

# **PHI315-001: Philosophy and Science Fiction | Fall 2023**

## **General Course Information**

When: MWF 1:00PM-1:50PM

Where: Funkhouser Building, Room B4

Credit Hours: 3

Instructor: Mykyta Storozhenko

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Office Location: 1402 Patterson Office Tower

Office Phone Number: 8592571862

Office Hours: 12pm to 1pm.

## **Course Description**

In PHI315-001, we harness the imaginative capacity of science fiction to venture beyond the confines of present reality. Just as an opium dream might strip away inhibitions, science fiction acts as a portal, offering us a chance to witness worlds untouched by our current constraints. This course does not merely offer an escape; it prompts students to reflect critically on these alternate realities, drawing them back to our present circumstances. We'll engage with science fiction as a lens for philosophical exploration, urging students to draw insights from fiction and root them in our lived experience.

## **Student Learning Outcomes**

**Visionary Exploration:** Students will appreciate the expansive nature of science fiction as a medium that encourages creative thinking beyond our present boundaries.

**Philosophical Application:** Extract and analyze philosophical themes and questions raised within chosen science fiction media, translating them into contemporary, real-world contexts.

**Critical Engagement:** Engage in class discussions and reflections, demonstrating an understanding of peer perspectives and challenging or building upon them in a constructive manner.

**Media Analysis:** Critically analyze the selected films, series, and games, discerning their philosophical implications and their potential influence on our understanding of reality.

**Synthesis and Application:** Drawing from class learnings and discussions, craft thoughtful papers that meld science fiction narratives with philosophical inquiry, revealing the intertwined nature of the two and their implications for our present reality.

## **Core Learning Outcomes**

Core Area: Intellectual Inquiry – Arts & Creativity

As you may be aware, PHI315 is a UK Core Class, fulfilling the “Intellectual Inquiry – Arts & Creativity” core. This means that you will accomplish the following additional learning outcomes upon the successful completion of this course:

Students will personally perform, produce, fabricate or generate an artifact or artifacts that demonstrates their engagement with the creative process (e.g. an object, product, installation, presentation, record of a performance etc.) either as an individual or as part of a collaborative. As part of this process students will:

1. Define and distinguish different approaches (historical, theoretical, and methodological issues) to “creativity” as appropriate to the disciplinary practices specific to the subject, medium, or approach that informs a particular course.
2. Apply the logic, laws, or constraints of the area of study, (e.g. “out of the box” thinking, or the masterful, elegant treatment of given rules or forms).
3. Demonstrate the ability to critically analyze work produced by other students in this course and in co-curricular events using appropriate tools. These analyses should utilize relevant information resources to incorporate historical, theoretical, and or cultural factors.
4. Evaluate results of their own creative endeavors and using that evaluation, reassess and refine their work.

### Required Materials

For any reading that will be assigned (**see canvas page module schedule**), the PDF will be posted. There are, however, various media that you need to gain access to. These are either available for purchase on some streaming platform (such as Amazon) or are available on a streaming platform that you already own or could get a free trial for (Netflix, HBO, and so on). One way or another, you have to gain access to these. **If you are unable to afford some or any of these, please let me know. I have copies I have legally acquired and am willing to share.**

Here is a list of movies and show episodes you need to find access to:

- *Her* (2013) - <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1798709/>
- *Ex Machina* (2014) - <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0470752/>
- *Blade Runner* (1982) - [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0083658/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_2](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0083658/?ref=fn_al_tt_2)
- *I, Robot* (2004) - [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0343818/?ref=nv\\_sr\\_srgs\\_0\\_tt\\_8\\_nm\\_0\\_q\\_iRobot](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0343818/?ref=nv_sr_srgs_0_tt_8_nm_0_q_iRobot)
- “San Junipero” (S3E4) of *Black Mirror* (2016) - [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4538072/?ref=fn\\_tt\\_tt\\_1](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt4538072/?ref=fn_tt_tt_1)
- “Hollow Pursuits” (S3E21) of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1990) - <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0708729/>
- *The Matrix* (1999) - [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0133093/?ref=nv\\_sr\\_srgs\\_0\\_tt\\_8\\_nm\\_0\\_q\\_matrix](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0133093/?ref=nv_sr_srgs_0_tt_8_nm_0_q_matrix)
- *Tron* (1982) - [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0084827/?ref=fn\\_al\\_tt\\_2](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0084827/?ref=fn_al_tt_2)
- *Total Recall* (1990) - [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0100802/?ref=nv\\_sr\\_srgs\\_0\\_tt\\_8\\_nm\\_0\\_q\\_Total%2520Re](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0100802/?ref=nv_sr_srgs_0_tt_8_nm_0_q_Total%2520Re)
- *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) - [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0062622/?ref=nv\\_sr\\_srgs\\_0\\_tt\\_8\\_nm\\_0\\_q\\_2001%2520%2520](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0062622/?ref=nv_sr_srgs_0_tt_8_nm_0_q_2001%2520%2520)
- *Melancholia* (2011) - [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1527186/?ref=nv\\_sr\\_srgs\\_0\\_tt\\_8\\_nm\\_0\\_q\\_melancholia](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1527186/?ref=nv_sr_srgs_0_tt_8_nm_0_q_melancholia)
- *Donnie Darko* (2001) - [https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0246578/?ref=nv\\_sr\\_srgs\\_0\\_tt\\_8\\_nm\\_0\\_q\\_donnie%2520dar](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0246578/?ref=nv_sr_srgs_0_tt_8_nm_0_q_donnie%2520dar)

We will also spend a week playing a game called “Detroit: Become Human”. This will take place in the e-lounge, and the Philosophy Department will provide the requisite licenses for the activity. I will discuss this more in class, as the details are currently being worked out. But the experience will contribute to your core learning outcomes.

### **Technology Information and Requirements:**

You will need an electronic device for this class. Please see below for minimum requirements.

Technology Requirements: minimum technical requirements for UK courses and suggested hardware, software, and internet connection are available at [http:// www.uky.edu/its/student- hardware-software-guidelines](http://www.uky.edu/its/student-hardware-software-guidelines) Technical Support: for account help, contact <http://www.uky.edu/UKIT> or send email [218help@uky.edu](mailto:218help@uky.edu) or call 859-218-HELP (4357).

### **Attendance, Class Format, Exams, Technology, AI, and Privacy Policies**

Attendance: attendance is mandatory and is reflect in your class session reflections papers. I will take attendance manually everyday as well. If you miss class, it must be for an excused reason as defined in the Academic Policies section of the syllabus and by the university. As a means of making up your attendance and class session reflection, you are required to attend office hours and produce a reflection on the office hour conversation.

Class Format: this is an in-person class, and there is no zoom or online component. You must be here for the class in person. There will be no recordings of the class available to you either.

Technology Policy: you are expected to have a device with you in class as per minimum tech requirements UK outlines, and you are expected to have it with you in class every time.

AI: you may use AI to assist you in this course. I work on artificial intelligence during my research, and I understand the value it provides. This does not mean you can just put your questions in and get responses that you copy and paste—this I forbid in this class. But for general back and forth, and getting help on ideas, you are more than welcome to use an LLM of your choice. If you need advice on how to make best use of LLMs, please consult me. **You are not permitted to copy and paste the responses the AI generates for you. Rather, you can use it to help you think through issues.**

Privacy Policy: Video and audio recordings are not permitted during the class unless the student has received prior permission from the Professors. If permission is granted, recording of other students is prohibited. Any distribution of recordings is also prohibited. Students with specific recording accommodations approved by the Disability Resource Center should present their official documentation to the professor. All content for this course, including handouts, assignments, and powerpoint lectures are the intellectual property of the instructors and cannot be reproduced, sold, or used for any purpose other than educational work in this class without prior permission from the professor.

### **Assignments and Grading**

A:100-90; B:89-80; C:79-70; D:69-60; F:59-0

You will have four papers and daily class session reflection.

**Class Session Reflections:** You are to turn in 34 written reflections for every class meeting period starting with week 2 and excluding workshop days. Each reflection needs to be about a page, must address one thing that another student said, and what you think about it. The layout will be a few sentences about what we covered. A couple sentences and a quote about what someone in class said. A couple sentences of you reflecting on it. Some wrap up sentences. All in all, about a double spaced 12 pt. font page. These will be paramount for Papers II, III, and IV. As for how you should do these assignments—keep the same document running, and re-upload it every time. For any missing reflection, I will deduct a point since you will start with all 35% of the grade. (35% of your final grade, due at the end of day for every class session starting in week 2).

**Paper I:** The first paper is a kind of meta-paper where you explain the general approach of this class that you will learn in the first two weeks. This assignment will also fulfill the first core requirement. Essentially, you will analyze and explain to me the very unique approach we will take in this class toward mixing philosophy and science fiction. Science fiction will allow us to explore possibilities that may be hard to imagine given present conditions, and philosophy will allow us to analyze these possibilities in relation to our own life and world. (11% of your final grade, due end of the day on September 10).

**Paper II:** The second paper presents the layout for all the subsequent papers. Paper II is in relation to the content we cover during our AI and AL sections. You will write a paper where you address some philosophical issue covered during the lectures and discussion in relation to one media item we covered. You will also include some other student's comment from your class session reflections and respond to it or amplify it in agreement. (18% of your final grade, due end of day October 15).

**Paper III:** The third paper is very similar to the second but includes the following differences. First, you must include a reflection on the second essay and the feedback you received and explain what you did different. Two, now you must do it in response to the newly covered content, namely, personal identity and ar/vr. Aside from that, you must still do the same thing you did in paper II, including responding to another student's comment. (18% of your final grade, due end of day November 15).

**Paper IV:** The fourth paper is like your third paper, and in turn the second paper. The only difference is that I expect to also see an additional page of an overall reflection on your growth and experience in the course. Your paper will be on the last content in the class, namely on how science fiction opens the horizon of possibility when it comes to our own interpretation of our existence. (18% of your final grade, **due 3pm Wednesday, December 13**).

Any papers, including the final, that are submitted late will count as a zero, unless you have an excused reason in accordance with university policy.

**Midterm:** for undergraduates, midterm grades will be posted in myUK by the deadline established by the University Senate and published in the Academic Calendar, which can be found here:  
<http://www.uky.edu/registrar/content/academic-calendar>

**Late and Missing Assignments:** late or missing work, including exams, will not be accepted, unless it is due to an excused absence, or any other sanctioned reason as defined under Academic Policy Statements.

**Policy on Return of Assignment:** I will return your work within a week, sans the final exam.

A Note Concerning Assignment Modification: I reserve the right to modify, within reason and with reasonable notice, any of the assignments, or any component thereof, for this course.

Assignment	Percent / Point of Final
Class Session Reflections	35 points / 35%
Paper I	11 points / 11%
Paper II	18 points / 18%
Paper III	18 points / 18%
Paper IV	18 points / 18%
TOTAL	100 points / 100%

As you can see, points and percentages align, making it easier for you and I both to understand how it all breaks down in this class.

### **A Note Concerning Plagiarism**

Plagiarism, cheating, and misuse of academic records will not be tolerated. For definition of plagiarism, cheating, and misuse of academic records, see the **Academic Offenses Rules for Undergraduate and Graduate Students** section of the syllabus. The first offense will result in a grade of zero for the assignment though the instructor may allow for a resubmission. The second offense may result in a meeting with the instructor, which may involve the department chair, and which may result in a grade of 'F' for the course or other potential penalty. Depending on the circumstances, under the university wide rules, further consequences may

### **Academic Policy Statements**

Please read over the whole of academic policy statements, which can be found here: <https://www.uky.edu/universitysenate/acadpolicy>

### **Academic Offenses Rules for Undergraduate and Graduate Students**

Please familiarize yourself with the definitions of plagiarism, cheating, and misuse of academic records here: <https://www.uky.edu/universitysenate/ao>

### **Syllabus Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

Please view the university approved statement on diversity, equity, and inclusion, as well as how it affects you, here: <https://www.uky.edu/universitysenate/syllabus-dei>

**Course Copyright:** All original instructor-provided content for this course, which may include handouts, assignments, and lectures, is the intellectual property of the instructor(s). Students enrolled in the course this academic term may use the original instructor-provided content for their learning and completion of course requirements this term, but such content must not be reproduced or sold. Students enrolled in the course this academic term are hereby granted permission to use original instructor provided content for reasonable educational and professional purposes extending beyond this course and term, such as studying for a comprehensive or qualifying examination in a degree program, preparing for a professional or certification examination, or to assist in fulfilling responsibilities at a job or internship; other uses of original instructor-provided content require written permission from the instructor(s) in advance.

**Schedule:** A Brief Note Concerning Modification of Schedule: I reserve the right to modify the schedule, or any part thereof, within reason and with reasonable notice.

Week	Monday	Wednesday	Friday
1 – Aug 21	Syllabus	Introductions	Course Overview
2 – Aug 28	Philosophy: What is It?	Science Fiction: What is It?	Imagination, possibility, and new thought
3 – Sep 4	Labor Day	Artificial Intelligence Philosophy I	Artificial Intelligence Philosophy II
4 – Sep 11	Artificial Life Philosophy I	Artificial Life Philosophy II	Discussion of <i>Her</i>
5 – Sep 18	Discussion of <i>ex Machina</i>	Discussion of <i>Blade Runner</i>	Discussion of <i>iRobot</i>
6 – Sep 25	Detroit: Become Human	Detroit: Become Human	Detroit: Become Human
7 – Oct 2	Discussion of D:BH	Overall AI & AL Discussion	Paper I Workshop
8 – Oct 9	Personal Identity I	Personal Identity II	Metaphysics and Epistemology of AR/VR
9 – Oct 16	Metaphysics and Epistemology of AR/VR	<i>San Junipero</i> Discussion	No Class
10 – Oct 23	Fall Break	Fall Break	<i>Star Trek</i> Discussion
11 – Oct 30	<i>Matrix</i> Discussion	<i>Tron</i> Discussion	<i>Total Recall</i> Discussion
12 – Nov 6	Overall PI, AR/VR Discussion	Paper II Workshop	Philosophy and Existence
13 – Nov 13	Philosophy and the Good Life	Question in Existentialism	<i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i> Discussion
14 – Nov 20	No Class	Thanksgiving Break	Thanksgiving Break
15 – Nov 27	<i>Melancholia</i> Discussion	<i>Donnie Darko</i> Discussion	“The Passengers” Discussion
16 – Dec 4	Wrap Up Discussion	Classes End	