

Science Fiction: East and West

10989 SLAV 0660

MW 4:30-5:45 CL 139

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Office Hours: Thursdays 1:00 - 3:00, Slavic Department

This course compares Slavic and Anglophone science fiction texts and films, examining how a given culture's dominant concerns are articulated in this genre. Students will analyze works that imaginatively posit "fantastic" situations rooted in spatial, temporal, and biological explorations beyond those currently verified by science. Students will discuss topics like progress, utopia/dystopia, human perfectibility, the moral limits of science, the nature of knowledge, and the boundaries of human identity, with a view to comparing Eastern and Western elaborations of these concerns. You will also be introduced to analytical frameworks like Marxism, Feminism, and Postmodernism.

More broadly, students in this course will improve their analytical and critical skills as they read, explain, critique, and problematize the course's texts, ferreting out ideological bias, relevance, social commentary, narrative coherence, and artistic merit; and learn to apply critical theoretical frameworks to texts' representations of societies, economies, genders, ideologies, and scientific assumptions.

Grade Components

Students are required to come to class and participate in class discussions; each day in class you will be assigned a class participation grade. Students are also required to write five journal entries of varying length on Courseweb at the end of each syllabus unit, summarizing, analyzing, and responding to the material they covered during that unit. Class participation is half of your grade. The other half is journal entries: 10% for the Unit One entry, 10% for the Unit Two entry, 10% for the Unit Three entry, 15% for the Unit Four entry, 5% for the fifth entry on "The Bloodchild" by Octavia Butler.

Absences

Each student will be granted three dropped class participation grades. There are no "excused" or "unexcused" absences besides these dropped grades, however, if a situation arises in which a student knows they're going to have to miss class at length, get in touch, we'll work it out.

Book to acquire:

Oman-Ra by Victor Pelevin

... everything else will be available online through Courseweb.

EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY! January 4-10, Row House Cinema, in Lawrenceville (catch the 93 bus from Oakland), is showing the film *Solaris* by Andrei Tarkovsky. Bring me your

receipt and a BRIEF summary of the film and your reactions to it, and you can earn one replacement class participation A grade. They offer student ID discounts.

Monday, January 7: No assignment, review of the syllabus and formalist analysis

Wednesday, January 9: Introduction to Unit One: *The Time Machine* and *Metropolis*

Monday, January 14: H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine*, chapters one ("Introduction") through six ("The Sunset of Mankind")

Wednesday, January 16: *The Time Machine*, chapters seven ("A Sudden Shock") through twelve ("In the Darkness")

Monday, January 21: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day **NO CLASS**

Wednesday, January 23: *The Time Machine*, chapter thirteen ("The Trap of the White Sphinx") through the end

Monday, January 28: Before class: watch Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*

Wednesday, January 30: no additional assignment

Monday, February 4: Unit One journal entries due by the time class starts (500-750 words).
Introduction to Unit Two: *Heart of a Dog*

Wednesday, February 6: Mikhail Bulgakov's *Heart of a Dog*, chapters one and two

Monday, February 11: *Heart of a Dog*, chapters three, four, and five

Wednesday, February 13: *Heart of a Dog*, chapter six through the end

Monday, February 18: Unit Two journal entries due by the time class starts (500-750 words).
Introduction to Unit Three: *We*. Read the first two "entries" of *We* before class.

Wednesday, February 20: *We*, through the seventeenth entry

Monday, February 25: *We*, through the twenty-third entry

Wednesday, February 27: *We*, through the end

Monday, March 4: Unit Three journal entries due by the time class starts (500-750 words).
Before class: watch Georgiy Daneliya's *Kin-Dza-Dza*

Wednesday, March 6: No further assignment

Monday, March 11: Spring Break **NO CLASS**

Wednesday, March 13: Spring Break **NO CLASS**

Monday, March 18: Introduction to Unit Four: Postmodernism and the (Post)Soviets in Space

Wednesday, March 20: Victor Pelevin's *Oman-Ra*, through page 38

Monday, March 25: *Oman-Ra*, through page 100

Wednesday, March 27: *Oman-Ra*, through the end

Monday, April 1: Before class: watch Alexei Fedorchenko's *First on the Moon*

Wednesday, April 3: "We Can Remember It for You Wholesale" by Philip K. Dick

Monday, April 8: "Johnny Mnemonic" by William Gibson

Wednesday, April 10: Before class: watch Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*

Monday, April 15: Unit Four journal entries due before class starts (750-1000 words). Before class: read "The Bloodchild" by Octavia Butler

Wednesday, April 17: No further assignment

Friday, April 19: No class, but a journal entry on "The Bloodchild" is due by the end of the day (250-500 words).