

# FYSM 1210 Special Topics in Philosophy Science Fiction and Philosophy

## Course Outline

**Term:** Fall 2021

**Time:** Tues. & Thurs. 4:30-6:00 pm

**Location:** Online

**Instructor:** Philippe-Antoine Hoyeck

**Office:** N/A

**Office hours:** By appointment only

**Phone:** N/A

**Email:** philippeantoin.hoyeck@carleton.ca

### Course Description

This course introduces students to a range of themes in philosophy through the lens of science fiction. Students will be exposed to classic works of science fiction across a range of different media, including film, television, and literature. These will be used to illustrate key concepts, problems, and figures in the philosophical tradition.

### Learning Outcomes

Students will become familiar with key questions and debates in metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics as well as with influential works of science fiction. They will learn to think critically about arguments and thought-experiments both in contemporary philosophy and in the history of philosophy across various traditions. Special emphasis will be placed on close readings of philosophical texts and on argument reconstruction.

### Course Materials

Students are expected to have access to both video materials and readings. All video materials can be accessed on Netflix in Canada. Students who do not wish to purchase a Netflix subscription are expected to rent or to purchase these materials legally.

Most text materials take the form of articles and short excerpts of longer works. These will be made available to students for free, either on Ares or on Brightspace. In addition to those listed in the course calendar, these may include excerpts from historical works across various philosophical traditions.

Students need only purchase two books for this course. Both can be found at most new or used booksellers. No particular edition of the books is necessary.

- Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932)
- Douglas Adams, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (1979)

### Course Requirements

This course is organized as a seminar. Classes will take the form of synchronous lectures on Zoom. Students are expected to review readings ahead of time and to come prepared to discuss them and to participate in in-class group activities. Participation in all sessions is mandatory. Nonetheless, sessions will also be recorded for students who cannot attend.

### Evaluations

- Participation 20%
- Short assignment 1 (due September 30<sup>th</sup>) 10%

- Short assignment 2 (due November 18<sup>th</sup>) 10%
- Mid-term examination (opens October 21<sup>st</sup>) 15%
- Essay (due December 9<sup>th</sup>) 20%
- Summative final exam (TBD) 25%

### Course Policies

- The instructor will not hold regular office hours. Office hours will be held by appointment on Zoom.
- The instructor reserves the right to modify the order and content of lectures. Students will always be notified ahead of time in the event of a change.
- The instructor will try to respond to emails promptly. However, students should allow up to two business days for answers.
- No extra work will be assigned to students for additional grades under any circumstances.
- Evaluations will not be weighed differently to improve students' grades under any circumstances.

### Tentative Course Calendar

<b>Week 1</b> Sept. 9 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Course Introduction</b> No readings
<b>I. Knowledge of the External World</b>	
Sept. 14 <sup>th</sup> – 23 <sup>rd</sup>	<b>Film:</b> <i>The Matrix</i> (1999)  <b>Readings:</b> Hilary Putnam, "Brains in a Vat" Nick Bostrom, "Are You Living in a Computer Simulation?"
<b>II. Personal Identity and the Self</b>	
Sept. 28 <sup>th</sup> – Oct. 7 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Television:</b> <i>Star Trek</i> TOS S1 E5, "The Enemy Within" (1966) <i>Star Trek</i> TNG S6 E12, "Second Chances" (1993) <i>Star Trek</i> VOY S2 E24, "Tuvix" (1996)  <b>Readings:</b> Bernard Williams, "The Self and the Future" Derek Parfit, <i>Reasons and Persons</i> (excerpts)  <i>Short assignment 1 due September 30<sup>th</sup></i>
<b>III. The Nature of the Mind</b>	
Oct. 12 <sup>th</sup> – 21 <sup>st</sup>	<b>Film:</b> <i>Blade Runner</i> (1982)  <b>Readings:</b> John Searle, "Minds, Brains, and Programs" David Chalmers, <i>The Conscious Mind</i> (excerpts)  <i>Mid-term examination opens October 21<sup>st</sup></i>

<b>IV. Freedom and Determinism</b>	
<b>Nov. 2<sup>nd</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup></b>	<p><b>Film:</b> <i>Minority Report</i> (2002)</p> <p><b>Readings:</b> Benjamin Libet, “Unconscious Cerebral Initiative and the Role of m Conscious Will in Voluntary Action.” Harry Frankfurt, “Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility”</p>
<b>V. Ethics and the Good Life</b>	
<b>Nov. 16<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup></b>	<p><b>Novel:</b> Aldous Huxley, <i>Brave New World</i> (1932)</p> <p><b>Readings:</b> Robert Nozick, <i>Anarchy, State, and Utopia</i> (excerpts) Judith Jarvis Thomson, “The Trolley Problem” Mary Midgley “Trying Out One’s New Sword”</p> <p style="color: red;"><i>Short assignment 1 due November 18<sup>th</sup></i></p>
<b>VI. The Meaning of Life</b>	
<b>Nov. 29<sup>th</sup> – Dec. 9<sup>th</sup></b>	<p><b>Novel:</b> Douglas Adams, <i>The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy</i> (1979)</p> <p><b>Readings:</b> Anthony Flew, “Theology and Falsification” Richard Taylor, “The Meaning of Life”</p> <p style="color: red;"><i>Essay due December 9<sup>th</sup></i></p>

## **Department of Philosophy and Carleton University Policies (Fall/Winter 2021-22)**

### **Assignments:**

Please follow your professor's instructions on how assignments will be handled electronically. There will be NO hard copies placed in the essay box this coming year.

### **Evaluation:**

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

### **Deferrals for Term Work:**

If students are unable to complete term work because of illness or other circumstances beyond their control, they should contact their course instructor no later than three working days of the due date. Normally, any deferred term work will be completed by the last day of the term. Term work cannot be deferred by the Registrar.

### **Deferrals for Final Exams:**

Students are expected to be available for the duration of a course including the examination period. Occasionally, students encounter circumstances beyond their control where they may not be able to write a final examination or submit a take-home examination. Examples of this would be a serious illness or the death of a family member. If you miss a final examination and/or fail to submit a take-home examination by the due date, you may apply for a deferral no later than three working days after the original due date (as per the University Regulations in Section 4.3 of the Undergraduate Calendar). Visit the Registrar's Office for further information.

### **Plagiarism:**

It is the responsibility of each student to understand the meaning of 'plagiarism' as defined in the Undergraduate or Graduate Calendars, and to avoid both committing plagiarism and aiding or abetting plagiarism by other students. (Section 10.1 of the Undergraduate Calendar Academic Regulations)

### **Academic Accommodation:**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term:

§ Pregnancy or religious obligation: write to your professor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details visit the EDC website. § Academic accommodations for students with disabilities: The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental

health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class test or exam requiring accommodation. After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with your professor to ensure accommodation arrangements are made.

§ Survivors of Sexual Violence: As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. § Accommodation for Student Activities: Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Please contact your instructor with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

### **Important Dates:**

Sept. 8 Classes start.

Sept. 22 Last day for registration and course changes for fall term and fall/winter (two-term) courses.

Sept. 30 Last day for entire fee adjustment when withdrawing from fall term or two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.

Oct. 11 Statutory holiday. University closed.

Oct. 25-29 Fall Break – no classes.

Nov. 26 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, before the official examination period.

Dec. 10 Last day of fall term classes. Classes follow a Monday schedule. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall term courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for term work for a fall term course.

Dec. 11-23 Final examinations for fall term courses and mid-term examinations in two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.

Dec. 23 All take-home examinations are due.

Jan. 10 Classes begin.

Jan. 24 Last day for registration and course changes in the winter term.

Jan. 31 Last day for a full fee adjustment when withdrawing from winter term courses or from the winter portion of two-term courses. Withdrawals after this date will result in a permanent notation of WDN on the official transcript.

Feb. 21 Statutory holiday. University closed.

Feb. 22-25 Winter Break – no classes.

Mar. 29 Last day for summative tests or examinations, or formative tests or examinations totaling more than 15% of the final grade, in winter term or fall/winter courses before the official examination period.

Apr. 12 Last day of two-term and winter term classes. Classes follow a Friday schedule. Last day for academic withdrawal from fall/winter and winter courses. Last day for handing in term work and the last day that can be specified by a course instructor as a due date for two-term and for winter term courses.

Apr. 13 No classes or examinations take place.

Apr. 14-28 Final examinations for winter term and two-term courses. Examinations are normally held all seven days of the week.

Apr. 15 Statutory holiday. University closed.

Apr. 28 All take-home examinations are due.

### **Addresses:**

Department of Philosophy:  
[www.carleton.ca/philosophy](http://www.carleton.ca/philosophy)  
520-2110

Registrar's Office:  
[www.carleton.ca/registrar](http://www.carleton.ca/registrar)  
520-3500

Academic Advising Centre:  
[www.carleton.ca/academicadvising](http://www.carleton.ca/academicadvising)  
520-7850

Writing Services:  
<http://www.carleton.ca/csas/writing-services/>

520-3822

MacOdrum Library

<http://www.library.carleton.ca/>

520-2735