COURSE DETAIL

SAVIOR OF MANKIND OR "MAD, BAD, AND DANGEROUS"? SCIENCE IN FICTION, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY

Country
Germany

Host Institution
Free University of Berlin

Program(s)
Free University Berlin

UCEAP Course Level
Upper Division

UCEAP Subject Area(s)
Sociology Film & Media Studies

UCEAP Course Number
107

UCEAP Course Suffix

UCEAP Official Title
SAVIOR OF MANKIND OR "MAD, BAD, AND DANGEROUS"? SCIENCE IN FICTION, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY

UCEAP Transcript Title
SCI:FICT CULTR SCTY

UCEAP Quarter Units
4.50

UCEAP Semester Units
3.00

Course Description

Since the Covid19 pandemic and in the context of climate change, slogans such as “follow the science” or appeals to “trust science” have become ubiquitous. In fact, for modern societies, science and scientists are probably the last remaining unquestioned authorities; when we need guidance, we turn to scientific experts and trust that they will give us solid advice. However, this is a relatively new development; during the time of the ascent of the sciences, from the 18th through to the mid-20th centuries, new discoveries and inventions in the sciences as well as the scientists and inventors themselves were met with fear, skepticism or suspicion. One powerful expression of this attitude of societies towards the sciences can be found in popular works of fiction: we still use the names of fictional characters such as Faust, Frankenstein, Dr Jekyll or Dr Strangelove to characterize mad, evil or amoral scientists as well as dangerous scientific and/ or technological developments. Program: In this course, we will examine the development of literary / cultural imaginations of science and scientists, looking at key texts as well as key developments in the sciences: Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, galvanism and the creation of life; Robert Louis Stevenson’s Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde: experimental drugs and the split personality; H.G. Wells’ The Island of Dr Moreau: Vivisection and genetics; Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World: eugenics, genetic engineering and chemistry; the figure of the physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, the ‘father of the atomic bomb’, in post-war reality and fiction, and, finally, the benevolent scientific research on climate change as presented in Kim Stanley Robinson’s Green Earth trilogy. Based on extracts from the texts and on academic texts which contextualize and analyze the topics, discussions in class will take literature as a point of departure for a more fundamental examination of the connection between science and society.

Language(s) of Instruction
English

Host Institution Course Number
16912

Host Institution Course Title
SAVIOR OF MANKIND OR "MAD, BAD, AND DANGEROUS"? SCIENCE IN FICTION, CULTURE, AND SOCIETY

Host Institution Course Details
https://www.fu-berlin.de/vv/de/lv/939940?m=437635&pc=749257&sm=870180

Host Institution Campus
Humboldt University

Host Institution Faculty

Host Institution Degree

Host Institution Department
Deutsche Philologie

Course Last Reviewed
2023-2024

Print