

## SCIF1004 – Summer Term 2024

### Discussion Piece Information

The discussion piece is worth 40% of the course. The assessment item must be submitted via Moodle. Please note, that failure to submit by the deadline will carry a 5-mark a day penalty (assignment is out of 100 marks) up to 5 days where the penalty will be 100-marks (this is the UNSW policy).

On to the assessment item, so far on this course you should have seen (from watching the lectures and films) that science and scientists can be portrayed in a variety of different ways:

*Science/Scientists can be portrayed as shining lights, striving to make the future a better place...*

*Science/Scientists can be shown as a force of evil, highlighting how manipulation can have catastrophic results...*

Or

*Some films depict science/scientists in a balanced manner, highlighting the good that can be done but giving a forewarning of potential problems...*

Your task is to write a discussion piece on how a science/scientific concept has been portrayed in film, you should frame your piece in line with one of the italicised statements (*vide supra*). In your piece you may use films from the course or others of your own choosing. If you choose a film that is not part of this course then it is a good idea to first consult the FAQ list (then if you still are not sure contact the course coordinator) to see if your film is suitable; a common issue when selecting your own film is that the science involved is not actually science and instead is merely a bunch of made up terms used as a plot device, your assignment is to discuss the portrayal of science in film not the plot of a bunch of films (although some context might be needed). Also, the discussion piece is not supposed to be an attack on a series of films, highlighting the absurdity of what transpires or what “fake” science was depicted.

### An example of a good assignment:

You are discussing ‘science X’... Film A only shows X in a positive light; however, you have seen film B and in it X was approached with caution, you could therefore discuss how in film A although the science is only portrayed in a positive light, it could also conceivably be misused as in film B’s depiction. You could then go onto discuss what impact these films have had on your own thinking about X...

### An example of a bad assignment:

You watch film A... You discuss how you know that film A would never happen, ‘science X’ does not allow ‘plot point’ to happen, in fact ‘alternate plot point’ would have happened, film B also makes the same assumption about X again so ‘plot point’ would not happen...

Or

You watch film A... You discuss how *'made up words disguised as science'* allowed mankind to talk to *'magical space fairies'*, the *'magical space fairies'* turn out to be evil and plot to overthrow mankind. In film B however the *'magical space fairies'* are benevolent and give mankind the technology to explore the stars...

Now I would like to point out that in the *'magical space fairies'* scenario, you could actually turn this into a good assignment by instead discussing space exploration/first encounters and how mankind might need to be weary as we explore the 'final frontier'... It's all about context, selection of films and the science/theme are equally important.

The assignment is to be 1000 (900-1100) words (not including references – as in telling the assessor where the work came from does not count towards the word limit), references can be in any widely accepted style (although I would recommend using Oxford, Harvard or Vancouver style). Note, writing a section of text in inverted commas (even correctly referenced) still counts towards the word count. Yes, you must reference the films you watch and any articles that relate to the science that you used for research. There are no limits to how many references you may use, although I would say that you do not want to use too many films as you only have around 1000 words for the assignment.

**Key dates:**

Submission deadline: **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> January**

**FAQs:**

*Do I have to use 2 films, can I just use 1?*

The number of films has no bearing on your grade; one, two, or more, use however many you want but I would recommend one or two as you have a limited word count

*Can I use film X?*

Consult the FAQ film list, if in doubt, send the coordinator an email

*Can you check my work before I submit?*

I'm sorry, there are far too many students for us to pre-grade or check before submission in an equitable manner so no

*I have never studied science, am I disadvantaged?*

Not at all, this course is designed as a general education course, you do not need to know anything about the topics we cover before we begin, the course does not directly assess how much science you know and instead focuses on how "the science" comes across to an audience. If anything, this course focuses on critical analysis and communication skills more than anything else

### **Common Pitfalls:**

Before you start your work, please remember the following:

- The piece is a discussion piece, it should have a “voice” or a narrative, you are **not** just making statements of fact
- You must communicate in a way that shows how an audience would view the film(s), you do **not** have to directly state “the audience would”
- You are **not** to just go through the plot of the film(s)
- You are **not** to point out issues with plots
- You are **not** to point out inaccuracies in film(s), film(s) have artistic licence

### **Assessment Rubric:**

A general note on how a rubric works, in order to be awarded a level you must complete all of the criteria in an ‘area of the grid’, each area builds on from the last i.e. you cannot be awarded a higher level if you have not fully satisfied all of the criteria in every area that precedes it (unless it is a null statement in the previous area). Also, each level of the rubric will have a weighting so you can see how you will be graded, the rubric is also there to help my markers assess your work and also to give you feedback.

Please consult the assessment document for more information of the assessment process. The rubric on Moodle has the mark allocations for each area so you can see which areas are worth more marks.

Assessment Area	Level				
	0	1	2	3	4
Scientific Context [18]	No scientific theme presented [0]	No common theme is presented, piece is multiple non-related themes [6]	A single scientific theme/science is discussed, or multiple themes are presented that are linked [10]	Student shows good evidence of understanding the science/scientific theme(s) [14]	Student shows clear evidence of understanding the science/scientific theme(s) [18]
Context of Science in the Discussion [20]	No discussion occurs [0]	A lack of a discussion and/or no link between the film(s) and science [8]	There is evidence of a link between the film(s) and the science being presented [12]	There is a clear link between the film(s) and the science being presented [16]	The film(s) and science are clearly linked and are used to support the discussion in the piece [20]
Construction of Discussion [24]	No discussion occurs [0]	A discussion occurs but it is difficult to follow (goes off on tangents or provides irrelevant details and/or comments) [6]	The discussion stays on point for the most part with only minor parts not being on point [12]	The discussion flows and stays on point throughout [18]	A high level discussion occurs that is persuasive, clearly articulated and has a logical structure [24]
Conclusion [8]	No conclusion [0]	A concluding sentence is given [2]	A few sentences are provided that conclude the piece [4]	An appropriate conclusion is given [6]	A well rationalised and present conclusion is present [8]
Referencing [20]	No references [0]	A reference is given [8]	References given in accepted format, with only minor errors [12]	References given in accepted format, with no errors [16]	Every reference is suitable, i.e. each lends weight to the discussion [20]
Communication [8]	Poor use of English language, as such it is difficult to comprehend [0]	Reasonable use of the English language, with multiple spelling and/or grammatical errors [2]	Acceptable use of the English language, minor spelling or grammatical errors [4]	Good use of English language, with only a minor spelling or grammatical error [6]	A clear and well-articulated piece is presented with no spelling or grammatical errors [8]
Length of Piece [2]	Piece is not of the appropriate length [0]	Piece is of the appropriate length [2]			