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HSS 403-106: Science Fiction Film

Nancy Steffen-Fluhr

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HSS 403-106 SCIENCE FICTION FILM Spring, 2021

INSTRUCTOR: Dr. Nancy Steffen-Fluhr

Associate Professor, Humanities (Science, Technology & Society Division)
Director, Murray Center for Women in Technology

OFFICE: Online only during spring 2021
OFFICE HOURS: Wednesdays, 5 to 6 pm & by appointment
WebEx Office: <http://njit.webex.com/meet/steffen>
PHONE: Cell: 201-919-4018 Landline: 973-208-9015
EMAIL: steffen@njit.edu
COURSE CANVAS: <https://njit.instructure.com/courses/15175>

CLASS MEETINGS:

Thursdays, 6-8:45 pm via WebEx

WEBEX LINK: <https://njit.webex.com/njit/j.php?MTID=m2e333928e6f5085e97076121ef633476>

WEBEX PASSWORD: C63ciPDUQ3

NUTS & BOLTS

COURSE DELIVERY MODE: This is an online course. It will be primarily synchronous: that is, we will meet “live” via WebEx once a week at a regular time (6-8:45 pm). Some of our class interaction will also take place asynchronously, however, within NJIT’s CANVAS learning management system--canvas.njit.edu—and I will hold live (online) office hours, in my personal WebEx room. (See above.) Some of the assignments require that you work on project/ have a discussion with a subset of your fellow students, and your group may decide to do this synchronously via Zoom, WebEx, or a chat room. You will also be asked to record a very short selfie-style video each week on an assigned topic and share your video with the class via an app called Flipgrid. (See “APPS” below for more detail.) [For more info on online courses sat NJIT, See For more information, see [FAQs for Online Courses at NJIT.](#)]

TOOLS:

- **REQUIRED:** A computer, webcam, mic, and a reliable internet connection (preferably hard-wired)
- **RECOMMENDED:** In addition to your main computer, you will probably want to have a smartphone or tablet, with a reliable internet connection, that you can use to make Flipgrid videos. (If you don’t have a smartphone, you can make Flipgrid videos from your desktop/laptop, as long as you have a webcam and mic.)

APPS:

- **CANVAS MOBILE APP:** You can access Canvas directly from your desktop/laptop by going to canvas.njit.edu and logging in with your UCID. If you want to access Canvas from your smartphone or tablet, however, you will first have to download an app. **Here’s how:** Go to the App Store on your iOS device or the Play Store on your Android device. Once you have downloaded the app, open it, tap Find my school, and then type in New Jersey Institute of Technology. When the full name appears in the search list, tap the name. The name of the university should appear in the search list. If it does not, then enter the following URL: njit.instructure.com.
- **FLIPGRID MOBILE APP:** In addition to the spontaneous discussions, we will have each week in our live class session and breakout rooms, part of your weekly homework will involve responding to a special question by making a short, selfie-style video using a simple but powerful app called Flipgrid. The app is already embedded in our LIT 386 Canvas, so you don’t need an individual Flipgrid account; however, if you are going to use a smartphone or tablet to record your videos, you will need to download the mobile version of the app. It comes in both IOS and Android flavors. **Here are instructions:**

<https://blog.flipgrid.com/gettingstarted>

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: *“Academic Integrity is the cornerstone of higher education and is central to the ideals of this course and the university. Cheating is strictly prohibited and devalues the degree that you are working on. As a member of the NJIT community, it is your responsibility to protect your educational investment by knowing and following the academic code of integrity policy that is found at: <http://www5.njit.edu/policies/sites/policies/files/academic-integrity-code.pdf>. Please note that it is my professional obligation and responsibility to report any academic misconduct to the Dean of Students Office. Any student found in violation of the code by cheating, plagiarizing or using any online software inappropriately will result in disciplinary action. This may include a failing grade of F, and/or suspension or dismissal from the university. If you have any questions about the code of Academic Integrity, please contact the Dean of Students Office at dos@njit.edu”*

PROCTORING OF QUIZZES AND EXAMS: All quizzes and exams are closed book, closed notes, no aids. **You are required to use Respondus for the online quizzes and exams. (See below.)**

Using Respondus LockDown and a Webcam for Online Exams:

Respondus LockDown Browser is a locked browser for taking exams in Canvas. It prevents you from printing, copying, going to another URL, or accessing other applications during a test. If a Canvas quiz requires that LockDown Browser be used, you will not be able to take the assessment or quiz with a standard web browser.

You will be required to use the LockDown Browser with a webcam (Respondus Monitor), which will record you during this course’s online midterm and final exams.

The webcam can be built into your computer or can be the type that plugs in with a USB cable. Watch [this short video](#) to get a basic understanding of LockDown Browser and the webcam feature. A student [Quick Start Guide \(PDF\)](#) is also available.

- a) Download and install LockDown Browser from this link:
<http://www.respondus.com/lockdown/download.php?id=264548414>
- b) Once your download has finished, locate the “LockDown Browser” shortcut on the desktop and double-click it. (For Mac users, launch “LockDown Browser” from the Applications folder.)
- c) You will be brought to the Canvas login page within the LockDown Browser, click “Login with your UCID” to log in with your NJIT UCID and password and then click Login.
- d) Under “My courses”, click on the course in which you have to take the exam that requires the LockDown Browser.
- e) After you enter the course, find the exam and click on it.
- f) A confirmation prompt will appear, click the “Start attempt” button. Once a quiz has been started with LockDown Browser, you cannot exit until the Submit all and finish button is clicked.
- g) If you are required to use a webcam (Respondus Monitor), you will be prompted to complete a Webcam Check and other Startup Sequence steps.

NETIQUETTE: Throughout this course, you are expected to behave courteously to classmates by being a polite, active participant. You should respond to discussion Flipgrid assignments promptly so classmates have adequate time to reply. In our synchronous class sessions, please keep your camera on—especially when you are speaking. (But don’t Toobin!) Respect opinions, even those that differ strongly from your own, and avoid using offensive language, unless I do first. ●

THE COURSE (finally!)

BRIEF COURSE DESCRIPTION: In this course, we will analyze a set of science fiction novels, stories, and films in order to better understand the underlying cultural assumptions that drive the real-life US technological enterprise. In the second half of the course especially, we will take a closer look at how these assumptions are critiqued in the films of several major directors, with special attention to the idiosyncrasies of visual style.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

H.G. Wells. *The War of the Worlds* (1898)

NOTE: The complete (free) E-Text of *War of the Worlds* is available at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/36>

Emily St. John Mandel. *Station Eleven* (2014)

Online Course Pack (CP) of short stories and essays [Available on our course CANVAS]

REQUIRED FILM VIEWING: You are expected to see the assigned films/video clips on your own, at home or in your dorm. Some of the films/videos are available for free at the URLs indicated in the syllabus. The others are widely available for a small rental fee on YouTube, Netflix, Amazon Prime Video, iTunes, and/or Vudu, among other sources. If you have trouble finding a given film, please contact me.

COURSE GRADING SCALE

GRADE	POINTS
A	90-100
B+	88-90
B	80-87
C+	78-80
C	70-77
D	65-70
F	Below 65

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COURSE REQUIREMENTS/ GRADING (Here's How You Earn those 100 Points!)

Two analytical essays on assigned topics.

Essay #1: due March 25	20 points
Essay #2: due May 6	20
Midterm exam: March 11	20
Cumulative "Final Quiz": April 29	10
Weekly Class Participation/ Quizzes (2.5 x 12 wks.)	30
TOTAL	100 points

WEEKLY CLASS PARTICIPATION COMPONENTS:

Class Participation Score (See Rubric):	0.75	
Quiz A (beginning of class):	0.50	
Quiz B (end of class):	0.25	+ extra credit "Easter Egg" worth 0.25 or more
Flipgrid Video*	0.75	* The Flipgrid assignment is due before class.
Comment on another student's Flipgrid*	0.25	* The Flipgrid assignment is due before class.
WEEKLY TOTAL=	2.50	

READING/ DISCUSSION SCHEDULE

NOTE ON READINGS & FILMS: You should have completed the assigned reading and/or seen the assigned film by the date on which it is scheduled for discussion. That is, you should have finished the novel *War of the Worlds* and have seen the 2005 Spielberg film version of *War* by next week, **January 28**.

J21	Unit 1	What is SF? The Things We Carry In-Class Film: Stanton. <i>WALL-E</i> (2008)
J28	Unit 2	Them! (Aliens and the War within H.G. Wells) Reading: Wells. <i>War of the Worlds</i> (1898) Film to Rent: Spielberg. <i>War of the Worlds</i> (2005) (excerpts) [See the complete film prior to class] In-Class Film: Pal. <i>War of the Worlds</i> (1953) [excerpts]
F4	Unit 3	Alien Transformations Part 1 Films to Rent: <i>Invasion of the Body Snatchers</i> (1956) [See the complete film prior to class] <i>Annihilation</i> (2018) [See the complete film prior to class] In-Class Films: <i>Body Snatchers</i> (1993) [Excerpts] <i>Invasion of the Body Snatchers</i> (1978) [excerpts] <i>The Invasion</i> (2007) [excerpts]
F11	Unit 4	Alien Transformations Part 2 Readings: CP #1 Nussbaum (on Disgust) from <i>Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions</i> (Cambridge UP, 2003). CP #2 "From Santa Mira to South Africa" Film to rent: <i>District 9</i> (2009) [See the complete film prior to class]
F18	Unit 5	Alien Transformations Part 3 Readings: CP #3 Van Vogt. "The Enchanted Village" CP #4 Russell. "Don't It Make My Black Face Blue" Film to Rent: Cameron. <i>Avatar</i> (2009) [See the complete film prior to class]
F25	Unit 6	Aliens and Female Embodiment Film to rent: Scott. <i>Alien</i> (1979) [See the complete film prior to class] Scott. <i>Prometheus</i> (2012) [Extra Credit]

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- M4** **Unit 7** **Alien Conversations**
Films to Rent: Villeneuve. *Arrival* (2016) [See the complete film prior to class]
 Del Toro. *The Shape of Water* (2017) [See the complete film prior to class]
- M11** **Unit 8** **Welcome to Dystopia**
MIDTERM EXAM **[1.5 hour]**
Extra Credit Film: “Nosedive” (Black Mirror Season 3 Episode 1—2016) (Netflix)
- M18** **NO CLASS** **SPRING BREAK**
- M25** **Unit 9** **ESSAY #1 DUE**
Dystopia, Take One: Metro as Metaphor
Online film: *Max Headroom* (1985): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aZY-yQYVf38>
Online film: Saleh. *Metropia* (2009): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XP14Nm0Vm4o>
 [See the complete films prior to class]
- A1** **Unit 10** **Dystopia, Take Two: Aliens as Immigrants**
Film to rent: Cuarón. *The Children of Men* (2006) [See the complete film prior to class]
- A8** **Unit 11** **Dystopia, Take Three: Pandemic**
Book Reading: St. John Mandel. *Station Eleven* (2014)
- A15** **Unit 12** **Dystopia, Take Four: Inside Outside**
Film to rent: Winterbottom. *Code 46* [See the complete film prior to class]
- A22** **Unit 13** **Dystopia, Take Five: The World of Terry Gilliam**
Films to rent: Gilliam. *Brazil* (1985) [See the complete film prior to class]
 Gilliam. *Zero Theorem* (2014) [See the complete film prior to class]
In-class film: *The Making of Brazil* (documentary--excerpts)
- A29** **Unit 14** **The World of Stanley Kubrick** **LAST CLASS**
Films to rent: Kubrick. *2001* (1968) [See the complete film prior to class]
 Kubrick. *Dr. Strangelove* (1964) [See the complete film prior to class]
Cumulative “Final Quiz”
- May 6** **ESSAY #2 DUE**