

I don't try to describe the future. I try to prevent it. –Ray Bradbury

English 492/IDS 496



Robby, the prototypical robot in *Forbidden Planet* (1956)

International Science Fiction Film

Spring 2011, T/Th: 2:25-4:15 – Caldwell G 107

Dr. Devin Orgeron

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Film Studies at NCSU: NCSU offers a Film Studies Minor and a Film Major. For more information, contact Dr. Maria Pramaggiore or visit our website at: www.ncsu.edu/chass/film.

Required Texts:

- 1) Redmond, Sean, ed. *Liquid Metal: The Science Fiction Film Reader* (London: Wallflower, 2004).
- 2) Electronic Reserves– <http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/reserves/>

Course Objectives and Outcomes: One of the cinema's most enduring and popular genres, Science Fiction might also be the most curious. Along with the social, political, technological, and scientific concerns of the films we'll view in class, we will consider the cinema's particular fascination with and ability to imagine "the future." Focused on international films from the 1950s-present, requirements include weekly readings, two term papers, and a cumulative final.

Screenings: You are required to be present for **all** screenings. If you have a **documented emergency** and miss a screening, you are responsible for viewing the film(s) on your own time prior to class discussion. The Library's media center (2nd floor of D.H. Hill, 515-2977) has most of the films we'll be viewing. You may also view films in the Film Studies lab (Tompkins G116). To make an appointment contact Film Studies Lab Assistant, Clitha Mason (cmason2@ncsu.edu).

Some of the films in this course involve drug-use, nudity, sex, extreme language, extreme violence, animal cruelty, etc. If you fear that you might be offended by such material, you should meet with me immediately and may want to seek another course.

Class Discussion/Oral Participation: Discussions will revolve around the materials we've seen and read so always bring the reading being covered to class along with notes that you have taken during or after the screenings. I frequently call on students to respond to questions so be ready to participate on a daily basis. You should feel free to express your opinions and ideas, but also be prepared to draw upon supporting evidence from the films and essays. While I do not officially quantify oral participation in determining your grade, participation *influences* borderline grades. An avid participator with a high "B" (mathematically) will often receive an "A" in the course, while someone who does not participate regularly with a borderline "B"/"C" will receive a "C" in the course. Students who participate usually receive the highest grades, largely because they use each class session to test their own ideas.

Reading: You are required to complete all reading for each class session and to bring these materials to class (you should print out all assigned and printable e-reserve materials). Read carefully

and closely, making comments in the margins of the text and taking notes in order to help your oral responses in class and to prepare you for the papers and final examination.

Written and In-Class Work:

1) There are two formal papers in this course, both **about 8** pages. The due dates for both papers are noted on your syllabus. You are encouraged to discuss paper topics or any other assignment with me in advance via email or during my office hours to avoid writing an inappropriate paper. **Proofreading and revision** are essential to good writing and getting another person to read your work often reveals problems that you might miss. Papers are due at the beginning of class on the day that they are due. **Late papers drop a grade per class day that they are late.** Please consider using NCSU's **free** Writing Tutorial Services. Call 515-3163 or visit their website for more information.

2) You will have weekly quizzes in this course based on our reading, discussions, and screenings. These cannot be made up. Read carefully and actively.

3) You will also notice a list of films listed at the end of each study unit. These films are all available on reserve in the library's media center and you are *encouraged* to view them all. Over the course of the semester, you are *required* to select one of these films and write a two-page response drawing on ideas we've discussed in class (especially from that unit). Do not summarize. Instead, comment on the film's ideas and the devices the filmmakers use to articulate those ideas. If you are concerned about your writing, you should plan to do this in the first half of the semester (before paper #1). Papers—30 points towards the quiz portion of your grade—for each unit are due on the last day of that unit.

Final Examination: This class includes a cumulative final exam. *There are no make-up exams.* You are responsible for all material covered in the readings, screenings, lectures, and discussions.

Academic Integrity: Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. This includes plagiarism, cheating on assignments or exams, turning in work that has been written (partially or entirely) by someone else, failing to appropriately document sources, fabricating information or citations, turning in work that has been previously submitted for another course, forging documents (including attendance), or helping another student commit an act of academic dishonesty. In addition to being referred to the Office of Student Conduct and having to participate in that office's Academic Integrity Program, any student who violates the Code of Student Conduct—whether in a formal paper, an informal writing assignment, an exam, etc.—will receive a failing grade in the course and be placed on Academic Integrity Probation. *Except for the most basic IMDB information, your internet research should be limited to the resources available through the library and your use of these materials must be properly cited.* Please see http://www.ncsu.edu/student_affairs/osc/AIpage/acaintegrity.html for an explanation of academic integrity and of the consequences involved in violating it. According to University guidelines, it is your responsibility to know the rules.

Attendance: Attendance is required. If you miss a class, please ask another student for class notes and find out if you missed any assignments. More than four absences (two weeks of class) will result in the lowering of your grade by one third for every additional day (an "A" student with six absences will receive a "B+" for the course).

Grades: Your final grade will be determined as follows: Quizzes/Short Writing=**20%**; Paper #1=**20%**; Final Paper=**30%**; Final Exam=**30%**

Extra Credit: 1st Fridays of the month at 7pm at the NC Museum of Natural Sciences there will be free Science Fiction films. You can get 5 pts. e.c. towards your quiz/short writing grade (you may do 2). 2 pg. response paper (not summary!) with ticket stub (tickets avail. @ 5pm each 1st Friday).

This syllabus is subject to change. You are responsible for all changes announced in class. If you miss some or all of a class session, contact a classmate about changes to the syllabus. Always read the assigned text for the class session on which the assignment appears.

*(LM) refers to Sean Redmond's *Liquid Metal*

*(ER) Refers to E-reserve materials

Welcome to Tomorrowland: The Space(s) of Science Fiction

Tu., Jan. 11

Syllabus / Course Policies

Screening: *Things to Come* (1936) William Cameron Menzies (92 min.) UK

Th. Jan. 13

Introduction: Screening Speculation: The Roots of Filmed Science Fiction

Reading: Jorge Luis Borges: "Wells the Visionary" (ER 16-18)

Tu. Jan. 18

Screening: *Forbidden Planet* (1956) Fred Wilcox (98 min.) USA

Tu. Jan. 20

Reading: Vivian Sobchack: "Images of Wonder" (LM 4-11)

Keith Booker: "*Forbidden Planet*" (ER 41-57).

Screening: *American Look* (1958) Jam Handy Organization (28 min) USA

Design for Dreaming (1956) MPO (9 min.) USA

Tu. Jan. 25

Screening: *Alphaville* (1965) Jean Luc Godard (99 min.) France

Th. Jan. 27

Reading: Vivian Sobchack: "Cities on the Edge of Time" (LM 78-87)

David Desser: "Race, Space and Class" (ER 80-96)

Tu. Feb. 1

Screening: *Brazil* (1985) Terry Gilliam (143 min.) UK

Th. Feb. 3

Reading: J.P. Telotte: "Dream Girls and Mechanic Panic" (LM 64-73)

Keith James Hamel: "Modernity and Mise-en-scène" (ER 344-354)

Also View: *Metropolis* (1927) Fritz Lang (124 min.) Germany

Fahrenheit 451 (1966) François Truffaut (112 min.) France

Gattaca (1997) Andrew Niccol (106 min.) USA

Human Questions

Tu. Feb. 8

Screening: *RoboCop* (1987) Paul Verhoeven (103 min.) USA

Th. Feb. 10

Reading: Doran Larson: "Machine as Messiah" (LM 191-204)

Hassan Melehy: "Bodies Without Organs" (ER 315-334)

Tu. Feb. 15

Screening: *The Fly* (1986) David Cronenberg (95 min.) Canada

Th. Feb. 17

Reading: Steve Neale: “You’ve got to be fucking kidding!” (LM 11-16)
J.P. Telotte: “Crossing Genre Boundaries” (ER 179-195)

Tu. Feb. 22

Screening: *THX 1138* (1971) George Lucas (98 min.) USA

Th. Feb. 24

Reading: Michael Ryan and Douglas Kellner: “Technophobia/Dystopia” (LM 48-56)
Mary Ann Doane: “Technophilia” (LM 182-190)

Also View: *Children of Men* (2006) Alfonso Cuarón (109 min.) USA

Terminator II (1991) James Cameron (137 min.) USA

Tetsuo (1989) Shinya Tsukamoto (67 min.) Japan

What are you doing after the apocalypse?

Tu. March 1

Screening: *Gojira* (1954) Ishiro Honda (98 min.) Japan

Th. March 3

Reading: Jerome Shapiro: “Japan’s Atomic Bomb Cinema” (ER 251-306)
PAPER #1 Due

Tu. March 8-Th. March 10 – NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK

Tu. March 15

Screening: *The End of August at the Hotel Ozone* (1967) Jan Schmidt (77 min.) CZ
La Jetée (1962) Chris Marker (28 min.) France

Th. March 17

Reading: Susan Sontag: “The Imagination of Disaster” (LM 37-47)

Tu. March 22

Screening: *The Day the Earth Caught Fire* (1961) Val Guest (98 min.) UK

Th. March 24

Reading: I.Q. Hunter: “The Day the Earth Caught Fire” (ER 99-112)

Tu. March 29

Screening: *The Road Warrior* (1981) (91 min.) AU

Th. March 31

Reading: Thomas Dilworth: “The Road Warrior and the Fall of Troy” (ER 146-150)
Christopher Sharrett: “Myth, Male Fantasy, and Simulacra in Mad Max and The Road Warrior” (ER 80-91)

Also View: *On the Beach* (1959) Stanley Kramer (134 min.) USA

Silent Running (1972) Douglas Trumbull (89 min.) USA

The Road (2009) Jim Hillcoat (111 min.) USA

Journeys and Invasions

Tu. Apr. 5

Screening: *The Thing* (1951) Howard Hawks (87 min.) USA

Th., Apr. 7

Reading: Peter Biskind: "The Russians are Coming, Aren't They?" (LM 318-324)
Mark Jancovich: "Re-examining the 1950s Invasion Narratives (LM 325-336)

Tu. Apr. 12

Screening: *District 9* (2009) Neil Blomkamp (112 min.) USA

Th. Apr. 14

Reading: Barry Keith Grant: "Sensuous Elaboration" (LM 17-23)

Tu. Apr. 19

Screening: *Silent Star* (1960) Kurt Maetzig (93 min.)

FINAL PAPER DUE

Th. Apr. 21 – NO CLASS – SPRING HOLIDAY

Tu. Apr. 26

Screening: *Planet of the Apes* (1968) Franklin Shaffner (112 min.) USA

Th. Apr. 28

Reading: Constance Penley: "Time Travel, Primal Scene & the Critical Dystopia" (LM 126-135)
Booker, Keith: "Planet of the Apes" (ER 91-107)

Also View: *Destination Moon* (1950) Irving Pichel (92 min.) USA

2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) Stanley Kubrick (141 min.)

Avatar (2009) James Cameron

Th. May 5: Final Exam - 1:00-4:00, Caldwell G107. Bring exam books!!!

No make-up exams