The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Subject Description Form

Please read the notes at the end of the table carefully before completing the form.

Subject Code	ELC1A01
Subject Title	**Science fiction as a reflection on humanity**
Credit Value	3
Level	1
Pre-requisite / Co-requisite/ Exclusion	None
Objectives	**Background** Science fiction is a sub-genre of literature and its academic discipline is known as 'science fiction studies'. Universities in the USA and the UK grant degrees in the field. Science fiction examines the relationships between characters in unusual and changing environments, and thus reveals human nature. In this subject students will learn by analysing the examples of this in the readings. By taking this subject, students will improve their: **Knowledge of human nature, relations and development** Students will read about, describe and analyse from a theoretical perspective human nature as displayed by the characters in the stories, their relationships and their character development. They will apply this knowledge by writing a short science fiction story in which the nature, relations and development of characters are described. **Literacy** (requiring extensive reading and substantive writing) The subject includes the English reading and writing requirements, and students will receive additional feedback and advice which will help them to improve their writing. **Higher order thinking** (requiring students to exercise and demonstrate systematic, critical and creative thinking skills) Students will learn to hypothesise, theorise, generalise, criticise, justify, and evaluate aspects of stories in relation to human nature, relations and development, and demonstrate this in a book report. They will then use these skills to create a short story. **Life-long learning** (incorporating learning to learn activities) Students will develop their critical thinking, problem-solving, knowledge construction and life-long learning abilities by utilizing the learning-to-learn activities from the EDC website to analyse science fiction.

Intended Learning Outcomes *(Note 1)*	Upon completion of the subject, students will be able to: a) understand human nature, relationships and development in science fiction stories b) read and understand science fiction stories c) think critically with regard to science fiction using problem-solving, knowledge construction and life-long learning through completing learning-to-learn abilities d) discuss science fiction stories orally and in writing e) write a short science fiction short story. Outcome (a) will improve students' understanding of human nature, relationships and development through a number of approaches, including philosophical, anthropological, psychological, religious, behaviouristic, and political. Outcome (b) will improve students' literacy by requiring them to engage in extensive reading of science fiction. Students will be taught reading strategies relevant to science fiction, such as vocabulary strategies to decode names of new technology. These strategies will be generalisable to their other reading. Outcome (c) will involve students in developing their critical thinking, problem-solving, knowledge construction and life-long abilities utilizing learning-to-learn activities from the EDC website such as the Asking Questions Guide worksheet for tutorials and the Knowledge Building Worksheet in lectures. An example of the use of the Knowledge Building Worksheet would be to collect and relate aspects of a science fiction story such as sub-genre, historical context, plot, location, characters, their culture, relationships and world views, and from these create an idea for a short story. For Outcome (d) students will write a short story and a book report on a science fiction novel. These will demonstrate the critical thinking from Outcome (c). Regarding Outcome (e) students will use their understanding and analysis from the above outcomes combined with creativity in order to write a science fiction short story. There will be scaffolding in the lectures and the tutorials to help students realize this outcome.
Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus *(Note 2)*	**Subject Synopsis** The subject will introduce, in an academically rigorous manner, human nature, relations and development in the science fiction studies discipline. It will cover its foundational pre-suppositions, such as the reasons that science fiction is a form of literature, the value of studying it, and how theories of human nature, relations and development form the basis of literature. It will examine the structure of its knowledge domain, for example the main themes including human reactions to different technologies, time and location. Distinctive features of science fiction as a genre in which predictions are made about the future, many of which are later realised, and how humans might react to these changes, will be scrutinised. The approach of enquiry and study methodologies such as Libertarian, Marxist and Feminist will be presented. The major trends of development in the history of philosophy as reflected in science fiction will be traced, from Roman and middle-eastern proto-science fiction,

through the Age of Reason to the Victorian era, and finally to the 20th and 21st centuries including the Golden Age of science fiction, and cyberpunk.

Students will read one or two short stories in preparation for the two hours of lectures and one tutorial. Relevant films are listed as optional preparation activities. The lectures will cover two areas each week: one on the themes of human nature, relations and development, and one on analysing the genre and writing science fiction based on these themes.

In the assessments students will read one novel and write a book report on it, write a short story, and complete weekly quizzes. All the short story readings are either available free on the internet, mainly from Project Gutenburg, are in the PolyU library, or links will be provided. Most of the novels are available in the PolyU library. All are classics of the genre, chosen as examples that illustrate the lecture and tutorial topics.

Indicative Syllabus

Week	Human nature, relations and development topic				Writing topic		
	Lecture topic (Lectures on human nature, relations and development in science fiction)	**Related short stories** (Students read one per week)	**Related Novels** (Students read one overall)	**Related Films** (Watching these films is optional for students)	**Lecture topic** (Lectures on how to analyse science fiction and how to write a science fiction short story)	**Related short stories** (Students read one per week)	**Related Novels** (Students read one overall)
1.	Introduction						
2.	Greek philosophy - a good human life is a life in accordance with nature	When the World Screamed	Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, The Word for World is Forest	Avatar	Sub-genres and themes of science fiction: speculative, hard, space opera, temporal / alternate dimensions.	Arm of the Law	Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, The Mote in God's Eye
3.	Modernism – the 'blank slate', 'nature vs. nurture'	The Adventurer	Ender's Game, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?	Blade Runner	Plot and dialogue: plot structure, myths, common plots; sci-fi dialogue	Beyond Lies the Wub	A Fall of Moondust
4.	Natural science (1) anthropological approaches	Bleeding Jungle	The Land that Time Forgot, The Left Hand of Darkness	The Land that Time Forgot	Character - hero, anti-hero, archetypes	Super Man and the Bug Out	Star Wars
5.	Natural science (2) Freud, Darwin	The Man who Evolved	Forbidden Planet	Forbidden Planet	Narrator – first, second and third person	Flowers For Algernon Scroogled	A Princess of Mars
6.	Naturalism – societal expectations	A Story of the Days to Come	The Stars My Destination	Logan's Run	Setting – time	The Defenders, The Skull, Project Mastodon	The Time Machine The Forever War
7.	Religion	The Nine Billion Names of God and The Quest for Saint Aquin both in The	Dune, Stranger in a Strange Land, A Canticle For Leibowitz, Lord of Light, The Handmaid's	Dune	Setting - place	A Martian Odyssey	

		Science Fiction Hall of Fame, Volume One	Tale, Speaker for the Dead				
8.	Free will and determinism	Adjustment Team, The Doorway	Slaughterhouse-Five, The Adjustment Bureau, We	Minority Report	Setting - culture	The K-factor	Down and Out in the Magic Kingdom
9.	Human relations – Group behaviour	2 B R 0 2 B	The Martians, Childhood's End, Starship Troopers, The Forever War, Make Room! Make Room!	Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, Aliens	Setting – cyber worlds	0wnz0red	For the win, Neuromancer, Snow Crash
10.	Libertarianism	The Weapon Shop	The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress, Men Like Gods	V for Vendetta	Technology	I, Robot	
11.	Utopian and Dystopian societies	The Country of the Blind	Brave New World, Herland, 1984, The Handmaid's Tale, Never Let Me Go	The Shape of Things to Come Brazil, 1984	Style – literary technique, suspension of disbelief, imagery, symbolism	The Last Question	Childhood's End
12.	Human development	The Demolished Man	The Island of Dr Moreau, Children of Men	Renaissance Man, Forbidden Planet, Children of Men, AI, District 9	Form – novel, novella, hypertext	The Sentinel	2001 : A space odyssey
13.	Conclusion						

| **Teaching/ Learning Methodology** *(Note 3)* | The subject examines human nature, relations and development with different theoretical perspectives as detailed in the indicative syllabus above.

Students will develop skills and attitudes focusing on their own self by self-analytical and life-long learning activities carried out in the lectures and tutorials.

In the tutorials a blended delivery approach will be applied, involving instruction, interaction, oral presentations and online in-class quizzes. Tutorials will also include teaching input and individual, group or pair work, reading texts, discussing meaning and comparing texts. |
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Assessment Methods in Alignment with Intended Learning Outcomes *(Note 4)*

Specific assessment methods/tasks	% weighting	Intended subject learning outcomes to be assessed (Please tick as appropriate)					
		a	b	c	d	e	
1. Book review Includes the Reading Requirement	30	✓	✓	✓	✓		
2. Short story writing 10% from the Writing Requirement, 30% for content	40	✓		✓		✓	
3. Continuous assessment by in-class quizzes	30	✓	✓	✓			

	Total	100 %	

Explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes:

Assignment 1 assesses students' reading of a novel, and their analysis of the story in terms of human nature, relationships and development, and in terms of the structure of its knowledge domain. The assignment will be done in the final week of the subject, so an understanding of all of the subject knowledge will be expected. It also tests the reading requirement.

Assignment 2 fulfils the writing requirement, and tests not only the students' knowledge of the subject content, but their ability to utilize this knowledge to produce a short story that describes human nature, relationships and development in a science fiction setting.

The purpose of continuous assessment by in-class quizzes is to ensure that the students are doing the preparation for the classes, and to check their knowledge of the subject content previously taught. This will be done online.

Student Study Effort Expected	Class contact:	
	▪ Lectures	26 Hrs.
	▪ Tutorials	13 Hrs.
	Other student study effort:	
	▪ Out-of-class study including extensive reading, writing and self-study	78 Hrs.
	Total student study effort	117 Hrs.

Reading List and References	The subject should have an "R" designation. The expected reading requirement is one of the novels above, and one or two short stories per week.
	For the reading list, see the Indicative Syllabus above. In addition, the following science fiction studies texts will be referenced:
	Baron, C, Halvorsen, P.N., & Cornea, C. (2017). *Science Fiction, Ethics and the Human Condition*. Cham [Switzerland]: Springer International Publishing.
	Blackford, R. (2017). *Science fiction and the moral imagination: Visions, minds, ethics* Cham [Switzerland]: Springer International Publishing.
	Calvin, R. (2016). *Feminist science fiction and feminist epistemology: Four mod*es (Studies in global science fiction). Cham, [Switzerland]: Palgrave Macmillan.
	Jakubowski, M. & James, E. (eds.) (1992). *The profession of science fiction: SF writers on their craft and ideas*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan; New York, N.Y.: St. Martin's Press.
	Mandala, S. (2010). *Language in science fiction and fantasy: the question of style*. London; New York: Continuum.
	Roberts, A. (2016). *The History of Science Fiction* (2nd ed.), Palgrave Histories of Literature). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

| | Shaw, B. (1993). *How to write science fiction*. London: Allison & Busby.

Schneider, S. (2015). *Science fiction and philosophy from time travel to superintelligence*, (2nd ed.). Wiley.

Song, M. (2018). *The reincarnated giant: An anthology of twenty-first-century Chinese science fiction*. New York: Columbia University Press. |

Note 1: Intended Learning Outcomes
Intended learning outcomes should state what students should be able to do or attain upon completion of the subject. Subject outcomes are expected to contribute to the attainment of the overall programme outcomes.

Note 2: Subject Synopsis/ Indicative Syllabus
The syllabus should adequately address the intended learning outcomes. At the same time over-crowding of the syllabus should be avoided.

Note 3: Teaching/Learning Methodology
This section should include a brief description of the teaching and learning methods to be employed to facilitate learning, and a justification of how the methods are aligned with the intended learning outcomes of the subject.

Note 4: Assessment Method
This section should include the assessment method(s) to be used and its relative weighting, and indicate which of the subject intended learning outcomes that each method purports to assess. It should also provide a brief explanation of the appropriateness of the assessment methods in assessing the intended learning outcomes.

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