SCIF1004 Science and the Cinema

SCIF1004 is a 6 UoC course, which is an expanded version of the 3 UoC GENS1004 (which stopped running in 2011).

General Information

Welcome to SCIF1004 Science and the Cinema! The objectives of the course are for you to learn some introductory level science and to think about how science is portrayed to the general public by the movie industry. The sorts of questions I hope we manage to consider are things like, “Is science portrayed well and accurately?” “Does it matter if the science is distorted if it helps the plot of a movie?” I also hope that you learn a little about DNA analysis, genetically modified organisms, climate change, space exploration and viruses. Most of all I hope that the course is not only a good learning experience but that you enjoy it too.

There are two streams for SCIF1004 Science and the Cinema
- On campus
- Online
Both eventually merge

In the on campus version you;

Attend 5 lectures and film screenings over 4 days (Monday 28th November – Thursday 1st December) in order to complete task 1. The rest of the tasks (2-5) are performed online.

In the online version you;

Watch the recorded lectures online before answering associated online quizzes in order to complete task 1. The rest of the tasks (2-5) are performed online in the same manner as in the on campus version.

There are a range of assessment tasks for both streams (an online debate, additional online quizzes, a newspaper article and then a freeform piece). The five assessment tasks and key dates are below. There is a mixture of individual work, group work, and in some tasks, an option of group-or-individual work.

All deadlines are fixed unless a prior arrangement with the course coordinator is made (these must be approved before the course starts – Monday 28th November at 0900). A change in deadline will only be given in extenuating circumstances.

Key dates:

On Campus stream - Monday 28th November – Thursday 1st December (attendance at UNSW – mandatory attendance, no other option)

Both streams – Monday 28th November – Friday 13th January (distance learning; internet access and some time required)
### Assessment Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Key dates</th>
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| 1)   | **Quizzes on each screened film**  
• These are worth 20% of the course.  
• There is one quiz associated with each film.  
• Each quiz will be handed out prior to viewing the film and the questions will be answered during the film.  
• The purpose of the quizzes are to direct your thinking towards the science that is being portrayed in the film you are watching. | **On campus:** Week 1 *(Monday 28th November – Thursday 1st December)* attend lectures and complete the quizzes  
**Online:** Watch the lectures and complete the quizzes based upon the lecture material: *Friday 16th December* |
| 2)   | **Online Debate**  
• This is worth 20% of the course.  
• Debates will take place via Moodle.  
• Assignment to debate groups (3 per group), debate topics (including side of the debate) will be made via Moodle. It is your responsibility to contact team members and assign tasks. You should work together as a group, and each person has to make one submission.  
• The debates will cover scientific topics/issues that are explored in one or more of the films. | **Key dates (both streams):**  
Opening argument posted by first student: *Thursday 8th December*  
Rebuttal argument posted by another student: *Monday 12th December*  
Closing argument posted by final student: *Friday 16th December* |
| 3)   | **Online films and quizzes**  
• This is worth 15% of the course.  
• You will be given access to four films which you can watch online, anytime, anywhere in the world. You are expected to have watched them, and then have attempted to answer an online quiz for each film.  
• The purpose of the quizzes are to make sure you can now pick up on the science which is occurring in films – by yourself – as you watch them. | **Key date (both streams):**  
Watch and answer quizzes based upon the scientific aspects presented in the online films: *Friday 16th December* |
| 4)   | **Newspaper article**  
• This is worth 15% of the course.  
• You can either work individually or within your group of three (from the debate groupings). Everyone needs to submit something via Moodle (for those working in a team, identical document submission is required).  
• You write a newspaper article for the science section of a newspaper. You are expected to communicate via Moodle, or other options such as GoogleDocs.  
• As you have seen from the films, science and scientists can have a positive and a negative impact on our lives. Write an article under one of the two headlines:  
  "Scientific Research Assures a Bright Future"  
  Or  
  "Science: Taking Us to the Dark Side" | **Key date (both streams):**  
Submit newspaper article: *Friday 16th December* |
• Include in your article at least four scientific examples from four different movies (you are not restricted to movies you have seen in this course). For each example you should explain the scientific concept and contrast its portrayal with reality, ensuring you make reference to your sources of information.
• The article is to be 900-1100 words.

5) A piece on ‘Science and a form of media’
• This is worth 30% of the course
• Working in your debate groups, you will work together to prepare the final submission on the general topic of ‘Science and the Cinema’. You will only submit one submission between the three of you, and will be marked as a group.
• This can be on any topic under the heading of ‘Science and a form of media’ based upon what you have learnt during this course. An example is: Whether it is positive or negative that ‘science’ is used artistically in Hollywood films, or if its use should be regulated, etc.
• I am open to different formats: it can be a feature newspaper article, an editorial piece, or a magazine article (2000 word limit). Alternatively, it can be a comic, a website or a short film, etc. providing all members of the group can contribute. Some forms (poems, paintings) are not acceptable unless as part of a written-based piece. Please contact the course coordinator if you are unsure if your ideas are appropriate, or how to submit large/unusual formats.

Key date (both streams):
Submit media piece: Friday 13th January

Timetable for Week 1 of the on campus stream is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day, Place</th>
<th>Academic</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>What’s happening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday 28th November, E19 - Central Lecture Block 6</td>
<td>A/Prof. Julian Cox</td>
<td>10-2</td>
<td>Introduction Lecture: Viruses Film: Outbreak</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday 28th November, E19 - Central Lecture Block 6</td>
<td>Prof. Justin Gooding</td>
<td>3-6</td>
<td>Lecture: DNA, genes and gene chips Film: Gattaca</td>
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<td>Tuesday 29th November, E19 - Central Lecture Block 6</td>
<td>Dr. Scott Sulway</td>
<td>10-2</td>
<td>Lecture: Space Exploration Film: Apollo 13</td>
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<td>Wednesday 30th November, E19 - Central Lecture Block 6</td>
<td>Prof. Mike Archer</td>
<td>10-2</td>
<td>Lecture: Cloning Film: Jurassic Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday 1st December, E19 - Central Lecture Block 6</td>
<td>Dr. Alex Sen Gupta</td>
<td>10-2</td>
<td>Lecture: Climate change Film: The Day After Tomorrow</td>
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On Tuesday afternoon you will be assigned to your debate groups and given your debating topic. Wednesday and Thursday afternoons have been put aside as dedicated time for your group to prepare for the debate (or any other group tasks you may want to work on).

Any issues or concerns, contact the course coordinator:

Dr Scott Sulway  
SCIF1004 Course Coordinator  
School of Chemistry  
s.sulway@unsw.edu.au