

The Politics of Science Fiction

In this course, we will explore the ways in which political concerns have been explored in works of science fiction, both in literature and film. Through diverse works, we will analyze critical themes such as the role of government and the state in social life, the mechanisms of domination and resistance, social inequality, gender and reproductive rights, and environmental degradation. Students will gain insight into how speculative fiction challenges and reimagines political realities by engaging with these texts and films.

Sessions and works

1. Two views on power

George Orwell, 1984

Aldous Huxley, Brave New World

This session examines two contrasting dystopian visions of power and control: one based on surveillance and repression, the other on pleasure and passive compliance. We will discuss how these works critique political authority and problematize individual autonomy.

2. Authoritarianism, oppression and resistance

Philip K. Dick, The Man in the High Castle

Hugo Santiago, Invasión

Exploring alternate histories and speculative futures, this session delves into the nature of authoritarian regimes and the complexities of resistance, reflecting on how power shapes the oppressed and the oppressors.

3. The climate crisis and planetary breakdown

Rafael Bernal, His Name was Death

Through this environmental sci-fi novel, we will discuss humanity's impact on the planet and the intersection of ecological degradation, colonialism, and existential despair.

4. Technology: autonomy and control

Adolfo Bioy Casares, The Invention of Morel

Stanislaw Lem, The Invincible

Alex Garland, Ex Machina

This session examines the classical sci-fi relationship between humanity and technology, focusing on surveillance, artificial intelligence, and the struggle for autonomy in a technologically dominated world.

5. Inequality and social stratification

Jorge Luis Borges, "The Lottery in Babylon"

Andrew Niccol, Gattaca

Alex Rivera, Sleep Dealer

Through these works, we will explore the structures and dynamics of social inequality and social and genetic determinism, reflecting on how speculative worlds depict the intersection of class, labor, and systemic discrimination.

6. Gender and reproductive rights

Margaret Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale

This session focuses on gender oppression and reproductive control. We will analyze how science fiction reflects and critiques patriarchal structures and women's societal roles.

7. Critical thinking

Ray Bradbury, Fahrenheit 451

We will examine the role of censorship and intellectual freedom in a world where knowledge is controlled, reflecting on how speculative fiction critiques societal complacency, the suppression of dissent, and the monopoly over thought.

8. Identity and the individual

Mark Romanek, Never Let Me Go

Peter Weir, The Truman Show

This session explores questions of identity, free will, and authenticity in contexts where individuals are subject to unseen forces of control and manipulation.

9. Bureaucracy and rules

Kafka, The Trial

Harlan Ellison, "Repent, Harlequin!" Said the Ticktockman"

Through these stories, we will analyze the dehumanizing effects of bureaucratic systems and the struggle to maintain individuality within rigid societal and political structures.

10. Hope and utopia

Ursula K. Le Guin, The Dispossessed

To conclude the course, we will discuss visions of utopia and the challenges of creating equitable societies, focusing on themes of political philosophy, social justice, hope, and the potential for human progress.