

**HIS 185**  
***A History of the Future:***  
***Millennial Visions in Film in Literature***

MW, 9:00-10:15 a.m.  
Morey 501  
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*Through literature and film, this course examines how people at various points in the past have imagined our future--and the ways in which those "millennial visions" were conditioned by specific historical contexts. The course looks at both positive and negative views of the future, and at secular as well as religious predictions for humankind's fate, asking always how our visions of the future, like a fun-house mirror, reflect in sometimes monstrous or exaggerated terms the concerns of the present.*

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**Part 1: Religious visions of the future**

Week 1.        1/14     Introduction

Week 2.        1/19     NO CLASS (Martin Luther King holiday)

1/21     Discussion: Apocalypse and millennium in the Christian tradition

Reading: *Revelation*; Joachim of Fiore, selections

Week 3.        1/26     Discussion: *The Seventh Seal*

Viewing: *The Seventh Seal*;

Reading: Michael Pressler, "The Idea Fused in the Fact: Bergman and *The Seventh Seal*," *Literature Film Quarterly* 13 (1985): 95-101.

**Part 2: Technology and the future**

1/28     Lecture: The Revolutions of the Modern Age

Week 4.        2/2     Discussion: *Frankenstein*

Reading: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*;  
 Deborah Blum, “Conceiving ‘Frankenstein,’” *New York Times*, February 1, 2013.

2/4 Lecture: Space and artificial intelligence

Week 5. 2/9 Discussion: *2001: A Space Odyssey*

Viewing: *2001: A Space Odyssey*;

Reading: Jeffrey Geiger, “I’m Afraid I Can Feel It,” in R. L. Rutsky, *Film Analysis: A Norton Reader* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), online via FIAF International Index to Film Periodicals,  
[http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&res\\_dat=xri:fiaf&rft\\_dat=xri:fiaf:article:011/0000037](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:fiaf&rft_dat=xri:fiaf:article:011/0000037).

**Topics for final project due on 2/9.**

2/11 Lecture: Jules Verne’s world

Week 6. 2/16 Discussion: Jules Verne, *Paris in the Twentieth Century*

Reading: Jules Verne, *Paris in the Twentieth Century*;

Brian Taves, “Jules Verne’s *Paris in the Twentieth Century*,” *Science Fiction Studies* 24 (1997): 133-38.

2/18 Discussion: *Blade Runner* (**No response due; you will write an essay about *Blade Runner* on the midterm exam.**)

Viewing: *Blade Runner* (director’s cut);

Reading: Mark Lussier and Kaitlin Gowan, “The Romantic Roots of ‘Blade Runner,’” *Wordsworth Circle* 43 (2012): 165-72.

Week 7. 2/23 **Midterm exam**

Part 3: Cold-War visions of a nuclear holocaust

2/25 The Cold War and Nuclear Armageddon

Week 8. 3/2 Discussion: *On the Beach* (**You may omit the response for either *On the Beach* or *Dr. Strangelove***)

Viewing: *On the Beach*

Reading: Philip Beidler, “Remembering *On the Beach*,” *War, Literature, and the*

*Arts: An International Journal of the Humanities* 21 (2009): 370-82;

Stewart Alsop, "Let's Stop Talking Nonsense about Fallout," *Saturday Evening Post* 7/23/1960 (Vol. 233 Issue 4), p. 10.

3/4 Discussion: *Dr. Strangelove* (**You may omit the response for either *On the Beach* or *Dr. Strangelove***)

Viewing: *Dr. Strangelove*;

Reading: Grant B. Stillman, "Two of the MADdest Scientists: Where *Strangelove* Meets Dr. No; Or, Unexpected Roots for Kubrick's Cold War Classic," *Film History* 20 (2008): 487-500.

### **Spring break: 3/9-3/13**

Week 9. 3/16 Discussion: *A Canticle for Leibowitz*

Reading: Walter J. Miller, Jr., *A Canticle for Leibowitz*;

David J. Tietge, "Priest, Professor, or Prophet: Discursive and Ethical Intersections in *A Canticle for Leibowitz*," *Journal of Popular Culture* 41 (2008): 676-94.

#### Part 4: Society, family, and gender in the future

3/18 Lecture: American Progressivism and millennialism

Week 10. 3/23 Discussion: *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*

Reading: Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*;

George E. Connor, "The Awakening of Edward Bellamy: *Looking Backward* at Religious Influence," *Utopian Studies* 11 (2000): 38-50.

3/25 Lecture: Feminism at the turn of the twentieth century

Week 11. 3/30 Discussion: *Herland*

Reading: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*;

Ann J. Lane, "Introduction," in Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), v-xxiii.

4/1 Lecture: Introduction to *THX 1138*

Week 12. 4/6 Discussion: *THX 1138*

Viewing: *THX 1138*;

Reading: J. P. Telotte, "The Problem of the Real and *THX 1138*," *Journal of Film Criticism* 24 (2000): 45-60.

4/6 Lecture: Seventies utopias and dystopias: Marge Piercy's world

Week 13. **No class 4/13 or 4/15. Work on final projects.**

Week 14. 4/20 Discussion: *Woman on the Edge of Time*

Reading: Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time*;  
 Marcia Bundy Seabury, "The Monsters We Create: *Woman on the Edge of Time* and *Frankenstein*," *Critique* 42 (2001): 131-43.

Part 5: Post 9/11 fears

4/22 Lecture: Zombies in a post-9/11 world

Week 15. 4/27 Discussion: *28 Days Later*

Viewing: *28 Days Later*;

Reading: Nicole Birch-Bayley, "Terror in Horror Genres: The Global Media and the Millennial Zombie," *Journal of Popular Culture* 45 (2012): 1137-1151.

4/29 Presentations of final projects

**Final papers due in the history department by 5 p.m. on May 6.**

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*Timeline of texts and films*

<i>Revelation</i>	ca. 81-96 C.E.
Joachim of Fiore, selections	between 1184 and 1202
Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i>	1818 (rev. 1831)
Jules Verne, <i>Paris in the Twentieth Century</i>	1863
Edward Bellamy, <i>Looking Backward: 2000-1887</i>	1888
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, <i>Herland</i>	1915
<i>The Seventh Seal</i>	1956
<i>On the Beach</i>	1959
Walter J. Miller, Jr., <i>A Canticle for Leibowitz</i>	1959
<i>Dr. Strangelove</i>	1964
<i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i>	1968
<i>THX 1138</i>	1971
Marge Piercy, <i>Woman on the Edge of Time</i>	1976
<i>Blade Runner</i>	1982
<i>28 Days Later</i>	2003

**Books to purchase:**

- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition: 978-0143105039).  
 Jules Verne, *Paris in the Twentieth Century* (Del Rey: 978-0345420398).  
 Walter J. Miller, Jr., *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (EOS: 978-0060892999).  
 Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* (Signet Classics: 978-0451531162).  
 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland and Selected Stories* (Signet: 978-0451469878).  
 Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time* (Fawcett: 978-0449210826).

*All other readings in the course are available through Blackboard in the section marked Readings under the Readings and Films tab.*

*All films are available on reserve in the Art and Music Library. In addition, the following titles are available for streaming through links on Blackboard in the section marked Films for Streaming under the Readings and Films tab: *On the Beach*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *THX 1138*, *Blade Runner*, and *The Seventh Seal* (this latter through the Kanopy database, also accessible through the “Databases” tab on the library home page). *28 Days Later* is available for on-demand streaming through several vendors, including Amazon (for \$3.99 in HD).*

**Course requirements:**

- Attendance at *all* classes, along with active, informed, and enthusiastic participation in all discussions. (10%)
- A one- to two-page (250-500 word) response to each reading assignment and film, due in class on the day of the discussion for each discussion unless otherwise indicated on the syllabus. (30%)
- Midterm exam. (20%)
- “Ownership” of one of the films or readings in the course, involving a 5-minute oral presentation plus a 2-4 page write-up, complete with bibliography. Ownership papers are due on the day in which the work is discussed, and you need not submit a reading response for the work for which you take ownership. (15%)
- A final paper analyzing some vision of the future we have not discussed in class as a product of its historical context. (25%).

*About the responses:* The responses are meant to focus your thinking about the films and texts to be discussed in the classroom. You may respond to the material in any way you choose, but I will award higher grades for response papers that offer more analysis and insight into the way the text or film reflects its historical context and that use specific examples (and quotations, when possible) to back up their arguments. An adequate plot summary will result in a grade of 7 out of 10 points on the response. Additional points will be awarded for consideration of the historical context in which the work was produced, analysis of the structure and or symbols employed in the given work, comparisons to other works analyzed in the class, questions for discussion raised in the paper, and the use of specific examples and quotations to back up your arguments. Responses should be word processed and double-spaced.

*About the “ownership” of a film or reading:* In a short, five minute presentation, you will orient the class about 1) the historical context in which the work was produced, specifically thinking about contemporary events to which the author or film-maker was responding (for example, for *Revelation*, to Roman persecutions of Christians in the late first century); and 2) the author or film-maker responsible for the work being discussed, situating the work within that person’s life story, larger body of work, and artistic or literary style or goals. You will hand in a 2-4 page write-up, complete with bibliography (in University of Chicago humanities style) with your presentation, citing at least four sources; Wikipedia is not a valid source.

*About the final paper:* The final paper gives you the opportunity to explore the ways in which some vision of the future responds to, comments on, or is a product of a specific historical context. You may choose to examine a film, work of literature, piece of non-fiction writing, or even a video game, but your topic must be chosen in consultation with the instructor and must be submitted and approved by February 9. Papers should be 10-12 pages in length, double-spaced, in Times or Times New Roman font. Papers should include a bibliography of sources consulted. You may use either endnotes or footnotes, but all references must be in University of Chicago Humanities/Turabian style.

#### **Grading scale:**

A	100-93%
A-	92.9-90%
B+	89.9-87%
B	86.9-83%
B-	82.9-80%
C+	79.9-77%
C	76.9-73%
C-	72.9-70%
D+	69.9-67%
D	66.9-63%
D-	62.9-60%
F	Below 60%

In case of some mix-up, it is a good idea to save all returned work until you receive your grade at the end of the semester.

#### **General policies:**

Late work will be penalized 10% for each calendar day late. I do not accept emailed assignments without prior arrangement and only under the most exigent of circumstances.

#### **Attendance:**

Students are responsible for all material covered in and announcements made in class; attendance is, thus, crucial for doing well in the course. Participation in discussions is a critical component of the course. The instructor reserves the right to impose a failing

grade for the course after a student's absence from four or more discussions. (For the sake of accounting, three tardies will constitute one absence.)

**Learning objectives:**

At the end of this course, students will be able to

- Read and understand primary sources as products of a specific historical context
- Describe both religious and secular views of the future, particularly as expressed in the nineteenth, twentieth, and early twenty-first centuries
- Provide examples of the way in which projections of the future can convey anxieties or concerns about the present
- Effectively analyze, in writing and orally, works of literature and film as historical sources
- Identify and utilize appropriate sources to discover background material about the films, novels, and historical settings discussed in the course
- Correctly cite sources in footnotes/endnotes and bibliographies

**Students with disabilities:** The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL, 1-154 Dewey Hall, 585-275-9049) offers a variety of disability services for undergraduates and graduate students in Arts, Sciences & Engineering. These services aim to provide an inclusive experience and equal access to academic content and program requirements. They can help you to request accommodations for your success in this class. You can learn more at: [www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/undergraduate/disability](http://www.rochester.edu/college/cetl/undergraduate/disability).

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me as well.

**Classroom etiquette:** Please turn off cell phones or set them to a silent alert. In the rare event you must enter late or leave class early, please let me know in advance.

**Academic honesty:** All assignments and activities associated with this course must be performed in accordance with the University of Rochester's Academic Honesty Policy. Cheating and plagiarism are serious offenses and will be treated as such. Anyone who engages in such activities will be turned over to the College Board on Academic Honesty for disciplinary action, as outlined at <http://www.rochester.edu/College/honesty/>.

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**Disclaimer:** The instructor reserves the right to change topics and assignments on the syllabus at any point in the semester.