

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Philosophical Topics in Science Fiction Film and Literature

Academic year 2025 2026

1. Programme-related data

1.1. Higher Education Institution	BABES-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY	
1.2. Faculty	HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY	
1.3. Department	PHILOSOPHY	
1.4. Field	PHILOSOPHY	
1.5. Level of study	MASTERS	
1.6. Degree programme / Qualification	PHILOSOPHY, CULTURE, COMMUNICATION/MASTER IN PHILOSOPHY	
1.7. Form of education	FULL-TIME	

2. Course-related data

2.1. Course title							<i>Philosophical Topics in SciFi Film and Literature</i>			Course code		HME2310	
2.2. Course coordinator				Assoc. Dr. MAFTEI STEFAN									
2.3. Seminar coordinator				Assoc. Dr. MAFTEI STEFAN									
2.4. Year of study		2		2.5. Semester		1		2.6. Type of assessment			Exam		
2.7. Course status				Compulsory			2.8. Course type			Specialisation subject			

3. Total estimated time (hours per semester of teaching activities)

3.1. Number of hours per week	4	of which: 3.2. course	2	3.3. seminar/ laboratory/ project	2
3.4. Total of hours in the curriculum	56	of which: 3.5. course	28	3.6. seminar/ laboratory	28
Time allocation for individual study (IS) and self-taught activities (ST)					hours
Learning from textbooks, course materials, bibliography, and notes (IS)					50
Additional research in the library, on subject-specific electronic platforms, and on-site					50
Preparing seminars/ laboratories/ projects, assignments, reports, portfolios, and essays					20
Tutoring (professional guidance)					12
Examinations					4
Other activities					8
3.7. Total hours of individual study (IS) and self-taught activities (ST)				144	
3.8. Total hours per semester				200	
3.9. Number of credits				8	

4. Prerequisites (where applicable)

4.1. curriculum-related	-
4.2. skills-related	-

5. Specific conditions (where applicable)

5.1. course-related	Attendance at classes is not mandatory. The attendance at the exam is not conditioned by a minimum number of attendances
5.2. seminar/laboratory-related	The activity at the seminar is mandatory. Missed seminars can be recovered under certain conditions. The attendance at the exam is not conditioned by a minimum number of attendances to seminars

6.1. Competencies resulting from the completion of the degree programme (as referred to in the curriculum)¹

Professional competencies	
Competency code	Competency
PC1	Specific cognitive abilities such as critically assessing the results of new philosophical research studies, drawing up interpretative alternatives as well as proving their relevance.
PC4	Building up a conscious and responsible attitude towards cultural differences in his/her professional activity and daily life; maximizing the cultural, religious and political pluralism specific to democracy
Transversal competencies	
Competency code	Competency
TC2	The ability to provide a comparative and inter-relational approach of the new and traditional knowledge in order to observe the emerging trends in the professional development.
TC3	The ability to manage work groups and communicate within various cultural contexts.

6.2. Learning outcomes relevant to the degree programme (as referred to in the curriculum)²

Learning outcomes targeted by the subject		
Competency code	Knowledge and comprehension	Specific academic skills
PC3	1. The student/graduate demonstrates an advanced knowledge in the field and specific cognitive abilities, such as the critical evaluation of the results of new philosophical research, the formulation of interpretative alternatives and the demonstration of their relevance.	1. The student/graduate can creatively apply research methods specific to philosophy and inter/trans-disciplinary, to solve complex and unpredictable problems in the field of philosophy and in the cultural and social field, as well as to communicate the results in a reasoned way.
PC4	2. The student/graduate demonstrates advanced knowledge of current problems in philosophy, culture and interpersonal and intercultural communication, approached from various philosophical perspectives.	2. The student/graduate can identify, analyse and solve interpersonal and intercultural problems with a high level of complexity, in order to achieve interpersonal and intercultural mediation.
PC5	3. The student/graduate demonstrates advanced knowledge of specific aspects of the history of philosophy.	3. The student/graduate can conceive and conduct specific research processes, such as designing, conducting and presenting a research paper (dissertation) on a significant issue, to develop philosophical knowledge and to apply it creatively in the social and cultural field.
PC6	4. The student/graduate demonstrates advanced knowledge of current problems, theories and methodological guidelines in the philosophy of culture/art/communication, phenomenology and applied ethics, as well as creative methods of cognitive transfer and problem solving.	4. The student/graduate can evaluate objectively and constructively different critical situations and can act independently and creatively, to address and solve new cognitive, professional or educational problems with a high level of complexity.

7. Subject-specific learning outcomes

Knowledge and comprehension

¹ The professional and/or transversal skills targeted by the subject for which the course description is prepared will be copied from the curriculum of the degree programme. For each competency, the complete entry, including the competency code, will be copied with the exact wording that appears in the curriculum, without any changes. If no competency is copied from either of the two categories, the row corresponding to that category is deleted from the table.

² The learning outcomes relevant for the degree programme and targeted by the subject for which the course description is prepared will be listed. The entries, copied without any changes from the Curriculum by subject type (Core Subject/Specialisation Subject/Complementary Subject), are listed under the corresponding competency.

1. The student understands philosophical thinking and philosophical questions from a cultural hermeneutic perspective
2. The student is able to understand and relate philosophical concepts and issues to everyday cultural themes and topics drawn from popular culture
3. The student is able to perceive the philosophical dimension of reading SF film and literature, within case studies.
4. The student becomes aware of the actuality of the philosophical debate in contact with themes and motifs of literature and sci-fi film that are reflected in matters of great importance in today's culture, marked especially by the impact of information technologies.
Specific academic skills
1. The student is able to interpret cultural specificities and differences within the same culture or in relation to different cultures
2. The student is able to read cultural topics and cultural symbols present in everyday culture as examples of or as leading to philosophical topics and debates
3. The student is able to appreciate and discriminate the philosophical value of popular cultural symbols and narratives
4. The student is able to analyze products of popular culture (film, literature) specific to the SF genre from the perspective of philosophical thinking and classical themes of philosophy

8. Contents

8.1. Course	Teaching and learning methods	Remarks ³
LECTURE 1-2 . Sci-Fi and Philosophical Thinking. Interactions and compatibilities. Towards a new "philosophy of the future"?	- interactive course based on lectures and multimedia presentations - discussions based on examples	-
LECTURE 3. MAN AND HIS FUTURE IN THE TECHNOLOGICAL AGE. Anxieties and hopes about science and technology: <i>Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus</i>	-interactive course with lecture foundation and multimedia presentations -discussions based on examples	-
LECTURE 4. HUMAN IDENTITY: humans, cyborgs, robots (<i>Blade Runner</i>)	-interactive course with lecture foundation and multimedia presentations -discussions based on examples	-
LECTURE 5. THE SELF AND ITS COHERENCE (<i>Total Recall, We Can Remember It for You Wholesale</i>)	-interactive course with lecture foundation and multimedia presentations -discussions based on examples	-
LECTURE 6. BODY AND MIND (<i>Bicentennial Man, Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?, Neuromancer</i>)	-interactive course with lecture foundation and multimedia presentations -discussions based on examples	-
LECTURE 7. FREE WILL (<i>Matrix, Minority Report</i>)	-interactive course with lecture foundation and multimedia presentations -discussions based on examples	-
LECTURE 8. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (<i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i>)	-interactive course with lecture foundation and multimedia presentations -discussions based on examples	-
LECTURE 9. DYSTOPIAS, UTOPIAS (<i>Men Like Gods , Brave New World , 1984</i>)	-interactive course with lecture foundation and multimedia presentations -discussions based on examples	-
LECTURE 10. THE OUTSIDERS (<i>ET and Alien</i>)	-interactive course with lecture foundation and multimedia presentations -discussions based on examples	-
LECTURE 11. THE WAR OF THE FUTURE (<i>Terminator</i>)	-interactive course with lecture foundation and multimedia presentations -discussions based on examples	-
LECTURE 12. ECOTOPIAS AND FEMINOTOPIAS	-interactive course with lecture	-

³ For example, organisational aspects, recommendations for students, specific aspects relating to the course/seminar, such as inviting experts in the field, etc.

(<i>Avatar</i> , <i>The Female Man</i>)	foundation and multimedia presentations -discussions based on examples	
LECTURE 13. EMPIRES AND COLONIZATIONS (<i>Dune</i>)	-interactive course with lecture foundation and multimedia presentations -discussions based on examples	-
LECTURE 14. IMMORTALITY: curse or blessing? (<i>The Postmortal</i>)	-interactive course with lecture foundation and multimedia presentations -discussions based on examples	-

Bibliography

Movies:

Blade Runner (1982) – dir. Ridley Scott
Total Recall (2012) – dir. Len Wiseman
The Matrix (1999) – dir. L. & L. Wachowski
Minority Report (2002) – dir. Steven Spielberg
2001: A Space Odyssey (1968) – dir. Stanley Kubrick
ET (1982) – dir. Steven Spielberg
Alien (1979) – dir. Ridley Scott
The Terminator (1984) – dir. James Cameron
Avatar (2009) – dir. James Cameron
Dune (1984) – dir. David Lynch
Dune (2021) – dir. Denis Villeneuve

Literature:

Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus (1818) - Mary Shelley
Bicentennial Man (1976) – Isaac Asimov
Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? (1968) – Philip K. Dick
Neuromancer (1984) – William Gibson
Men Like Gods (1923) – HG Wells
Brave New World (1932) – Aldous Huxley
1984. A Novel (1949) – George Orwell
The Female Man (1975) – Joanna Russ
The Postmortal (2011) – Drew Magary
We Can Remember It for You Wholesale (1966) - Philip K. Dick
The Minority Report (1956) - Philip K. Dick
Dune (1965) – Frank Herbert

Secondary sources:

Brown, R., Decker, KS (eds.), *Terminator and Philosophy* (Blackwell Philosophy and Pop Culture Series), Blackwell, 2009
Decker, KS (ed.), *Dune and Philosophy* (Blackwell Philosophy and Pop Culture Series), Blackwell, 2023
Dunn, GA (ed.), *Avatar and Philosophy* , (Blackwell Philosophy and Pop Culture Series), Blackwell, 2014
Ewing, J., Decker, KS (eds.), *Alien and Philosophy* , (Blackwell Philosophy and Pop Culture Series), Blackwell, 2017
Michaud, Nicolas (ed.), *Frankenstein and Philosophy* (Popular Culture and Philosophy Series), Open Court, 2013
Nicolas, Jeffery (ed.), *Dune and Philosophy* (Popular Culture and Philosophy Series), Open Court, 2011
Rowlands, Mark, *The Philosopher at the End of the Universe: Philosophy Explained Through Science Fiction Films* , Ebury Press, 2005
Sanders, Steven M. (ed.), *The Philosophy of Science Fiction Film* , University Press of Kentucky, 2008
Schneider, Susan (ed.), *Science Fiction and Philosophy* , Wiley-Blackwell, 2009
Wittkower, DE (ed.), *Philip K. Dick and Philosophy: Do Androids Have Kindred Spirits?* (Popular Culture and Philosophy Series), Open Court, 2011

8.2. Seminar/ laboratory	Teaching and learning methods	Remarks
1-2. Activity organisation. Discussion on the novel <i>Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus</i>	-interactive seminar based on discussions / multimedia presentations -text commentary, debate	-
3-4. Viewing and discussion about the film <i>Blade Runner</i>	-interactive seminar based on discussions / multimedia presentations -text commentary, debate	-
5-6-7-8. Viewing and discussion on the films <i>Total Recall</i> , <i>Matrix</i> , <i>Minority Report</i> , <i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i> Discussion on <i>We Can Remember It for You Wholesale</i> , <i>Bicentennial Man</i> , <i>Do Androids</i>	-interactive seminar based on discussions / multimedia presentations -text commentary, debate	-

<i>Dream of Electric Sheep?</i> , <i>Neuromancer</i>		
9-10. Viewing and discussion on <i>ET</i> and <i>Alien</i> films Discussion on <i>Men Like Gods</i> , <i>Brave New World</i> , 1984	-interactive seminar based on discussions / multimedia presentations -text commentary, debate	-
11-12. Viewing and discussion about the movies <i>Terminator</i> and <i>Avatar</i> Discussion on <i>The Female Man</i>	--interactive seminar based on discussions / multimedia presentations -text commentary, debate	-
13-14. Viewing and discussion on <i>Dune</i> (1984) and <i>Dune</i> (2021) Discussion on <i>Dune</i> (novel) Discussion on <i>The Postmortal</i>	-interactive seminar based on discussions / multimedia presentations -text commentary, debate	-

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9. Evaluation

Type of activity	9.1 Evaluation criteria ⁴	9.2 Evaluation methods ⁵	9.3 Percentage in the final grade
9.4. Course	- acquisition of the knowledge taught in the course; - the ability to operate correctly and adequately with them	The evaluation will be done during the final examination	
	- undertaking one's own documentary research in the fields of philosophy, cultural studies and philosophy of culture; - acquisition and application of research and	Written exam at the end of the semester (session)	66% of the final grade

⁴ The evaluation criteria must directly reflect the learning outcomes targeted at the level of the degree programme respectively at the level of the subject. More specifically, the learning outcomes set out in the expected learning outcomes are assessed.

⁵ Both final evaluation methods and ongoing evaluation strategies should be established.

	writing methods specific to philosophy (text analysis, report, academic essay)		
9.5. Seminar/ laboratory	- acquisition of the knowledge discussed at the seminar; - the ability to operate correctly and adequately with them	The evaluation will be done during the semester – viva voce verification	33% of the final grade
9.6 Minimum standard for passing			
Elaboration of an academic essay / case study, of high complexity, using methods of philosophy and socio-humanistic sciences Planning and making individual oral and written presentations at seminars (debate, text analysis-commentary, academic essay) Any work that is found to be at least 20% copied from another source or developed with the help of AI will be considered plagiarized, and the use of plagiarism will cause the evaluation to be canceled. Any contestation of the grade obtained in the exam must be accompanied by a request from the student for the reevaluation of the paper. The result of this reevaluation will be presented to the students within 2 days from the date of the appeal.			

10. SDG labels (Sustainable Development Goals)⁶

	☐	Sustainable Development Generic Label						
								
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
								No label applies
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒

Date of entry:

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Signature of course coordinator

STEFAN-SEBASTIAN MAFTEI

Signature of seminar coordinator

STEFAN-SEBASTIAN MAFTEI

Date of approval in the department:

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Signature of the head of department

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⁶ Select a single label which, according to the [Implementation of SDG labels in the academic process](#), best matches the subject. If the subject addresses sustainable development in a generic manner (i.e. by presenting/introducing the general framework of sustainable development, etc.), then the Sustainable Development generic label may be applied. If none of the labels describe the subject, select the last option: "No label applies."