

# **BIOL 3303:001/VMC/V01**

## **SCIENCE IN CINEMA AND TV**

### **Spring 2026**

Instructor: Dr. Christopher M. Ritzi. Rm 217, Tel. 837-8420 Email: [critzi@sulross.edu](mailto:critzi@sulross.edu)

Office Hours: MW 9:30-11, TR 3-5 in Rm 217 or by appt.

Webpage: <http://sulross.blackboard.edu/> or <http://faculty.sulross.edu/critzi>

Textbook: None required, although internet and library access will be necessary

Classroom: Rm 101 Warnock Science Building (ALP) and personal computer via Blackboard Collaborate

Time: Sections 001, VMC, V01 - Monday 6:00 – 9:00 pm

#### **Course Description:**

The purpose of this course is to survey the presentation of science in media as presented in film and television. We will look at analyze the accuracy and inaccuracy of the science portrayed to the masses, and interpret whether this level of scientific knowledge is helpful or not to society. The areas of science we will examine will cover such disciplines as biology, physics, chemistry, geology, meteorology, forensics, biotechnology, archeology, paleontology, and others.

#### **Student Learning Objectives for a Student majoring in a BS in Biology include:**

- SLO1 The student will be able to demonstrate an understanding of basic biological concepts, including but not limited to evolution via natural selection, cell theory, and the role and function of DNA.
- SLO2 The student will be able to demonstrate utilization of various field techniques toward addressing scientific questions in the specific discipline. These field techniques can include, but are not limited to, plant collection and processing, various animal collection techniques, ecological surveying and sampling, and biodiversity indexing.
- SLO3 The student will be able to use biological instrumentation to solve biological problems using standard observational strategies.
- SLO4 The student will develop writing skills by summarizing and critiquing recent relevant biological literature.

#### **Course Learning Objectives:**

- 1) Students will investigate the scientific accuracy of media.
- 2) Students will discuss the impact of scientific inaccuracies on real world situations.
- 3) Students will diagnosis the validity of scientific concepts in the media, and explain fallacies.
- 4) Students will document and catalogue the extent of scientific modifications in media.

**Marketable Skills:** A student getting a degree in the Biological sciences would be expected to acquire the following marketable skills by graduation.

- 1) Students will be able to organize, analyze, and interpret data.
- 2) Students will be proficient at using presentation software.
- 3) Students will acquire experience in managing time and meeting deadlines.
- 4) Students will gain the ability to speak effectively and write concisely about scientific topics.
- 5) Students will acquire experience and guidance in the development of professional email correspondence.

#### **Grading:**

Students are expected to attend all lectures and view video content in class. There are to be roughly 2 movies or programs per class period, and each week students will be required to submit a short (half page minimum) review of the scientific content of the film and the degree of accuracy involved. Additional, at the beginning of March, a midterm assignment covering scientific questions of interest will be due for 100 pts. Also, a final exam covering 5 different sources of media will be administered on-line on the date of the final for another 100 point. The rest of the points will be based on the media scientific summaries and attendance (300 points total).

**Suggestion:**

As per SRSU policy, students shall be dropped from the class with an F if they miss 20% (3 lectures) over the course of the semester. If you are unable to attend class, please notify me by either e-mail, phone, or in person so that you will not be unnecessarily dropped from the course. Due to the nature and time line of this course, attendance will be required and late work will not be accepted. Please do not miss class or plan on leaving part way into a session, as that will be counted as an absence.

**Lecture courtesy:** The general rules of classroom etiquette are below.

- 1) Please do not talk to others in class while the instructor is lecturing or a film is playing. If you have a question, ASK THE INSTRUCTOR! That's what I'm here for.
- 2) No eating, chewing, dipping, etc.
- 3) If you are going to attend class, please do so. Leaving and returning to class repeatedly is disruptive, as well as showing up after half the period is over.
- 4) Please turn cell phones and pagers to silent while in class. They are disruptive to the entire class, and distract others as well. Texting is also not allowed in class.

**Students with disabilities will be provided reasonable accommodations. If you would like to request such accommodations because of physical, mental, or learning disability, please contact the ADA Coordinator for Program Accessibility at 837-8203, FH 112.**

**Tentative Lecture Outline**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Lecture topic</b>
Jan 19	Martin Luther King Jr Holiday – No class
Jan 26	Introduction, Evolution, and Sharktopus (Over-the-Top Sci-Fi Day)
Feb 2	SwampThing and The Ruins (Botany Day)
Feb 9	Andromedia Strain (Disease/Microbiology Day)
Feb 16	Contagion (Disease/Microbiology Day Continued)
Feb 23	Day After Tomorrow (Environmental Day)
Mar 2	The Core (Environmental Day Continued) and Mid Term Due
Mar 9	Spring Break – No Class
Mar 16	Them and Wasp Woman (Entomology Day)
Mar 23	San Andreas (Natural Disaster Day)
Mar 30	Rampage and 8 Legged Freaks (Mutated Critter Day)
Apr 6	The Monolith Monsters and The Fly (Horror Sci-Fi Day)
Apr 13	Fantastic Voyage and Andromedia 1:1 (Inner & Outer Space Travel Day)
Apr 20	Andromedia 1:2 and Serenity (Outer Space Travel Day)
Apr 27	Bones, Numbers, and CSI (Forensic Science Day)
May 1	Final Exam on Blackboard, complete by 8 pm

Note – This outline is subject to change for reasons of course interest, time constraint, or instructor whim. The exam will be administered on the dates given, unless material relevant for a given exam has not been covered. Under such cases, an exam may be moved a class period or two to aid in the clarity and understanding of the material.

Paper requirements:

The papers you will be required to write for this class are listed below. All papers must be typed, spell checked, and formatted with 1 inch margins, double spaced, and 12 point Times New Roman Font. All assignments will be submitted through Safe Assign in Blackboard.

1) Midterm due before Midnight on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Choose 2 of the 3 questions, answer on your word processor, and upload your answers to Blackboard. Each answer should be at least 3 pages and include citations and media references.

- 1) What are the ethical ramifications of genetic manipulation?
- 2) What are some of the consequences of our portrayal of DNA and scientific techniques in the judicial system?
- 3) How has the portrayal of science changed in movies and shows over the past 50 years? Has it become more realistic or fantastical?

2) Write a short summary of **ONE** of the films or series of shows viewed **each week**, detailing the science covered and its accuracy. Feel free to cite outside sources to back up your arguments, but the majority of the summary needs to be your own ideas and in your own words. If the program had any potential social or ethical impacts as a result of the science, please explain these as well. These short summaries (minimum half page) are to be submitted through Blackboard by the start of the next week's class each week. If you do not submit your summary by the start of class the following week, it will be counted late and not received.

**Plagiarism Warning** – There are lots of interesting sites on the internet that talk about and discuss films and TV. I expect you will be tempted to use these to help you complete your assignment, but you may not copy or plagiarize. If you copy and paste, or fail to cite sources when you should have, you will not receive credit for the assignment. Additionally, the failure to include your own interpretation of the films will also result in a failure of the assignment.

**SRSU Disability Services:** SRSU Accessibility Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mrs. Mary Schwartze Grisham, LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Director at 432-837-8203 or email [mschwartze@sulross.edu](mailto:mschwartze@sulross.edu). Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall, room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine, Texas, 79832.

**SRSU Distance Education Statement:** Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

**Libraries:** The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library in Alpine offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, [library.sulross.edu](http://library.sulross.edu). Off-campus access requires logging in with your Lobold and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email ([srsulibrary@sulross.edu](mailto:srsulibrary@sulross.edu)), or phone (432-837-8123).

**Academic Integrity:** Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. Students should submit work that is their own and avoid the temptation to engage in behaviors that violate academic integrity, such as turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's

work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden. Students should also avoid using open AI sources *unless permission is expressly given* for an assignment or course. Violations of academic integrity can result in failing assignments, failing a class, and/or more serious university consequences. These behaviors also erode the value of college degrees and higher education overall.

**Classroom Climate of Respect:** Importantly, this class will foster free expression, critical investigation, and the open discussion of ideas. This means that all of us must help create and sustain an atmosphere of tolerance, civility, and respect for the viewpoints of others. Similarly, we must all learn how to probe, oppose and disagree without resorting to tactics of intimidation, harassment, or personal attack. No one is entitled to harass, belittle, or discriminate against another on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, age, gender, national origin, or sexual preference. Still, we will not be silenced by the difficulty of fruitfully discussing politically sensitive issues.

**Supportive Statement:** I aim to create a learning environment for my students that supports various perspectives and experiences. I understand that the recent pandemic, economic disparity, and health concerns, or even unexpected life events may impact the conditions necessary for you to succeed. My commitment is to be there for you and help you meet the learning objectives of this course. I do this to demonstrate my commitment to you and to the mission of Sul Ross State University to create a supportive environment and care for the whole student as part of the Sul Ross Familia. If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you.