

MUSIC AND SCIENCE FICTION

MUHL 588, SPRING 2016
M 12:00 PM – 1:50 PM, MUS 303
2.0 UNITS

Instructor: Dr. Sean Nye

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 3-5 p.m. in MUS 305.

Description: This course will revolve around a basic question: how has musical culture transformed through encounters with science fiction? Following the Second World War, science fiction and popular music entered an extraordinary period of interaction, such that a number of music genres are inconceivable without science fiction (progressive rock, post-punk, industrial, electronic dance music, etc.). Numerous composers and popular musicians incorporated science fiction themes into their work (Kraftwerk, George Clinton, David Bowie, Rush, Janelle Monáe, etc.). In addition, intersections between literature and music took on a range of forms. Major music critics and journalists were science fiction fans (Paul Williams, Kodwo Eshun, Simon Reynolds, etc.), and likewise, science fiction authors engaged socio-political and aesthetic aspects of music (Philip K. Dick, Thomas Disch, William Gibson, etc.). Finally, science fiction radio, film, and television have been influential in shaping popular perceptions of audio technologies, new instrumentation, and futuristic music.

Engaging this history, the course will examine aesthetic and cultural questions emerging from these interactions: (1) How has science fiction shaped understandings of music's role in politics, ideology, and culture? (2) How do science fiction authors describe music in alternate and future worlds? (3) In what ways can the study of musical topics in literature and film be applied to science fiction studies? (4) How do representations of audio technologies and future music develop in music and multimedia contexts?

Objectives over the next 15 weeks:

- [1] develop a critical history of science fiction as a genre designation in popular media and music.
- [2] gain a thorough understanding of the interactions between music and science fiction in the 20th century.
- [3] place multiple academic disciplines in conversation: science fiction studies, musicology, media studies, and sound studies.
- [4] develop a critical engagement with music, technology, and anthropology.
- [5] address the roles that recording, broadcasting, and studios have played in the imaginings of SF music.

Required Texts:

Timothy D. Taylor, *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology, and Culture*.
Philip Hayward, ed., *Off the Planet: Music, Sound and Science Fiction Cinema*.
Philip K. Dick, *Martian Time-Slip*.
Philip K. Dick, *VALIS*.

Additional Resources:

Science Fiction and Music Websites (a selection):

lo9.com
eaton.ucr.edu
depauw.edu/sfs/
discogs.com
dancecult.net
thewire.co.uk

SCIENCE FICTION AND MUSIC BIBLIOGRAPHY (a selection):

Ballard, J.G. Selected novels and short stories.
Cope, Julian. *Krautrock sampler*.
Denton, Bradley. "Buddy Holly Is Alive and Well on Ganymede."
Dick, Philip K. Selected novels and short stories.
Disch, Thomas. *On Wings of Song*.
Goonan, Kathleen Ann. *Nanotech Quartet* and *In War Times*.
Lovecraft, H.P. "The Music of Erich Zann" and "The Whisperer in Darkness."
Eshun, Kodwo. *More Brilliant Than the Sun: Adventures in Sonic Fiction*.
Miller, Paul D. aka. DJ Spooky, That Subliminal Kid. *Rhythm Science*.
Waldrop, Howard. Selected short fiction.
William S. Burroughs. Selected writings.

Science Fiction and Music Filmography (a selection):

Metropolis (1927)
The Day the Earth Stood Still (1951)
Godzilla (1954)
Forbidden Planet (1956)
2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)
Planet of the Apes (1968)
A Clockwork Orange (1971)
Space is the Place (1974)
The Rocky Horror Picture Show (1975)
Star Wars (1977)
Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977)
E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial (1982)
Tron (1982)
Blade Runner (1982)
Repo Man (1984)
Akira (1988)
The Fifth Element (1997)

The Matrix (1999)

Gravity (2013)

Science Fiction and Music Documentaries (a selection):

Modulations: History of Electronic Dance Music (Iara Lee, 1998)

Krautrock: The Rebirth of Germany (BBC, 2009)

Kraftwerk and the Electronic Revolution (Chrome Dreams, 2008)

High Tech Soul: The Creation of Techno Music (Plexifilm, 2006)

The Last Angel of History (Icarus, 1996)

J.G. Ballard (BBC, 1991)

A Day in the Afterlife of Philip K. Dick (BBC, 1994)

Pink Floyd: Behind the Wall (Sonia Anderson, 2011)

David Bowie: The Story of Ziggy Stardust (BBC, 2012)

Prog Rock Britannia (BBC, 2007)

Synth Britannia (BBC, 2009)

Selected Statements:

It was like the drone of some loathsome, gigantic insect ponderously shaped into the articulate speech of an alien species, and I am perfectly certain that the organs producing it can have no resemblance to the vocal organs of man, or indeed to those of any of the mammalia. There were singularities of timbre, range, and overtones which placed this phenomenon wholly outside the spheres of humanity and earth-life.

H.P. Lovecraft, "The Whisperer in Darkness," 1939

"I think, Hamilton said, "that music is here to stay. The question is: how do we handle it? Operating a hi-fi rig is getting to be an art in itself. These sets we'll be turning out will take as much skill to run as to build."

"I can see it now," Laws said, grinning. "Slender young men sitting on the floors of their North Beach apartments, rapturously turning knobs and switches, as the incredibly authentic roar of freight engines, snowstorms, trucks unloading scrap iron and other recorded oddities thunder out."

Philip K. Dick, *Eye in the Sky*, 1957

We create out of the German language, the mother language, which is very mechanical, we use as the basic structure of our music. Also the machines, from the industries of Germany... We use tapes, prerecorded, and we play tapes, also in our performance... We don't need a choir. We just turn the key, and there's the choir.

Kraftwerk, interview with Lester Bangs, 1975

I feel the science-fictional-enterprise is richer than the enterprise of mundane fiction. It is richer through its extended repertoire of sentences, its consequent greater range of possible incident, and through its more varied field of rhetorical and syntagmatic organization. I feel it is richer in much the same way atonal music is richer than tonal, or abstract painting is richer than realistic.

Samuel R. Delany, 1977

I'ma pull out ya ears cuz I'm sick
Traveling hard, I'll off, another lunatic
Smacking germs, eating bugs, biting mouse
Roaches wonder why I'm traveling
On to bell vue cuz I'm sick
Traveling hard at the speed of thought.
Ultramagnetic MCs, "Traveling at the Speed of Thought," 1987.

Sonic Fiction strands you in the present with no way of getting back to the 70s. Sonic Fiction is the first stage of a reentry program which grasps this very clearly. Sonic Fictions are part of modern music's MythSystems. Moving through living space, real-world environments that are already alien.

Kodwo Eshun, *More Brilliant Than the Sun*, 1998

Science fiction and music go together for me like... well, like Strayhorn and Ellington, like Rodgers and Hart, like B.B. King and Lucille, or Monk and his piano...

To meld two major musical and literary ideas of the twentieth century, to portray human beings in a technological, if musical milieu, seems to me to be an interesting and almost inevitable enterprise.

Kathleen Ann Goonan, 2000

Assessment and Assignments:

Course Assessment (i.e., Grading):

Letter Grades:

A - Achievement that is excellent relative to the level necessary to meet requirements.

B - Achievement that is good relative to the level necessary to meet requirements.

C - Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.

D - Achievement worthy of credit even though it fails to meet course requirements.

F - Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed.

Course participation (40%): Music examples and/or course readings will be assigned each week, along with film viewings (available in the Music Library). Students are expected to come prepared each week and to bring necessary materials to class; consistent and active participation in discussion is expected. Short reading responses and in-class responses will also be part of the participation grade.

Two essays (30%/30%): Participants in “Music and Science Fiction” will complete two essays (7-9 pages) over the course of the semester. Modern Language Association (MLA) style should be used for formatting. The essay topics should be chosen after consulting the instructor. The essays are intended to provide an opportunity for students to prepare for a presentation at an academic conference or to engage issues related to graduate research. Essay options will be discussed in class.

For MLA style, see:

<http://libguides.usc.edu/content.php?pid=19123&sid=133048>

See also the site on MLA style offered by Purdue University:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Statement on Academic Conduct and Support Systems

Academic Conduct

Plagiarism – presenting someone else’s ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards* <https://scampus.usc.edu/files/2015/08/SCampus-2015-16.pdf>. Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct, <http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct/>.

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety* <http://capsnet.usc.edu/department/department-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university community – such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member – can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. *The Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm/> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage sarc@usc.edu describes reporting options and other resources.

Support Systems

A number of USC’s schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. *The Office of Disability Services and Programs* http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu/> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

Statement for Students with Disabilities

Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with Disability Services and Programs (DSP) each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please be sure the letter is delivered to me (or to TA) as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Website and contact information for DSP: http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html, (213) 740-0776 (Phone), (213) 814-4618 (Video Phone), (213) 740-8216 (FAX) ability@usc.edu.

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Week One	Introduction
Jan. 11	Syllabus overview: music and science fiction.
Week Two	
Jan. 18	NO CLASS
Week Three	Music and SF Literature
Jan. 25	Read: H.P. Lovecraft, "The Music of Erich Zann." Philip K. Dick, "The Preserving Machine." J.G. Ballard, "The Sound-Sweep." Simon Reynolds, "Sonic Fiction: Part 2: Literature." <i>Loops</i> 2. 107-27. SF Encyclopedia, "Definitions of SF" and "SF Music."
Week Four	Technology, Media, and Modernity
Feb. 1	Read: Timothy D. Taylor, <i>Strange Sounds</i> . 3-71. Simon Reynolds, "Sonic Fiction: Part 1: Cinema." <i>Loops</i> . 204-22.
Week Five	SF Culture, Horror, and Film
Feb. 8	Read: Shuheii Hosokawa, "Atomic Overtones and Primitive Undertones: Akira Ifukube's Sound Design for <i>Godzilla</i> ." <i>Off the Planet</i> . 42-60. Rebecca Leydon, "Forbidden Planet: Effects and Affects in the Electro Avant-garde." <i>Off the Planet</i> . 61-76. Timothy D. Taylor, <i>Strange Sounds</i> . 72-95. View: <i>Forbidden Planet</i> and <i>Godzilla</i>
Week Six	
Feb. 15	NO CLASS
Week Seven	Philip K. Dick 1: <i>Martian Time-Slip</i>
Feb. 22	Read: Philip K. Dick, <i>Martian Time-Slip</i> . Paul Williams: feature article in <i>Rolling Stone</i> , "The Most Brilliant Sci-Fi Mind on Any Planet: Philip K. Dick."

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Week Eight	<i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i>
Feb. 29	<p>Read: Philip Hayward, "Sci Fidelity – Music, Sound, and Genre History." <i>Off the Planet</i>. 1-29. David Patterson, "Music, Structure and Metaphor in Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey." <i>American Music</i>, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Autumn, 2004), pp. 444-474.</p> <p>View: 2001: A Space Odyssey</p>
Week Nine	Afrofuturism 1: Jazz
March 7	<p>ESSAY 1 DUE</p> <p>Read: Kodwo Eshun, selections from <i>More Brilliant Than the Sun</i>. Nebeel Zuberi, "The Transmolecularisation of [Black] Folk: <i>Space is the Place</i>, Sun Ra and Afrofuturism." <i>Off The Planet</i>. 77-95.</p> <p>View: <i>Space is the Place</i></p>
Week Ten	SPRING BREAK
March 14	NO CLASS
Week Eleven	Afrofuturism 2: Hip-Hop and Techno
March 21	<p>Read: Kodwo Eshun, selections from <i>More Brilliant Than the Sun</i>. Mark Dery, "Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose." Lester Bangs, "Kraftwerkfeature."</p> <p>View: <i>The Last Angel of History</i></p>
Week Twelve	<i>The Man Who Fell To Earth</i> and <i>Star Wars</i>
March 28	<p>Read: Neil Lerner, "Nostalgia... In John Williams' Scores for <i>Star Wars</i> and <i>Close Encounters of the Third Kind</i>." <i>Off The Planet</i>. 96-108. Ken McLeod, "Space Oddities: Aliens, Futurism, and Meaning in Popular Music." <i>Popular Music</i>, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Oct., 2003), pp. 337-355.</p> <p>View: <i>The Man Who Fell to Earth</i> and <i>Star Wars</i></p>
Week Thirteen	Philip K. Dick 2: VALIS
April 4	Read: Philip K. Dick, <i>VALIS</i> .

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Week Fourteen	Progressive Rock, Ambient, Post-Punk
April 11	<p>Read: Sean Albiez, "Sounds of Future Past: From Neu! To Numan." In <i>Pop Sounds: Klangtexturen in der Pop- und Rockmusik</i>. Erik Davis, "Kosmische." In <i>Krautrock: Cosmic Rock and Its Legacy</i>. Michael Hannan and Melissa Carey, "Ambient Soundscapes in <i>Blade Runner</i>." <i>Off the Planet</i>. 149-64.</p> <p>View: <i>Blade Runner</i></p>
Week Fifteen	Anime, Manga, and Comics
April 18	<p>Read: Milo Miles. "Robots, Romance, and Ronin: Music in Japanese Anime." In <i>The Cartoon Music Book</i>. 219-24. Christopher Bolton. "From Ground Zero to Degree Zero: Akira from Origin to Oblivion." In <i>Mechademia</i>, Vol. 9 (2014), 295-315.</p> <p>View: <i>Akira</i></p>
Week Sixteen	Future Traditions
April 25	<p>Read: Timothy D. Taylor, <i>Strange Sounds</i>. 96-114. Simon Reynolds, "Out of Space: Nostalgia for Giant Steps and Final Frontiers." In <i>Retromania</i>. 362-98. Sean Nye, "Headphone-Headset-Jetset: DJ Culture, Mobility, and Science Fictions of Listening." In <i>Dancecult: Journal of Electronic Dance Music Culture</i> 3(1): 64-96.</p>

Course Calendar: Overview

January	
11	Introduction
18	NO CLASS
25	Music and SF Literature
February	
1	Technology, Film, and Modernity
8	SF Culture, Horror, and Film
15	NO CLASS
22	Philip K. Dick 1: <i>Martian Time-Slip</i>
29	<i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i>
March	
7	Afrofuturism 1: Jazz ESSAY 1 DUE
14	NO CLASS
21	Afrofuturism 2: Hip-Hop and Techno
28	<i>The Man Who Fell To Earth</i> and <i>Star Wars</i>
April	
4	Philip K. Dick 2: <i>VALIS</i>
11	Progressive Rock, Ambient, Post-Punk
18	Anime, Manga, and Comics
25	Future Traditions
May	
Finals week	ESSAY 2 DUE