World Creation as Cultural Commentary

A media studies curriculum on the themes present in science fiction and fantasy media and the connections to real-world societies and cultures

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I set out to connect three subjects with this project: my AHS concentration in media studies, science fiction and fantasy media, and education. The intersection of these topics is the result of my project: a curriculum for a media studies course analyzing common themes and structures used in the representation of fictional worlds and their connections to modern and historical cultures and societies. The media I explored and class discussion prompts I created raise a variety of questions and will spur conversation on philosophy, ethics, religion, race, sexuality, and the foundation of them all, identity.

This project has provided a unique opportunity for me to go through the experience of analyzing books, film, and television from my perspective as a student, but also from the perspective of a teacher. In forming my exploration into a cohesive curriculum, I worked to create an overarching structure that builds up new ideas and concepts in both a logical and interesting order. As the course concludes, the topics and the relationships among them should begin to crystalize and connect, ideally in a manner that reveals as many new questions as answers and leaves students excited to continue to further pursue the ideas of the course in their own media consumption.

The following document includes the course syllabus and lesson plans for a half-semester course that I will co-teach with my advisor, Prof. Maruta Vitols, in Spring 2016.

Table of Contents

World Creation as Cultural Commentary
Spring 2016 – 2 AHS Credits
AHSE2199B
Mondays/Thursdays 1:30-3:10 AC318
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The worlds and cultures of fictional works echo perspectives and commentaries on the state of society and often project into the future, forecasting potential utopia or destruction. This class will explore the relationship between our political, cultural, and socioeconomic reality and those of the fictional worlds created by many science fiction and fantasy writers. Students will discuss and analyze common themes and ideologies expressed in fictional media and investigate how literature, film, and television express commentary on our worlds.

Course Objectives
- To analyze and compare representations of fictional worlds in various media.
- To identify common ideologies and themes within science fiction and fantasy worlds and their relationship with modern cultures.
- To explore the representations of agency, ethics, sexuality, gender, race in fictional works and the implications thereof.

Learning Objectives
- To refine written and oral communication skills.
- To improve critical thinking and analysis of various media.
- To encourage an understanding of similarities and differences of various societies and perspectives.
- To distill the core tenets of a variety of world views through analyzing cultural texts.

Course Media

Ballard, J. G. "Motel Architecture." *The Complete Stories of J.G. Ballard*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2009. N. pag. Print.
Blade Runner, The Director's Cut. Dir. Ridley Scott. Perf. Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, and Sean Young. Warner Bros. 1992. DVD.
Blowup. Dir. Michelangelo Antonioni. Bridge Films, 1966.
Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974. Print.
Campbell, Joseph, and Bill D. Moyers. *The Power of Myth*. New York: Doubleday, 1988. Print.

Cosmos Laundromat. Dir. Mathieu Auvray. Prod. Ton Roosendaal. *Youtube*. Blender Foundation, 10 Aug. 2015. Web. 3 Dec. 2015.

Enemy Mine. Dir. Wolfgang Petersen. 20th Century Fox, 1985. DVD.

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind. Dir. Michel. Gondry. 2004. DVD.

Ex Machina. Dir. Alex Garland. Universal Studios, 2015. DVD.

Gattaca. Continental Film, 1998. DVD.

King Kong. Dir. Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack. RKO Radio Pictures, 1933. DVD.

Planet of the Apes. Dir. Franklin J. Schaffner. 20th Century Fox, 1968.

Psycho. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Shamley Productions, 1960. DVD.

Pumzi. Dir. Wanuri Kahiu. Focus Features, 2009. Online. *Youtube*. 7 Dec. 2012. Web. 3 Dec. 2015.

Roddenberry, Gene, prod. "The Cloud Minders." *Star Trek*. 28 Feb. 1969. Television.

Roddenberry, Gene, prod. "Let That Be You Last Battlefield." *Star Trek*. 10 Jan. 1969. Television.

Simmons, Dan. *Hyperion*. New York: Doubleday, 1989. Print.

Tolkien, J. R. R., and Christopher Tolkien. *The Silmarillion*. N.p.: n.p., n.d. Print.

Videodrome. Dir. David Cronenberg. 1983. DVD.

X-men First Class. 21st Century Fox, 2011. DVD.

Note: PDFs of reading assignments will be made available, and all assigned media will be on reserve in the library.

Class Schedule

Week 1:
R (1/21): 1. Introduction – Themes and Context in Setting

Week 2:
M (1/25): 2. Myth - The Origin and Inspiration of Stories
Assignment:
- *The Power of Myth* Ch. 1 (1-43) - Joseph Campbell

R (1/28): 3. Creation Stories – Western/Eastern/Native American
Assignment:
- Team presentation on creation stories of choice (assignment handout will be provided in class)

Week 3:
M (2/1): 4. Abstractions – World Construction and Description
Assignment:
- *Invisible Cities* Ch. 3 (p.43-56)/*Ainulindale*

R (2/4): 5. Philosophy – Agency (Fate/free will/destiny)
Assignment:
- *The Lord of the Rings/The Silmarillion*
- *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*

- Journal #1 due in class

Week 4:
M (2/8): 6. Philosophy – Ethics
- *Gattaca*

R (2/11): 7. Philosophy – Post-Modernism (psychoanalysis, deconstructionist)
Assignment:
- *Motel Architecture*
- *Videodrome*

Week 5:
M (2/15): No Class

R (2/18): 8. Identity—The Other
Assignment:
- *X-Men: First Class*
- Journal #2 due in class

Week 6:
M (2/22): 9. Colonialism
Assignment:
- *Hyperion – Consul's Tale: "Remembering Siri"* (p. 423-462)

R (2/25): 10. Race
Assignment:
- Group chosen media and mini-presentations (assignment handout will be provided in class)

Week 7:
M (2/29): 11. What does it mean to be Human?
Assignment:
- *Blade Runner*

R (3/3): No Class
Assignment:
- Journal #3 due by email to Ben and Maruta before 1:30pm

Week 8:
M (3/7): 12. Last Class – Synthesizing World Representation

In-class presentations (detailed handout will be distributed in class)

NOTE: Further details and instructions for all assignments will be distributed in class when the work is assigned.

<u>Expectations and Grading</u>

1) **Journal Reflections – 60% (20% each):** All students are required to write periodic journal entries where they will respond to their assigned readings, films, and discussions. Each entry should be no less than 2 full pages and no more than 3 full pages. The journal entries are meant as a space for students to explore their own ideas and to make sense of the material covered in this course. They are intended as a learning tool to complement class discussion and to allow students to see their own development as critical spectators and readers. Students will be asked to turn in their journal entries three times during the semester, and this part of the grade will depend upon two factors: first, the completion of the assignment (i.e., writing journal entries that address the readings, films, and discussions from class); second, the effort put into writing something thoughtful and reflective. Do not summarize the reading or the plot of the films! Utilize this opportunity to "digest" the material at hand and relate it to your own experience and understanding. **Journal entries are due: Thursday, February 4th; Thursday, February 18th; and Thursday, March 3rd.** For each day that your assignment is late, we will deduct 10 points from your assignment grade. Exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis.

2) **Final Presentation – 20%:** Each student will create a presentation on a work of his or her choice that demonstrates connections to other course material and ideas. This presentation should introduce classmates to new source material, or to a novel approach to material covered in class. Demonstrate your interpretations through examples and provide relevant context.

3) **Class participation and Attendance – 20%:** Since classroom discussion is a key component in this course, all students are expected to attend class regularly, to arrive on time, and to actively participate in the discussions. Unexcused absences and chronic tardiness are unacceptable and will adversely affect your final grade. If you have more than two unexcused absences, your final grade for this course will automatically decrease by 15 points. If you arrive more than 15 minutes after the beginning of class, it will count as an unexcused absence. If you need to miss class due to illness, a family

emergency, or for religious observances, you must contact us beforehand via e-mail or make prior arrangements with us in class. Even if you miss class, you are responsible for all information discussed in class. All readings and other assignments MUST be completed BEFORE class to allow for richer discussions (unless otherwise noted).

*This syllabus is subject to change at the discretion of the instructors.

Class 1 – Themes and Context in Setting
Thursday 1/21

<u>Class goals</u>
- Introduce students to the course: overview, schedules, assignments, expectations
- Why are we looking at sci-fi and fantasy?
- Critical/close reading of media. How do we extract connections, themes, metaphors from media and how can we relate them to other contexts?
- Connect to storytelling and myth and the rest of the class.

<u>Introduction to course</u>
(~35 minutes)
- Teaching team introduction
- Idea of the course, description, objectives, and overarching questions
  o At the core of this course are connections; drawing connections between various forms of media, themes, styles, philosophies, etc. and interpreting these connections in the context of our history, culture, our lives, and the future.
- Course style -> Heavily discussion and self-interpretation based
- Introduce students: What do you hope to get out of the class? What experiences or motivations do you have related to the course materials?
- Overview of schedule and assignments

Sci-fi Short Analysis and Discussion: (~3 minutes)

<u>Cosmos Laundromat</u>
(~2 minutes)
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cosmos_Laundromat):
- 2015
- First of a many-part film developed by 12 animation studios around the world
- Crowd-funded and run by the Blender Institute in the Netherlands.
- The entire film and all resources are released under Creative Commons
- It has a balance of dark and light themes ("dark Pixar")
- Ensure take notes, especially with respect to:
  o Characters
  o Setting
  o Style

- o Metaphors
- o (Identity/Place in the world, agency, context shifting, multiple realities)
- WHY: This is an interesting film. It has many levels of humor and metaphor and briefly touches on a lot of ideas on personal identity and relation to the world and concepts of reality. It also has an very personally interesting background.

Cosmos Laundromat (10 min) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-rmzh0Pl3c)

Pumzi
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pumzi): (~2 minutes)
- 2009
- Written and directed in Kenya, screened at Sundance 2010.
- Take note of:
  - o Political and social critiques
  - o Role of technology
  - o Metaphors and juxtaposition of elements
- WHY: A foreign approach to a more common style of sci-fi. What does that mean? Demonstrates a different perspective on global issues as well as common perspectives. Ideates on future possibilities technologically and politically.

Pumzi (21 min) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIR7I_B86Fc)
- Afrofuturism
- Ecocriticism
- Scarcity/Reclamation
- Communication
- Pumzi = "Breath"

Discussion: (~40 minutes)
- What themes are expressed?
- Can you draw any parallels to historical, political, social, or cultural ideas or movements?
- How does the media augment or distract from the themes and messages?
  - o Both films present the role of individuals and individual identity but do so in very different ways. How does the form of the media impact your interpretation of the characters?
  - o Animation vs. Live-action
  - o Sheep vs. human
  - o Tone
- Does the context behind the creation of the film alter your interpretation in any way? (Open source, Kenyan produced, etc.)

- What speaks to you on a personal level (do you relate to the film in any way?)

Class 2 – The Power of Myth
Monday 1/25

Class Goals

- Rituals as a manifestation of mythology, how they still effect our lives.
- Myths are stories, they help us organize events, and memories and make sense of the world. Myths are omnipresent.
- Cultural mythology and ideology (belief systems, 'why things are', 'what they should be') are very closely related and draw from each other.
- Religions as strong manifestations of historical myths and centers of belief systems. How do they move forward?
- Symbols as touchstones of myth.
- Myths are still being created (Campbell may not agree) but we also follow old themes.
- The four functions of myth (mystical, cosmological, sociological, pedagogical) are active in different forms of media.
- Myths are foundational in science fiction and fantasy and will be an underlying theme all semester.

Introduction to Campbell
(5 min)

- 1904-87
- PBS -> book Power of Myth 1988
- "Monomyth"
- Hero's Journey
- Structuralist searching for patterns to find connections
- Evolution of myth in reaction to the realities to which society had to adjust
- Criticized: Anti-Semitism, racism, and rough interpretation of stories to prove his points, oversimplification.
- Why?: Poses interesting questions and viewpoints that whether true or not prompt thought.

Mythology/Rituals
(15 min)

xii – "Why do you need the mythology?" She held the familiar modern opinion that "all these Greek gods and stuff" are irrelevant to the human condition today. What she did not know—what most do not know—is that the remnants of all that "stuff" line the walls of our interior system of belief, like shards of broken pottery in an archeological site. But as we are organic beings, there is energy in all that "stuff". Rituals evoke it.

    Can this by applied to your personal experiences?
    [Groups of 3-4, ideate on modern rituals (5 min), Go over looking for connections/differences as class (5-10 min)]
    What rituals evoke mythology?

- Bar/Bat Mitzvah, Confirmation, Baptism, Rumspringa, Walkabout, Weddings, Hazing, Retirement Party, Baby-Showers, Graduation
- Why do we need public rituals of proclaiming faith?
- The Ritual of the Calling of an Engineer has a very simple purpose. It is to direct the newly qualified engineer toward a consciousness of the profession and its social significance and indicating to the more experienced engineer their responsibilities in welcoming and supporting the newer engineers when they are ready to enter the profession.

Broaden definition of myths to be more about making connections, and storytelling; relating to the world:

What is a myth?
(10 min)

OED: "A traditional story, typically involving supernatural beings or forces, which embodies and provides an explanation, aetiology, or justification for something such as the early history of a society, a religious belief or ritual, or a natural phenomenon."

More than a fictional tale; has inner meaning. Myths, stories, beliefs, narrative, science all related.

What is the purpose of stories?

Stories are how we make sense of the world; how we organize events and memories.

Jon Adler – Personal Narrative

The stories we tell end up shaping our own world. They have as much effect on our future as they relate to the past.

We need myths!:
Xvi – The "guiding idea" of his work was to find "the commonality of themes in world myths, pointing to a constant requirement in the human psyche for a centering in terms of deep principles."

Myth and the Modern World
How do myths and religions depend on culture and society (25 minutes, 55min):
- "Every myth we tell today has some point of origin in our past experience." "The main motifs of the myths are the same, and they have always been the same. If you want to find your own mythology, the key is with what society do you associate?" (27)
  - How does societal mythology differ from/relate to ideology (personal beliefs, how we see our society, how things should be)? Is one "real" and one "fake"?
  - What does this say about creativity in story telling?

- o Are all modern stories applications of old myths placed in new settings? Think of some examples or counter examples.

From above, many rituals and myths are related to religious history and beliefs. How are they related? Campbell sees some modern religions as myths that haven't adapted to modern life and contexts.

- "They don't know how to apply their religious ideas to contemporary life, and to human beings rather than just to their own community. It's a terrible example of the failure of religion to meet the modern world. These three mythologies are fighting it out. They have disqualified themselves for the future." (30)
    - o Campbell points to western religious as those following old mythologies that no longer apply in a global context.
        - ▪ Do you agree/disagree, give examples?
        - ▪ In what framing could they fit?
    - o How do contemporary myths evolve to fit modern culture?
    - o What are the results of following an "old" myth not well applicable in the modern context?
    - o What are examples of some modern myths the societies adhere to?

Symbols in modern culture (10 min, 65):
- Description of symbols and meaning on the US dollar.
    - o Why are symbols common in our society?
    - o How do symbols connect to stories and myths?
    - o What are some more examples of potent symbols in our society?
        - ▪ Why do they exist?
    - o Are there any categories of symbols?

Myths in an evolving world (15 min, 80):
- "In modern times we have moved beyond the animal powers, beyond nature and the seeded earth, and the stars no longer interest us except as exotic curiosities and the terrain of space travel. Where are we now in our mythology for the way of man?" "We can't have a mythology for a long, long time to come. Things are changing too fast to become mythologized."
    - o Is this true? Can we live in a fast moving technological world and still have myths?
    - o How have technologies created myths for themselves.
        - ▪ Themes and narrative structures
        - ▪ Origin stories in technology
            - • "Cult of Steve Jobs"
            - • "Garage hackers"
            - • The "Entrepreneur" (Lone hero against the world vs. a collaborative movement)
            - • Elon Musk?
        - ▪ How does Olin play into this?
            - • The underdog coming to save the world of education?

Function of myth, role in our lives, and in media (15 min, 100):
How do we connect personally with myths? What aspects of myth are there to look for and what functions do they break down into? How can we relate this to sci-fi and fantasy media?

- "The individual has to find an aspect of myth that relates to his own life. Myth basically serves four functions."
  - o The mystical/metaphysical function: realizing what a wonder the universe is, and what a wonder you are, and experiencing awe before this mystery. (Awakening a sense of awe before the mystery of being)
    - ▪ Does this still exist in modern culture?
  - o The cosmological dimension: showing you what the shape of the universe is, but showing it in such a way that the mystery again comes through.
    - ▪ Cosmos – (Sagan?) Neil Degrasse Tyson mythologizes the universe, physics, and scientific history to show wonder, uniqueness, complexity, beauty, and mystery.
      - • Beginning of Cosmos 102: "Some of the Things that Molecules Do"
  - o The sociological one: supporting and validating a certain social order. (Ethical laws, it has taken over our world and is out of date).
    - ▪ Have students think of examples?
  - o The pedagogical function: how to live a human lifetime under any circumstances.]

With all of this in mind, myths are at the foundation of much of science fiction and fantasy, sometimes even more explicitly than other genres.
  - o How does this thinking relate to science fiction and fantasy works?
  - o Where do these aspects of myth manifest in modern stories (examples of plots and themes?)
    - ▪ This is a core theme to the class: the central aspects of science fiction and fantasy that link back to modern or historical needs and realities.

Do myths from various cultures and societies influence fiction in different ways? How? How do representations of myths relate to or inform our understanding of existing and historical societies?

Class 3 – Creation Stories
Thursday 1/28

Class goals
- Connect mythological roots to stories of creation
- Compare and contrast creation stories across cultures
- Identify keys themes and structures
  - Creation from nothing, word, thought, division of primordial unity, separation, etc.
- Connect modern stories to original creation stories
- All fantasy/sci-fi has a setting, the description and creation of this setting has a large impact on the understanding of the referenced society

Assignment before class:
- Break up into 6-8 pairs
- Pick a culture and research creation stories (supply a list), no overlaps
- Present overview, major quotes or passages, major themes and structures, and look for connection to other myths/stories, modern or historical that you know of. Open ended format for presentation (supply some ideas) (5-7 minutes)

Present on researched creation stories
(50 minutes, 0:50)
- Back to back, keep notes on similarities, differences, and anything that comes to mind during other team presentations

Discussion on creation stories, myths, and describing worlds
(50 minutes, 1:40)
- What common themes and structures did we see throughout?
  - Did any stand out as particularly unique?
  - How do the similarities or differences between stories change your understanding of the culture and its influences.
  - Do we see similar structures and themes in modern stories?

Some interesting creation story tidbits
Rigveda 10.121:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hiranyagarbha
- "In the beginning" – One translation uses the same starting phrase as Genesis.
- List of creation and awe, praise and fear.

- One being ("The God of gods, the One and only One")

Rigveda 10.129:

Dictionary of Creation Myths:
Indian Creation: 139-144
- Creation from nothing
- Sacrificial basis
- Incest, heaven as father, earth as mother
- "Human cry for knowledge of origins, for the meaning of Self, the meaning of Being."
- "6 But, after all, who knows, and who can say
  whence it all came, and how creation happened?
  The gods themselves are later than creation,
  So who knows truly whence it has arisen?
  7 Whence all creation had its origin,
  He, whether he fashioned it or whether he did not,
  He, who surveys it all from highest heaven,
  He knows—or maybe even he does not know."
- "…In the beginning there was only the primeval sea—the waters. It was the waters who wished to reproduce, and through devotions became heated enough to produce a golden egg that floated about for a time. Then from the egg came Prajapati. It took a year for him to come, and so it takes about that amount of time for a woman or a cow to give birth. After he broke out of the egg, Prajapati rested on its shell for another year or so before he tried to speak. The sound he made—the Word, his sounded breath—became earth. His next sounds became sky. Other sounds became the seasons."
- Creation by thought: "The Self-Existent Brahman thought of the waters, and they were."
- Death as distinction between men and gods.

Roman Creation: 236
- Greek influence
- Creation ex nihilo or from chaos
- Fall of man, great flood with guiltless humans left to drive the new human creation

Snohomish Creation: 255
- Separation of language
- Local centricity
- Origin of stars and constellations

Sumerian Creation: 257

- Influence of Semitic cultures
- Imperfect creation: "So it is that human beings, the creations of drunken gods, have so many problems and weaknesses"
- Great flood.
- (Similar names to those of Silmarillion)

Wahungwe Creation (Rhodesia): 283
- Creation from chaos
- Fall of mankind,
- Incest

Wapangwa (Tanzania): 284
- World creation by ants eating a branch of a tree (world tree) a defecating a huge pile.
- Flood killed ants

Class 4 – Abstraction – World Creation and Description
Monday 2/1

<u>Class goals</u>
- Connect themes and structures from creation stories and myth to fantasy settings
- Understand contextual history of JRR Tolkien's writing
- Interpret the Ainulindale through the lens of creation stories and the writer's context.
  - Fiction is grounded in reality; it's not all that different.
- Break apart more abstract and metaphorical descriptions of settings

<u>Discussion Prompts</u>
(20 minutes as small groups, 80 minutes as class)
- What themes of creation are present in *The Ainulindale* and in *Invisible Cities*. Are there similarities between the two? Do the themes contribute to the overall style of the works?
- How do these stories link to creation stories we read or heard about last class? Are there any major themes or styles they share? How do they differ from the "real" creation stories? How do these connections or similarities effect your interpretation of the stories?
- What differentiates worlds? "Marco Polo's cities resembled one another, as if the passage from one to another involved not a journey but a change of elements" (43). What are these "elements"? Are all worlds just permutations of the same core elements in different arrangements? Find supporting or refuting elements in *The Ainulindale* and *Invisible Cities,* and stories from last class.
- The descriptive and narrative style of the two stories is very different. *The Ainulindale* is more of standard creation story while *Invisible Cities* uses a series of vignettes of symbolism and metaphor to form description. How do these styles affect your reading and perception of the world being described?

<u>Ainulindale</u>
- Tolkien invokes the style of a verbal history. This story was passed down through retelling: "These are the words that Pengoloð spake to Ælfwine concerning the beginning of the World. First he recited to him the *Ainulindalë* as Rúmil made it." (1)
- Creation by thought: "There was Ilúvatar, the All-father, and he made first

the Ainur, the Holy Ones, that were the offspring of his thought" (1)

- Lack of agency and free will (among gods): "Then Ilúvatar spoke, and he said: 'Mighty are the Ainur, and mightiest among them is Melkor; but that he may know, and all the Ainur, that I am Ilúvatar, those things that ye have sung and played, lo! I will show them forth, that ye may see what ye have done. And thou, Melkor, shalt see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath not imagined.'" (3)
- Very human emotions from the gods and also a possible reference to Germany post-WWI: "Then the Ainur were afraid, and they did not yet comprehend the words that were said to them; and Melkor was filled with shame, of which came secret anger." (3)
- Language from Genesis: "Therefore I say: Eä! Let these things Be!" (5)
- Valar took upon themselves the image of men and elves, not the other way around: "But the Valar took to themselves shape and hue; and because they were drawn thither by love for the Children of Ilúvatar, for whom they hoped, they took shape after that manner which they had beheld in the Vision of Ilúvatar; save only in majesty and splendor, for they are mighty and holy. Moreover their shape comes of their knowledge and desire of the visible World, rather than of the World itself, and they need it not, save only as we use raiment, and yet we may be naked and suffer no loss of our being." (6)
- Leaving room for other interpretations of the creation of the world to have a place?: "But of all such matters, Ælfwine, others shall tell thee, or thou shalt read in other lore; for it is not my part at this time to instruct thee in the history of the Earth." (7)
    - What are the implications of this? Is this a positive thing? Is it unnerving to leave some aspects open?
- Reference to a great flood: "And in the fall of the Lamps, which were very great, the seas were lifted up in fury, and many lands were drowned." (8)
- The world is "designed" through song, but created by word, "Ea!".
- "Secret Fire"/ "Flame Imperishable"?
- "Three Themes of Illuvatar"?
    - World Creation vs. World Ending. What happens next?
- Sorrow as beauty: "The one [music] was deep and wide and beautiful, but slow and blended with an immeasurable sorrow, from which its beauty chiefly came."
    - Depth of realism
- Interplay of monotheism (Iluvatar) vs. polytheism (Valar)

Invisible Cities Ch. 3
(Cities and Signs, structures, signs. What is world creation (creating different

signs)? Symbolism, metaphors, meta level of world creation:

- What differentiates worlds? Are they just permutations of the same core elements in different arrangements?
    - "Marco Polo's cities resembled one another, as if the passage from one to another involved not a journey but a change of elements" (43)
- The connections, foundations, driving philosophy of a world are what hold it together. Without that core, it is impossible.
    - "From the number of imaginable cities we must exclude those whose elements are assembled without a connection thread, an inner rule, a perspective, a discourse. With cities, it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed, but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its reverse, a fear. Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else." (43)
- "'Signs form a language, but not the one you think you know.' I realized I had to free myself from the images which in the past had announced to me the things I sought: only then would I succeed in understanding the language of Hypatia." (48)
    - Being open to other interpretations. Symbols aren't always what we think they are. What other possibilities are there?
- "There is no language without deceit." (48)
- "In Chloe, a great city, the people who move through the streets are all strangers. At each encounter, they imagine a thousand things about one another; meetings which could take place between them, conversations, surprises, caresses, bits. But no one greets anyone; eyes lock for a second, then dart away, seeking other eyes, never stopping."(51)
- "At times the mirror increases a thing's value, at times denies it. Not everything that seems valuable above the mirror maintains its force when mirrored. The twin cities are not equal, because nothing that exists or happens in Valdrada is symmetrical: every face and gesture is answered, from the mirror, by a face and gesture inverted, point by point. The two Valdradas live for each other, their eyes interlocked; but there is no love between them.
- "The city exists and it has a simple secret: it knows only departures, not returns." (56)

Class 5 – Agency: Free will, Fate, and Destiny
Thursday 2/4

Class Goals
- Begin to see explorations and interpretations of philosophical questions, specifically the interplay of agency vs. fate, within science fiction and fantasy.
- A vague and changing balance of free will and fate in Tolkien's world.
  - As a representation of our world?
- Explore the relationship between fate/free will and identity.

Journal 1 Due

Lord of the Rings
(Review Ainulindale for Fate/Free will and read Zimbardo Excerpt) (30 min)
- How is the idea of free will and fate presented in the Ainulindale?
  - A balance. A thread of fate above all, but free will, choice, and chance playing a key role (especially amongst men).
  - "Then Ilúvatar spoke, and he said: 'Mighty are the Ainur, and mightiest among them is Melkor; but that he may know, and all the Ainur, that I am Ilúvatar, those things that ye have sung and played, lo! I will show them forth, that ye may see what ye have done. And thou, Melkor, shalt see that no theme may be played that hath not its uttermost source in me, nor can any alter the music in my despite. For he that attempteth this shall prove but mine instrument in the devising of things more wonderful, which he himself hath not imagined.'" (3)
  - "Therefore he willed that the hearts of Men should seek beyond the world and should find no rest therein; but they should have a virtue to shape their life, amid the powers and chances of the world, beyond the Music of the Ainur, which is as fate to all things else; and of their operation everything should be, in form and deed, completed, and the world fulfilled unto the last and smallest." (11)
  - "But Ilúvatar knew that Men, being set amid the turmoils of the powers of the world, would stray often, and would not use their gifts in harmony; and he said: 'These too in their time shall find that all that they do redounds at the end only to the glory of my work.'" (11)
  - "But the sons of Men die indeed, and leave the World (it is said); wherefore they are called the Guests, or the Strangers. Death is their fate, the gift of Ilúvatar, which as Time wears even the Powers shall envy." (11)
- "I wish it need not have happened in my time," said Frodo. "So do I," said Gandalf, "and so do all who live to see such times. But that is not for

them to decide. All we have to <u>decide</u> is what to do with the time that is given us."

- o The reality of circumstances may be beyond our control (fated?), but the choices we make within those parameters are exercises of free will.
- "Now at any rate he is as bad an Orc, and just an enemy. He deserves death." "Deserves it! I daresay he does. Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life. Can you give it to them? Then do not be too eager to deal out death in judgment. For even the very wise cannot see all ends. I have not much hope that Gollum can be cured before he dies, but there is a chance of it. And he is bound up with the fate of the Ring. My heart tells me that he has part to play yet, for good or ill, before the end; and when that comes, the pity of Bilbo may rule the fate of many—yours not least.
  - o Interplay of fate and free will throughout the story.
- "Cosmic responsibility" is a driver of many choices, more than "fate"
  - o "Other evils there are that may come; for Sauron himself is but a servant or emissary. **Yet it is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after will have clean earth to till. What weather they shall have is not ours to rule.**" (Gandalf, III, 155)
- Overarching force/direction of fate:
  - o "That is the purpose for which you are called hither. Called, I say, though I have not called you to me, strangers from distant lands. You have come and are here met,… by chance as it may seem. Yet it is not so. Believe rather that it is so ordered that we, who sit here, and none others, must now find counsel for the peril of the world" (Elrond, I, 255)
  - o "In the end the Shadow was only a small and passing thing: there was light and high beauty forever beyond its reach." (Frodo, III, 199)
  - o "The universe of Tolkien, unlike that of the Anglo-Saxons, is ultimately affirmative. Within the vast affirmative context, however, there are enormous possibilities for immediate evil: the individual exists in a realm where choice is always necessary. The freedom of that choice, for the virtuous, is of paramount importance. 'I count you blessed, Gimli, son of Gloin,' says Legolas the Elf to a Dwarf member of the Ring-bearer's company: 'for your loss you suffer of your own free will, and you might have chosen otherwise' (I, 395). When Aragorn meets the Riders of Rohan, their leader asks him what doom he brings out of the north. 'The doom of choice,'

replies Aragorn (II, 36): all men must now choose good or evil. Sam, Frodo's closes companion, realizes how many opportunities they have had of turning back, and understands that heroism, in legend and in fact, consists of making repeatedly and free the choice of good (II, 321). In his moment of crisis, he knows that destiny has put him in this dilemma, and that his most important responsibility is to make up his own mind (II, 341)." (Zimbardo, Isaacs, 60)

- o "He often used to say there was only one Road; that it was like a great river: its springs were at every doorstep and every path was its tributary. "It's a dangerous business, Frodo, going out of your door," he used to say. "You step into the Road, and if you don't keep your feet, there is no telling where you might be swept off to." (Frodo, I)

Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind
(60 min)

- Science Fiction and Fantasy remove barriers of possibility that allow us to seriously consider the impact of various differences in our world. Given the relatively small difference of the existence of selective memory removal (perhaps real!), what questions does *Eternal Sunshine* raise?
    - o How is identity presented in *Eternal Sunshine*?
- "[2] Is it possible to change? In an everyday sense, of course it is. We routinely make choices that change the future and revise our views of the past. For example, like Joel Barish in *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, I could decide not to go to work this morning and instead take a train in the opposite direction. Like Clementine Kruszynski, I could dye my hair blue or tangerine. I could leave the relationship I'm in or settle for what I think I have.
[3] Let the question resonate in a wider context, though, and the answer becomes less clear. Am I the <u>kind</u> of person who bolts from work, dyes her hair, or abandons old loves? Apparently so, if I've done it. And come to think of it, haven't I done things very much like this before? Being a <u>kind</u> of person-having a personality, in the usual sense-means behaving in certain ways. And those ways or patterns, once recognized, can come to feel like traps. I make choices, but my choices already seem over-determined by who I am-by the behaviors in my repertoire. Can <u>that</u> change? More to the point, what can <u>I</u> do to change myself, given that my own limitations are what I want to overcome? I seem to be caught in a paradox. Whatever I do will simply be more of the kind of thing I do. However I exercise my freedom I am only rattling my chains." (Smith)

- "Does a change in what one remembers amount to a change in who one is?" (Smith)
    - Are we defined by our experiences and our memories?
    - Is free will the choices we make (determining our experiences) or is fate the coloring of our memories and how they affect our future choices?
- The ending of the film leaves the future unclear. Will the cycle of Joel and Clementine's relationship repeat? (An early draft of the script suggests it will (Smith)). Or, does their acknowledgement of their personalities and each other's give them the possibility to change to break the cycle of their lives?
    - How does free will and fate fit into this, is it Joel's will to tell Clementine to wait, or is the whole story a trick of fate?
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lacunar_amnesia
- EMDR

- Rose A. Zimbardo, Neil D. Isaacs, *Understanding the Lord of the Rings: The Best of Tolkien Criticism*. (https://books.google.com/books?id=GEWXQbASXZUC&pg=PA57&lpg=PA57&dq=fate+free+will+hobbit&source=bl&ots=EQ7A5UTDg1&sig=sCX96fQ8sVobj1ylNuocufWXHzg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CCsQ6AEwAmoVChMI64eEwujEyAIVCG0-Ch1h9ghZ#v=onepage&q=fate%20free%20will%20hobbit&f=false) 57-66
- David L. Smith, Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind and the Question of Transcendence, https://www.unomaha.edu/jrf/Vol9No1/SmithSunshine.htm

Class 6 – Philosophy: Ethics
Monday 2/8

Class Goals
- Relate genetic determinism/prophecy to a question of ethics
- Contextualize the discussions of identity in science fiction (a bigger question of the class: What determines who we are?)
- Frame the relationship of scientific advancement and ethics and understand the use of science fiction media to relate to real-world issues
- Identify styles used by science fiction to question and discuss philosophical questions (Build context and see the result)

Prepare for Debate
(20 minutes)
- What are the main issues that Gattaca is critiquing?
- What methods/styles does the film use to make its arguments?
  - What responses do they evoke from viewers?
  - How does the film reference reality?
- How does Gattaca represent individuals? How are people's identities defined?
  - What issues does this raise?
  - How does this compare to *Eternal Sunshine's* characterization of identity?

Debate
(60 minutes)
- Is science fiction media an effective, appropriate, or fair manner to discuss and critique science and technology?
  - Is it scientifically correct?
  - Is it fear mongering?
  - How do lay-people interpret science and technology presented through technology?

Redux
(10 minutes)
- If evolution grows from genetic flukes, what happens when there are no more flukes? Does evolution end? Are we stuck? Are we perfect?

"Bioethicists fear that attributes not desired by society as a whole, such as the aforementioned physical and behavioral traits, will be removed from humanity completely. Jeremy Rifkin has pointed out that the potential for a new eugenics

is inherent in our ability to manipulate our genetic makeup, even if the technology has beneficial uses:

> If diabetes, sickle-cell anemia, and cancer are to be prevented by altering the genetic makeup of individuals, why no proceed to other less serious "disorders": myopia, color blindness, dyslexia, obesity, left-handedness? Indeed, what is to preclude a society from deciding that a certain skin color is a disorder? In the end, why would we ever say no to any alteration of a genetic code that might enhance the well-being of our offspring? It is difficult to imagine parents rejecting genetic modifications that promised to improve, in some way, the opportunities for their progeny. (140)

Rifkin, among others, is concerned that the new eugenics will lead to homogenous societies, to a loss of diversity. Worse, he argues, we may create a society that discriminates against those who cannot access technologies controlled by a limited number of scientists." (Kirby, 196)

3 concerns of Gattaca:
1. Genetic discrimination against those who are not enhanced.
2. The cultural implications of predictive genetics (genetic prophecy)
3. The eradication of "undesirable" traits and human imperfection.
(Kirby, 199)

Race and classism. Glass ceiling.
"Because the genetically-unenhanced Vincent proves to be more successful that all the genetically-enhanced characters, *Gattaca* dismisses the practice of genetic discrimination by rejecting its underlying assumption of genetic determinism." (Kirby, 202)

"Most genetic data, however, only give information about the likelihood of, or predisposition for, developing a disorder or trait. Whether a person ultimately develops this trait or disorder is dependent on complex interactions linking heredity, environment, the individual, and society. A genetic readout provides uncertain predictive information about possible futures, not guaranteed outcomes." (Kirby, 202) (Agency!)

"Anton and Eugene are unable to live up to the expectations created by their flawless genes. According to Vincent, the expectations put upon the genetically enhanced to live up to their genetics are almost as debilitating as the discrimination against the unenhanced: 'unlike the faith births, the genetically enhanced suffer under a different burden, that of perfection.'" (Kirby, 203)

"…the film acknowledges that many physical characteristics can be enhanced through gene therapy. According to *Gattaca's* production notes, however, there is a downside to a world in which all our physical imperfections have been eliminated through gene therapy: 'what will be the consequences of such a

world? What will happen to the glorious creative chaos of diversity?'" (Kirby, 204) (Look at the stark, sterile visuals!)

"…the price paid for a genetically perfect world is the loss of the "human spirit" (Kirby, 208)

Sources:
David A. Kirby, *The New Eugenics in Cinema: Genetic Determinism and Gene Therapy in "GATTACA"*, Science Fiction Studies, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Jul., 2000), pp. 193-215 (http://www.jstor.org/stable/4240876)

Class 7 – Philosophy: Postmodernism
Thursday 2/11

Class Goals
- POMO primer: familiarize students with basic tenets of postmodernism, and relate it to how we can understand our contemporary situation (i.e., how to better understand the world in which we live in today)
- Continuation of identity discussion (what happens to our identities when they are fragmented, shattered, no longer unified; how does this fragmented identity inform our world creation)
- POMO is everywhere, our literary and cinema examples are only some manifestations of it - it informs every aspect of our existence (according to some)
- So far, we've looked at unified visions of world creation - what happens when this unity breaks down? How do we create worlds and make sense of things when there's this pervasive rupture, incongruity, and fracturing?

Postmodernism primer
  (25 minutes)
        1) Introduce Fred Jameson, background
        2) Intro/Explain/Discuss as a group the main characteristics of POMO:
                1) aesthetic populism
                2) depthlessmess
                3) waning of affect
                4) the end of the subject/ego
                5) pastiche
                6) historicism over history
                7) nostalgia
                8) schizophrenia
                9) the hysterical sublime
        3) Have students give examples of each characteristic from their own lives to make the examples relatable and more concrete (apply theory to practice) - this is where other media examples come in, from TV, internet memes, etc.
        4) What happens to world creation when these are the conditions in which we live? How does our POMO framework/ frame of reference inform how we understand our worlds, societies, culture, and ourselves?

Motel Architecture
  [introduce questions and film] (45 minutes):

5) Have students analyze how "Motel Architecture" is an example of POMO world creation; make sure students cite specific passages from text to illustrate their claims
6) Pangborn's identity issue - schizophrenia, death of the ego (quite literally at the end); he can't recognize himself in the mirror, he can't recognize that HE IS the intruder (split identity) - clip from *Fight Club*?? (Dir. David Fincher, 1999)
7) Obsession with surfaces (depthlessness) - Psycho shower scene analysis taken to an extreme, along with the video monitoring and abstraction of images (show clip of *Blow Up* - Antonioni, 1966)
8) Pastiche with future tech but also old school movies; same idea with the dubbed classic films (totally taken out of context and repurposed)
9) Old movies also raise nostalgia issue and historicism
10) Pangborn's lack of emotion (waning of affect) until he's shaken out of it by Vera (another allusion to Hitchcock and Vera Miles actress who shows up in *Psycho*)
11) hysterical sublime is basically his world - driven in a wheelchair, has all this tech that he's into (and it's a beautiful and an awful thing)
12) Solarium as his world - issue of simulacra (so we even want to go there, with Baudrillard and Disney World???); images of women vs. the real woman of Vera (clip from *Ex Machina*, Dir. Alex Garland, 2015, the part about how AI differs from humans in the color parable at the heart of the film)
13) Why the title "Motel Architecture"?

Videodrome
14) How is the film a quintessential example of a POMO movie?
15) What is the world created in *Videodrome*?
16) Compare and contrast Ballard's "Motel Architecture" with *Videodrome* - what do they have in common? What's different? Both are POMO, so that's a given, but delve deeper into core issues in terms of how each creates a world (or worlds).

Student reactions to postmodernism and world creation
(20 minutes)
Is this a deeply disturbing way of viewing the world or is there something to it? Is it all negative/apocalyptic or is there some positive aspects to it? Is this a more realistic/accurate way of understanding and representing our worlds and consciousness? If so, what are the implications of that? Or are they feeling something completely different about this kind of world creation?

Sources:
Ballard. J.G. "Motel Architecture."
Videodrome (Dir. David Cronenberg, 1983)
Psycho (Dir. Alfred Hitchcock, 1960)
Blow-Up (Dir. Michelangelo Antonioni, 1966)
Ex Machina (Dir. Alex Garland, 2015)

Class 8—Identity: The Other
Thursday 2/18

Class Goals
- Understand the role of "the other" in science fiction
- Connect themes of binary opposition to reality of a more grey scale
- Relate science fiction commentary to historical context

X-Men: First Class Group Discussion
(80 minutes)
- What social issues are represented in the film?
  - Diversity
    - Sexuality
      - Hidden identity
        - "If you're a freak you better hide" (12:15)
        - "You didn't ask, so I didn't tell" (37:30)
          - Clinton military policy
  - Identity
    - Finding a community—feeling normal
      - "You're not scared of me?"…"I always believed I couldn't be the only one in the world; the only one who was different". (3:57)
      - "I thought I was alone" "You're not alone" (36:05)
      - "I promised myself I would find a cure since I was a little boy. You have no idea what I'd give to feel normal" (40:29)
      - How is normalcy defined?
      - Who gets to define it?
      - Is there a difference between normalcy and conformity within communities?
    - Reclamation
      - "Then let's reclaim that word… Mutant and proud" (11:30)
      - "Hank, you're perfect. Look at all of us, look at all we've achieved this week; all we will achieve. We are different, but we shouldn't be trying to fit into society. Society should aspire to be more like us." (~75)
- How does the presence and relevance of the Holocaust impact the story and its meaning?
  - Historical example of a human approach to dealing with diversity and the "other"

- Nazi experiments
- "Identification. That's how it starts. It ends with being rounded up, experimented on, eliminated." (49:55)
  - Jews labeled with stars, gays with pink triangles
- Provides a historical parallel and "case study" to the topic of addressing diversity
- What is purpose and power of the Cold War framing in the story?
  - Link to reality, links this back story to real world history, making the story more relatable.
  - Representation of fear
    - Fear of the unknown
    - Social fears influenced by politics and propaganda
  - Communists as "The Other"
    - Communist "passing" as the "norm" in the US vs. passing as straight
- How does this connect back to Gattaca and the ethics of genetic enhancement and manipulation?
  - Humans evolve through mutation, are we all mutants?

Class 9 – Colonialism and Cultural Conflict
Monday 2/22

<u>Class Goals</u>
- Connect Hyperion to other stories of colonization and historical references.
- Understand the role of Science Fiction in commentary on human relationships and cultural conflict.
- See the use of technology to create and foster a new take on common human conflict

[Journal #2 due]
[Introduce final presentations]

<u>Hyperion Group Discussion</u>
(p. 423-462, 80 minutes)
- *"Nature is stupid*, I think and sit in the soft grass. Nature sets the stage all wrong for such a day and then it is insensitive enough to throw in a bird searching for prey which have long since fled the polluted waters near the growing city." (424)
  - o Advancement and growth has left the world behind. "Nature is stupid" trying to continue in its original form.
  - o When human groups have conflict—cultural, political, and geographical—does the setting (the physical, the technical, the natural) affect the process and the outcome? If so, how? If not, how is it affected as a consequence?
  - o Will the natural outlast these forms of human conflict?
- "It was always a thrill to me to fall out of high orbit into the atmosphere of a real world. Especially a world that looked as much like Old Earth as Maui-Covenent did." (427)
  - o Comparison of new tech to an old planet, Earth. Colonization of Earth. Direct connection to Earth and human history.
- "We were gods then. But even gods must descend from their high thrones upon occasion" (427)
  - o Self-perception of "conquering" people. (Tone is somewhat ironic in retrospect poking at the naiveté of that perception.)
  - o Perception is based heavily in ideology. How do the ideologies of the two groups in Maui-Covenent, the Hegemony supporters, and the Separatists differ? How do these ideologies drive the outcomes of the story?
    - ▪ Contextualize the reading in contemporary politics.

- What connection does this draw to other conflicts of culture and ideology (fictional or otherwise)? What comparisons can be made between them?

- "The last time I saw Siri she was seventy standard years old. She was *seventy years old* and still she had never—traveled offworld, used a fatline, tasted any alcoholic drink except wine, interfaced with an empathy surgeon, stepped through a farcaster door, smoked a cannabis stick, received gene tailoring, plugged into a stimsim, received any formal schooling, taken any RNA medication, header of Zen Gnostics or the Shrike Church, or flown any vehicle except an ancient Vikken skimmer belonging to her family."
  - The lack of these technologies and experiences is implicitly inferior. How do we perceive cultures with a different historical experience, with "old" science and technologies? "Natives".
  - Is more advanced technology implicitly superior?
  - How do the highly varied experiences of Merin compare to the local, but deep life experience of Siri?
    - Which is framed as preferable? Do you agree?
- Literally communicating with the animals (442)
  - Reference to many native cultures.
  - Does the advancement of technology distance us from nature?
  - Is technology linked to colonialist ideas? How?
- "…fight rather than agree to be swallowed into your Hegemony. He said that we should destroy your farcaster device before it destroys us." (443)
  - Separatist movement and the desire to maintain independence. The knowledge that merging is the destruction of the smaller/weaker group.
  - Hegemony definition: "authority or control: control or dominating influence by one person or group, especially by one political group over society or one nation over others."
    - Conquering colonialism is blatant.
- "'It will open a new era of trade and technology for Maui-Covenant. And you won't be restricted to one little world any longer. When you become citizens, everyone will be entitled to use the farcaster doors.'…'But what with *happen*? Who will be the first through to us?'… 'More diplomats, I suppose. Cultural contact specialists. Anthropologists. Ethnologists. Marine Biologists…. And then will come the missionaries. The petroleum geologists. The sea farmers. The developers." (451)
  - Everything is about the benefits of being a part of the greater collection of worlds. No thought to the detrimental changes of life in place. Everyone coming is an "-ist"—scientists coming to study this "science experiment" of a new world.
    - Missionaries, more influence and external superiority.

- - Petroleum, farmers, developers, the true benefit for the colonizers comes at last.
    - Financial, natural resource exploitation
- "'Develop?...How can they develop the isles? Even the First Families must ask permission of the Sea Folk to build our treehouse retreats there.' I smiled at Siri's use of the local term for the dolphins. The Maui-Covenant colonists were such children when it came to their damned dolphins.
  - Condescension and belittling of native culture and traditional.
- The use of the word "colonials" is flipped. The Maui-Covenant "natives" are original colonials of the planet, although they are now being colonized themselves and rejecting it.
  - Does this change the framing of the story or our interpretation? How?
- The story ends with the raise of the rebellion against the colonization. It is swiftly defeated but the spirit of independence and anger against the colonizers lives on.
  - What does this ending mean?
  - Is there a point to this story other than driving character development in the larger story?
  - What role does technology have in this story?

Class 10—Race
Thursday 2/25

Class Goals
- Practice synthesis and presentation of media analysis.
- Identify themes in Science Fiction's treatment of race issues.
- Relate historical context and reality to fictional representations of conflict.
- Continue to evolve understanding of methods and styles used to express commentary.

[As homework at end of previous class, sign up for groups (3 people) and media]

Mini-presentations
(50 minutes)

Five groups of 3. Watch one of the below films/episodes (or suggest another) and prepare a 10 minute presentation. Each presentation followed by 5 minutes of discussion (or 30 minutes at end).

Presentations should address:
- What is the overarching story?
- What themes are present?
- How does the media discuss and relate questions of racial conflict?
- What historical context is relevant to the writing/creation of the media and how does it apply to the interpretation of the story?
- What are major differences and similarities to media we have discussed previously?
    - How do these similarities or differences advance or conflict with the ideas of this film?

Suggested Media:
- *Star Trek 0315 "Let That Be Your Last Battlefield"* (Gene Roddenberry, 1969)
- *Star Trek 0321 "The Cloud Minders"* (Gene Roddenberry, 1969)
- *King Kong* (Dirs. Merian C. Cooper, Ernest B. Schoedsack, 1933)
- *Enemy Mine* (Dir. Wolfgang Petersen, 1985)
- *Planet of the Apes* (Dir. Franklin J. Schaffner, 1969)

Overarching discussion
(30 minutes)
- Racism vs. racial commentary
    - Can films represent social issues without being inherently racist/sexist, etc.?

- Lt. Uhura in Star Trek: A somewhat subservient character to Cpt. Kirk and follows many female stereotypes. On the other hand, also a black women in a position of relative power (in the 1960s).
- George Takei: Japanese American actor in the 60s
- Historical and Cultural context

http://urania-josegalisifilho.blogspot.com/2012/06/alien-others-race-and-science-fiction.html

Class 11—What does it mean to be Human?
Monday 2/29

Class Goals
- Wrap up the class by coming full circle.
- Link together aspects of identity, history, psychology, diversity, etc. that all affect our view of the world.

Blade Runner Group Discussion
(full class)
- Identify different topics from course manifesting in *Blade Runner*
- Synthesize ideas from the whole class referencing all material

Desser, David. "Race, Space and Class: The Politics of Cityscapes in Science-Fiction Films." Alien Zone II: The Spaces of Science-fiction Cinema. Ed. Annette Kuhn. London: Verso, 1999. N. pag. Print.
https://books.google.com/books?id=PGzJxbZovkAC&lpg=PA80&ots=X3x8C8yhJO&dq=race%20in%20science%20fiction%20films&pg=PA95#v=onepage&q=race%20in%20science%20fiction%20films&f=false