

## **Introduction of new course(s)**

### **COURSE CONTENT**

Date :

Academic Year : 2017/2018 (Semester 2)

Study Year (if applicable) : N.A

Course Code & Title : HL8025 Social Constructions of Utopias and Dystopias: Literature,  
Film and Image

Academic Unit : 3 AU

Pre-requisite : NIL

#### **HL8025 Social Constructions of Utopias and Dystopias: Literature, Film and Image**

[Lectures: 39 hours; Pre-requisites: Nil; Academic Unit: 3.0]

2017/2018 (Semester 2)

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**Lecturer:** Dr Jiaying Sim

#### **Content:**

This course examines the following questions: How do films and visual narratives realise utopic or dystopic ideas and imaginations? What is the relation between these fictions and the world of contemporary reality? How do they present new ways of conceiving life, experiences, or realities, to traditional history and/or alternative futures? How does the imaginative social construction of utopias and dystopias address the constantly changing relation of science and technology to human life as we know it: to the human individual, to human society, and to the many institutions and notions, from gender and sexuality to race, family, nation, religion and species, where the relation of the individual to the group is mediated in time and place? Dystopian and utopian concepts will be studied through a series of filmic case studies that may be regarded as extrapolations of current technology and science, or as possible social worlds with alternative selves, life-forms, ecosystems, or histories.

#### **Course Aims:**

At the end of this course students will have:

- 1) An awareness of how structures of power and control function through visions of utopias and dystopias in the context of race, class and gender relations.
- 2) An awareness of the historical and cultural contexts that create and construct these works of utopic and dystopic fiction
- 3) An ability to analyze and evaluate different iterations and characteristics of utopian fiction through literary, filmic, and visual texts.

## **Learning Outcomes:**

### **1) Subject-specific Knowledge**

- a. Students will demonstrate a close knowledge of key concepts, characteristics, and problems associated with utopic visions, and the incapacity for utopianism as a worldview.
- b. Students will show an understanding of the cultural and historical contexts that shape utopic visual texts.
- c. Students will analyse and evaluate different critical literary and filmic and visual texts that present utopic/dystopic characteristics.

### **2) Subject-specific Skills**

- a. Students will develop a capacity to analyse critically and articulate arguments
- b. Students will develop an ability to discuss these issues through written and verbal expression with cogency and coherence.
- c. Students will learn the language and vocabulary required for effective analysis of filmic and visual texts.

## **Student Assessment Students will be assessed by:**

- a. Final 2-hour written examination (50%)
- b. Term essay (50%)

### Primary Filmography List

William Cameron Menzies, *Things to Come* (1936)  
Fritz Lang, *Metropolis* (1927)  
Spike Jones, *Her* (2013)  
Brad Bird, *Tomorrowland* (2015)  
Andrew Niccol, *Gattaca* (1997)  
Wally Pfister, *Transcendence* (2014)  
Lana Wachowski, Lilly Wachowski, *Matrix* (1999)  
Tom Tykwer, Lana Wachowski, *Cloud Atlas* (2012)  
François Truffaut, *Fahrenheit 451* (1966)  
Gary Ross, *Pleasantville* (1998)  
James McTeigue, *V for Vendetta* (2005)  
James Cameron, *Avatar* (2013)  
Jules Boulain-Adenis (Naleb), *PANACÉE* (2017)  
Jennifer Phang, *Advantageous* (2015)  
*The Handmaid's Tale* (2017)  
(HBO Series, Season 1, Episode 1)

### Primary Reading List

Barbara Goodwin, Keith Taylor, *The Politics of Utopia: A Study in Theory and Practice*  
Marinela Freitas, *Utopia Matters: Theory, Politics, Literature, and the Arts*  
Peter Fitting, "What is Utopian Film? An Introductory Taxonomy"

Week	Topic	Lecture
1	Introduction: Concepts of Utopia and Dystopia	Reading(s): <i>What is utopian film? An Introductory Taxonomy</i> Film(s): William Cameron Menzies, <i>Things to Come</i> (1936)
2	Imagining Perfection	Film: Fritz Lang, <i>Metropolis</i> (1927)
3	The (Im)possibilities of Utopias through Technologies	Film(s): Spike Jones, <i>Her</i> (2013) Brad Bird, <i>Tomorrowland</i> (2015)
4	Transcending and Transgressing Human Bodies/Boundaries	Film(s): Andrew Niccol, <i>Gattaca</i> (1997) Wally Pfister, <i>Transcendence</i> (2014)
5	A Time for Utopia	Film(s): Lana Wachowski, Lilly Wachowski, <i>Matrix</i> (1999) Tom Tykwer, Lana Wachowski, <i>Cloud Atlas</i> (2012)
6	Words are Powerful	Book: Ray Bradley, <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> (excerpts) Film: François Truffaut, <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> (1966)
7	<b>Recess Week</b>	<b><i>Essay Due</i></b>
8	For the Greater Good	Film(s): Gary Ross, <i>Pleasantville</i> (1998)
9	Futility of resistance	Film: James McTeigue, <i>V for Vendetta</i> (2005)
10	Role of Women: Female Bodies	<i>Film(s):</i> Jennifer Phang, <i>Advantageous</i> (2015) <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> (2017) (HBO Series, Season 1, Episode 1)
11	Gender and Sexuality: Utopias for Desires	Film(s): San Junipero (Black Mirror Season 3, Ep 3)
12	Utopic/Dystopic Ecologies	James Cameron, <i>Avatar</i> (2013) Jules Boulain-Adenis (Naleb), <i>PANACÉE</i> (2017)
13	Course Revision	