

ASCI*4020 - Topics in Arts and Science Research: Science in Film

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'Film is the universal language of modern societies.'

We live in a world that is permeated everywhere by science and technology. In our world one of the most common ways that people learn about science is through film. Even though popular science books sell relatively well, most people learn about science, past and present, through film—unless they require technical and scientific knowledge for their careers. Even so, films 'fill in' much of their scientific knowledge in many areas. These films exist in a very wide range of formats such as: documentaries, docu-dramas, feature films, television series, and YouTube videos. Some of these films remain close to existing scientific knowledge, some extrapolate from this knowledge into a possible future, and some move resolutely into the realm of fantasy, as is the often the case in Science Fiction.

Notably, Science Fiction plays a particularly significant role as a popular form of 'science communication' in our day: the best Sci Fi does this through the constant creation of 'thought experiments'. But not all films that deal with science are Science Fiction. The visual rhetoric that films use is part of their imaginative power. We will study the techniques as well as the content of these films in relation to the time of their production. The films that we will study will be from both the 20th and 21st centuries and will be drawn from a wide variety of examples.