

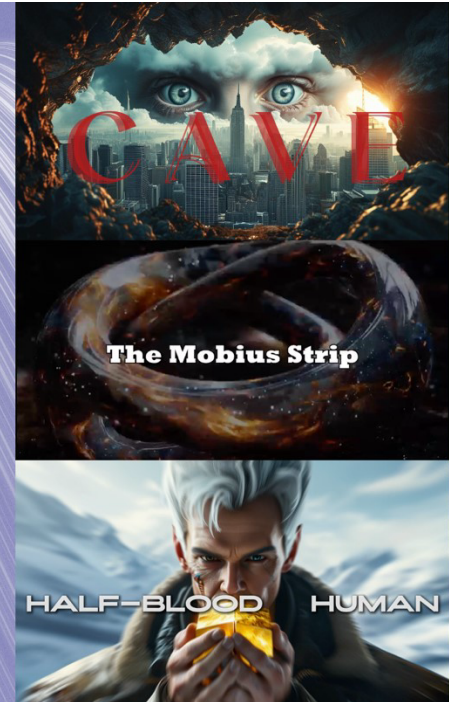
UCUG 1603 Science Fiction Storytelling (3 credits)

Instructor: Dr. Qiumeng Li qiumengli@hkust-gz.edu.cn

Office hour: Thursday 10:00–12:00 a.m., in W4 L6 608

Course Description:

This course offers a creative exploration of sci-fi topics such as perception of reality, existentialism in the multiverse, and philosophical and ethical questions on identity, AI, genetic engineering and so on. This course offers students opportunities to exercise power of creative imagination and to practice art of storytelling by developing students' own original sci-fi story with various tools e.g. Generative AI. In this analytical, creative, critical thinking and collaborative process, students will develop and present their story analysis and creation. This course offers visions of the future through studying important visionary film masters and related creative sci-fi works in films and animations, which stimulate thought-provoking discussion and forward thinking. Students will combine sci-fi knowledge, art and technique of visual storytelling, analytical, creative and critical thinking to screen-related research, analysis, sci-fi story creation through world, character and tension building.



Aims

Sci-fi subjects are not just pure fantasy; they can stimulate creative and critical thoughts that reflect our reality with forward thinking. Sci-fi subjects are closely related to many aspects of human social conditions and our concerns for the future. This course aims to broaden student horizons of these subjects and develop students' awareness, imagination and perspectives through analysis and creative projects.

This course not only studies and discusses key sci-fi topics, it also offers opportunities for students to exercise their creative imagination and critical thinking to build on these sci-fi themes by developing original sci-fi story. On the knowledge side, this course offers visions of the future through studying important classic and contemporary visionary film masters and their sci-fi works. On the application side, this course lets students exercise their power of creative imagination with critical thinking and storytelling technique to the creation and presentation of original sci-fi story.

Ideal For

Students interested in science fiction, philosophy, ethics, or future studies.

Those looking to strengthen creative writing, narrative design, or digital storytelling skills.

Learners aiming to work in film, animation, game design, writing, or technology ethics.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

1. Critically analyze the creative narrative content and cinematic form of the key sci-fi works
2. Critically analyze the human, social and other thematic issues addressed in these works
3. Conduct story research that informs creation of original sci-fi story with imagination
4. Effectively present the original sci-fi story and research verbally and visually

Assessment Tasks

	Weighting (%)	ILOs assessed
Participation	10	(1-4)
In-class exercises	20	(1-2)
Presentations (midterm + final)	30	(1-4)
Learning Portfolio (final project report)	30	(3-4)
2-page written report (individual reflection + peer review)	10	(1-4)

Course Content

Week	Sci-Fi Topics (tentative)	Storytelling + Movie clips	Tutorial Discussion	Weekly ILOs
1 0127 0129	Course Introduction Topics Overview 'What if'	Themes and Philosophical discussion	Story Elements Visual storytelling 0210	1,2
2 0203 0205	The science fiction elements of Chinese ancient literature	Story timeline		1,2
3 0224 0226	The science fiction elements of Chinese ancient literature	Story timeline		1,2
4 0303 0305	Utopia and Dystopia Sci-fi vs. real life issues	Doomsday machine	CHARACTER	1,2

5 0310 0312	The Future, future tech, future human Unknown and beyond	Sci fi predictions	Rising climax	1-3
6 0317 0319	Hi Tech vs. Low Tech Cyberpunk & visual styles	Visual styles and sci-fi city identity	INTERNAL WORLD	1-3
7 0324 0326	Technological crisis and threat Stages of AI – the law of robot AI vs. Super Human	Her & ChatGPT 4o Genetic engineering	CHARACTE	1-3
8 0331 0402	Mid-term group presentation			1-3
9 0407 0409	AI Identity crisis, body & mind Existentialism, memory & reality	Meanings of existence and reality in sci-fi genre Blade runner, ghost in the shell	Story vs. Plot	1-3
10 0414 0416	Natural Crisis and Threat Crisis Disaster Apocalypse	Exercises on characterization and storytelling	Plot & Tension	1-4
11 0421 0423	Advanced theory: Simulation theory & Chaos theory Review and conclusion	Butterfly’s Effect Plato’s Cave	Visual storytelling	1-4
12 0428 0430	Final group presentation 0430 6-9	Review and discussion		1-4
13 0507	Final group presentation 3-6	Review and discussion		1-4

Midterm Assignment

You will give a 6–10 minute presentation based on one of the following options:

Create and present your original science fiction story, or

Visually reinterpret an existing science fiction work (e.g., a short story, novel excerpt, or film concept)

This is a showcase of your narrative idea and speculative imagination. The focus is on story concept, worldbuilding, and narrative logic, rather than technical polish.

Presentation length: 6–10 minutes

Format: oral presentation with supporting visuals (optional)

Group size: 1–2 students per group

Final Assignment

The final project expands your midterm work into a more complete sci-fi storytelling piece.

You will give a 10-15 minute presentation, structured as:

- 5-10 minutes: a concise PowerPoint explanation of your concept
(story background, worldbuilding, core themes, narrative choices)
- 5 minutes: presentation of your science fiction work itself
(storytelling performance, animation, video, visual narrative, etc.)

In addition, you must submit a standalone video version of your sci-fi work (video, animation, narrated visuals, or equivalent) **with a minimum duration of 5 minutes.**

If there are subtitles in the video, both Chinese and English subtitles must be added.

Besides, you are also required to submit the revised written story prototype.

Group size: 1–2 students per group

Evaluation Criteria

Story quality (60%)– originality, narrative coherence, worldbuilding, thematic depth

Visualization (40%)– clarity of expression, effectiveness of visual storytelling

The choice of visualization tools does not matter. What matters is whether your visualization clearly communicates the meaning and logic of your story.

Grading Criteria

Originality (subject matter) Creativity (treatment) Clarity (presentation) Coherence (storytelling)

Relevance (relation to the course materials) **Final Grade Descriptors:**

Grades	Short Description	Elaboration on subject grading description
A	Excellent Performance	Demonstrates a comprehensive grasp of subject matter, expertise in problem-solving, and significant creativity in thinking. Exhibits a high capacity for scholarship and collaboration, going beyond core requirements to achieve learning goals.

B	Good Performance	Shows good knowledge and understanding of the main subject matter, competence in problem-solving, and the ability to analyze and evaluate issues. Displays high motivation to learn and the ability to work effectively with others.
C	Satisfactory Performance	Possesses adequate knowledge of core subject matter, competence in dealing with familiar problems, and some capacity for analysis and critical thinking. Shows persistence and effort to achieve broadly defined learning goals.
D	Marginal Pass	Has threshold knowledge of core subject matter, potential to achieve key professional skills, and the ability to make basic judgments. Benefits from the course and has the potential to develop in the discipline.
F	Fail	Demonstrates insufficient understanding of the subject matter and lacks the necessary problem-solving skills. Shows limited ability to think critically or analytically and exhibits minimal effort towards achieving learning goals. Does not meet the threshold requirements for professional practice or development in the discipline.

Course AI Policy

You can use Generative AI to assist the coursework especially the visual projects but for the writing, the final version must be in your own words.

Communication and Feedback

Assessment marks for individual assessed tasks will be communicated via Canvas and after the class presentation. Feedback on assignments will include strengths, weaknesses and areas for improvement. Students who have further questions about the feedback including marks should consult the instructor within five working days after the feedback is received.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to the university's academic integrity policy. Students are expected to uphold HKUST(GZ)'s Academic Honor Code and to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. The University has zero tolerance of academic misconduct. Please refer to Regulations for Academic Integrity and Student Conduct for the University's definition of plagiarism and ways to avoid cheating and plagiarism.

References, Materials and Resources

Some examples of the sci-fi authors to be covered in this course:

Philip Dick Isaac Asimov Carl Sagan Arthur C. Clarke Mary Shelly
Michael Crichton H.G. Wells Robert A. Heinlein

Some examples of the sci-fi film clips to be covered in this course:

Selected Black Mirror episodes

Metropolis (1927) Frankenstein (1931) The Stepford Wives (1975 and 2004)
 AI Artificial Intelligence (2001) I, Robot (2004) Blade Runner (1982, 2022)
 District 9 (2009) Elysium (2013) Prometheus (2012, 2017)
 Children of Men (2006) 12 Monkeys (1996) Dr. Strangelove (1964)
 Moon (2009) Source Code (2011) Starship Troopers (1997)
 Solaris (1972 and 2002) 2001 (1969) Contact (1997)
 Ghost in the Shell (1995) Akira (1998) The Host (2006)
 Her (2013) ExMechina (2014)

List of free Gen AI tools

AI Video Generation Tutorial: Gen-3 vs Kling AI vs Luma Dream Machine

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MbqfE_K1yqc <https://openart.ai/>

<https://www.klingai.com/> <https://vivago.ai/home>

Bluewillow AI Website :- <https://www.bluewillow.ai/>

Lexica AI Website :- <https://lexica.art/>

Leonardo AI Website :- <https://leonardo.ai/>

Playground AI Website :- <https://playgroundai.com/>

Dreamlike.art Website :- <https://dreamlike.art/>

Bing Image Creator :- <https://www.bing.com/create>

Dall-E2 Website :- <https://openai.com/dall-e-2> Night

Café <https://creator.nightcafe.studio/>

<https://www.pika.art/> (free for making moving images)

<https://easywithai.com/free-ai-image-generators/> (some free ai image generators list)

<https://runwayml.com/> (not free but can try) <https://stablediffusionweb.com/>

Moylan, T., & Baccolini, R. (Eds.). (2013). *Dark horizons: Science fiction and the dystopian imagination*. Routledge.

Roberts, A. (2002). *Science fiction*. Routledge.

Sanders, S. (2007). *The philosophy of science fiction film*. University Press of Kentucky.

Schelde, P. (1994). *Androids, humanoids and other science fiction monsters: science and soul in science fiction films*. NYU Press.

Telotte, J. P. (2001). *Science fiction film*. Cambridge University Press.

Telotte, J. P. (1995). *Replications: A robotic history of the science fiction film*. University of Illinois Press.