

**University of Pittsburgh**  
**Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures**  
**Slavic 0660-7010**  
**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**.*

<p><b>Spring 2014</b>  <b>Instructor:</b> Dr. Olga Klimova  <b>On-campus office hours:</b> Monday 8:30-9pm, Tuesday 6-7:30pm  <b>Office:</b> Cathedral of Learning 1417</p>	<p><b>Class meetings:</b> Mondays  <b>Room:</b> G8 Cathedral of Learning  <b>Time:</b> 6:00-8:25pm  <b>e-mail:</b> vok1@pitt.edu  <b>Office telephone:</b> (412) 624-5906</p>
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course compares Slavic and Anglophone science fiction in literature and cinema. 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, 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 the 2 exams; (4) to take weekly reading and watching quizzes (10 total); (5) to prepare 1 group project; (6) to attend all class meetings during the semester.

**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). There will also be two exams that will include multiple-choice, mix-and-match, and other types of questions.

**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.

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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  
Ursula K. LeGuin, *The Left Hand of Darkness* (USA)—on CourseWeb  
Phillip K. Dick, "We Can Remember It For You Wholesale" (USA) —on CourseWeb  
William Gibson, "Johnny Mnemonic" (USA-Canada) —on CourseWeb

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**REQUIRED FILMS:**

All films are 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. You can also try to find and watch these films on Netflix, Youtube, and through other online sources.

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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)

**IN-CLASS SCREENINGS:**

George Pal, *The Time Machine* (USA)  
Andrei Tarkovskii, *Stalker* (Russia)  
Robert Longo, *Johnny Mnemonic* (USA)  
Aleksei Fedorchenko, *First on the Moon* (Russia)

**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](mailto:helpdesk@pitt.edu), <http://technology.pitt.edu/help/help-desk.html>.

**EVALUATION AND GRADES:**

Reading/viewing quizzes (10):	150 points
Three examinations:	300 points
Attendance	200 points
Participation	50 points
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TOTAL:	700 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.

### **EXAMS:**

In this course there will be three exams. The exams will consist of multiple-choice, mix-and-match, and other types of questions. The first two exams will be conducted during our regular class meetings on February 9 and March 16. The last exam will be online through Blackboard, and will be due 11:59pm on Friday, April 24.

**NO MAKE-UP EXAMS WILL BE ADMINISTERED. IF A STUDENT MISSES AN EXAM, S/HE WILL RECEIVE A ZERO FOR THAT EXAM.**

### **QUIZZES:**

Almost every week there will be a reading and/or viewing quiz, based on the assigned material for that week. You will complete it online on our Blackboard 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).

### **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 Disabled Student Services (DDS) 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 DDS, call 648-7890 (Voice or TDD) to schedule an appointment. The office is located in 216 William Pitt Union.

### **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:**

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. 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. Any student suspected of violating this obligation for any reason

during the semester will also be required to participate in the procedural process, initiated at the instructor level, as outlined in the University Guidelines on Academic Integrity.

Students in this course will be expected to comply with the University of Pittsburgh's Policy on Academic Integrity. Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, from the February 1974 Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom reported to the Senate Council, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz or exam will be imposed. View the complete policy

at [www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/02/02-03-02.html](http://www.cfo.pitt.edu/policies/policy/02/02-03-02.html) and see also:

<http://www.as.pitt.edu/fac/policies/academic-integrity>

**COURSE SCHEDULE (subject to revision by the instructor)**

<b>Week/Dates</b>	<b>Topic/Titles/Themes</b>	<b>Assignments/Meetings</b>
<b>WEEK 1</b> <b>January 5</b>	<b>Syllabus and Course Requirements. Introduction into Sci-Fi. Film and Literature Analysis.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Purchase books, print out the course syllabus from Blackboard and read it.</li> </ul>
	The definition of the genre. Analyzing film/analyzing fiction.	
<b>WEEK 2</b> <b>January 12</b>	<b>Fritz Lang, <i>Metropolis</i>. Iakov Protazanov, <i>Aelita, Queen of Mars</i>.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch 2 films</li> <li>• Reading/Viewing Quiz 1, 11:59pm on Sunday</li> </ul>
	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.	
<b>January 19</b>	<b>MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY—NO CLASS</b>	
<b>WEEK 3</b> <b>January 26</b>	<b>H.G. Wells, <i>The Time Machine</i>. George Pal, <i>The Time Machine</i>.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the novel</li> <li>• Reading/Viewing Quiz 2, 11:59pm on Sunday</li> </ul>
	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.	
<b>WEEK 4</b> <b>February 2</b>	<b>Yevgeny Zamyatin, <i>We</i>.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the novel</li> <li>• Reading/Viewing Quiz 3, 11:59pm on Sunday</li> </ul>
	Totalitarianism and social control; gender roles, math and sciences vs. art and music. Dystopia in sci-fi. Satire in sci-fi.	
<b>WEEK 5</b> <b>February 9</b>	<b>EXAM ONE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for Exam 1</li> <li>• Read the novel</li> </ul>
	<b>Mikhail Bulgakov, <i>Heart of a Dog</i>.</b>	
	Science and human/animal experimentation in sci-fi. Totalitarianism	

	and socialist realism. Class struggle and intelligentsia.	
<b>WEEK 6</b> <b>February 16</b>	<b>Stanislaw Lem, <i>Futurological Congress</i>.</b> Irony and paradox. Skepticism about totalizing systems and misuse of science and reason. Bentham's theory of utility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the novel</li> <li>• Reading/Viewing Quiz 4, 11:59pm on Sunday</li> </ul>
<b>WEEK 7</b> <b>February 23</b>	<b>Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, <i>Roadside Picnic</i>. Andrei Tarkovskii, <i>Stalker</i>.</b> 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.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the novel</li> <li>• Reading/Viewing Quiz 5, 11:59pm on Sunday</li> </ul>
<b>WEEK 8</b> <b>March 2</b>	<b>Octavia Butler, "Bloodchild." Juliusz Machulski, <i>Sex Mission</i>.</b> Body, gender, reproduction. Gender stereotypes and gender deconstruction. Sexual identity and kinship. Patriarchate vs matriarchate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the short story</li> <li>• Watch the film</li> <li>• Reading/Viewing Quiz 6, 11:59pm on Sunday</li> </ul>
<b>March 9</b>	<b>SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS</b>	
<b>WEEK 9</b> <b>March 16</b>	<b>EXAM 2</b> <b>Ursula K. LeGuin, <i>The Left Hand of Darkness</i>.</b> Colonization; body, gender, reproduction. Sexual identity and androgyny.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for Exam 2</li> <li>• Read the novel</li> </ul>
<b>WEEK 10</b> <b>March 23</b>	<b>Karl Capek's <i>War with the Newts</i>.</b> Exploitation and evolution. The representation of war in sci-fi. Satire and social commentary. Fascism, racism, and capitalism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the novel</li> <li>• Reading/Viewing Quiz 7, 11:59pm on Sunday</li> </ul>
<b>WEEK 11</b> <b>March 30</b>	<b>Viktor Pelevin, <i>Omon Ra</i>. Aleksei Fedorchenko, <i>First on the Moon</i>.</b> Mocumentary and sci-fi. Space programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read the novel</li> <li>• Reading/Viewing Quiz 8, 11:59pm on Sunday</li> </ul>

	and space race. Cold war discourse in sci-fi.	
WEEK 12 April 6	<p><b>Phillip K. Dick, “We Can Remember It For You Wholesale.” William Gibson, “Johnny Mnemonic.” Paul Verhoeven, <i>Total Recall</i>. Robert Longo, <i>Johnny Mnemonic</i>.</b></p> <p>Postmodernism and Cyberpunk. Dystopia and anti-utopia. Robots and humans. Cyborgs in Sci-Fi. Information technology and memory manipulation. Genre mixture: film noir style.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read 2 short stories</li> <li>• Watch <i>Total Recall</i></li> <li>• Reading/Viewing Quiz 9, 11:59pm on Sunday</li> </ul>
WEEK 13 April 13	<p><b>Garth Jennings, <i>The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy</i>. Georgii Danelia, <i>Kin-dza-dza</i>.</b></p> <p>Sci-fi in various media. Comedy, sci-fi, and genre conventions. Artificial intelligence. Nature and science.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch 2 films</li> <li>• Reading/Viewing Quiz 10, 11:59pm on Sunday</li> </ul>
WEEK 14 April 20	<b>EXAM THREE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Submit Exam 3 on Blackboard by 11:59pm on Friday, April 24</li> </ul>