

“People become human the moment they think about the future, the moment they try to plan for the future”

Eleonora Masani, 1982



IML 453: Design Fiction and Speculative Futures

Units: 4

Semester: Spring 2024

Section: 37443R

Meet: Monday, 10:00 am – 12:50 pm

Instructor: Dr. Aisling Kelliher

Thinking about the future allows people to conceive of *possible selves*, which represent “what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming” (Markus, 1986). Critical to the exploration of alternate worlds representing *possible, probable and preferable* futures is the production, dissemination, and contemplation of *images of the future*, as “the rise and fall of images of the future precedes or accompanies the rise and fall of cultures” (Polak, 1961).

The notion of ‘images of the future’ encompasses more than just a visual dimension, as they are encoded and decoded within such disparate realms as science, art, economics, religion, and politics. That said, artists and designers play a significant role in the creation of future images in the form of speculative literature, science fiction movies, envisioning artifacts (Reeves, 2012), and design fiction scenarios (Sterling, 2009). While it can be argued that all of design activity “is oriented towards the future” while “informed by the past and the present” (Margolin, 2007), the emergence of consciously speculative design practices in the last 15 years has produced a rich body of provocative work that bring design and the future together, and to the fore.

In this praxis class, students will interrogate academic and popular texts, social media, audiovisual material, and computational and physical artifacts, bridging both historical and emerging areas of contemporary inquiry related to the topic. We will encounter and then use a variety of theoretical, philosophical, and pragmatic lenses to study, analyze, create, and write about course material. Students will complete diverse media prototype assignments throughout the semester and produce a final media product and accompanying text.

Szygy, Lina Iris Viktor. Image by Lina Iris Viktor. *Invocation for Hope*, Superflux, Image by Stephan Lux. *Her*, Spike Jonze, Image by Warner Bros.

Margolin, V. (2007). ‘Design, the Future and the Human Spirit’. *Design Issues*, 23(3), 4-15, 2007

Markus, H and Nurius, P. (1986). *Possible Selves*, *American Psychologist*, 41, 1986

Polak, F. (1961) *The Image of the Future: Enlightening the Past, Orienting the Present, Forecasting the Future*. NY: Oceana Publications.

Reeves, S. (2012). *Envisioning ubiquitous computing*. In *Proc CHI '12*. 1573-1582.

Sterling, B. (2009). *Design fiction*. *Interactions* 16, 3 (May 2009), 20-24