

PHIL 136-H01 Honors Colloquium in Philosophy – Dr. Aeon J. Skoble

Spring 2022: Philosophy & Science Fiction --**Syllabus – keep handy for reference**

341 Tillinghast, x2460 Email: askoble@bridgew.edu; Web: <http://webhost.bridgew.edu/askoble>

Office hours: MTR 11-12, or by appointment

Texts:

The Philosophy of Science Fiction Film, Steven M. Sanders, ed. (Univ. Press of Kentucky)

Additional readings to be distributed in class or via web

For film viewings, you can either (a) borrow them from your local public library, (b) buy/rent/stream them from Netflix or Amazon or another service.

Overview and objectives:

Science fiction can be defined as that branch of literature, and by extension cinema, which deals with the effects of science or technology on the human condition, or which explore the human condition via science (including via utopian or dystopian future societies). Science fiction allows for imaginative, yet carefully thought-out, alternative realities, and raises a number of philosophical questions and themes, including the paradoxes of time travel, enigmas of personal identity, the implications of advanced technology and artificial intelligence, and the meaning of life. Human nature, ethics, and politics may also be explored. This colloquium will examine ways in which science fiction illuminates many important philosophical issues, with an eye towards both enhancing the scope of the students' exposure to and appreciation of the genre and its roots, and also towards instilling curiosity about the philosophical dimensions of the genre.

Requirements:

This is a one-credit class. We will meet once a week to discuss the films and readings, and you will write an 8-10 page paper on a topic to be determined later by mutual agreement, which is due April 25th. In our final meeting, May 2nd, we will discuss the papers.

Required film viewings (please note year): *Frankenstein* (both the 1931 and the 1994 versions), *Forbidden Planet* (1956), *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (both the 1956 and 1978 versions), *Total Recall* (1990), *The Matrix* (first film only, 1999), *The Terminator* (first film only, 1984), *12 Monkeys*(1995), *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968), *Blade Runner* (original theatrical release only, 1982), *1984* (1984 version), *The Andromeda Strain* (1971), *Jurassic Park* (1993); others TBA. You must watch the films prior to the day they are scheduled to be discussed, as well as completing any assigned readings.

Optional additional films that will help: *The Time Machine* (1960), *War of the Worlds* (1953), *When Worlds Collide* (1951), any couple episodes of *The Outer Limits* (1963-65) and *Star Trek* (1966-69), and the original 1977 *Star Wars*.

General Outline:

Jan 24 – intro to topic; opening discussion of science fiction; *Frankenstein*

Jan 31 - *Forbidden Planet*

Feb 7 - *The Day the Earth Stood Still*

Feb 14 – *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*

Feb 23 - *Total Recall* and *The Matrix* (Note: Wednesday meeting this week)

Feb 28- *2001: A Space Odyssey*

Mar 14 - *The Terminator* and *12 Monkeys*

Mar 21- *Blade Runner*

Mar 28 - *1984*

Apr 4 – *The Andromeda Strain* and *Jurassic Park*

Apr 11 - TBA

April 25 - Papers due; final discussion of readings, film TBA

May 2 - discussion of student papers