

MDST 3559 (Schedule # [xxxxx](#))

University of Virginia

Fall 2009

Time :: Place

[Mr. David Golumbia](#)

Office: 449 New Cabell Hall

Fall 2009 Office Hours: TBD

Hard Science Fiction

Contemporary film, television, digital and written examples of the genre, one based on the premise that it is constructed from "plausible" science. This class will ask whether such an idea is itself plausible, while reading a variety of texts closely in cultural and formal terms. Our primary focus as always will be the texts themselves, but we will look for patterns and themes in the works as we analyze them. In two cases we will watch texts be transformed from novel to film (*Stalker*) and from novel to film to film (*Solaris*). The course will be taught primarily via discussion. Presentations, short papers, and a longer final paper. One prior class in English, Media Studies, Comparative Literature, or an appropriate topic in another discipline, or permission of instructor. Open to third years and above.

Fiction

- Stanislaw Lem, *Solaris*
- Gregory Benford and David Brin, *Heart of the Comet*
- Arthur C. Clarke, *Rendezvous with Rama*
- Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, *The Mote in God's Eye*
- Greg Bear, *Blood Music*
- Arkady and Boris Strugatsky, *Roadside Picnic*

Feature Films

- P.W.S. Anderson, dir., *Event Horizon*
- S. Kubrick, dir., *2001: A Space Odyssey*
- J. Cameron, dir., *Aliens*
- A. Tarkovsky, dir., *Solaris*, *Stalker*
- S. Soderbergh, dir., *Solaris*
- K. Otomo, dir., *Akira*

Games

- *Bioshock*
- *Half-Life*
- *Halo*
- *Fallout*

Assignments and Evaluation

Evaluation will be based on written exercises and course participation as follows:

- One oral presentation (10%)
Due over the course of the term on dates provided on the presentation schedule
- Two 5-7 page response papers (40%; 2 papers of 20% each)
Two response papers, one responding to a critical essay and the other to a media work, on syllabus material or on topics of the student's choice related to the course subject developed in consultation with the instructor.
- Final 10-12 page paper (40%)
The final paper will be on a topic of your choosing that relates to the course subject chosen in consultation with the instructor.

- Participation (10%)
Including all in-class work other than your presentation, your attendance and participation in discussion.

Policies

- This course is taught primarily via discussion. Your attendance and participation are vital to its success. A significant portion of your grade (20%) depends on your class participation. Because the class meets only once a week, more than one unexcused absence will count against your final course grade. 3 unexcused absences results in automatic failure of the course, in accordance with College guidelines.
- Papers for this class will be accepted *in printed form only* (ie, not emailed or posted online) unless otherwise arranged with instructor.
- No late work is accepted in this class. Work handed in late is automatically marked down one-third grade (e.g., a B becomes a B-) for each day it is late, and after one week becomes a failing grade for the assignment.
- You are expected to have done the primary reading and any other primary course assignments before the beginning of course each week.
- All work in this course is subject to the University's Honor Code. You may work in teams for some assignments, *but all written work must be solely your own*, and any reliance on published work must be properly cited.
- *Final grades for the course will not be released until the entire class has submitted online course evaluations.*

Week-by-Week Syllabus

Week 1. **Introduction**

- Thurs. Intro

Week 2. ***Blood Music***

- Tues. Part I
- Thurs. Part II

Week 3. ***Aliens***

- Tues. Part I
- Thurs. Part II

Week 4. ***Roadside Picnic***

- Tues. Part I
- Thurs. Part II

Week 5. ***Stalker***

- Tues. Part I
- Thurs. Part II

Week 6. ***The Mote in God's Eye***

- Tues. Part I
- Thurs. Part II

Week 7. ***Heart of the Comet***

- Tues. Part I
- Thurs. Part II

Week 8. ***Akira***

- Tues. Part I
- Thurs. Part II

Week 9. *Event Horizon*

- Tues. Part I
- Thurs. Part II

Week 10. *Solaris (Lem)*

- Tues. Part I
- Thurs. Part II

Week 11. *Solaris (Tarkovsky)*

- Tues. Part I
- Thurs. Part II

Week 12. *Solaris (Soderbergh)*

- Tues. Part I
- Thurs. Part II

Week 13. *Games I*

- Tues. *Half-Life*
- Thurs. *Halo*

Week 14. *Games II*

- Tues. *Fallout*
- Thurs. *Bioshock*

Week 15. *Final Class*

- Tues. Summary

All work for this course is due on the appropriate date indicated on the assignment sheets. There is no final exam for the course.

Last updated February 2, 2009.