

60417 - Adv. ETB Video: Experimental Science Fiction

Time: M/W 6:30 - 9:30pm	Place: CFA 307 and 318
Term: Fall 2017	Units: 10, Section: A
Instructor Suzie Silver suziesilver@cmu.edu Office: CFA 417 Office hours: by appointment	

Course Description

TO BOLDLY GO . . .

I was attracted to science fiction because it was so wide open. I was able to do anything and there were no walls to hem you in and there was no human condition that you were stopped from examining - Octavia Butler

Science Fiction is not about the future. Rather it uses the future as a means of talking about the present and its potentiality. - Samuel Delany

Imagination is the only weapon in the war against reality. - Lewis Carroll

This course uses science fiction and experimental media production as a means to explore our anxieties and desires in relation to possible (or impossible) futures. We will screen and discuss experimental and independently produced science fiction films from all over the world. Readings, including short stories and critical essays, will be assigned and discussed to broaden and deepen our engagement with the field. Technical instruction will be tool agnostic and focus on the specific needs of student projects. Students can explore practical and optical effects as well as animation and visual effects. It is assumed that students have at least basic proficiency in video production and post-production. The primary tools available in CFA 318 for editing and VFX include, Adobe After Effects, Premiere and Photoshop; Apple Final Cut Pro and Motion; Blackmagic Fusion and Davinci Resolve. Topics for demos and workshops will include compositing, tracking, color correction and grading, motion graphics, particle systems and more. Upon completion of the course, each student either alone or in small groups will have completed three short experimental science fiction films.

Reading for Wed

Why Take This Course

Experimental Science Fiction will help you develop skills applicable to a wide range of creative disciplines and professional fields. You will regularly use crucial cognitive skills that will benefit you in all academic and professional settings. You will analyze the work of writers and filmmakers, breaking down a story, essay or film in order to understand how it works. You will analyze your classmates' proposals and films and your own to discern where things are coming together and where there is room for improvement. You will synthesize your personal observations, experiences, research, inventiveness and imagination to propose and produce on your own or collaboratively short science fiction films.

Wherever you find yourself in your creative and/or professional life you will receive and be asked to give feedback on your work and the work of others. Feedback can be scary, but a studio class like this will give you many opportunities to practice receiving and giving feedback. You will learn how to listen actively to critical feedback, respond graciously, and process that feedback in a productive manner. You will also learn how to provide thoughtful, honest, and productive feedback to others.

You will read a selection of stories and essays and view films from diverse backgrounds and styles. Science Fiction is often about considering perspectives and experiences out of the ordinary. Inspired by the present and the past Science Fiction writers and filmmakers imagine (im)possible futures. Films and readings encountered in this class will broaden and deepen your understanding of those who are different from you. This course will help you prepare for a universe where change is the only constant.

Course Objectives

Upon successful completion of this course, you should be able to:

1. Effectively manage the resources and logistics required to produce an experimental short film.
2. Generate and pursue an idea from conception to completed short film.
3. Gain more experience and develop your skills in the techniques of digital film production and post-production.
4. Create film work that reflects your unique voice.
5. Analyze and discuss Science Fiction short stories, criticism and films.
6. Contribute productively to a studio environment with constructive criticism and positive feedback.

Required Texts

The Big Book of Science Fiction, Edited by Jeff and Ann VanderMeer

Science Fiction Criticism: An Anthology of Essential Writings, Edited by Rob Latham

Both available from the CMU bookstore or your favorite bookseller

Required External Hard Drive

A fast external hard drive is necessary for the successful completion of this course. HD video files can take up a lot of hard drive space in a very short time. Cloud storage is too slow for you to work from. Your drive should be at least 500 gigabytes (a terabyte is better). The interfaces that work with the clusters computers are USB-3, Firewire 800 (with an adaptor) and Thunderbolt. If it is a mechanical drive it should rotate at 7200 rpm with at least 16mb cache.

I get most of my hard drives from MacSales and find these drives a good value.

<https://eshop.macsales.com/item/OWC/MSU37T1.0T16/>

Learning Resources

Lynda.com

NoFilmSchool.com

videocopilot.net

Grading

Participation - 20%

World Building Sketch - 5%

Reflections and Analysis - 15%

Film Projects - 60%

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high line NYC
for as I

making a part
world (abstract)

Participation

- Consistently attend class
- Arrive on time
- Engage thoughtfully in class discussions
- Provide respectful and constructive feedback
- Help create a supportive environment (be careful not to dominate the conversation)
- Demonstrate that you have completed the assigned reading

World Building Sketch

This a quick non-medium specific project that will allow you to quickly express some of your science fiction world building interests and ideas. You can use the medium of your choice: writing, comics, drawing, digital imaging, photography, video. I will provide more instruction/explanation in class and on Canvas. Be as ambitious as possible but please remember that you will only have one week to complete it.

Reflections and Analysis

Throughout the course you will receive both in-class and out-of-class short writing assignments in which you will respond to the assigned readings and screenings. You will post these to Canvas on or before each due date.

Film Projects

You will create three short films in this course. The first one is a solo project the two other films you can make either on your own or in a small collaborative group. Whether you work alone or in a group depends on the type of film projects you want to be involved with. You will turn these in as a video file and as a vimeo link on or before every due date. Additionally you will be required to present your work-in-progress of the two major productions.

Note About Sensitive Material

Some of the stories we will read and some of the films we will view, and perhaps some of the films created by your classmates, may delve into challenging issues related to gender, race, class, gender, sexuality, violence and more. If you find yourself uncomfortable with a particular reading or film please let me know. Also, know that you may excuse yourself from a discussion or even the classroom due to personal discomfort with the subject matter if the occasion arises. Our classroom should be safe space for you to explore and discuss the material; if at some point it does not feel safe to you, you must do what you need to take care of yourself.

Classroom Policies

Late Work

Figuring out how to complete work by a given deadline will help you with whatever career you decide to pursue in the future. Therefore, if you turn in late work, you will not earn full credit unless there are special circumstances - for example, a personal emergency - for which you have documentation. Please contact me regarding any special circumstances. Attendance and

Tardiness

Consistent attendance is essential to the successful completion of this course. Much of the conceptual content, technical instruction and project work will happen during class time. I do realize that you do have a life beyond our classroom and that life can be hectic and difficult. Therefore you are allowed one unexcused absence. To earn full participation credit you must not exceed one unexcused absence. Excused absences are those for which you can provide documentation - for example a doctor's not or a note from your advisor verifying an emergency. Excused absences include but are not limited to illness, personal or family emergencies and observance of a religious holiday.

If you know you are going to miss class please let me know in advance.

Electronic Devices

Engagement with the classroom community in the moment is essential to successfully completing this course. Distraction is detrimental to creative and intellectual development. Ensure that your phone is turned off during class. If you receive calls, answer texts, etc. you will lose percentage points on the attendance/participation part of your grade.

Disability Accommodations

If you have a disability and require accommodations, please contact Catherine Getchell, Director of Disability Resources, 412-268-6121, getchell@cmu.edu. If you have an accommodations letter from the Disability Resources office, I encourage you to discuss your accommodations and needs with me as early in the semester as possible. I will make every effort to accommodate the needs of students with documented disabilities.

Personal Care and Wellness

Also, Please remember to take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is here to help: call 412-268-2922 and visit their website at <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for help getting connected to the support that can help.

Inclusivity

The School of Art recognizes the diversity of racial identities, religious backgrounds, sexual orientations, and gender identities that is a foundation of our strengths as a culture. All classes and studios in the School of Art are safe spaces for self-identification, self-expression, and inclusivity.