

PROJEKT BADAWCZY 1 i 2
2025/2026_SEMESTR LETNI
2026/2027_SEMESTR ZIMOWY
SPECJALNOŚCI AD KMT

dr Alicja Bemben

Communism in Screen Historical Fiction

This course focuses on representations of communism in screen historical fictions. Cinema, television, and games continue to offer us representations of communism that cater to consumers' tastes in every possible way. Combing through various texts of culture evidences this point. On the one hand, nostalgic images of this era – All that I Love, The Hundred-Year-Old Man who Climbed out the Window and Disappeared, and many alike productions – offer a rather idealistic take on a period usually associated with struggle and hardship. And one might wonder why this is so, given the communist brutality conveyed vicariously but way more often through historical fictions; as it is, for instance, in Captives or Chernobyl. More importantly, reviving communism in cinema, television, and games is not limited to black-and-white representations of it. Tales from the Golden Age and Totems reflect the memories of those who struggled but also managed to make a life for themselves under communism. For those interested in the cultural life of the era, The Red Queen and The Death of Stalin offer nuanced portrayals of the bygone glitterati. Finally, this course is also interested in representations of communism that focus on more ticklish subjects – such as (dis)loyalties under communism (The Sympathizer, Tinker, Taylor, Soldier, Spy, The Americans) or (ir)religiousness (The Christening, Operation Pope) – and using communism as a fabric with which to weave alternative histories (Atomic Blonde, For All Mankind, S.T.A.L.K.E.R., The Man in the High Castle, 1983).

dr Tomasz Burzyński

Discourses of Risk and Fear

Ours is an unpredictable world, one in which reckless political decisions, economic fluctuations, and irresponsible use of technology multiply areas of uncertainty and insecurity. Understood as a distinct combination of unpredictability and harm, the concept of risk seems to have dominated numerous interpretations and representations of the contemporary, late modern reality. This research project invites students to explore the concepts of risk and fear in the context of anglophone literatures and cultures. Discourses of risk and fear permeate cultural production, structuring our cultural responses to the unpredictability and complexity of economic and political organizations, technological innovations, and environmental processes. The biological reality of the body brings no comfort as it is increasingly subjected to biomedical and biotechnological rationalities in which the corporeal is perceived from a risk-laden perspective of self-tracking practices and epidemiological calculations (e.g., the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic).

Keywords: body, cultural representations, danger, risk, self-tracking, trauma, uncertainty.

dr hab. Małgorzata Poks

#All Lives Matter: Imagining the World Otherwise

Inspired by the revolutionary hashtag #BlackLivesMatter and the creative potential of speculative fiction (Donna Haraway's SF figure), the project is open to students interested in extending the revisionist premise of a just world beyond any exclusionary binaries, the human/nonhuman included. Having discussed the manifold theories of domination and exclusion – especially in settler colonial contexts (USA, Canada, New Zealand, Australia) – as well as the urgency of imagining the world and the “human” otherwise (eco/posthumanities) – students will be encouraged to concentrate their research on chosen texts of culture and or cultural/political movements.

#All Lives Matter: Wyobraźmy sobie świat inaczej

Inspirowany rewolucyjnym hashtagiem #BlackLivesMatter i kreatywnym potencjałem spekulacji naukowej (figura SF Donny Haraway), projekt jest otwarty dla osób studenckich zainteresowanych ideą budowania sprawiedliwszego świata, nieosadzonego w wykluczających opozycjach binarnych Zachodu. Po omówieniu różnorodnych teorii dominacji i wykluczenia – zwłaszcza w kontekście kolonializmu osadniczego (USA, Kanada, Nowa Zelandia, Australia) – a także pilnej potrzeby wyobrażenia sobie na nowo świata i „człowieka” (eko/posthumanism) – osoby studenckie poproszone zostaną o skoncentrowania swoich badań na wybranych tekstach kultury lub/oraz ruchach kulturowych czy politycznych.

dr Bartosz Stopel, prof. UŚ

Narrating Strange Minds: Cognitive Diversity and Altered States in Media

This research project explores representations and narrative expressions of non-standard cognition and altered states across literature, film, television, and interactive media. Neurodiversity, understood in terms of autistic, ADHD, or otherwise atypical cognitive styles, is treated as one important subset of a broader category that also includes obsessive, dissociative, traumatic, artificial or artificially-induced, non-human, and experimentally altered forms of cognition. Rather than approaching these modes primarily through a medical or diagnostic lens, the project will examine how they challenge dominant assumptions about cognition, emotion, narrative coherence, temporality, agency, empathy, and understanding. Central to the course is the idea that “strange minds” often give rise to “strange stories”: narrative forms, aesthetic strategies, and media techniques that depart from linearity, psychological transparency, or stable point of view.

The course combines theoretical readings with close analysis of fictional texts and media works, focusing on how narrative structures such as fragmentation, recursion, looping, minimalism, defamiliarization, and embodied interaction resonate with or are shaped by non-standard modes of attention, perception, and sense-making. Questions of empathy, identification, and moral engagement will be addressed critically, with particular attention to the limits and biases of empathetic response when confronted with unfamiliar or cognitively misaligned minds. Students are encouraged to pursue independent research projects that connect theoretical perspectives with selected case studies, developing their own analyses of how cognitive diversity and altered states are represented, enacted, or formally embedded in narrative media. The course thus positions narrative as a laboratory for thinking about cognitive difference, experiential opacity, and the ethics of understanding across human and non-human minds.

dr Michal Kisiel

“It Is Not Life as We Know or Understand It”

Critical Perspectives on the Inhuman

The research project “*It Is Not Life as We Know or Understand It...*” was initially inspired by Mr Spock’s famous observation in “The Devil in the Dark,” an episode of *Star Trek: The Original Series* (1967). The course is addressed to students interested in critical readings of English-language texts of culture, including literature, films, TV series, games, and music. What this project is especially preoccupied with is how the Western culture tends to represent inhuman and nonhuman agents. This problem matters because our understanding of inhabiting a diverse and complex more-than-human world has greatly expanded in the humanities. It is then sound to explore to what extent these mechanisms of representation either reconstruct a decoy or extension of a human perspective, or challenge it. They may, in fact, stretch the frameworks of storytelling, worldbuilding, and poetics to articulate something utterly nonhuman.

The participants of this project are encouraged to study the correspondences between selected texts of culture and posthumanist literary theory – mainly ecocriticism, new materialism, object-oriented ontology, plant studies, and animal studies. This project pays utmost attention to discussions, presentations, and readings of selected theoretical texts.

The research areas of students’ individual and group projects might include, but are not limited to:

- animals, plants, and other organic agents in English-language cultural texts;
- nonhuman bodies and forms in English-language cultural texts;
- objects, things, and machines in English-language cultural texts;
- ecocritical perspectives on the more-than-human world in English-language cultural texts;
- earthly and otherworldly nonhuman entities;
- posthumanism and transhumanism in English-language cultural texts;
- crisis of anthropocentrism in English-language cultural texts.

When involved in the project, students will need to formulate a research question and a thesis statement, prepare an annotated bibliography, carry out supervised research, prepare a report

(this semester), and, ultimately, present the result of their study (next semester). The result – the key goal of the project – might be presented in a form of an article to be published in an academic journal, a paper at an academic conference, a publication on a website, etc.