Courses in English
Course Description

Department
13 General and Interdisciplinary Studies

Course title
Frankenstein reloaded – science and technology in literature and film

Hours per week (SWS)
2

Number of ECTS credits
2

Course objective
Upon successful completion students will have become acquainted with various representations of science and technology in literature and film in different genres and historical periods. As a result, they will have acquired a deeper understanding of their interdependence and mutual influence throughout time. Thus, they will be able to discuss today’s questions on representations of science and technology in novels and films and how they shape the current debate in our society.

Prerequisites

Recommended reading

Teaching methods
This seminar will be held for 90 minutes every week. There will be time for lecture, student debate, group work, in-class reading, and film analysis. Students have to deliver one presentation on a given topic in class and write a seminar paper based on that same topic, which both make up the final grade.

Assessment methods
Credit earned through presentation and term paper.

Language of instruction
English

Name of lecturer
Prof. Dr. Nicole Brandstetter

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Link

Course content
200 years after the first publication of Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, we live in an era of digitalisation, automation, artificial intelligence, genetic engineering, and climate change. Our society is confronted with fundamental moral and ethical questions that scientific research and technological development raise: To which degree is scientific and technological advancement beneficial? Do new technologies simplify life or transform us to transparent and manipulable citizens? What are the chances and limits of genetic engineering? In which world do we want to live in the future?

Literature and films have ever since mirrored societal issues. The "mad scientist" (like Frankenstein or Dr. No) is a classical illustration of an insane personality that plays God and exhausts uncritically every possibility of scientific research or technological development. Classical science fiction novels like 1984 show a dystopian view of a society that is brainwashed, controlled, and imprisoned due to technological advancement. Only to name very few, science fiction films range from popular blockbusters like Jurassic Park or Back to the Future to critical films about genetic engineering like Gattaca or Matrix, which has set standards with its filmic realisation.

In this class we will analyse the various representations of science and technology in literature and films in different genres and historical periods. This includes literary and film analysis as well as discussions of societal issues that are implied.

Remarks
Material will be provided by the professor.