University of Waterloo School of Architecture
ARCH 285 — Spring 2020. Special Topics
ONLINE COURSE: site hosted on Learn

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Office hours: TBA

DISCOURSE MODERN AND POSTMODERN

INTRODUCED THROUGH SCIENCE FICTION

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introduction

"The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network. And this network of references is not the same in the case of a mathematical treatise, a textual commentary, a historical account, and an episode in a novel cycle; the unity of the book, even in the sense of a group of relations, cannot be regarded as identical in each case. The book is not simply the object that one holds in one's hands; and it cannot remain within the little parallelepiped that contains it: its unity is variable and relative. As soon as one questions that unity, it loses its self-evidence; it indicates itself, constructs itself, only on the basis of a complex field of discourse."
— Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*

This course is based around reading science fiction and critical articles, and watching movies available online. Science fiction is a branch of literature, film, and artwork, that deals with the effects of science or technology on the human condition and our relation to nature. We will read and watch works by key modern and postmodern creators of science fiction, and engage in discussions, understanding that these are not for entertainment but rather offering us oblique but privileged views into the workings of human cultures and societies.

> Science fiction is not escapism. You might say that science fiction is escape into reality. . . . In fact I can't think of any form which is more concerned with real issues.
> — Arthur C. Clarke, author of *2001: A Space Odyssey*

Every week our material will relate to a theme, and we will use the literary and cinematic materials as a springboard to critically open up complex questions, both individually and as a group. To confront this modern complexity, we examine the means by which authors, artists, and directors organically embed meaningful, relevant subjects in the fabric of poetic artifacts such as stories, films, artworks, and other media and popular culture in order to create multi-layered implication in meaning, and phenomenological depth.

Course Description

This course creates a focus in order to bring an idea — discourse — to a medium — science fiction — in order to analyze how cultural artifacts embody the mastery of complexity and confluence of layers of potential meaning. Architecture is a very special practice in that its reality bonds together inseparably the full spectrum of our experience, from the most material and concrete, tactile and massive at one end, through formal languages, to the most ephemeral, spiritual and conceptual content at the other. This course is predicated on recognizing the idea of 'depth' in context, that all things are situated, and that a world of contexts and their shifting meanings pre-exist every act of making. Therefore, just as, whenever we speak, we draw on words that have been around for a long time before us, cultural artifacts from films to books to buildings also draw on a 'language' of pre-existing things and ideas, in order to convey complex realities. These contexts and fragments are not homogeneous, and on the contrary, they present problems and paradoxes for our interpretations. But in any cultural artifact, these paradoxes, inconsistencies, and inner conflicts offer us fruitful ways into querying and critical analysis. Science Fiction as we know it is really a modern invention. But earlier, in 1516, Thomas More proposed his *Utopia*, in which a close reading of his text reveals — at the same time — both a positive or affirmative model for human dwelling, and a negative or critical stance toward this same model. This *double-coding* of the text, taking two opposing positions at the same time, creates a matrix of discourse, which allows the text to deepen its meaning, and the reader's understanding, in a nuanced and sophisticated way. This kind of approach, of constructing images that deliver contradictory points of view, is inherently modernist, dynamic and mutable rather than stable and fixed. It requires a reader or viewer to *actively engage* in interpreting the text, and find their own position, of ethics, and values, which

may be argued or validated in different ways, through discussion or verbal discourse. We can use our material to talk about: modernism, our place in the cosmos, the other, colonialism, migration, social justice, ecology, ethics, feminism, technology, intelligence, humanity's future, meaning, design, realism, quotation, and the role of art and architecture.

Introduction

Every week we will have a module made up of different media arranged around a particular theme. Every Monday I will post to Learn the materials for that week's module, and the tasks you are required to do (for example, readings, viewings, discussion online with your classmates, or uploading questions and notes). Instead of a "deadline" you'll have a block of participation time, to allow greater flexibility for those of you in other timezones. Please check Learn every morning in case there are changes to our program. This is the first time we have online courses, so things can shift or be unexpected, and I anticipate that we will need to change some elements to help us adapt to our new digital environment. In this course, most of the material will be delivered "asynchronously" in order to accommodate multiple timezones, which means that I will record and upload videos or post written notes and introductions for you, rather than relying on live Zoom meetings with the whole group, especially since recording group meetings is complicated by participant consent. **The nominal slot for our class is three hours every Tuesday**, but your participation time will be flexible to accommodate other courses and your own schedule.

Online learning is simply a different thing from in-class learning. Each form has a different culture of engagement, and there are pros and cons to both.

You may be accustomed to learning mainly through lectures, which puts the student in a slightly more passive position as a recipient of information, but this course is based on Web 2.0 and interactive, peer-learning, and you will find your participation makes it a more active and engaged learning experience, vital to build a sense of a learning community with the presence of others online.

This course is concerned with skill development. In the structure of the modules, I am leveraging the idea of collective intelligence - the concept that our natural diversity in strengths and interests means that in collaborative settings we are able to refine ideas in a more nuanced way, become more critically aware, solve more problems by working together and thus to create better quality knowledge by creating as you learn.

Course Work

> "…the function of art is never to illustrate a truth—or even an interrogation—known in advance, but to bring into the world certain interrogations (and also, perhaps, in time, certain answers) not yet known as such to themselves." Alain Robbe-Grillet

Every week after watching our movie or reading our text, or both, you are asked to produce two questions (each) stimulated by the material, and according to your own interests,

and introduce your questions to the discussion in Learn. You will also locate one or more relevant secondary sources (articles, essays, online books) by using Google Scholar and / or the OMNI library system, add a link to your source(s) for the rest of the class, and write a paragraph summarizing what interests you about the author's argument. The questions and essays with summary will count for 30% of your final grade. You are asked to participate in the open discussion with others actively and constructively, and this will constitute your participation grade of 15%. You are also asked to keep personal notes which you will summarize for a short self-assessment of learning and skill-development, worth 10%, submitted as a draught at the end of June, then resubmitted along with your final project.

Your final project is a creative work inspired by Chris Marker's *La Jetée* to take a time-based, narrative form; it can be a video essay, regular essay (10-15 pages), a slideshow presentation, webpage, a book project, art work, graphic novel, a game, dance, theatrical performance, garden, model, or other medium. Your project should engage with course materials, the ideas of discourse, and the use of quotation, reproduction, or sampling, to synthesize multiple themes from throughout the semester. This will be worth 35% of your final grade. Creative projects that are not written should be accompanied by a concept paper (5 pages), to clarify its structure and the viewpoint behind it, its sources of inspiration and (if relevant) a bibliography or references. Each person will additionally choose one of the other class projects to respond to, with an analytical paper (one page) for 10%

Learning Objectives and Outcomes

Invigorate your research, reading, inquiry and interpretation skills, your ability to critically read and interpret a number of texts and projects in relation to one another. The ability to write creatively, cite, respond to critical feedback and present research in written and verbal form for effective communication.

Communication

If you have a question which may apply to another student please ask it on Learn "Questions" on our class page, and check first to see if it has already been answered. Note: Information or discussion regarding illness must go through the front office, not through me.

Communication emails sent directly to me must use the following format in the SUBJECT line: **Arch 285 LastNameFirstName_nature of inquiry**. This is important so that I can quickly sort my emails, to find and read class messages.

Organization - Calendar, Content, Schedule

The following course schedule is a guide to anticipate forthcoming content, assignment deadlines and important dates and outlines topics covered over the semester, lectures, presentations, guest lectures, site visits. *This course schedule is subject to change*.

Week	Date	Topic	Readings/Viewings Dates to be confirmed	Activities / Assignments
1	May 11–17	Introduction	READINGS for all weeks ON **LEARN**	TASKS for all weeks ON **LEARN**
2	May 18–24		1996, Twelve Monkeys, Gilliam; La Jetée, Marker	
3	May 25–31		1989, Blade Runner, Scott	
4	June 1–7		1968, 2001: A Space Odyssey, Kubrick	
5	June 8–14		1999, The Matrix, Wachowskis	
6	June 15–21		1975, Shivers OR 1999, eXistenZ, Cronenberg	
7	June 22–28		1972, Solaris, Tarkovsky	June 27, 8 am-8 pm: project proposal and learning self-assessment due (1 page each)
8	June 29–July 5		2009, District 9, Blomkamp	
9	July 6–12		1966, Star Trek (The Original Series), Roddenberry	
10	July 13–19		1968, Planet of the Apes	July 19, 8 am-8 pm: Final project due
11	July 20–26		1976, Logan's Run, Anderson	
12	July 27– Aug 5		1973, Soylent Green, Fleischer or 1971, Omega Man, Sagal	
	Aug 7–15	**Final Assessment Period (NO EXAM)**		

Your Prof – about me

Hello - most of you already know me in person. This photo was taken a couple of years ago in the jungle in Cambodia, near the great temple of Angkor Wat. I appreciate your interest in joining this course, and I look forward to working with you on some stimulating topics and ideas.

I'm trained as a professional architect, worked in offices, plus my own studio, then decided to focus on architecture and cultural history. I got my M.Arch. degree from McGill University in the History and Theory of Architecture, working with Alberto Pérez-Gómez, then took a gap year of travel through India and Pakistan visiting sacred and holy sites of numerous different religions. Later, I received my Ph.D. at the University of Cambridge in England, in the History and Philosophy of Architecture, working with Dalibor Vesely. My dissertation title was *A Skeleton Key to Poliphilo's Dream: The Architecture of the Imagination in the Hypnerotomachia*. The *Hypnerotomachia* is a dream book published in 1499, narrating a journey through fantastical gardens and buildings in the ancient world, in extraordinary detail. In 2002 I moved to Rome, and started teaching Studio and Urban History in the Waterloo Rome program. Recently, my sabbatical research took me to Bali and Mexico to study ceremonial and traditional architecture and theatre, as well as self-built housing. I agree with my friend the architectural philosopher Juhani Pallasmaa that we often learn more about architecture from our non-architecture books. My teaching is oriented towards critical thinking, the importance of diversity for collective intelligence, the richness of history for the imagination, strategic research, techno-poeisis, and thinking outside of the box. My current research project is a book on the modern language of architecture in Carlo Scarpa's Castelvecchio Museum, a famous adaptive-reuse project.

I'm married, and live with my husband in a laneway house in Toronto. I love hiking, travel, photography, dogs, and dim sum. You can find many of my publications, conference papers and lectures as well as student theses **here.** It is worth signing in to get free access to many research papers.

Find me on Instagram: @Space_Odyssey Facebook: my Architectural Group - feel free to join.

Course Time Zone

All dates and times communicated for this course are Eastern Daylight Time (EDT, GMT-4).

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Evidence of critical thinking, understanding of complex ideas, lucid communications, thoughtful questions and comments, skill in interpretation, ability to take complexity from analysis to synthesis. Students' learning aspirations include: continuously building up and deepening a broad spectrum of cultural references and ideas, assessing evidence, valuing intellectual curiosity, communicating effectively with other people through a variety of media.

Grade Breakdown

Activities and Assignments	Weight (%)
Introduce Yourself	Ungraded
Reflections and sources	30%
Discussions	15%
Project	35%
Assessment	10%
Critical Feedback	10%

Materials and Resources

Texts - posted on Learn

Journal articles - through the library / OMNI, the internet, and Google Scholar

Visual Images: Artstor (through the library website), Google Images

Movies: **archive.org**, Netflix, Primevideo, Youtube, etc.

Spring 2020 COVID-19 Special Statement

Given the continuously evolving situation around COVID-19, students are to refer to the University of Waterloo's developing information resource page (https://uwaterloo.ca/coro-navirus/) for up-to-date information on academic updates, health services, important dates, co-op, accommodation rules and other university level responses to COVID-19.

Late Work

Assignments that are handed in late will receive an initial penalty of 20% on the first calendar day late and a 5% penalty per calendar day thereafter. After 5 calendar days, the assignment will receive a 0%.

Only in the case of a justified medical or personal reason will these penalties be waived, and only if these have been officially submitted to the Undergraduate Student Services Co-Ordinator and accepted by the Undergraduate Office.

Students seeking accommodations due to COVID-19, are to follow Covid-19-related accommodations as outlined by the university here: (**https://uwaterloo.ca/coronavirus/academic-information#accommodations).**

Academic integrity, grievance, discipline, appeals and note for students with disabilities:

Academic integrity: In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [Check **the Office of Academic Integrity** for more information.]

Grievance: A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read **Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4**. When in doubt, please be certain to contact the department's administrative assistant who will provide further assistance.

Discipline: A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity to avoid committing an academic offence, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. [Check **the Office of Academic Integrity** for more information.] A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offence, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offences (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about "rules" for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course instructor, academic advisor, or the undergraduate associate dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71, Student Discipline. For typical penalties, check **Guidelines for the Assessment of Penalties**.

Appeals: A decision made or penalty imposed under **Policy 70, Student Petitions and Grievances** (other than a petition) or **Policy 71, Student Discipline** may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to **Policy 72, Student Appeals**.

Note for students with disabilities: AccessAbility Services, located in Needles Hall, Room 1401, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curricu-

lum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with AccessAbility Services at the beginning of each academic term.

Turnitin.com: Text matching software (Turnitin®) may be used to screen assignments in this course. Turnitin® is used to verify that all materials and sources in assignments are documented. Students' submissions are stored on a U.S. server, therefore students must be given an alternative (e.g., scaffolded assignment or annotated bibliography), if they are concerned about their privacy and/or security. Students will be given due notice, in the first week of the term and/or at the time assignment details are provided, about arrangements and alternatives for the use of Turnitin in this course.

It is the responsibility of the student to notify the instructor if they, in the first week of term or at the time assignment details are provided, wish to submit the alternate assignment.

Coronavirus Information

Coronavirus Information for Students

This resource provides updated information on COVID-19 and guidance for accommodations due to COVID-19.

Mental Health Support

All of us need a support system. We encourage you to seek out mental health supports when they are needed. Please reach out to **Campus Wellness and Counselling Services**.

We understand that these circumstances can be troubling, and you may need to speak with someone for emotional support. **Good2Talk** is a post-secondary student helpline based in Ontario, Canada that is available to all students.

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