

Topics Course description Wintersession 17

CIN 370 W01 Horror/Sci-Fi in Film & TV

Isaac Asimov, master of hard science fiction, once said, “science fiction can be defined as that branch of literature which deals with the reaction of human beings to changes in science and technology.” Stephen King, master of horror fiction, stated, “we make up horrors to help us cope with the real ones.” The study of the horror and science-fiction genres in film and television offers unique insight into the consequences of the *what if?* scenario. These two genres, sometimes referred interchangeably and occasionally viewed as overlapping in shared codes, conventions, and iconography, provide a means to debate cautionary social and political controversies surrounding unforeseen futures, usually dystopias, or the creation or existence of unimaginable beings — both of which are positioned as a detriment to humanity. In particular, the two genres’ most central conveyance concerns the perception of the *other* and the protagonist’s struggle to remain or become *human* and/or moral. Although this course will provide an historical survey of some of the more influential and popular films and television programs of the two genres, the focus will be on contemporary work that reinvents prior axiomatic tropes by contextualizing them with specific social commentaries on the science and horrors of the present. We will explore issues of gender, race, sexuality, and class through such vehicles as: *disaster* — alien invasion, environmental catastrophes, humans supplanted by technology, the apocalypse, and pandemics; *identity* — cyborgs, clones, experimentation by biotech and government, precognition, and artificial intelligence; and, the *fantastical* — monsters, the paranormal, time travel, and the devil incarnate. Contemporary television programs to be viewed and discussed will likely include *Fringe*, *iZombie*, *Battlestar Galactica (2004)*, *Black Mirror*, *The Leftovers*, *The Walking Dead*, *Helix*, *Dexter*, *Lost*, *Game of Thrones*, *American Horror Story (Murder House/Asylum)*, *Being Human (U.K.)*, *Supernatural*, *Scream Queens*, and *Penny Dreadful*. Recent films may include *Moon*, *District 9*, *The Host (2006)*, *Edge of Tomorrow*, *It Follows*, *Under the Skin*, *Snowpiercer*, *The Babadook*, *The Guest*, and *Cabin in the Woods*. A few genre-bending horror and sci-fi comedies, such as *Shaun of the Dead*, *What We Do in the Shadows*, *Galaxy Quest*, and *Zombieland*, may complete the mix. Ultimately, coming to terms with what is meant by “*being human*” will be explored.