self-correcting quizzes gives you a chance to understand your mistakes, and gives us all a chance to clarify concepts that probably will appear later on an exam. Up to 14 quizzes will be given in class so expect them once a week. The best eight quizzes will be counted.

Make up exams will be administered only in cases of emergency, and then in the form of an essay test. Quizzes may not be made up, but I only count your eight best quiz scores out of twelve.

PARTICIPATION

Participation is an essential element of a successful class. Be prepared to comment at least once a class session, even if you feel unsure of the material. In fact, if you are confused, you should absolutely speak up. Intelligent questions also count as participation. Remember, this is 15% of the grade.

That being said, if you are uncomfortable with participating in a large class setting, weekly take-home questions will be available to answer as a replacement for class discussion. Please note: this is not an opportunity for additional participation, but rather an alternative choice. If you participate in class and choose to answer the take-home questions, the written questions will automatically replace your in-class discussion points.

GROUP WORK AND PRESENTATIONS

There will be group presentations on the following dates: Monday 15 November, Wednesday 17 November, and Monday 22 November. Groups will consist of five students and will cover approved topics of your choice. You will be required as a group to turn in a proposal of your topic and ideas. There will be
a wide range of possibilities for group members' participation in this project (i.e. not everyone in a group may be required to speak publicly etc.) A detailed outline of what will be expected of your group will be available to you in a separate handout no later than Monday, September 20th. Any questions regarding the presentations will be covered at that time.

EXTRA CREDIT

If you wish to improve your grade you may choose to submit an optional extra credit paper. You must outline the proposed topic to me in writing (a paragraph will do) by **Monday, 29 November, 2010**. The final possible due date for extra credit papers is **Wednesday, 15 December, 2010** in my mailbox in CL1417. Again, keep in mind that the end of your semester may bring many due dates—I strongly urge you to write and submit your paper as early as possible. Extra credit papers should be 7-10 pages (please number your pages) type-written in 12 pt font with 1 inch margins, with a heading stating your name, SSN number, the paper’s title, and date. Please **staple** your paper. Please **proofread** your paper. Papers must be your original work, and may consist of research, a comparison of two works, or even a creative-writing exercise. As many as 5 percentage points may be awarded for an appropriate paper.

**Note:** Criteria for extra credit papers will be outlined in a separate handout by **Wednesday September 29th**.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

By remaining enrolled in this course, you not only agree to abide by the above stipulations, but also understand that the instructor will rigorously follow the rules spelled out in the Handbook on Integrity regarding cheating, plagiarism, etc.

READING LIST

Evgeny Zamyatin, *We*
H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine*
H.G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*
Stanislaw Lem, *The Futurological Congress*
Stanislaw Lem, *Solaris*
Frank Herbert, *Dune*
Ayn Rand, *Anthem*
Viktor Pelevin, *Omon Ra*
Orson Scott Card, *Ender’s Game*
Karel Čapek, *War with the Newts*
William Gibson, “Johnny Mnemonic”
William Gibson, “Burning Chrome”

VIEWING LIST

“The Simpsons: Citizen Kang”
*Forbidden Planet*
“The Simpsons: Time and Punishment”
*The Matrix*
*Alien*
*Blade Runner*
*Dune*
*Solaris* (Clooney)
*Solaris* (1972)
*War of the Worlds* (1953)
*War of the Worlds* (2005)
*The Day the Earth Stood Still*
*Threads*

FILM INFORMATION

The Hillman Library will have our films available in their Stark Media Resource Center to view at the library, the exception being one or two that will be shown in class because they are a rare find. The films are also easily accessible through video rental stores or through Netflix. Meeting in groups would be a great way to view and discuss films as well as prepare for your exams.

CONTACT INFORMATION

(Important: Please Read Carefully)

Alton Post
Office: 1417 Cathedral of Learning
Email: SF_CAS@yahoo.com
Office Phone: 412.624.5711
Cell: 412.251.4538
Office hours: Mondays 5:00—6:00pm and Wednesdays 6:00—7:00pm, and by appointment

NOTE: To ensure prompt attention to any question, concern, or issue you might encounter during our semester, it is important to follow our established contact protocol:

1.) **Person-to-person:** this is the optimal method of contact, be it before or after lecture, during **office hours** or via appointment (please note my emphasis on visiting me during office hours)
2.) Email: as indicated, we have our own class email address at SF_CAS@yahoo.com Please use this email. Email should be used when it is not possible to meet during office hours or by appointment.

3.) Phone: 412.251.4538. This is a great way to reach me fast and to discuss any issues that may require immediate attention. In many ways, this option is more efficient than email. So please do not hesitate to call in addition to or instead of emailing.

CLASS SCHEDULE
Note: Syllabus subject to modification with adequate notice

AUGUST

WEEK ONE
Mon. August 30:
  Introductions
  review of syllabus
  class flow
  “Moving Towards Definitions of SF”
Assignment for 9/1: prepare for Quiz on Syllabus

SEPTEMBER

Wed. Sept 1:
  QUIZ ON SYLLABUS
  Freud, 1st Part Forbidden Planet
Assignment for 9/8: Review Freud

WEEK TWO
Mon. Sept. 6: NO CLASS LABOR DAY

Wed. Sept. 8: Conclusion Forbidden Planet and discussion

WEEK THREE
Mon. Sept. 13: The Time Machine and discussion and comparison with movie
Assignment for 9/15: Read first half of H.G. Wells’ War of the Worlds


WEEK FOUR
Assignment for 9/22: read Ayn Rand’s Anthem, introduction to Objectivism

Wed. Sept. 22: Anthem discussion, introduction to Marxism
Assignment for 9/27: Read Zamyatin’s We

WEEK FIVE
Mon. Sept. 27: discussion on We, Anthem, Marxism and Objectivism
Assignment for 9/29: prepare for exam 1 (study session TBA)

Wed. Sept. 29: EXAM 1
Assignment for 10/4: Read War with the Newts first and second books

OCTOBER

WEEK SIX
Mon. Oct. 4: War with the Newts Part One
Assignment for 10/6: Read War with the Newts third book

Wed. Oct. 6: War with the Newts Part Two and discussion
Assignment for 10/12: View Alien and begin reading Solaris (although not formally due until 10/13, please read as much as possible during break)

WEEK SEVEN
Mon. Oct.11: NO CLASS FALL BREAK

**Tues. Oct. 12: MONDAY CLASSES Alien discussion and comparison with War with the Newts
Assignment for 10/13: Finish reading Solaris, view Solaris 2005 film version for Mon. 10/18

Assignment for 10/18: Study for Exam 2 (review sessions TBA) View Solaris (2005) for Monday

WEEK EIGHT
Mon. Oct. 18: viewing 1972 continued, comparison of all three Solaris versions
Assignment for 10/20: read first half of Dune
Wed. Oct. 20: discussion of first half of *Dune*  
Assignment for 10/25: read second half of *Dune*

**WEEK NINE**  
Mon. Oct. 25: *Dune* discussion  
**Assignment for 10/27:** Study for Exam 2, construct questions regarding the exam

Wed. Oct. 27: Review for Exam 2  
**Assignment for 11/1:** Study for Exam 2, begin viewing *The Matrix* for Wed. 11/3

**NOVEMBER**

**WEEK TEN**  
Mon. Nov. 1: EXAM 2  
**Assignment for 11/3:** View *The Matrix* and read Gibson’s “Johnny Mnemonic” and “Burning Chrome”

Wed. Nov. 3: Gibson and *Matrix* discussion  
**Assignment for 11/8:** Read *Ender’s Game*

**WEEK ELEVEN**  
Mon. Nov. 8: *Ender’s Game* discussion  
**Assignment for 11/10:** Read *Futurological Congress*

Wed. Nov. 10: *Futurological Congress* discussion  
**Assignment for 11/15:** Prepare for your presentation

**WEEK TWELVE  PRESENTATIONS next 3 classes**  
Mon. Nov. 15: Presentations  
**Assignment for 11/17:** Review previous presentations

Wed. Nov. 17: Presentations  
**Assignment for 11/22:** Review previous presentations

Mon. Nov. 22: Presentations  
**Assignment for 11/29:** Review previous presentations. Read Pelevin’s *Omon Ra* over your break.

**THANKSGIVING BREAK** Wed. Nov. 24 – Sun. Nov. 28

**WEEK THIRTEEN**  
Mon. Nov. 29: *Omon Ra* discussion  
**Assignment for 12/1:** View *The Day the Earth Stood Still* for Monday 12/8
DECEMBER

**Wed. Dec. 1:** In-class viewing of *Threads*
**Assignment for 12/6:** prepare for Exam 3

**WEEK FOURTEEN**

**Mon. Dec. 6:** In-class viewing of *Threads* wrap-up, In-class discussion and comparison of *The Day the Earth Stood Still*
**Assignment for 12/8:** prepare for Exam 3

**Wed. Dec. 8:** LAST DAY OF CLASS review for Final

**Mon. Dec. 13:** TENTATIVE (FINAL) EXAM 3