

Philosophy 315 001 – Philosophy & Science Fiction – Fall 2012

MWF 9:00 – 9:50 in CB 243

Contact Information Kyle Burchett kyle.burchett@uky.edu Department Phone: (859) 257-1861 Office: 1406 Patterson Office Tower Office Hours: Mondays, 10:00 – 11:30 Wednesdays, 10:00 – 11:30	Required Texts <i>Science Fiction and Philosophy: From Time Travel to Superintelligence</i> Susan Schneider, editor Wiley-Blackwell, 2009 ISBN: 978-1-4051-4907-5 <i>The Philosophy of Science Fiction Film</i> Steven M. Sanders, editor The University Press of Kentucky, 2009 ISBN: 978-0-8131-9260-4 <i>Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?</i> Philip K. Dick Del Rey, 1968 ISBN: 978-0-345-40447-3 Recommended Text <i>Sci-Phi: Philosophy from Socrates to Schwarzenegger</i> Mark Rowlands Thomas Dunne Books, 2003 ISBN: 978-0-312-32236-6
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Description & Objectives

In this course students will actively explore the philosophical aspects of that wonderful genre known as science fiction. Works of science fiction have the capacity to inspire an audience to ask questions about the most basic aspects of existence—to ask the same sorts of questions that eternally transfix philosophers. Confrontations with the alien other, the alien self, or the alien environment inevitably engender deep and desperate questions. For some thinkers, of course, philosophy is not the first thing that comes to mind upon being exposed to science fiction's enacted thought experiments. Yves Chevrier, for example, in analyzing Ridley Scott's film, *Blade Runner*, called "inescapable" the "puerile intrigues and infantile philosophical messages" of science fiction film. He stated, "*Blade Runner's* story is likewise impudently dull and conventional, and its metaphysics aren't worth a plug nickel" (1984:51). At least he held the film's imagery in high regard. It is often the *subtle* or *unspoken* messages of science fiction which make the genre amenable to philosophical speculation, however. The attentive viewer/reader is called upon to ask the questions that implicitly arise as the story unfolds. Critics such as Chevrier, Mark Rowland writes, "wouldn't recognize a complex philosophical point if [they were] pissing on it" (2003:x). Science fiction and its metaphors can easily allow one to, from a safe distance perhaps, entertain questions like: Who or what is the 'I'. . . *really*, and where exactly is. . . *it*? Do I have a free will, or am I only deluded into thinking that I do? Can the senses ever be trusted, or is my life necessarily some kind of dream? Can a robot or a computer program have an 'I' that is genuinely comparable to mine, *provided that I indeed have one*? Could I somehow transfer my consciousness into a human-engineered receptacle and essentially become immortal? Could there be an infinite number of alternate selves out there, each convinced that it is *I*? Major themes to be explored this semester include: personal identity, free will, artificial intelligence, dystopia, absurdity, and possible worlds.

Grading

Students will maximize the possibility of receiving a satisfactory grade in this course by completing all homework assignments and attending every class ready to discuss that day's assigned material.

The grading scale is as follows: A = 90 – 100%, B = 80 – 89%, C = 70 – 79%, D = 60 – 69%, E = 0 – 59%.

1. **Quizzes & Reflection Pieces: (25%)** There will be a number of quizzes administered during class, either announced or unannounced. Students must also turn in seven brief reflection pieces (basically, one- to two-page journal entries) concerning assigned materials. Quizzes and reflection pieces will be used to ascertain whether students are keeping up with and comprehending the reading/viewing assignments. Missed quizzes or reflection pieces will not be made up without an excuse.
2. **Paper Assignments: (50%)** There will be two assigned papers (7-10 pages, 12 pt. font, 1" margins, double-spaced), each worth 25% of the final grade. For the first paper, students will be given a choice of topics from the assigned readings and viewings. The final paper will involve more independent research. In each paper, students are expected to defend a *clear* thesis statement, make use of sustained logical argumentation, demonstrate adequate understanding and critical evaluation of—and specifically reference—philosophers, readings, and viewings appropriate to the topic. Handouts will be distributed at least two weeks prior to the papers' due dates. **Only printed copies of the papers will be accepted.**

If you have never written a philosophy paper before, or if you wish to better understand what is expected, please refer to the following excellent advice: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>.

You are also strongly encouraged to make use of the free services provided by the university's Writing Center, located in the W. T. Young Library: <http://wrd.as.uky.edu/writing-center>.

3. **Participation: (10%)** Philosophy is a social enterprise. Students are expected to actively participate in *all* classroom discussions. Full credit will be awarded to students who attend every class prepared to discuss their engagement with that day's readings/viewings.
 - **Attendance is mandatory.** *Students will be permitted two unexcused absences*, though such absences will negatively affect the participation grade. Each subsequent unexcused absence will result in a 2% deduction from the final grade. If a student is tardy, leaves class early without permission, is mentally absent, or is otherwise disruptive, a 2% deduction will result for each offense. ***If you are going to be absent and have a legitimate reason, it is in your best interest to let me know.***
4. **Presentation: (15%)** Each student will give a 10-minute PowerPoint presentation on an assigned reading or set of readings. PowerPoint files must be electronically delivered by the date of the presentation. Students are expected to demonstrate an adequate understanding and critical evaluation of the assignment by providing a general summary of its philosophical import and by fielding questions following the presentation. Presentations will be assigned during the first full week of classes.

Letters of Accommodation

If you have a documented disability which requires academic accommodations, please contact me as soon as possible with a letter of accommodation from the Disability Resource Center:

<http://www.uky.edu/StudentAffairs/DisabilityResourceCenter/>.

A Note on Assigned Materials

In addition to the three required texts listed on page 1, there are a number of assigned readings that will be electronically distributed to the class as PDF files. It is your responsibility to print out copies of these documents if you do not wish to read them on a computer or tablet. Make sure to check your uky.edu e-mail account on a regular basis for updates to the syllabus. Also, while I have taken great pains to make use of films and TV programs that are freely available online, there are some films that may not be viewed for free. I recommend that students open a Netflix, Amazon Prime, or other relevant account in order to have access to assigned or suggested films. It is probably a good idea to verify video availability prior to committing. Check other sources as well—such as libraries, Red Box, and local video rental shops. At any rate, the price for viewing assigned videos is less than what students would normally pay for another assigned text. By the way, I also strongly suggest that you scan ahead in the syllabus and use your weekends and leisure time to watch the films and TV episodes before reading the material—which is full of SPOILERS. Most of all, have fun and enjoy the semester!

<https://signup.netflix.com/>

http://www.amazon.com/b/ref=lp_student/?_encoding=UTF8&node=668781011 (free?)

If feasible, the Davis Marksbury building (or some other facility) will be reserved for occasional, non-class-time video-watching. Details to come. . . .

Miscellaneous

- ❖ **CAUTION:** Cell phones must be either muted or turned off during class. Text messaging is strictly forbidden and **guaranteed** to draw my ire. If a student is caught text messaging or otherwise disrupting class with a cell phone, up to five percentage points will be deducted from the student's overall grade for each violation. Egregious violators will be ejected from the classroom. Computers and tablets, on the other hand, are allowed if used for note-taking or accessing assigned materials.
- ❖ If you would prefer to privately discuss the materials or any other concerns, please do not hesitate to visit me during scheduled office hours or contact me by e-mail.

Course Web Site: <https://philosophy.as.uky.edu/klburc0/phi-315-fall-2012-philosophy-science-fiction>

Tentative Schedule (to be revised as necessary)

Science Fiction and Philosophy (SFP) *The Philosophy of Science Fiction Film* (PSFF)

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (DADES)

1. W 8.22

Greetings—What We Are Doing in This Class

2. F 8.24

Thought Experiments: Science Fiction as a Window into Philosophical Puzzles [Susan Schneider] (SFP) pp. 1 – 14

An Introduction to the Philosophy of Science Fiction Film [Steven M. Sanders] (PSFF) pp. 1 – 18

3. M 8.27 ***The Matrix (1999) The Matrix Reloaded (2003) The Matrix Revolutions (2003)***

Brain in a Vat [John Pollock] (SFP) pp. 15 – 19

Are You in a Computer Simulation? [Nick Bostrom] (SFP) pp. 20 – 23

Excerpt from The Republic [Plato] (SFP) pp. 24 – 27

Excerpt from The Meditations on First Philosophy [René Descartes] (SFP) pp. 28 – 32

The Experience Machine [Robert Nozick] (PDF) pp. 42 – 45

Also Recommended: ***Surrogates (2009)***

4. W 8.29

The Matrix as Metaphysics [David J. Chalmers] (SFP) pp. 33 – 52

The Matrix, the Cave, and the Cogito [Mark T. Conard] (PSFF) pp. 207 – 221

Return to Source: Philosophy & The Matrix (2004) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LgkBE4Kgg5Q>

5. F 8.31

Brains in a Vat [Hilary Putnam] (PDF) pp. 1 – 21

Brains in a Vat: Different Perspectives [Yuval Steinitz] (PDF) pp. 213 – 222

The Outer Limits: The Brain of Colonel Barham (1965) <http://www.imdb.com/video/hulu/vi809961241/>

6. M 9.03

ACADEMIC HOLIDAY

7. W 9.05

Reflection Piece #1 Due

The Origins of Selves [Daniel C. Dennett] (online) <http://ase.tufts.edu/cogstud/papers/originss.htm>

Where Am I? [Daniel C. Dennett] (SFP) pp. 55 - 66

Victim of the Brain (1988) 30:24 - 57:30 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGywwvUjIqk>

8. F 9.07 ***Total Recall (1990) Total Recall (2012) A Scanner Darkly (2006)***

Personal Identity [Eric Olson] (SFP) pp. 67 – 90

Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons [Derek Parfit] (SFP) pp. 91 – 98

We Can Remember It for You Wholesale [Philip K. Dick] (PDF) pp. 1 – 19

9. M 9.10

The No-Self Theory: Hume, Buddhism, and Personal Identity [James Giles] (PDF) pp. 175 – 200

Who Am I? What Am I? [Ray Kurzweil] (SFP) pp. 99 – 102

Dark City (1998)

10. W 9.12

The Simplicity of the Soul [Jonathan Bennett] (PDF) pp. 648 – 660

Recalling the Self: Personal Identity in Total Recall [Shai Biderman] (PSFF) pp. 39 – 54

Star Trek: The Enemy Within (1966) http://www.startrek.com/watch_episode/pyvDGAtrGxA

11. F 9.14 **Minority Report (2002) The Matrix Trilogy (1999, 2003)**
Free Will and Determinism in the World of Minority Report [Michael Huemer] (SFP) pp. 103 – 112
The Book of Life: A Thought Experiment [Alvan I. Goldman] (SFP) p. 113
The Library of Babel [Jorge Luis Borges] (PDF) pp. 79 – 89
Time and Personal Identity in Nietzsche's Theory of Eternal Recurrence [Scott Jenkins] (PDF) pp. 208 – 217
12. M 9.17
Reflection Piece #2 Due
The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility [Galen Strawson] (PDF) pp. 5 – 24
I Could Not Have Done Otherwise—So What? [Daniel C. Dennett] (PDF) pp. 553 – 565
Star Trek: The City on the Edge of Forever (1967) http://www.startrek.com/watch_episode/h2wjBxB192mj
The Outer Limits: The Man Who Was Never Born (1963) <http://www.imdb.com/video/hulu/vi2517500697/>
13. W 9.19 **I, Robot (2004) Prometheus (2012)**
Robot Dreams [Isaac Asimov] (SFP) pp. 117 – 121
A Brain Speaks [Andy Clark] (SFP) pp. 122 – 125
Against Neural Chauvinism [Tom Cuda] (PDF) pp. 111 – 127
Star Trek: The Changeling (1967) http://www.startrek.com/watch_episode/O3b_Sl1Xyd_M
14. F 9.21
Is the Brain a Digital Computer? [John R. Searle] (PDF) pp. 21 – 37
Artificial Intelligence and Personal Identity [David Cole] (PDF) pp. 399 – 417
Colossus: The Forbin Project (1970) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KRt-KHGLxMY>
15. M 9.24
The Mind as the Software of the Brain [Ned Block] (SFP) pp. 126 – 169
Star Trek: The Ultimate Computer (1968) http://www.startrek.com/watch_episode/sSabkSG_1zlj
16. W 9.26
Cyborgs Unplugged [Andy Clark] (SFP) pp. 170 – 185
Consciousness in Human and Robot Minds [Daniel C. Dennett] (SFP) pp. 186 – 200
Robotics and Intelligent Computing, 1 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2sNPEXGgYey&feature=plcp>
Robotics and Intelligent Computing, 2 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMEE6qpEuTg&feature=plcp>
17. F 9.28 **2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) The Terminator (1984)**
2001: A Philosophical Odyssey [Kevin L. Stoehr] (PSFF) pp. 119 – 133
Terminator-Fear and the Paradox of Fiction [Jason Holt] (PSFF) pp. 135 – 149
Adaptive Flight Control with Living Neuronal Networks on Microelectrode Arrays [DeMarse & Dockendorf] (PDF) pp. 1 – 4
18. M 10.01 **2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) Terminator Salvation (2009) Prometheus (2012)**
Reflection Piece #3 Due
Asimov's "Three Laws of Robotics" and Machine Metaethics [Susan Leigh Anderson] (SFP) pp. 259 – 276
Ethical Issues in Advanced Artificial Intelligence [Nick Bostrom] (SFP) pp. 277 – 283
Ethical Robots in Warfare [Ronald C. Arkin] (PDF) pp. 1 – 4
That's Impossible: Real Terminators (2009)
19. W 10.03
Superintelligence and Singularity [Ray Kurzweil] (SFP) pp. 201 – 224
Why I Want to Be a Posthuman When I Grow Up [Nick Bostrom] (PDF) pp. 1 – 25
The Outer Limits: Demon with a Glass Hand (1964) <http://www.imdb.com/video/hulu/vi105318169/>
20. F 10.05
The Artificial Alien: Transformations of the Robot in Science Fiction [Morton Klass] (PDF) pp. 171 – 179
Trying to Plug In: Posthuman Cyborgs and the Search for Connection [Melissa Colleen Stevenson] (PDF) pp. 87 – 105
Victim of the Brain (1988) 8:21 - 15:56 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TGyvvvUjIqk>

21. M 10.08 **Ghost in the Shell [Koukaku Kidoutai] (1995)**
Sex and the Single Cyborg: Japanese Popular Culture Experiments in Subjectivity [Sharalyn Orbaugh] (PDF) pp. 172 – 192
Refiguring the Radical Cyborg in Mamoru Oshii's Ghost in the Shell [Carl Silvio] (PDF) pp. 54 – 72
Ghost in the Shell 2.0 (2008) <http://www.hulu.com/#!/watch/371717>
22. W 10.10
Transhumanism [Francis Fukuyama] (PDF) pp. 42 – 43
The Man on the Moon [George J. Annas] (SFP) pp. 227 – 240
Mindscan: Transcending and Enhancing the Human Brain [Susan Schneider] (SFP) pp. 241 – 256
Transhumanism, Metaphysics, and the Posthuman God [Jeffrey P. Bishop] (PDF) pp. 700 – 720
Ghost in the Shell 2: Innocence (2004)
23. F 10.12 **Blade Runner (1982)**
What Is It to Be a Human? Blade Runner and Dark City [Deborah Knight, George McKnight] (PSFF) pp. 21 – 37
Blade Runner; or, The Sociology of Anticipation [Yves Chevrier] (PDF) pp. 50 – 60
24. M 10.15 (Midterm)
Reflection Piece #4 Due
Ideology as Dystopia: An Interpretation of Blade Runner [Douglas E. Williams] (PDF) pp. 381 – 394
Blade Runner and Sartre: The Boundaries of Humanity [Judith Barad] (PDF) pp. 21 – 34
Metropolis (2001) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctV5fiaaL08&feature=watch-now-button&wide=1>
25. W 10.17
Philip K. Dick: An Introduction [Roger Zelazny] (DADES) pp. vii – x
Ch. 1 – 4 Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? [Philip K. Dick] (DADES) pp. 1 – 47
26. F 10.19 (Midterm grades will be posted by midnight.)
Ch. 5 – 8 (DADES) pp. 48 – 96
27. M 10.22 (Paper #1 Handout)
Ch. 9 – 12 (DADES) pp. 97 – 144
28. W 10.24
Ch. 13 – 15 (DADES) pp. 145 – 183
29. F 10.26
Ch. 16 – 18 (DADES) pp. 184 – 215
30. M 10.29
Reflection Piece #5 Due
Ch. 19 – 22 (DADES) pp. 216 – 244
31. W 10.31
Entering the Posthuman Collective in Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? [Jill Galvan] (PDF) pp. 413 - 429
Do Androids Pulverize Tiger Bones to Use as Aphrodisiacs? The Tragedy of Extinction [Simon A. Cole] (PDF) pp. 173 – 193
Silent Running (1972)
32. F 11.02 (Last day to drop) **Avatar (2009)**
The Doomsday Argument [John Leslie] (SFP) pp. 257 – 258
Theoretical Background to the Vicious Circle Principle [Craig Dilworth] (PDF) pp. 99 – 108
The Vicious Circle Principle of the Development of Humankind [Craig Dilworth] (PDF) pp. 109 – 133
33. M 11.05
Paper #1 Due
IN-CLASS VIEWING
Star Trek: Where No Man Has Gone Before (1966) http://www.startrek.com/watch_episode/ucRkvXjR0TRI

34. W 11.07 **The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951) Forbidden Planet (1956)**
The Vicious Circle Principle of the Development of Humankind [Craig Dilworth] (PDF) pp. 134 – 167
Technology and Ethics in The Day the Earth Stood Still [Aeon J. Skoble] (PSFF) pp. 91 – 101
Star Trek: The Menagerie: Part I (1966) http://www.startrek.com/watch_episode/LfgOaMzjN1gb
Star Trek: The Menagerie: Part II (1966) http://www.startrek.com/watch_episode/DI_dtlcubvyP
35. F 11.09 **Nineteen Eighty-Four**
Imagining the Future, Contemplating the Past: The Screen Versions of 1984 [R. Barton Palmer] (PSFF) pp. 171 – 190
Nineteen Eighty-Four (1954) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u1kGSDYp2Rw>
Nineteen Eighty-Four (1956) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajWC_J-jgLc
Nineteen Eighty-Four (1984) http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GON_P8ZvMw&feature=related
36. M 11.12 **Brazil (1985) Gattaca (1997)**
Reflection Piece #6 Due
Republic: Book 5 [Plato] (PDF) pp. 142 – 152
Star Trek: The Cloud Minders (1969) http://www.startrek.com/watch_episode/COApXsz_7wuz
37. W 11.14 **Repo Men (2010) Repo! The Genetic Opera (2008) <GORE ALERT!!!>**
The Survival Lottery [John Harris] (PDF) pp. 81 – 87
Why the Numbers Should Sometimes Count [John T. Sanders] (PDF) pp. 3 – 14
Soylent Green (1973)
Also Recommended: **Logan's Run (1976)**
38. F 11.16
A Sound of Thunder [Ray Bradbury] (SFP) pp. 287 – 296
Time [Theodore Sider] (SFP) pp. 297 – 309
The Girl Who Leapt Through Time (2006)
Star Trek: Assignment: Earth (1968) http://www.startrek.com/watch_episode/zH_v7CHf9XrW
39. M 11.19 **12 Monkeys (1995) The Terminator (1984)**
The Paradoxes of Time Travel [David Lewis] (SFP) pp. 310 – 321
The Quantum Physics of Time Travel [David Deutsch and Michael Lockwood] (SFP) pp. 322 – 334
Some Paradoxes of Time Travel in The Terminator and 12 Monkeys [William J. Devlin] (PSFF) pp. 103 – 117
40. W 11.21
ACADEMIC HOLIDAY
41. F 11.23
ACADEMIC HOLIDAY
42. M 11.26 **(Final Paper Handout)**
Reflection Piece #7 Due
Gene Regime [Francis Fukuyama] (PDF) pp. 56 – 63
The Identity of Clones [Kathinka Evers] (PDF) pp. 67 – 76
Human Cloning: Three Mistakes and an Alternative [Françoise Baylis] (PDF) pp. 319 – 337
Moon (2009) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbCfsAC-Aoo&feature=watch-now-button&wide=1>
The Sky Crawlers (2008) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KW7emZ2oq3g&feature=watch-now-button&wide=1>
Also Recommended: **The 6th Day (2000)**
Also Recommended: **The Island (2005)**
43. W 11.28 **Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956) District 9 (2009)**
Picturing Paranoia: Interpreting Invasion of the Body Snatchers [Steven M. Sanders] (PSFF) pp. 55 – 72
Self and Other in SF: Alien Encounters [Carl D. Malmgren] (PDF) pp. 15 – 33
Invasion of the Body Snatchers (1956)
The Night Caller (1965) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m75pod3Ggw0>

44. F 11.30

Possible Worlds [Robert C. Stalnaker] (PDF) pp. 65 – 75

Counterparts of Persons and Their Bodies [David Lewis] (PDF) pp. 203 – 211

Star Trek: Mirror, Mirror (1967) http://www.startrek.com/watch_episode/6PMQlhVH6SY

45. M 12.03

Beyond the Earth Charter: Taking Possible People Seriously [Robin Attfield] (PDF) pp. 359 – 367

The Outer Limits: The Duplicate Man (1964) <http://www.imdb.com/video/hulu/vi1044842265/>

The Outer Limits: Second Chance (1964) <http://www.imdb.com/video/hulu/vi2366505753/>

46. W 12.05 ***Idiocracy (2006)***

Miracles and Wonders: Science Fiction as Epistemology [Richard Hanley] (SFP) pp. 335 – 342

Dark Star (1974)

2081 (2009)

47. F 12.07 **(Last day of class)**

The Theologian's Nightmare [Bertrand Russell] (PDF) pp. 1 – 3

The Absurd [Thomas Nagel] (PDF) pp. 716 – 727

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (2005)

48. M 12.10

FINAL PAPER DUE – Deliver a printed copy to my mailbox in POT 1443 by 1:00 p.m.

Final grades will be posted on myUK by midnight Monday, 12.17.

Want more? Check out these films:

Metropolis (1927)

Things to Come (1936)

Five (1951)

Donovan's Brain (1953)

This Island Earth (1955)

The Time Machine (1960)

Master of the World (1961)

The Phantom Planet (1961)

The Day of the Triffids (1962)

Ikarie XB 1 [Voyage to the End of the Universe] (1963)

Alphaville (1965)

Terror in Space (1965)

Planet of the Apes (1968)

The Bed Sitting Room (1969)

THX 1138 (1971)

Sleeper (1973)

Zardoz (1974)

A Boy and His Dog (1975)

The Man Who Fell to Earth (1976)

Kin-dza-dza! (1986)