University of Pittsburgh
Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures
Slavic 0660-
Sci-Fi: East and West

*The following course overview serves as **a contract** between the student and the instructor teaching this course. Please read the entire text carefully and let the instructor know if you have any questions about it **as soon as possible**.*

Spring 2018 **Instructor**: Dr. Olga Klimova **Office hours**: Tuesday/Thursday 11:00am-12:00pm and Sunday 1-2 pm through Skype/GoToMeeting or by appointment **e-mail**: vok1@pitt.edu **Skype:** olgaklim5	**Class meetings**: Mondays **Room**: G8 Cathedral of Learning **Time**: 6:00-8:25pm **Office telephone**: ext. 49958 **Office**: 1235 Cathedral of Learning **GoToMeeting:** https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/804833037

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course compares Slavic and Anglophone science fiction in literary and visual texts. It examines how a given culture's dominant concerns are articulated in a genre popular in the East (i.e., Eastern Europe and Russia) and West (i.e., America, Germany, and England). Those concerns emerge in works that imaginatively posit "fantastic" situations rooted in spatial, temporal, ecological and technological explorations beyond those currently verified by science. On the basis of a wide range of novels, stories, and films we shall discuss such topics as progress, utopia, human perfectibility, gender inequality, construction of femininity and masculinity, the limits of science, the nature of knowledge, ecology, and verifiability.

More broadly, the goals of this course are to improve students' critical and analytical skills by incorporating a variety of critical perspectives (Marxism, feminism, postmodernism, etc.) as we read, explain, and problematize the course's texts, bringing to light ideological bias, relevance, social commentary, historical context, and narrative coherence. In studying critical theoretical framework, the students will explore the texts' representations of societies, economies, genders, ideologies, and scientific assumptions.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students are required (1) to complete the assignments scheduled by specific deadlines–normally that means read 80-120 pages and/or watch 1-2 film(s) per week; (2) to participate actively and intelligently on a **REGULAR** basis in the course discussions; (3) to take weekly reading and watching quizzes (12 total); to take 1 final exam; (4) to present a digital poster in a group of 3-4 students (5) to attend all class meetings during the semester; (6) to complete a final group project—a digital essay.

CLASS FORMAT:

This course carries three credits and satisfies the School of Arts and Sciences' requirement in foreign/comparative culture. It meets once a week for 2 hours and 25 minutes throughout the semester, and combines lecture and discussion, with films viewed in class as well as outside. Besides readings in the forms of books to purchase and readings posted on CourseWeb, you will be expected to watch films on your own. Almost every week, there will be a reading and/or viewing quiz that you will have to take by 11:59pm on Sunday (after that, they won't be available).

REQUIRED TEXTS:

In addition to the required texts for the course (available at University Book Center or on Amazon.com), required readings will also be available on CourseWeb or otherwise.

H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (England)
Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We* (Russia)
Stanislaw Lem, *Futurological Congress* (Poland)
Mikhail Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog* (Russia)
Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, *Roadside Picnic* (Russia)—on CourseWeb
Karl Capek's *War with the Newts* (Czech Republic)
Viktor Pelevin, *Omon Ra* (Russia)
Octavia Butler, "Bloodchild" (USA)—on CourseWeb
Phillip K. Dick, "We Can Remember It For You Wholesale" (USA) —on CourseWeb
William Gibson, "Johnny Mnemonic" (USA-Canada) —on CourseWeb

REQUIRED FILMS:

You can watch most of these films on Netflix, Youtube, and through other online sources.
All films are also on reserve in the Media Center in Hillman Library and should be watched there. You may also check your local library and check out these films to watch them at home. For some of the films, we might have to schedule an additional screening on campus.

Fritz Lang, *Metropolis* (Germany), enhanced by Giorgio Moroder
Iakov Protozanov, *Aelita*, *Queen of Mars* (Russia)
Paul Verhoeven, *Total Recall* (USA)
Juliusz Machulski, *Sex Mission* (Poland)
Georgii Danellia, *Kin-dza-dza* (Russia)
Garth Jennings, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (England)
George Pal, *The Time Machine* (USA)
Andrei Tarkovskii, *Stalker* (Russia)
Robert Longo, *Johnny Mnemonic* (USA)
Aleksei Fedorchenko, *First on the Moon* (Russia)
Black Mirrow, TV series (England)

COURSE WEBSITE:

In this course, we will be using a web course tool called Blackboard. All course materials, announcements, quizzes, and grades will be online. You will use your main Pitt account to log in to the course at CourseWeb (http://CourseWeb.pitt.edu). This course site will be available to you from the first day of the term.

If you have not used Blackboard before, in order to get started with a Blackboard course, please see the Blackboard Student Manual http://help.blackboard.com/. If you need further help, the Pitt Technology Help Desk Team provides technical support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They can be reached at 412-624-HELP, helpdesk@pitt.edu http://technology.pitt.edu/help-desk

EVALUATION AND GRADES:

Attendance and participation	160 points
Reading/viewing quizzes (12*10 points/10*12 points):	120 points
A digital poster+oral presentation	50 points
A final exam	70 points
A final group project (a digital essay)	80 points
A storyboard (an outline) for digital essay	10 points
Peer- and self-evaluation of digital essays	10 points
TOTAL:	500 points=100%

The following grading standards will be used in assigning grades in this course:

93-100	A	80-82	B-	68-69	D+
90-92	A-	78-79	C+	65-67	D
88-89	B+	73-77	C	64-54	E
83-87	B	70-72	C-	53 and below	F

ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION:

Since attendance is critical to course performance, more than three unexcused absences will automatically result in a lower grade (each additional absence will reduce the grade by a notch: B to B-, C+ to C, etc.). Six absences automatically translate into an F for the course. Students must sign an attendance sheet at the beginning of class. 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 AT THE TIME THE CLASS MEETS the student was too ill to attend. In order for the student's absence to be excused, that letter must be submitted THE DAY THE STUDENT RETURNS TO CLASS.

It is the students' responsibility to find out from their classmates whether important information or materials were handed out during a session they missed. Students therefore should obtain the telephone number and/or E-mail address of least one of their classmates.

Neighbor's tel. _____ Neighbor's E-mail_____
Students experiencing special problems in the course should make an appointment with the instructor during office hours

Participation is also an important part of this course. You should participate in our class discussions. Your responses must be thoughtful and reference the assigned material specifically. I will judge your responses on thoughtfulness, thoroughness of understanding, depth of analysis, and how much it contributes to the discussion at hand, moving it forward in useful and interesting ways. You will also have a chance to discuss some questions in small groups during our class meetings. Your participation in small group discussions will be also counted toward your participation for that class meeting.

QUIZZES:

Almost every week there will be a reading and/or viewing quiz, based on the assigned material for that week.   The only exception is our quiz 1 that you will complete in class on January 22. You will complete the rest of the quizzes online on our Courseweb page. The deadline is 11:59pm on Sundays (the day before our class meeting), and there are NO makeup quizzes or extensions (unless official documented reasons). I will drop the lowest TWO scores on these quizzes at the end of the semester.

DIGITAL POSTER AND PRESENTATON:

Throughout the semester, in a group of three-four students, you will prepare one digital poster (or an infographic) on a specific topic related to the main themes of that class session. You will need to post it on our Courseweb page by 11:59pm on Sunday, to present it in class, and to be ready to facilitate a brief class discussion on your topic (all together no longer than 5-10 minutes). We will have about 2 poster presentations per one class meeting. You will be able to sign up for this presentation on our Courseweb page (through the wiki "Poster Presentation Sign-up." You need to talk to me about your presentation or send me your ideas or an outline for your poster one week before your presentation (on Monday before our class at 6pm).

FINAL GROUP PROJECT (A DIGITAL ESSAY):

Students will be working on and submitting one final group project at the end of the semester. You will work with partners on this assignment (appr. 5 students in each group). You will be creating a digital essay up to 3-4-minute-long (like a small movie). In your video essay, you should make an argument about subject matter (have a thesis and support that thesis just like a written paper) and treat it as a piece of communication intended for practical use. For that reason, you should keep in mind four fundamental rhetorical concerns: your audience (who will view the video), purpose (your aim for the video), genre (consider genre expectations), and

context (the social, political, and technological). Your video essay may combine various art forms (pictures, music, video, words, voice, etc.). One of the main requirements is that you have to use at least one Slavic text (visual or literary) and one Western text (USA, England, Germany, etc.).

Choose a specific topic/theme relevant to our course, on which your group will be working. The detailed instructions on how to complete this assignment will be distributed later in the semester.

You will have to submit your storyboard (a special kind of an outline for digital essays) through Courseweb by our class on March 12th. You will submit your digital essay through Coursweb (links to Youtube or Google Drive on our discussion board) by 6pm on Wednesday, April 25 and watch 2 digital essays prepared by other students and evaluate them along with your own digital essay (self- and peer-evaluations) through Google Forms by 6pm on Friday, April 27.

FINAL EXAM:

In this course, there will be one final exam. The exam will consist of multiple-choice, mix-and-match, short essay questions, and other types of questions. You will have to take it online through Courseweb by Sunday, April 22. NO MAKE-UP EXAMS WILL BE ADMINISTERED. IF A STUDENT MISSES AN EXAM, S/HE WILL RECEIVE A ZERO FOR THAT EXAM.

DISABILITY POLICY:

If a student has a disability that requires special teaching, testing accommodations, or other classroom modifications, he or she must notify the instructor and the Office of Disability Resources and Service as early as possible in the semester. The student may be asked to provide documentation of the disability to determine the appropriateness of accommodations. To notify, call to schedule an appointment. The office is located in 140 William Pitt Union, phone*:* Phone: 412-648-7890, video Phone: 412-228-5374.

PLAGIARISM:

As "Student Obligations and Adjudication" (University Policy 02-03-03) states, "students have an obligation to exhibit honesty, and to respect the ethical standard of his (their) chosen profession in carrying out (their) academic assignments". According to the University of Pittsburgh's policy, a student "violates this obligation" if he/she: "a) presents as one's own, for academic evaluation, the ideas, representations, or works of another person or persons without customary and proper acknowledgement of sources; b) submits the work of another person in a manner which represents the work to be one's own; c) knowingly permits one's work to be submitted by another person without the instructor's authorization".

The penalties for academic misconduct like plagiarism can be very severe. The immediate consequence of plagiarism will be receiving a grade zero for the particular assignment and can lead to an F for the course.

For the references, please, check and The Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Science's Academic Integrity Code at https://as.pitt.edu/faculty/policies-and-procedures/academic-integrity-code and the Guidelines on Academic Integrity at https://provost.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/academic_integrity_guidelines.pdf.

CELL PHONE AND LAPTOP POLICY

All cellular telephones must be switched off before coming to class. The use of all mobile devices during Russian class is prohibited, unless it is a requirement for our in-class learning activities. If you need to make or accept an urgent phone call, you should do it outside the classroom. There should be absolutely no text messaging during the class period.

The use of laptops is prohibited during our classes. You are allowed to use your laptops only if they are required for our in-class learning activities.

COURSE SCHEDULE
 * subject to revision by the instructor

Week/Dates	Topic/Titles/Themes	Assignments
WEEK 1 January	**Syllabus and Course Requirements. Introduction into Sci-Fi.** The definition of the genre. Sci-Fi and socio-historical context. Cultural Studies.	• Watch 2 films *Metropolis a*nd *Aelita, Queen of Mars.* • Reading/Viewing Quiz 1 in class
WEEK 2 January 15	**MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY—NO CLASS**	
WEEK 3 January 22	**Fritz Lang, *Metropolis.* Iakov Protazanov, *Aelita, Queen of Mars.*** Social classes in sci-fi. Reflection of aspects of Western philosophy and dominant social tendencies and concerns. A vision of the future: modernity: machines, city, social class. Gender disposition in sci-fi.	• Read the novel *The Time Machine.* • Watch the film *The Time Machine.* • Reading/Viewing Quiz 2 through Courseweb, 11:59pm on Sunday
WEEK 3 January 29	**H.G. Wells, *The Time Machine.* George Pal, *The Time Machine.*** Movement through time: Victorian industry and dystopia. Visualizing the future; vertical spatialization of technological developments (above and below ground); the film's technological solutions. Narrative frame.	• Read the novel *We.* • Reading/Viewing Quiz 3 through Courseweb, 11:59pm on Sunday
WEEK 4 February 5	**Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We.*** Totalitarianism and social control; gender roles, math and sciences vs. art and music. Dystopia in sci-fi. Satire in sci-fi.	• Read the novel *Heart of a Dog.* • Reading/Viewing Quiz 4 through Courseweb, 11:59pm on Sunday
WEEK 5 February 12	**Mikhail Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog.*** Science and human/animal experimentation in sci-fi. Totalitarianism and socialist realism. Class struggle and intelligentsia.	• Read the novel *Futurological Congress.* • Reading/Viewing Quiz 5 through Courseweb, 11:59pm on Sunday
WEEK 6 February 19	**Stanislaw Lem, *Futurological Congress.*** Irony and paradox. Skepticism about totalizing systems and misuse of science and reason. Bentham's theory of utility.	• Read the novel *Roadside Picnic.* • Reading/Viewing Quiz 6 through Courseweb, 11:59pm on Sunday

		• Prepare for the exam.
WEEK 7 February 26	**Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, *Roadside Picnic*. Andrei Tarkovskii, *Stalker*.**	• Read the short story "Bloodchild.".
	Philosophical sci-fi. Ecological crisis/economical crisis. Mutations and human responsibility. Exploring cosmos or confronting the self; nature of "the alien"; data/information/knowledge; synthesis of genres.	• Watch the film *Sex Mission* (only as a last resort, *Futurama: The Amazon Women in the Mood)*. • Reading/Viewing Quiz 7 through Courseweb, 11:59pm on Sunday
March 5-11	**SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS**	
WEEK 8 March 12	**Octavia Butler, "Bloodchild." Juliusz Machulski, *Sex Mission*. *Futurama: The Amazon Women in the Mood.***	• **Storyboard is due** • Read the novel *War with the Newts*.
	Body, gender, reproduction. Gender stereotypes and gender deconstruction. Sexual identity and kinship. Patriarchate vs matriarchate.	• Reading/Viewing Quiz 8 through Courseweb, 11:59pm on Sunday
WEEK 9 March 19	**Karl Capek's *War with the Newts.***	• Read the novel *Omon Ra.* • Watch the film *First on the Moon.*
	Exploitation and evolution. The representation of war in sci-fi. Satire and social commentary. Fascism, racism, and capitalism.	• Reading/Viewing Quiz 9 through Courseweb, 11:59pm on Sunday
WEEK 10 March 26	**Viktor Pelevin, *Omon Ra*. Aleksei Fedorchenko, *First on the Moon*.**	• Read the short stories. • Watch the film *Total Recall.*
	Mocumentary and sci-fi. Space programs and space race. Cold war discourse in sci-fi.	• Reading/Viewing Quiz 10 through Courseweb, 11:59pm on Sunday
WEEK 11 April 2	**Phillip K. Dick, "We Can Remember It For You Wholesale." William Gibson, "Johnny Mnemonic." Paul Verhoeven, *Total Recall.* Robert Longo, *Johnny Mnemonic.***	• Watch 2 films *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* and *Kin-dza-dza.*
	Postmodernism and Cyberpunk. Dystopia and anti-utopia. Robots and humans. Cyborgs in Sci-Fi. Information technology and memory manipulation. Genre mixture: film noir style.	• Reading/Viewing Quiz 11 through Courseweb, 11:59pm on Sunday

WEEK 12 April 9	**Garth Jennings**, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. **Georgii Danelia**, *Kin-dza-dza.* Sci-fi in various media. Comedy, sci-fi, and genre conventions. Artificial intelligence. Nature and science.	• Watch 3 episodes of *Black Mirror*. • Reading/Viewing Quiz 12 through Courseweb, 11:59pm on Sunday
WEEK 13 April 16	**Sci-Fi on Television. Charlie Brooker's** *Black Mirror*. **Conclusions.** Techno-dystopia. The power and threat of new media and social media. Technology addiction.	• Prepare for the exam. • Finish your digital essays, post them on Youtube or Google Drive, and post links on the Courseweb discussion board.
WEEK 14 April 23	**FINAL EXAM through Courseweb by 11:59pm on Sunday, April 22.**	• **Digital essay is due on Tuesday, April 25 at 6pm. Peer- and self-evaluations are due on Friday, April 27 by 6pm.**