

Title of Course: *Science Fiction and Philosophy*

Instructor: Daniel Kodaj

Aim of the course:

Introduction to philosophy through science fiction.

Content of the course:

Science fictions stories are often called philosophical, and philosophers often use SF-ish thought experiments to make a point. For example, well before the Matrix movie, Hilary Putnam considered the hypothesis that we are brains in vats hooked up to a computer, and he claimed to be able to prove that this is not the case. David Lewis argued for the consistency of (certain) time-travel stories (for example, for the story depicted in the movie *Predestination*), Derek Parfit wondered about the metaphysics of Star Trek-style teletransporters, and the list goes on.

The course explores connections between science fiction and philosophy in a systematic way. Each week, we'll read a classic philosophical paper along with a SF story. Among other things, we'll discuss time travel, free will, the reality of the external world, personal identity, and nonhuman intelligence. Do philosophers and SF authors agree or disagree about these issues?

Assessment

Written exam at the end of the semester, with multiple-choice questions and an essay question based on the readings. The list of required readings and essay questions will be published in late April.

Schedule and readings:

See the course homepage (elte.dkodaj.net).

Recommended readings:

Susan Schneider (ed.): *Science Fiction and Philosophy*. Wiley–Blackwell.

The Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction. Cambridge University Press.