Year 12 Media Studies Film Genre Study: 
Dystopian Science-Fiction

2.4 Demonstrate understanding of an aspect of a media genre 
&
2.2 Demonstrate understanding of narrative in media texts
External Achievement Standard 91251

Subject Reference               Media Studies 2.4
Title                        Demonstrate understanding of an aspect of a media genre
Level               2           Credits   4           Assessment    External

This achievement standard involves demonstrating understanding of an aspect of a media genre.

Achievement Criteria

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<th>Achievement</th>
<th>Achievement with Merit</th>
<th>Achievement with Excellence</th>
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<td>• Demonstrate understanding of an aspect of a media genre.</td>
<td>• Demonstrate in-depth understanding of an aspect of a media genre.</td>
<td>• Demonstrate critical understanding of an aspect of a media genre.</td>
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Explanatory Notes


2 Demonstrate understanding involves describing an aspect of a specific media genre using supporting evidence.

Demonstrate in-depth understanding involves giving reasoned explanations of an aspect of a specific media genre. A reasoned explanation involves a logical argument supported by specific evidence.

Demonstrate critical understanding involves examining the likely implications of an aspect of a specific media genre and drawing conclusions based on the evidence.

3 Media genre means a group of media texts categorised through their commonly shared features. Examples of genres include but are not limited to:

- teenage magazines (print)
- western movies (film)
- documentaries (film or television)
- soaps (television)
- breakfast shows (radio)
- social networking websites (internet).
4  An aspect of a media genre includes at least one of the following:
   • changes in the genre (eg development of sub-genre, changes in the use of features)
   • audience expectations and/or response to the genre
   • the influence of commercial considerations of the genre.

5  Assessment Specifications for this achievement standard can be accessed through the Media Studies Resources page found at http://www.nzqa.govt.nz/qualifications-standards/qualifications/ncea/ncea-subject-resources/.

Definitions

Genre: A French word meaning ‘type’ or ‘class’. A film genre is a category of a film that uses similar conventions.

Code: A collection or group of signs (something that signals something to the viewer.

Convention: is something expected to be seen in a particular genre

From: "NCEA Level 2 Media Studies (Study Guide)" Jones and Thompson
Internal Achievement Standard 91249

Subject Reference: Media Studies 2.2

Title: Demonstrate understanding of narrative in media texts

Level: 2

Credits: 4

Assessment: Internal

This achievement standard involves demonstrating understanding of narrative in media texts.

Achievement Criteria

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Explanatory Notes


2. *Demonstrate understanding* involves describing how selected narrative features contribute to narrative in media texts.

   *Demonstrate in-depth understanding* involves explaining how selected narrative features contribute to narrative in media texts.

   *Demonstrate critical understanding* involves examining the implications of the contribution of selected narrative features to narrative in media texts.

3. *Media texts* include but are not limited to: television programme, radio programme, film, feature article, web page, music video.

4. *Narrative features* that contribute to the narrative may relate to:
   - mise en scène
   - character
   - symbols, motifs, or themes
   - setting
   - narrative structure
   - visual elements
   - narrative perspective
   - sound
   - manipulation of time
The Grammar of Film

A STORY consists of letters which make up words which make up sentences which make up a STORY

A FILM consists of frames which make up shots which make up scenes which make up a FILM
### Terms Used in Film Analysis

An extensive (but not exclusive list) of terms useful in the analysis of film...

When engaging in the analysis of film a new vocabulary arises. Here are a few suggestions of terms you might use to maintain clarity when expressing your ideas.

1. **‘SHOT’**
   A single ‘run’ of the camera. This is the basic unit from which a film is constructed. The length (or duration) of a shot depends upon:
   - Its purpose ie. establishing a place; to show action; to show reaction
   - The pace (or tempo) of the sequence in which it occurs.

   - **Sequence**: A group of shots depicting one action, or, which seems to belong with or depend upon each other. (Say 3 to 18 shots).
   - **Scene**: A group of sequences, or, (for short scenes) a group of shots, which:
     - Depict an event in the story.
     - Occur in one place.

   A scene is generally a larger unit than a sequence (though) sometimes a group of shots can be classified as either).

2. **TYPES OF SHOT**
   - **Long Shot [L.S.]**: A distance shot in which a setting, and not a character, is the emphasis. this is generally used to establish the place in which action will occur, hence the term establishing shot. Given its function, a long shot is often used at the beginning of a scene or sequence, and may be combined with a panning movement of the camera to show us a wider area.
   - **Mid Shot [M.S.]**: A middle distance shot which focuses our attention on a particular subject. With a mid shot the camera is close enough to pick up detail, though still far enough away to be able to follow the subject as he/she/it moves. The mid shot, therefore, is commonly used to show action eg. as in a fight scene.
   - **Close Up [C.U.]**: A close shot of an object or person, the aim being to focus our attention on a particular detail. Close ups of objects may serve as the in-point to a new scene, depicting a new fact or location in the story. Close ups of a person have a number of different functions:
     - In an establishing sequence a close up of someone suggests that he/she is a main character. The first close up of a character (in a sequence of shots), establishes point of view e.g. who is watching an event
     - Close up is most commonly used to show the reaction of a character, ie. a reaction shot.

3. **CAMERA MOVEMENTS**
   - **Pan**: Movement from side to side from a stationary position.
   - **Tilt**: Movement up or down from a stationary position.
   - **Tracking**: The camera is not stationary but moves to follow a moving object or person. The camera is mounted on a moving device such as a rail platform, a dolly or a vehicle.
   - **Zoom Out**: Movement outwards away from a subject.

   **Note**: The speed of a camera movement (from very fast to very slow) can dramatically alter its effect on the viewer/audience.

4. **TRANSITIONS & MOVING FROM ONE SHOT TO ANOTHER**
   - **Cut**: The ending of a shot. If the cut is a jerky movement, which seems a little inconsistent with the next shot it is called a jump cut.
• **Fade In or Out:** The image appears or disappears gradually. It brightens to full strength over a full second, or darkens to fade out. The fade is often used as a division between scenes.

• **Dissolve:** One image fades in while another fades out so that for a few seconds the two are superimposed.

• **In-point:** An image which starts the scene. Sometimes this in-point is used to smooth the transition between scenes. As the word suggests the in-point takes us in to the next shot or scene by making a visual link (a related object or shape) with the out-point of the previous shot.

5. **CAMERA ANGLES**

In filming a shot a decision is made about the angle at which the camera is to be directed at a subject. High and Low angles may be used to influence our impression of a particular character.

A character filmed from a low angle will seem strong, powerful, tall, proud, etc... Whereas if a high angle is used the subject will appear weak, insignificant, vulnerable, small etc... Our impression of a structure or object can be manipulated in a similar way.

A distorted angle may be used to make a scene more frightening, or to make the viewer feel anxious, or queasy (especially if fast or jerky camera movement is also used).

6. **EDITING**

This is the process of assembling and splicing together the various shots which comprise a film. Underlying the process is a technique which can be called pairing, ie. a story is built up by alternating one set of shots with another.

• There are common instances of pairing:
  o A conversation or confrontation between two characters. The shots alternate from one to the other, angles may be used to suggest inferiority or superiority.
  o Shots of a character are alternated with shots of what he/she sees. The first shot of the character is the P.O.V. (It establishes point of view ie. who is looking).
  o Cross-cutting. A sequence of shots in which the alternation is between two different locations (For example: A burglar creeping into a house in which an unsuspecting victim lies sleeping). The sequence builds to a climax and ends with the two things coming together.

The Editing Speed (or tempo) of a particular sequence is also an important consideration. Fast editing involves fast cutting. ie. The shots are 1 to 2 seconds long. Fast editing generates excitement and anticipation as for example in a chase sequence. Slow editing (ie. Shots are 3 to 10 seconds long), has the opposite effect, calming and relaxing the viewer. Accordingly slow editing is a characteristic of love scenes.

7. **OTHER TERMS**

• **Soft Focus:** A slightly blurred shot to make the subject seem more attractive, romantic, nostalgic or dreamlike.

• **Hand Held Camera:** The tripod and dolly are deliberately abandoned in favour of this method when a director wants to create a sense of anxiety or confusion, exploiting the unsteady movement of the camera. A hand held shot in which a character is approached from behind usually suggests that someone is being followed and is about to be ‘pounced upon’...

• **Montage:** The editing together of a large number of shots with no intention to create a continuous reality. A montage is often used to compress time (a number of facts are established in one sequence). Films may begin with a montage which establishes a particular time and place. With the absence of a visual relationship between them, the montage shots are linked through a unified sound - either a voiceover or a piece of music.
Dystopian Film

Q: What does dystopia mean?
A: The word dystopia commonly sits in opposition to utopia.

_Utopia_: A place, state, or condition that is ideally perfect in respect of politics, laws, customs, and conditions.

_Dystopia_: A futuristic, imagined universe in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through corporate, bureaucratic, technological, moral, or totalitarian control.

Dystopian films, through an exaggerated worst-case scenario, make a criticism about a current trend, societal norm, or political system.

Q: What is dystopian science fiction?
A: Dystopian science fiction films will often feature one or more of the following features as a key driver in the narrative or underlying themes: massive dehumanization, totalitarian government, rampant disease, post-apocalyptic environments, cyber-genetic technologies, societal chaos and widespread urban violence. Dystopian films aim to bravely examine the ominous shadow cast by ‘future’.

A dystopia is a fictional society that is the antithesis or complete opposite of a utopia (an ideal world with a perfect social, political and technological infrastructure; a world without chaos, strife or hunger).

Dystopian films often construct a fictional universe and set it in a background which features scenarios such as dehumanizing technological advancements, man-made disease or disasters or class-based revolutions.”


Q: What are some common characteristics of dystopian films?
A: The following is a list of some common elements/characteristics you will find in a dystopian film. Please remember this is a starting point only – you will add to this list as the unit/study progresses. Also remember not all films have these elements.

Dystopian Society:
- Propaganda is used to control the citizens of society.
- Information, independent thought, and freedom are restricted.
- A figurehead or concept is worshipped by the citizens of the society.
- Citizens are perceived to be under constant surveillance.
- Citizens have a fear of the outside world.
- Citizens live in a dehumanized state.
- The natural world is banished and distrusted.
- Citizens conform to uniform expectations. Individuality and dissent are bad.
- The society is an illusion of a perfect utopian world.
**Dystopian Controls:**
Most dystopian works present a world in which oppressive societal control and the illusion of a perfect society are maintained through one or more of the following types of controls:

- **Corporate control:** One or more large corporations control society through products, advertising, and/or the media. Examples include *Minority Report* and *Running Man*.

- **Bureaucratic control:** Society is controlled by a mindless bureaucracy through a tangle of red tape, relentless regulations, and incompetent government officials. Examples in film include *Brazil*.

- **Technological control:** Society is controlled by technology—through computers, robots, and/or scientific means. Examples include *The Matrix*, *The Terminator*, and *I, Robot*.

- **Philosophical/religious control:** Society is controlled by philosophical or religious ideology often enforced through a dictatorship or theocratic government.

**Characters:** The protagonist in a dystopian film would often:
- often feels trapped and is struggling to escape.
- questions the existing social and political systems.
- believes or feels that something is terribly wrong with the society in which he or she lives.
- helps the audience recognizes the negative aspects of the dystopian world

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**DYSTOPIA**

The pervasive, enduring, and widespread acknowledgment that man's most steadfast potential is the ability to completely screw everything up.
Dystopian Film: Conventions

The following is a list of common elements you will find in a dystopian sci-fi film. Please remember this is a starting point only – you will add to this list as the unit progresses. Also remember not all films have these elements. The list is non-exclusive!

Characters
The protagonist in a dystopian film is often referred to as an **anti-hero**. They are generally lonely and fight against the system (government or laws or the place) to prove something to be wrong.

Consider some of the following characteristics and list any films/characters where you have experienced or noticed these features.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A character who is a specialist in their field who is asked out of retirement or from holiday to help an organisation...</th>
<th>A character who is wrongly framed or is made to look like a criminal because of the very situation he/she is fighting...</th>
<th>A character who makes a discovery that no one else can believe is true and needs to go to extreme lengths to prove it...</th>
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Settings
List any films you have scene which are set in the following environments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Futuristic settings</th>
<th>Dehumanizing settings</th>
<th>Technologically advanced settings</th>
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<th>Settings which include computer/artificial intelligence</th>
<th>The environment is physically breaking/broken down.</th>
<th>Settings which link to our own world/current society.</th>
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Timeline: Dystopian Film through the Decades

Here is a summary of the influences and developments that have occurred in the dystopian sci-fi genre since its very early beginnings.

1895  Guglielmo Marconi introduces the first practical application of radio technology, the telegraph. It marks the beginning of the mass communication era and entails a dramatic evolution of communication and information technologies.

The Lumière brothers construct the cinematograph and exhibit the first motion picture. Until the breakthrough of television after World War II, the motion picture will be the most effective means of propaganda.

1897  Henri Becquerel discovers the phenomenon radioactivity. The dangerous potential of this discovery is recognised almost directly.

1898  H.G. Wells's ground-breaking novel War of the Worlds, the first depiction of an alien invasion of Earth, is published.

1899  The publication of the novels The Story Of The Days To Come and When The Sleeper Wakes by H.G. Wells. They are debatably the first modern dystopias per se, probably the first elaborately ideological dystopias, and definitely the first anti-capitalistic dystopias.

1901  Guglielmo Marconi establishes the first transatlantic wireless connection, thus indirectly enabling effective global trade and warfare in the future.

1902  Georges Melieres directs A Trip to the Moon—the first science fiction movie (14 minutes long).

1903  The Wright brothers perform the first successful flight in an aeroplane. It lasts for 12 seconds and 40 meters. The practical implementation of aircraft will revolutionise communications and warfare the following decades.

1911  Only eight years after the accomplishment of the Wright brothers, aeroplanes are used in combat for the first time. Italian pilots bomb two oases near Tripolis in North Africa; needless to say, the targets are civilian.

1914  In a haze of war romanticism, the European powers engage in the Great War; not only the first world war, but also the first industrialised war. It lasts for four years and results in more than 10 million dead people. The world will never be the same again.

1915  Chemical weapons: the German army uses chlorine gas near Ypres in Belgium.

1917  A revolution in Russia gives the Bolsheviks an opportunity to seize power. Soon, they begin to call themselves Communists, and their radical political programme will gradually evolve into a totalitarian nightmare. It will end over 70 years after the revolution.

1918  The Spanish Influenza, the worst pandemic ever next to the Black Death, claims more than 21 million lives, more than every 100th human being.

1920  Karel Čapek's play R.U.R. introduces the term robot and the modern robot concept, and is the first elaborate depiction of a machine take-over. Čapek's robots can also be seen as the first androids: they are in fact organic.

1924  Yevgeny Zamiatin's My (English title: We), the first totalitarian dystopian novel, as well as the first critical comment on the future of USSR, is published. It will serve as inspiration for Aldous Huxley and George Orwell.

In the essay Daedalus, or Science and The Future, J.B.S. Haldane prophesies with remarkable precision about different kinds of genetic engineering in the future. It served as inspiration for Aldous Huxley's Brave New World.
1925  In Italy, the Fascists seize power, and implement the first truly totalitarian system; USSR will soon follow. Many intellectuals, even in democratic countries, praise Mussolini’s new order.

1926  The Scotsman John Baird conducts the first successful television transmission, thus introducing the most effective means of mass propaganda and mass marketing so far in human history. Within a decade, regular television transmissions have begun in London, Paris, Berlin and New York.

1927  Première of Fritz Lang’s Metropolis, the first serious science fiction movie, as well as the first dystopian movie. It sets a new standard for cinema in general, and futuristic cinema in particular.

1929  Capitalistic break-down: On the so-called Black Sunday, 80 million dollars disappear from the American economy due to stock exchange mania. It entails severe depression, social unrest and indirectly also autocratic take-overs around the world.

1932  The publication of Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World, the first depiction of failed paradise-engineering. Among many other things, it basically introduces the themes of mass culture and technology abuse in dystopian fiction, as well as scientific concepts such as designer drugs, conditioning and cloning.

1933  The National Socialists seize power in Germany and implement an autocratic and militaristic order, soon to become elaborately totalitarian. The nightmare ends 12 years later in the ruins of Berlin.

1934  Première of the German propaganda film Triumf des Willens (Triumph of the Will) by the controversial filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl. It will influence dystopian nightmare visions of totalitarian systems for many decades to come.

1936  A rebellion by military units in Spain triggers the first armed ideological conflict: the Spanish Civil War. The Fascist side introduces barbarian war methods in Europe, methods which previously had been reserved for the colonies; the most horrifying novelty is air raids against civilian targets, e.g. in Guernica. More than one million people die, and Fascism triumphs. The war entails a dangerous polarisation between Fascism and Communism.

The first public trials against alleged traitors are staged in USSR, which marks the beginning of Stalin’s terror era. It lasts until the dictator’s death in 1953 and costs at least 20 million lives.

1938  Orson Welles causes public panic in USA with a realistic radio adaptation of The War of the Worlds, and effectively illustrates the potential of mass media manipulation.

1939  Hitler’s Third Reich attacks Poland and triggers the most devastating conflict so far in human history, World War II. More than 40 million people die in five years. Especially the German scientists excel in inventing advanced military technology which will claim many lives in the future, e.g. jet fighters and directed missiles.

The publication of Raymond Chandler’s first major detective story: The Big Sleep. Chandler’s novels, and the filmatisations, will influence dystopian fiction with their potent mixes of lonely detectives, realistic approaches, urban settings, societal critique, harsh dialogue etc.

1942  The Holocaust is outlined in the infamous Wannsee conference. The first industrial genocide in human history will claim the lives of 6 million Jews. All in all, the terror machinery claims at least 12 million lives, including communists, dissidents, gypsies, homosexuals and disabled.

The first nuclear reactor is constructed in USA for military purposes. The full scope of the hazards with civilian nuclear power will not be recognised until much later.

1943  COLOSSUS, the first electronic computation machine is completed in Great Britain. It is in fact more advanced than ENIAC, but it will remain a military secret for decades.

1945  The Manhattan Project is completed, and USA deploys nuclear weapons against human populations for the first time. One bomb in Hiroshima and another in Nagasaki claim at least half a million lives, including the
victims of the lingering radiation. Only four years later, USSR detonates its first atom bomb, and the nuclear arms race is a fact.

1946 In the Nuremberg Trials, the full scope of the totalitarian horrors in the Third Reich are recognised.

The first official electronic computation machine, ENIAC, is completed in USA. The first real computer, EDSAC, is completed only three years later in Great Britain.

1949 After a bloody civil war, the Communists proclaim the People's Republic of China. Exactly how many lives the revolution claims the next two decades will never be certain, but it is probably at least 20 million, hypothetically ten times as many.

George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-four, the most elaborately anti-totalitarian dystopia and the politically most influential dystopia of all times, is published. It advances and consolidates the dystopian themes of systematic oppression and mind control. Until the making of Blade Runner years later, it is basically the sole Dystopia prototype.

1950 Alan Turing defines the so-called Turing Test, the philosophical foundation of artificial intelligence theory. A new science is born, and the following decades many a scientist will claim to have created an intelligent computer.

1952 USA detonates the first hydrogen bomb at Bikini Atoll in the South Pacific, thus increasing the scope of nuclear mass destruction dramatically.

The heart pacemaker, the first implanted mechanical body enhancement, is introduced.

1953 Watson and Crick unravels the structure of DNA. From a scientific point of view, Man has become Computer: the Code has been revealed and the Code can be reprogrammed.

The publication of Ray Bradbury's Fahrenheit 451, possibly the most intellectually advanced dystopian satire, together with Nineteen Eighty-four. In any case, it certainly contributed to the intellectual integrity of dystopian fiction. Filmed by François Truffaut in 1966.

1957 USSR launches the first man-made satellite, Sputnik I. The space race is a fact, and it engenders a rapid technological evolution. Among many other things, satellites will enable new means of communication, mass culture, surveillance and warfare.

The publication of Nevil Shute's novel On The Beach, made into a movie in 1959 starring Gregory Peck. It was not the first depiction of nuclear holocaust horrors, but the first one which had a strong emotional impact on the main-stream audience.

1959 The publication of Robert Heinlein's pro-militaristic and anti-democratic novel Starship Troopers, which engenders a heated debate among science fiction writers.

1962 The Cuba crisis almost triggers a nuclear war between USA and USSR. If mankind would have survived a full-scale nuclear conflict is uncertain.

1966 Make Room, Make Room by Harry Harrison, the first major over-population dystopia, is published; later to be adapted for the silver screen under the title Soylent Green in 1973.

D.F. Jones's novel Colossus, adapted for the silver screen in 1969, is probably the first depiction of a global take-over attempt by military computers. The concept will later be advanced in the Terminator and Matrix movies.

1967 The first heart transplant operation is performed, and human beings suddenly become sets of organic spare parts.

1968 Stanley Kubrick's and Arthur C. Clark's 2001: A Space Odyssey sets new visual and thematic standards for science fiction in general and science fiction cinema in particular. It advances the artificial intelligence concept and introduces more realistic and conceivable space programs.
Philip K Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* advances the android concept and raises disturbing questions about human identity.

1969 **USA** implements the first Moon landing, the Apollo 11 expedition. A few more manned Moon landings will follow, but the costly Vietnam war will soon put an end to these grand projects.

In **USA**, the first primitive computer network, a nuclear defence application, is constructed. The event will entail a dramatic evolution of computer technology, perhaps most notably the development of the first global computer network, internet.

1971 The first space station, the Soviet Salyut 1, is constructed and put into operative use.

**Stanley Kubrick**’s adaptation of *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess hits the theatres and engenders a furious debate, especially in **Great Britain**. The movie basically introduces the theme of urban anarchy in dystopian fiction.

**Robert Wise**’s *The Andromeda Strain*, based on a novel by Michael Crichton, popularises the modern pandemic horror theme.

The première of Douglas Trumbull’s sadly underestimated *Silent Running*, the first environment-conscious science fiction movie.

**David Rorvik** popularises the modern cyborg concept in *As Man Becomes Machine*.

1972 **John Brunner** advances the dystopian theme of environmental collapse in *The Sheep Look Up*.

1973 In *Japan Sinks, Sakyo Komatsu* advances the apocalyptic theme in science fiction, especially the social and psychological aspects.

1974 **John Carpenter**’s obscure low-budget comedy *Dark Star* is probably the first non-romantic and non-heroic movie about space exploration. Screen-writer Dan O’Bannon will later advance the concept dramatically in *Alien*.

1975 Altair 8800 is the first personal computer to be produced in fairly high quantity. Thus, the personal computer industry is launched, a technological development that will inspire the cyberpunk movement.

1976 A new potential plague is recognised: the Ebola hemorrhagic fever. The first outbreak occurs in Sudan, shortly followed by an outbreak in Zaire. Within the next decades, more outbreaks will occur, some of them with a mortality rate of 70-90%; as a comparison, the mortality rate of the Black Death was 30-75%.

1977 The publication of Joe Haldeman’s brutal anti-war novel *The Forever War*, debatably the first serious depiction of possible space war horrors; also, it can be seen as a critical comment on *Starship Troopers*. Together with *Alien*, it basically deromanticises space adventures.

1979 In Three-Mile Island, **USA**, the first serious incident at a nuclear power plant occurs.

In **Iran**, a fundamentalist revolution entails the first proclamation of an elaborate theocracy (rule by God or religious precepts) since the proclamation of the Vatican state in 1929.

**Ridley Scott**’s famous horror movie *Alien* hits the box office, and changes the look and feel of space adventures dramatically.

1981 A new disease is recognised in **USA**, although yet not named: AIDS. Exactly when this lethal virus began to circulate is uncertain; it probably occurred for the first time in the late 1960s or early 1970s.

**George Miller**’s *Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior* advances the break-down of civilisation in the first movie into Social-Darwinist anarchy, and sets a new standard for post-apocalyptic depictions.

1982 **Ridley Scott**’s *Blade Runner* sets a whole new standard for science fiction, especially visually, and influences the coming cyberpunk movement (*The Matrix*) immensely. It will engender debates on e.g. hyper-
technology and urbanisation for decades to come. It is the first major dystopian film to draw on film noir conventions.

1984 William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* is published and marks the birth of the influential cyberpunk movement. It also inspires science, engenders debate, revitalises dystopian fiction, popularises the *cyberspace* concept, and consolidates the themes of corporate dominion and hyper-technology in modern science fiction.

James Cameron’s *The Terminator* hits the box office and reanimates the ‘old dystopia’ machine model, later to be continued in the *Matrix* movies.

Première of Michael Radford’s ambitious adaptation of *Nineteen Eighty-four*, starring John Hurt and Richard Burton.

1985 Terry Gilliam’s *Brazil* reboots Kafkaesque themes in dystopian fiction and basically defines the visual standards for *tech noir*, compare with *The City Of Lost Children* and *Dark City*.

1986 In *Chernobyl*, USSR, the first nuclear power plant catastrophe occurs.

1987 The publication of Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*; not the first feminist dystopia, but the first one which gains recognition. It popularises feminist theory in science fiction and advances the concept of modern theocracies in dystopian fiction.

Paul Verhoeven’s *RoboCop* modernises the anti-capitalistic satire with cyberpunk concepts.

1988 Katsuhiro Omoto’s *Akira* popularises *anime* and *manga* outside Japan, cultural expressions which will continue to influence dystopian fiction, albeit mainly on aesthetic levels.

1989 The fall of the *Berlin Wall* is a fact, and it will soon be followed by the fall of the *USSR*. It entails a political vacuum and an uncertain future.

1993 Graphical user interfaces make *internet* practically accessible to the public. Possibly, future history books will claim that it entailed social, psychological and perceptual changes.

1997 The première of the first major genetic-engineering dystopia, Andrew Niccol’s *Gattaca*. This was the first major genetic-engineering dystopian film. It also makes use of film noir conventions but fails to find a major box-office audience. It is also the first dystopian film in years not to be an adaptation of a sci-fi novel.

1999 *The Matrix* by the Wachowski brothers revitalises the fading post-cyberpunk current trend in dystopian fiction.

2001 George W. Bush is elected 43rd president of the USA. The largest terrorist attack ever occurs in New York resulting in 3,000 dead in America. The terrorists achieve their goals: wide-spread paranoia, non-democratic tendencies and illegal war campaigns. Bioterrorism attacks: letters containing anthrax spores (a lethal disease) are mailed in the USA. No cases of the disease occur but panic and paranoia ensue. In technological developments, Apple launches *iPod* and a new search engine company joins the market – their name is *Wikipedia*.

2002 Steven Spielberg’s *Minority Report*. While relatively light in dystopian themes, the drawcards of Spielberg and star Tom Cruise make this the most commercially successful dystopian film. The blending of dystopia, action, and film noir conventions are a major influence on future films such as *I, Robot* (2006). SARS virus outbreak worldwide. Mortality rate 9.6% to 2003. Further terrorist attacks occur in Bali (twice), Madrid, London, and Instanbul, among others. These incidents are widely publicised and publically (though possibly incorrectly) linked to Islamic militant groups. Other dystopian films released include *Equilibrium* and *28 Days Later*.

2005 Bird Flu (H5N1) recognised as a ‘likely’ future pandemic. YouTube is launched. USB flash drives replace floppy disks. Suicide bombers in London kill 43 people and injure some 700 others. Hurricane Katrina floods New
Orleans. Angela Merkel becomes the first female Chancellor of Germany. Dystopian films, *V for Vendetta*, *The Island* and *Serenity* released.

2006  
Twitter is launched, a social networking platform to compete with Facebook (2004). Pluto is demoted to “dwarf planet” status—a major astrological shift in thinking. North Korea conducts its first nuclear test. Saddam Hussein is executed. Phillip K. Dick’s award winning 1977 novel *A Scanner Darkly* is released in film. Set in dystopian Orange County, CA, the film explores recreational and abusive drug culture, set in a futuristic 1994. *Children of Men* based loosely on a 1992 novel of the same name is released—exploring a dystopian society facing the effects of two decades of infertility world-wide.

2007  
Global economic downturn trends. Brown succeeds Blair as Prime Minister of Great Britain | Apple debuts the iPhone. Environmental concerns arise as the Arctic sea ice hits a record low. Google Street View is launched raising questions over privacy laws and rights.

2008  
Oil prices hit a record high of $147/barrel. The internet continues to boom. Scientists extract images directly from the brain. Artificial DNA experimentation and breakthrough. Advancement is wireless energy. Major advances and development in Computer Generated Images (CGI). Video adverts on London’s tube. Beijing hosts the Olympic Game

2009  
Barack Obama is sworn in as 44th president of the USA. Major breakthrough in cancer research. Scientists engineer new plastics without the use of fossil fuels. Mind control headsets available for gamers. 3D scanning enters the consumer market. Africa’s population reaches one billion coinciding with the release of *District 9* which deals with Alien refugees in future dystopian Johannesburg, SA. *The Road* is also released portraying a post-apocalyptic America

2010  

2011  
British forces withdraw from Afghanistan. At home Christchurch suffers a major earthquake results in death and destruction. After the earlier September 2010 quake which left the city most unscathed, this quake results is major infrastructure breakdowns over a pro-longed period of time. Shortly after, Japan is devastated by a 9.0 magnitude earthquake and tsunami. The death of Osama bin Laden. Worsening economic crisis in Greece. The Space Shuttle fleet is retired. Global population reaches 7bn.

2012  
Economic concern continues worldwide. The Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II. London hosts the Olympic Games. Mars Science Lab explores the Red Planet. Microsoft’s Windows 8 is released. Quad-core smartphones and tablets. The Mayan calendar reaches the end of its current cycle. Dystopian film *The Hunger Games* is released based on the 2008 novel by the same name. This attracting youth interest in the dystopian genre.
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**Dystopian Genre Conventions in Film**
(Be specific – say where they occur e.g. Used Future – we see beggars asking the antihero for currency)

**What elements in the film created sense of future and dysfunctional society?**
Explain why. (Consider events of the time)

**What elements in the film failed to communicate a sense of future or a dysfunctional society?** Explain.
**Generic Dystopian Log Sheet...**

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Explain why. (Consider events of the time)

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**What elements in the film failed to communicate a sense of future or a dysfunctional society?** Explain.
This is a style of film emerged in Germany between 1919-24. While it didn’t last very long, it did produce a number of key films AND influence films made after this time.

Expressionism means “squeezing out”. It is usually associated with a movement or style of art in which strong human emotions are conveyed on canvas. Often the themes are of revolt, madness and sexuality. A famous painting associated with this movement is Edward Munch’s The Scream.

**German Expressionism in Film:**
The influence of expressionism can be seen in both the narrative and mise-en-scene of films.

The subject matter of these films tends to be surreal and quite gothic. The films are highly stylised. The themes in these films were often linked to the economic and social conditions of the society in which they were made.

**A wee tangent to Germany in the late 1920’s:**
The effects of World War One were being felt heavily and many critics have attributed the rise of expressionism in German film to this.

At the end of WW1 the Treaty of Versaille was formulated. This meant that Germany signed a war guilt clause – ie they had to take responsibility for the damage that happened. They were forced to pay reparations or payments to those countries who had sustained damage in the war. Germany also lost valuable territories as part of the Treaty.

Add to this that of course ‘the depression’ occurred towards the end of this era and then there was the Spanish Flu epidemic and then of course there were all the people who had been killed or injured during the war itself....

**So what does that mean??????**
- Germany was left in a pretty bad state financially and this affected the mood of the German population.
- They were poor, often lacked nutritious food and were generally left feeling demoralized and depressed.
- This mood was then reflected in literature, art and...FILM!!!!!! Hence we have German Expressionist films!!!!!!! (See we got to the point eventually).

**Common Themes in German Expressionist films:**
- Insecurity
- The conflict between progress/technology and the affect (dehumanising) on humanity. This is particularly important for dystopian films which borrow from German Expressionist features.

**Common conventions of these films included:**
- Oblique camera angles
- Distorted bodies and shapes
- Bizarre and incongruous settings – quite gothic
- Lighting – use of heavy contrast between light and dark. This is known as chiaroscuro or high contrast lighting.
The first film we will briefly look at as part of this genre study is a German film called, *Metropolis*. Released in 1927 and set almost a whole one hundred years into its future (2026), this film provides the initial spring board for the dystopian and science fiction genre.

**Plot Summary:**
Set in the year 2026, *Metropolis* takes place in a dystopian society where wealthy industrialists rule from vast tower complexes, oppressing the workers who live in the depths below them. The film follows Freder (Gustav Fröhlich), the son of the master of the city, Joh Fredersen (Alfred Abel). While idling away his leisure time in a pleasure garden, Freder encounters a young woman named Maria (Brigitte Helm) who has brought a group of worker’s children to see the privileged lifestyle led by the rich. Maria and the children are quickly ushered away, but Freder is fascinated by Maria and descends to the worker’s city in an attempt to find her.

Freder finds the worker’s city and watches in horror as a huge machine explodes, injuring many. Appalled by what he has witnessed, Freder runs to tell his father. Joh is angered that he learned of the explosion from Freder rather than his assistant Josaphat (Theodor Loos), and fires Josaphat as a result. When Freder berates his father for this, Joh is unsympathetic to Josaphat or the Workers. Josaphat attempts to commit suicide over his dismissal, but is stopped by Freder. Freder tells Josaphat to return to his apartment and wait for him there, leaving to return to the workers’ city. Concerned by his son’s behaviour, Joh sends The Thin Man (Fritz Rasp) to keep track of his movements.

In the worker’s city, Freder sees a worker named Georgy (Erwin Biswanger) close to collapsing at his post. Freder relieves him, swapping clothes with Georgy and telling him to go to Josaphat’s apartment and wait for him there. Georgy is driven away by Freder’s chauffeur, but on his way to Josaphat’s apartment he is distracted by the bright lights of the licentious nightclub Yoshiwara. Back in the worker’s city, Freder finds a plan folded tightly in his pocket and is told of an approaching meeting by a passerby.

Meanwhile, Joh has learned of mysterious plans being shared amongst the workers. He takes the plans to Rotwang (Rudolf Klein-Rogge), a scientist and old collaborator who informs him the plans show the underground tunnels that lie beneath the worker’s city. Rotwang was in love with Joh’s deceased wife Hel, and – to Joh’s horror — reveals that he has been building a robot in order to ‘resurrect’ her. Rotwang discovers the plans are a map of the ancient catacombs beneath the city, and he and Joh leave to investigate. Freder, after suffering hallucinations brought on by exhaustion, follows the workers down into the catacombs, where Maria is waiting to speak to them.
In the catacombs, Maria prophesies the arrival of a mediator between the workers and the rulers. Freder watches her transfixed, and once she has finished speaking approaches her and declares his love. They arrange to meet later in a cathedral, and part. Joh and Rotwang watch the entire scene unfold, and plot to kidnap Maria, give the robot her appearance and use it to discredit her. Joh is pleased with the plan, unaware that Rotwang intends to use the false Maria to destroy his son. Rotwang follows Maria through the catacombs, and kidnaps her.

After leaving Yoshiwara the next morning, Georgy finds The Thin Man waiting for him in his car. The Thin Man orders Georgy to return to his post and forget everything that occurred, taking Josaphat’s address from him. Meanwhile Freder goes to Josaphat’s apartment, and asks for Georgy. Josaphat tells Freder that Georgy has not arrived. Freder tells Josaphat of his experiences in the worker’s city, before departing to meet Maria. The Thin Man arrives at Josaphat’s apartment just after Freder’s departure, and attempts to intimidate him into leaving Metropolis. The two fight, and Josaphat manages to escape and hide in the worker’s city.

When Maria does not arrive at the cathedral, Freder goes in search of her. He hears her cries as he approaches Rotwang’s house, and makes futile attempts to reach her. In his laboratory Rotwang successfully transforms the robot into Maria’s double, and sends it to greet Joh. Freder returns to his father, and sees him and the false Maria embracing. He faints, and experiences a series of nightmarish visions. The false Maria begins to unleash chaos throughout Metropolis, driving men to murder out of lust for her in Yoshiwara and stirring dissent amongst the workers. Meanwhile, the real Maria manages to flee from Rotwang’s house as Rotwang and Fredersen duel after Fredersen becomes aware of Rotwang’s treachery.

When Freder recovers ten days later, he finds out from Josaphat that the Robot, whom they believe is Maria, is raising havoc. The pair venture down to Maria’s altar, where the robot is urging the workers to rise up and revolt. Freder calls the robot out, knowing that Maria would never preach war, but is recognized as Joh Frederson’s son and is attacked by the mob. In the chaos, Georgy is stabbed trying to protect Freder. Joh has ordered that the workers are allowed to rampage, in order to justify the use of heavy force against them at a later stage. The robot leads the workers from the city, who unknowingly leave their children behind, and they surge into the machine halls, abandoning their posts and destroying the Heart Machine, the central power Station of the city, which causes all the city’s systems to fail. With no power for the pumps, the subterranean workers’ city begins to flood. Maria finds the children trying to escape the flood and attempts to save as many as she can from the water, sounding the city’s alarm to gather them in one spot. She is soon joined by Freder and Josaphat, who help her rescue the children and escape to the upper levels of the city via an escape ladder. They manage to evacuate the children just as the workers’ city begins to collapse.

As the workers revel in the Machine halls, Grot, foreman of the Heart Machine, manages to suppress the out-of-control crowd, and berates them for their behavior and actions. Realizing their children have been left behind in the flooded workers’ city, the workers are driven mad by grief. Considering Maria the cause of their misery, they launch a witch hunt, capture the false Maria, who had been reveling with the city’s rich, and tie her to a stake. Having been separated from the real Maria, Freder watches as the false Maria is set afire and gradually transforms back into her robot form.
A delusional Rotwang finds the real Maria hiding from the mob in the cathedral, and, mistaking her for Hel, gives chase. Rotwang and Maria end up on the roof of the cathedral, and are seen by Freder from the ground. Freder climbs up to the roof of the cathedral and confronts Rotwang; the two fight, and Rotwang eventually loses his balance and falls to his death. The film ends with Freder declaring a truce between the workers and the thinkers, and linking the hands of his father and Grot (Heinrich George), becoming the Mediator between head and hands.

**Influences on Production:**
*Metropolis* features a range of elaborate special effects and set designs, ranging from a huge gothic cathedral to a futuristic cityscape.

In an interview, Fritz Lang reported that "the film was born from my first sight of the skyscrapers in New York in October 1924". Describing his first impressions of the city, Lang said that "the buildings seemed to be a vertical sail, scintillating and very light, a luxurious backdrop, suspended in the dark sky to dazzle, distract and hypnotize".\(^5\)

The appearance of the city in *Metropolis* is strongly informed by the Art Deco movement; however it also incorporates elements from other traditions. Ingeborg Hoesterey described the architecture featured in *Metropolis* as eclectic, writing how its locales represent both "functionalist modernism [and] art deco" whilst also featuring "the scientist’s archaic little house with its high-powered laboratory, the catacombs [and] the Gothic cathedral".\(^6\) The film’s use of art deco architecture was highly influential, and has been reported to have contributed to the style’s subsequent popularity in Europe and America.\(^7\)

The film drew heavily on Biblical sources for several of its key set-pieces. During her first talk to the workers, Maria uses the story of the Tower of Babel to highlight the discord between the intellectuals and the workers. Additionally, a delusional Freder imagines the false-Maria as the Whore of Babylon, riding on the back of a many-headed dragon.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolis_(film)#Plot](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metropolis_(film)#Plot)

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While Metropolis looks more closely at technological advancements and concerns around the potential and uses of robotic technology and development, the second film in this unit, Fahrenheit 451, explores more central themes that occur in many dystopias — governmental control.

**Plot Summary:**
Based on the 1951 Ray Bradbury novel of the same name, Guy Montag is a firefighter who lives in a lonely, isolated society where books have been outlawed by a government fearing an independent-thinking public. It is the duty of firefighters to burn any books on sight or said collections that have been reported by informants. People in this society including Montag’s wife are drugged into compliance and get their information from wall-length television screens (a perceived view of the future). After Montag falls in love with book-hoarding Clarisse, he begins to read confiscated books. It is through this relationship that he begins to question the government’s motives behind book-burning. Montag is soon found out, and he must decide whether to return to his job or run away knowing full well the consequences that he could face if captured.

**Production:**
Truffaut kept a detailed diary during the production, and this was later published in both French and English (in *Cahiers du Cinema in English*). In this diary, he called *Fahrenheit 451* his “saddest and most difficult” filmmaking experience, mainly because of intense conflicts between Truffaut and Werner.

The film was Universal Pictures’ first European production. Julie Christie was originally just cast as Linda Montag, not both Linda and Clarisse. After much thought, Truffaut decided that the characters should not have a villain/hero relationship, but rather be two sides of the same coin, and cast Christie in both roles, although the idea came from the producer, Lewis M. Allen.

In an interview from 1998, Charles Aznavour said he was Truffaut’s first choice to play the role eventually given to Werner; Aznavour said Jean-Paul Belmondo was the director’s second choice, but the film’s producers refused on the grounds that both of them were not familiar enough for the English-speaking audience. Paul Newman, Peter O’Toole and Montgomery Clift were also considered for the role of Montag; Terence Stamp was cast, but dropped out when he feared being overshadowed by Christie’s dual roles in the film.
The film was shot at Pinewood Studios in England, with the monorail exterior scene taken at the French SAFEGE test track, in Châteauneuf-sur-Loire near Orléans, France (since dismantled). The film featured the Alton housing estate in Roehampton, South London and also Edgcumbe Park in Crowthorne, Berkshire. The final scene of the Book People was filmed in a rare and unexpected snowstorm that occurred on Julie Christie’s birthday, April 14 1966.

The production work was done in French, as Truffaut spoke virtually no English, but co-wrote the screenplay with Jean-Louis Ricard. Truffaut expressed disappointment with the often stilted and unnatural English-language dialogue. He was much happier with the version that was dubbed into French.

The movie’s opening credits are spoken rather than displayed in type, which might be the director’s hint of what life would be like in an illiterate culture. Tony Walton did costumes and production design, while Syd Cain did art direction.

**Sources:** [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0060390/plotsummary](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0060390/plotsummary)  

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**Processing: Five things I learnt from this article are...**

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Plot Summary:
In Los Angeles, November 2019, retired police officer Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford) is detained by officer Gaff (Edward James Olmos) and brought to meet with his former supervisor, Bryant (M. Emmet Walsh). Deckard, whose job as a "Blade Runner" was to track down bioengineered beings known as replicants and "retire" (colloquial term for the termination of replicants) them, is told by Bryant that several have escaped and come to Earth illegally. As Tyrell Corporation Nexus-6 models, they have only a four-year lifespan, and may have come to Earth to try to extend their lives.

Deckard watches a video of another Blade Runner named Holden (Morgan Paull) administering a "Voight-Kampff" test designed to distinguish replicants from humans based on their empathic response to questions. The subject of the test, Leon (Brion James), shoots Holden. Bryant wants Deckard to return to work to retire Leon and three other replicants — Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer), Zhora (Joanna Cassidy) and Pris (Daryl Hannah). Deckard refuses, but after Bryant makes an overt threat, he reluctantly agrees.

Sent to the Tyrell Corporation to ensure that the test works on Nexus-6 models, Deckard discovers that Tyrell’s (Joe Turkel) assistant Rachael (Sean Young) is an experimental replicant who believes herself to be human; Rachael’s consciousness has been enhanced with false memories to provide an "emotional cushion". As a result, a more extensive test is required to determine if she is a replicant.

Trying to find a way to meet with Tyrell, Roy and Leon go to the eye-manufacturing laboratory of Chew (James Hong), forcing him to divulge the identity of J.F. Sebastian (William Sanderson), a gifted designer who works closely with Tyrell. Rachael visits Deckard at his apartment to prove her humanity by showing him a family photo. Dropping the photo to the floor, Rachael leaves in tears after Deckard tells her that her memories are only implants taken from a real person. Sent by Roy, Pris meets and gains the confidence of Sebastian at his apartment, where he lives with manufactured companions.

While searching Leon's apartment, Deckard finds a photo of Zhora, and a synthetic snake scale that leads him to a strip club where Zhora works. Deckard retires Zhora, and shortly after is told by Bryant to add Rachael, who has disappeared from the Tyrell Corporation headquarters, to his list of retirements. Deckard spots Rachael in a crowd but is disarmed and attacked by Leon, who saw him kill Zhora. Rachael kills Leon using Deckard's gun, and the two return to Deckard's apartment, where he promises not to hunt her. Later they share an intimate moment; Rachael then tries to leave, but Deckard seduces her.
Arriving at Sebastian's apartment, Roy tells Pris the others are dead. Sympathetic to their plight, Sebastian reveals that because of a genetic disorder that accelerates his aging, his life will also be cut short. Under a pretext, Sebastian and Roy gain entrance into Tyrell's secure penthouse, where Roy demands more life from his maker. Told that this has proved to be impossible, Roy confesses that he has done "questionable things". Tyrell dismisses Roy's guilt, praising Roy's advanced design and his accomplishments. Responding "Nothing the god of biomechanics wouldn't let you into heaven for", Roy kisses Tyrell, then kills him. Sebastian runs for the elevator followed by Roy, who rides the elevator down alone. Roy has killed Sebastian, although the murder is not shown.

Upon entering Sebastian's apartment, Deckard is ambushed by Pris, but manages to kill her just as Roy returns. Roy fights Deckard without using his full strength against him. Eventually Deckard is hanging from a rooftop. Just as he is about to fall, Roy saves him. His life ending, Roy delivers a monologue on how his memories are about to be lost and dies in front of Deckard, who watches silently. Gaff arrives and, referring to Rachael, shouts to Deckard "It's too bad she won't live, but then again, who does?" Deckard returns to his apartment to find Rachael alive and sleeping in his bed; as they leave, Deckard finds a small tin-foil unicorn, a calling card left by his origami-making partner Gaff. Depending on the version, Deckard and Rachael either leave the apartment block to an uncertain future, or drive through an idyllic pastoral landscape.

**Themes in Blade Runner:**
Despite the initial appearance of an action film, *Blade Runner* operates on an unusually rich number of dramatic levels. As with much of the cyberpunk genre, it owes a large debt to film noir, containing and exploring such conventions as the femme fatale, a Chandleresque first-person narration in the Theatrical Version, and the questionable moral outlook of the hero — extended here to include even the literal humanity of the hero, as well as the usual dark and shadowy cinematography.

It is one of the most literate science fiction films, both thematically — enfolding the moral philosophy and philosophy of mind implications of the increasing human mastery of genetic engineering, within the context of classical Greek drama and its notions of hubris — and linguistically, drawing on the poetry of William Blake and the Bible. This is a theme subtly reiterated by the chess game between J.F. Sebastian and Tyrell based on the famous Immortal Game of 1851 symbolizing the struggle against mortality imposed by God. The *Blade Runner* FAQ offers further interpretation of the chess game, saying that it "represents the struggle of the replicants against the humans: the humans consider the replicants pawns, to be removed one by one. The individual replicants (pawns) are attempting to become immortal (a queen). At another level, the game between Tyrell and Sebastian represents Batty stalking Tyrell. Tyrell makes a fatal mistake in the chess game, and another fatal mistake trying to reason with Batty."

*Blade Runner* depicts a future whose fictional distance from present reality has grown sharply smaller as 2019 approaches. The film delves into the future implications of technology on the environment and society by reaching into the past using literature, religious symbolism, classical dramatic themes and film noir. This tension between past, present and future is apparent in the retrofitted future of *Blade Runner*, which is high-tech and gleaming in places but elsewhere decayed and old.
A high level of paranoia is present throughout the film with the visual manifestation of corporate power, omnipresent police, probing lights; and in the power over the individual represented particularly by genetic programming of the replicants. Control over the environment is seen on a large scale but also with how animals are created as mere commodities. This oppressive backdrop clarifies why many people are going to the off-world colonies, which clearly parallels the migration to the Americas. The popular 1980s prediction of the United States being economically surpassed by Japan is reflected in the domination of Japanese culture and corporations in the advertising of LA 2019. The film also makes extensive use of eyes and manipulated images to call into question reality and our ability to perceive it.

This provides an atmosphere of uncertainty for Blade Runner's central theme of examining humanity. In order to discover replicants an empathy test is used with a number of questions focused on empathy; making it the essential indicator of someone’s "humanity". The replicants are juxtaposed with human characters who are unempathetic, and while the replicants show passion and concern for one another, the mass of humanity on the streets is cold and impersonal. The film goes so far as to put in doubt the nature of Deckard and forces the audience to reevaluate what it means to be human.

**Source:** [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Themes_in_Blade_Runner](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Themes_in_Blade_Runner) (see link also for detailed theme breakdowns)

**Its Influence on film and culture:**
While not initially a success with North American audiences, the film was popular internationally and became a cult film. The film's dark style and futuristic designs have served as a benchmark and its influence can be seen in many subsequent science fiction films, anime, video games, and television programs. For example, Ronald D. Moore and David Eick, the producers of the re-imagining of Battlestar Galactica, have both cited Blade Runner as one of the major influences for the show. Blade Runner continues to reflect modern trends and concerns, and an increasing number consider it one of the greatest science fiction films of all time.

The film was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry in 1993 and is frequently used in university courses. In 2007 it was named the 2nd most visually influential film of all time by the Visual Effects Society.

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Cinematic Style: Dystopias and Film Noir

One of the major stylistic influences on dystopian sci-fi film is the film style known as *film noir*. *Film noir* is a genre in its own right (these are films with common narrative elements) but is sometimes viewed as a film or cinematic style with a distinct ‘look’.

**Genre**
- Crossover with other genre/media
- New use of film technology
- Development of film style
- Influence on pop culture/fashion

**Society**
- Fears, anxieties, preoccupations
- Existing film style & technology
- Social/political developments

**RESEARCH TASKS: Understanding the ‘basics’ of Film Noir:**
Use the internet to research *film noir*.

1. What does *film noir* mean?

2. What are the elements of *film noir* as a style (film techniques)?

3. Identify the lighting technique most associated with *film noir*.

4. What are the narrative elements of *film noir* as a genre (story elements)?
5. What era or decades are considered the heyday of *film noir*? Give two examples of *noir* films from this era. Include title, director and year of release.

6. What is *neo-noir*? Give a recent example. Include title, director and year of release.

7. What film is considered to be the first dystopian with *noir* elements? Include title, director and year of release.

8. Why do you think *noir* elements are considered to suit dystopia? Justify your answer.
The fourth film we look closely at in this genre study is *Minority Report*. It is important to note that between the release of *Blade Runner* and *Minority Report* we have skipped two whole decades of world-events and film making. It is important you have an understanding of the genres development throughout this period. It is particularly important that you view the film *Gattaca* (1997) and *The Matrix* (1999) to “bridge the gap” between The last film studied and this one.

**In a Nut Shell:**

*Minority Report* is a 2002 American neo-noir science fiction film directed by Steven Spielberg and loosely based on the short story "The Minority Report" by Philip K. Dick. It is set primarily in Washington, D.C., and Northern Virginia in the year 2054, where “PreCrime”, a specialized police department, apprehends criminals based on foreknowledge provided by three psychics called "precogs". The cast includes Tom Cruise as PreCrime captain John Anderton, Colin Farrell as Department of Justice agent Danny Witwer, Samantha Morton as the senior precog Agatha, and Max von Sydow as Anderton's superior Lamar Burgess. The film is a combination of whodunit, thriller and dystopian/neo-noir science fiction.

Spielberg has characterized the story as “fifty percent character and fifty percent very complicated storytelling with layers and layers of murder mystery and plot”. The film's central theme is the question of free will versus determinism. It examines whether free will can exist if the future is set and known in advance. Other themes include the role of preventive government in protecting its citizenry, the role of media in a future state where electronic advancements make its presence nearly boundless, the potential legality of an infallible prosecutor, and Spielberg's repeated theme of broken families.

The film was first optioned in 1992 as a sequel to another Dick adaptation, *Total Recall*, and started its development in 1997, after a script by Jon Cohen reached Spielberg and Cruise. Production suffered many delays due to Cruise's *Mission: Impossible II* and Spielberg's *A.I.* running over schedule, eventually starting in March 2001. During pre-production, Spielberg consulted numerous scientists in an attempt to present a more plausible future world than that seen in other science fiction films, and some of the technology designs in the film have proven prescient. *Minority Report* has a unique visual style. It uses high contrast to create dark colors and shadows, much like a film noir picture. The film’s overlit shots feature desaturated colors which were achieved by bleach-bypassing the film’s negative in post-production.

*Minority Report* was one of the best reviewed films of 2002. It received praise for its writing, visuals and themes, but earned some criticism for its ending which was considered inconsistent with the tone of the rest of the movie. The film was nominated for and won several awards. It received an Academy Award nomination for Best Sound Editing, and eleven Saturn Award nominations, including Best Actor, Best Supporting Actor and Saturn Award for Best Music, winning Best Science Fiction Film, Best Direction, Best Writing and Best Supporting Actress. The film was a commercial success, earning over $358 million worldwide against an overall budget of $142 million (including advertising). Over four million DVDs were sold in its first few months of home release.
The Matrix has had a strong effect on action film-making in Hollywood. It upped the ante for cinematic fight scenes by hiring acclaimed choreographers (such as Yuen Woo-ping) from the Hong Kong action cinema scene, well-known for its production of martial arts films. The success of The Matrix put those choreographers in high demand by other filmmakers who wanted fights of similar sophistication: for example, Yuen Woo-ping’s brother Yuen Cheung-Yan was choreographer on Daredevil (2003). There was a surge in movies, commercials and pop videos copying "the Matrix look", usually without the training and attention to detail that made it successful in the first place.

Following The Matrix, films made abundant use of slow-motion, spinning cameras, and, often, the famed bullet time effect of a character freezing or slowing down and the camera panning around them. In several video games, most notably Max Payne and its sequel, bullet time and the ability to dodge bullets became core gameplay elements. The bullet time effect has also been parodied numerous times, in comedy films such as Scary Movie, Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigolo, Shrek and Kung Pow: Enter the Fist; in TV series such as The Simpsons and Family Guy; and in video games such as Conker's Bad Fur Day.

In 2003, GRACE, the Global Resource Action Center for the Environment, commissioned Free Range Studios to produce The Meatrix, a dark satire of The Matrix, to encourage the purchase and consumption of organic foods and sustainable, free-range meats. In the Adobe Flash short, Leo, a pig on a seemingly bucolic farm, is approached by Moopheus, an anthropomorphic bull, who reveals to him that the farm he has known is an illusion, and in reality he is trapped in a horrific "factory farm". The animated short has won numerous awards, been reported in major international media, has been viewed over 10,000,000 times and translated into 13 languages. In 2006, this was followed by a sequel, The Meatrix II: Revolting, themed around the factory farm treatment of dairy cows.

In 2005 a feature-length parody of the Matrix series called The Helix...Loaded starring Scott Levy as the Neo character and Vanilla Ice was released.

Style
Minority Report is a futuristic film which portrays both elements of a dystopian and utopian future. The film renders a much more detailed view of a near-term future world than that present in the original short story, with depictions of a number of technologies related to the film’s themes.

From a stylistic standpoint, Minority Report resembles A.I., (its immediate Spielberg-directed predecessor) more than the much earlier E.T. The picture was deliberately over lit, and the negative was bleach-bypassed during post-production. This gave the film a distinctive look, with colors severely desaturated, almost to the point where the film looked like a black-and-white film, yet the blacks and shadows had an extraordinary contrast, looking almost like a film noir picture. This distinctive look is the first major stylistic shift in science fiction films since Blade Runner and the "used future" look of Alien, and has subsequently influenced cinematography and production design in the same way that those earlier pictures influenced the look of the science fiction films of the 1980s and 1990s.

Minority Report is a science fiction film which, like Blade Runner mixes in elements of several genres, particularly film noir, mystery, thriller and action / adventure. Source: www.wikipedia.org
Comparing Dystopias - The Matrix & Minority Report

- Both are ‘recent’ examples of dystopian science fiction that were hugely popular as mainstream film (unusual for dystopias).
- Both won critical acclaim, including technical Oscars.
- Both have had major influences on other genres and more recent dystopias.
- Both use some film noir conventions and ignore others (notably plot structures).
- Each can also be read as an example of other genres: especially cyberpunk (The Matrix) and action/thriller (Minority Report).

Questions:

1. In what ways is each film a dystopia?

2. What similarities can you see to film noir?

3. In what ways do the dystopian ideas play on or introduce ‘deep fears’?

4. What was going on in the world when these films were released? (Consult your timeline and/or the internet).

5. In what ways has each influenced society (and other genres)?

6. In what ways was society (including developments in film technology) an influence on each film?
When considering the fifth film in the genre study, it is important also to trace the science and technology developments that have occurred in society since Minority Report in 2002.

In a nut shell:
The Island is a 2005 American science fiction/thriller film directed by Michael Bay, starring Ewan McGregor and Scarlett Johansson. It was released on July 22, 2005, in the United States, and was nominated for three awards, including the Teen Choice Award. It is described as a pastiche of "escape-from-dystopia" science fiction films of the 1960s and 1970s such as Fahrenheit 451, THX 1138, and Logan’s Run. The film’s plot revolves around the struggle of Ewan McGregor’s character to fit into the highly structured world he lives in and the series of events that unfold when he questions how truthful that world really is. The film cost $126 million to produce. It earned only $36 million at the United States box office, but earned $127 million overseas, for a $162 million worldwide total.

Plot Summary:
In the year 2019, Lincoln Six Echo and Jordan Two Delta live with others in an isolated compound. Their community is governed by a set of strict rules. The residents believe that the outer world has become too contaminated for human life with the exception of one island. Every week a lottery is conducted and the winner gets to leave the compound to live on the island.

Lincoln begins having dreams that include memories that he knows are not from his own experiences. Dr. Merrick, a scientist who runs the compound, is concerned and places probes in Lincoln’s body to monitor his cerebral activity and record what he sees. While secretly visiting an off-limits power facility in the basement where his friend, technician James McCord, works, Lincoln discovers a live moth in a ventilation shaft, leading him to deduce that the outside world is not really contaminated. Lincoln follows the moth to another section, where he discovers that the “lottery” is actually a guise to remove inhabitants from the compound, where the “winner” is then used for organ harvesting, surrogate motherhood, and other purposes for each one’s sponsor, who is identical to them in appearance.

Merrick learns that Lincoln has discovered the truth, which forces Lincoln to escape. Meanwhile, Jordan has been selected for the island. Lincoln and Jordan manage to escape the facility, where they emerge in an Arizona desert. He explains the truth to her, and they realize that all the residents are clones of wealthy and/or desperate sponsors, who are kept ignorant of the real world. Merrick hires French mercenary Albert Laurent to hunt them down, and explains that he needs the clones conscious in the compound, as otherwise their organs inevitably fail.
Lincoln and Jordan find McCord in a bar. McCord gives them the name of Lincoln's sponsor in Los Angeles, and helps them to the Yucca railway station, before being killed by the mercenaries. Jordan's sponsor, model Sarah Jordan, is in a coma because of a car accident. Lincoln's sponsor, Tom Lincoln, explains some of the situation, causing Lincoln to realize that he has gained some of Tom's memories. Tom agrees to help expose the truth about the organ harvesting, but secretly informs Merrick about the situation by telephone. Merrick sends the mercenaries to their location, but Lincoln tricks Laurent into killing Tom, allowing him to assume Tom's identity. Merrick, having realized a cloning defect was responsible for Lincoln's memories and behavior, decides to eliminate the four newest generations of clones. Lincoln and Jordan, however, plan to liberate their fellow clones. Posing as Tom, Lincoln returns to the compound in order to destroy the holographic projectors that conceal the outside world from the clones. With help from Laurent, who has moral qualms about the clones' treatment, Merrick is killed and the clones are freed. The film ends with the clones seeing the outside world for the first time.

Product placements
The boat featured at the end of the film is a 118 Wally Power, while the car that Tom Lincoln owns is a 2002 concept car, the Cadillac Cien. The Calvin Klein advertising that Jordan sees in the street, in which she recognizes her sponsor, Sarah Jordan, is the actual advertising for the Eternity Moment fragrance by Calvin Klein in which Johansson also appeared. All computers used by the clones on the island are Apple iMacs, the virtual gaming simulation used by Lincoln Six Echo during a scrimmage with Jordan Two Delta displays a large Xbox logo, the beer drank by Tom Lincoln is Michelob Ultra from Anheuser-Busch, Aquafina is distributed in the island bars to the clones at leisure, Voss is distributed as breakfast water to the clones on the island, all of the island clones use Puma shoes, the information booth in Los Angeles is a MSN search booth.

Critical reception
The Island received mixed reviews from critics. It has a 40% “Rotten” rating (based on 185 reviews) at “Rotten Tomatoes”. Critical consensus was that the film was well acted and had impressive special effects but didn't deal with the ethical issues it raised as well as it could have. Many reviewers noted that the The Island seemed like two separate films.

Roger Ebert said, ”[the first half] is a spare, creepy science fiction parable, and then it shifts into a high-tech action picture. Both halves work. Whether they work together is a good question.” He gave the film three out of four stars and praised the performances of the actors, in particular Michael Clarke Duncan: ”[He] has only three or four scenes, but they’re of central importance, and he brings true horror to them.” On the critical side, he says the film “never satisfactorily comes full circle” and missed the opportunity “to do what the best science fiction does, and use the future as a way to critique the present.”

Variety’s Justin Change called the film an “exercise in sensory overkill” and said that Bay took on “the weighty moral conundrums of human cloning, resolving them in a storm of bullets, car chases and more explosions than you can shake a syringe at.” He noted McGregor and Buscemi as highlights of the film, along with Nigel Phelps' production design. However, he felt the story lacked in surprises and blamed “attention-deficit editing by Paul Rubell and Christian Wagner” for actions sequences that he felt lacked tension and were “joltingly repetitive”. Salon's Stephanie Zacharek also praised the actors but felt that when the film ”[gets] really interesting, Bay thinks he needs to throw in a car crash or a round of gunfire to keep our attention.” She felt the film had enough surprises “to make you wish it were better.” Similarly, The New York Times reviewer, A.O. Scott, said ”[the] film is smarter than you might expect, and at the same time dumber than it could be.”

Reviewers were critical of the excessive product placement in the film.
In 2027, in a chaotic world in which humans can no longer procreate, a former activist agrees to help transport a miraculously pregnant woman to a sanctuary at sea, where her child's birth may help scientists save the future of humankind. This is *Children of Men*.

The film opens on November 16th, 2027. A brief newscast reports done by newsreaders (Mishal Husain & Rob Curling) on the state of the world: women have become infertile and no children have been born for 18 years. Most of the world’s societies have collapsed and in Britain, all foreigners have been declared illegal immigrants and are rounded up by British military forces to be deported. Additionally, the youngest person in the world, the Argentine Baby Diego (Juan Gabriel Yacuzzi), has been murdered by someone who he refused to give an autograph.

The film’s protagonist, Theo Faron (Clive Owen), has narrowly escaped being killed when the London coffee shop he frequents is bombed, an act attributed to an underground guerrilla group, the Fishes. Theo is shaken by the incident and leaves work early to visit his friend, Jasper (Michael Caine), who lives outside London. Jasper, a former political activist, now lives in seclusion in a well-hidden house with his catatonic wife, Janice (Philippa Urquhart), growing variants of cannabis.

The next day Theo is captured by The Fishes and is reunited with his former wife, Julian, who leads the group. She and Theo have not seen each other for nearly 20 years after their son, Dylan, died in a flu epidemic. She first tells him that the Fishes were not responsible for the bombing of the cafe the previous day. She also asks for his help in securing transit papers; Theo’s cousin, Nigel (Danny Huston), has influence within the government. Theo is able to get the papers but they specifically state that Theo himself must accompany the refugee they are meant for. Theo agrees and he joins Julian (Julianne Moore), her associate Luke (Chiwetel Ejiofor), the refugee Kee (Clare-Hope Ashitey) and her midwife, Miriam (Pam Ferris) as they drive to the southern coast of England. Along the way, they are attacked in a forested area by a large mob and Julian is killed. As they flee the scene of the attack, they are pulled over by the police. When asked for their papers, Luke kills both policemen. A small funeral is held in the forest for Julian and Luke drives them to a safe house on a farm after finding another car.

At the farm, Kee reveals to Theo that she is about eight months pregnant. She also tells Theo that Julian had told Kee that she could only trust Theo. The Fishes hold a meeting to decide what to do with Kee. They conclude, despite Theo’s objections, that Kee should stay with them until the child is born. Theo thinks the pregnancy should be made public, the Fishes think that the British government would seize both Kee and the baby for their own political ends. Kee agrees to stay in the custody of the Fishes.

Later that night, Theo awakens to a commotion outside. Two of the men who attacked the travellers that day have come to the safe house, one of them badly wounded. Theo discovers that the attack on the car and Julian’s murder were both arranged by Luke and the Fishes, who wish to use the baby for their own ends. Theo quietly awakes Kee and Miriam and convinces them to leave with him. They steal a car and narrowly escape the farm. Theo takes them to Jasper’s house. While there, Jasper promises to arrange for Kee to meet a ship called the *Tomorrow*, a vessel belonging to a group called the Human Project, a collection of scientists based in the Azores off Portugal, and dedicated to restoring human fertility. Jasper arranges for his friend, Sid, to help Kee, Miriam and Theo enter the immigrant camp at Bexhill. From there, they will make arrangements for Kee to slip into the waters near Bexhill to meet the *Tomorrow*. 
The Fishes find Jasper’s hidden home, setting off the alarms. Jasper gives Theo his car and gives them an escape route - he tells them to meet a friend of his, Syd (Peter Mullan), a guard from Bexhill. From a nearby bluff, Theo watches as Jasper refuses to give the Fishes any information and is cruelly murdered by Luke. Before the Fishes arrival, Jasper had euthanized his wife.

Theo drives himself and his charges to a nearby school to hide out and wait for Syd. While there, Miriam talks of her past work as a maternity nurse and the onset of female sterilization 18 years prior. Syd arrives, acting very intimidating at first, and takes the fugitives in his truck to Bexhill. As they approach the detention center, Kee goes into labour. When they arrive, Miriam, while trying to protect Kee from the guards, fakes religious mania and is taken off the bus, hooded and detained, however, her fate is not revealed. Theo and Kee manage to enter Bexhill with her pregnancy undetected and meet a woman named Marichka who takes them to a dingy room. Right after they reach the room, Kee gives birth to a girl.

The next morning they are met by Marichka and Sid, who tells them about an uprising that has taken over Bexhill. The Fishes have broken into the city and the national guard have been called out to restore control. Both Syd and Marichka (Oana Pellea) are also astonished to see the baby. Syd, having seen Theo on television the night before, plans to turn Theo in for a large reward, Theo being a prime suspect from the attack on the road. With Marichka’s help, they escape Syd and find a temporary haven with Marichka’s people. Marichka is also supposed to take them to a boat that will get them to the Tomorrow in Bexhill’s harbour.

Theo, Marichka and Kee enter the city and are quickly found by Luke and his cohorts. They take Kee and her baby and leave Theo and Marichka to be executed by Patric (Charlie Hunman), one of Luke's lieutenants. They are able to escape when a skirmish erupts nearby. Theo goes looking for Kee, finding her in a decrepit apartment building which is under fire from the military. Theo finds Kee with Luke, who has joined the battle with the British forces outside. As Theo attempts to take Kee and the baby out, Luke opens fire in Theo’s direction -- Luke is killed a few moments later. As Theo and Kee walk out of the building, everyone who sees the baby stands in awe and the fighting stops, many of them break into prayer. The two walk outside the building and begin to walk away. The fighting resumes. They find their way back to Marichka and the rowboat she’s found for them and float out into Bexhill's harbor. Marichka refuses to leave with them and pushes the boat out.

The two make it out to a nearby buoy which marks the rendezvous point. As they wait, two jets fly overhead and begin a bombardment of Bexhill. Kee sees blood in the bottom of the boat and panics, thinking it’s hers. Theo tells her he was hit in the abdomen when Luke shot at him. Theo has just enough time to teach Kee how to burp the baby and she tells him that she’ll name her after Theo’s son, Dylan, because Dylan is also a girl’s name. Theo loses consciousness just as the Tomorrow arrives. Just before the closing credits roll the sound of children laughing is heard.

Source: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0206634/synopsis

Style and design
“In most sci-fi epics, special effects substitute for story. Here they seamlessly advance it,” observes Colin Covert of Star Tribune. Billboards were designed to balance a contemporary and futuristic appearance as well as easily visualizing what else was occurring in the rest of the world at the time, and cars were made to resemble modern ones at first glance, although a closer look made them seem unfamiliar. Cuarón informed the art department
that the film was the “anti-Blade Runner”, rejecting technologically advanced proposals and downplaying the science fiction elements of the 2027 setting. The director focused on images reflecting the contemporary period, choosing to have innovative technology in the film’s timeline discontinued by 2014. With the future in mind, Cuarón maintained a steady gaze on the present: “We didn’t want to be distracted by the future. We didn’t want to transport the audience into another reality.”

**Single-shot sequences**

*Children of Men* used several lengthy single-shot sequences in which extremely complex actions take place. The longest of these are a shot in which Kee gives birth (199 seconds); an ambush on a country road (247 seconds); and a scene in which Theo is captured by the Fishes, escapes, and runs down a street and through a building in the middle of a raging battle (454 seconds). These sequences were extremely difficult to film, although the effect of continuity is sometimes an illusion, aided by CGI effects.

Cuarón had experimented with long takes in *Great Expectations*, *Y tu mamá también* and *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. His style is influenced by the Swiss film *Jonah Who Will Be 25 in the Year 2000*, a favorite of Cuarón’s. Cuarón reminisces: “I was studying cinema when I first saw *Jonah*, and interested in the French New Wave. *Jonah* was so unflashy compared to those films. The camera keeps a certain distance and there are relatively few close-ups. It’s elegant and flowing, constantly tracking, but very slowly and not calling attention to itself.” Complicated long-takes were already popular among more accomplished film directors in Mexico, where the technique is known as *plano secuencia*.

The creation of the single-shot sequences was a challenging, time-consuming process that sparked concerns from the studio. It took fourteen days to prepare for the single shot in which Clive Owen’s character searches a building under attack, and five hours for every time they wanted to reshoot it. In the middle of one shot, blood splattered onto the lens, and cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki convinced the director to leave it in. According to Owen, “Right in the thick of it are me and the camera operator because we’re doing this very complicated, very specific dance which, when we come to shoot, we have to make feel completely random.” Cuarón’s initial idea for maintaining continuity during the roadside ambush scene was dismissed by production experts as an “impossible shot to do”. Fresh from the visual effects-laden *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, Cuarón suggested using computer-generated imagery to film the scene. Lubezki refused to allow it, reminding the director that they had intended to make a film akin to a “raw documentary”. Instead, a special camera rig invented by Gary Thieltges of Doggicam Systems was employed, allowing Cuarón to develop the scene as one extended shot. A vehicle was modified to enable seats to tilt and lower actors out of the way of the camera, and the windshield was designed to tilt out of the way to allow camera movement in and out through the front windscreen. A crew of four, including the director of photography and camera operator, rode on the roof.

However, the commonly reported statement that the action scenes are continuous shots is not entirely true. Visual effects supervisor Frazer Churchill explains that the effects team had to “combine several takes to create impossibly long shots”, where their job was to “create the illusion of a continuous camera move.” Once the team was able to create a “seamless blend”, they would move on to the next shot. These techniques were important for three continuous shots: the coffee shop explosion in the opening shot, the car ambush, and the battlefield
scene. The coffee shop scene was composed of "two different takes shot over two consecutive days"; the car ambush was shot in "six sections and at four different locations over one week and required five seamless digital transitions"; and the battlefield scene "was captured in five separate takes over two locations". Churchill and the Double Negative team created over 160 of these types of effects for the film. In an interview with Variety, Cuarón acknowledged this nature of the "single-shot" action sequences: "Maybe I'm spilling a big secret, but sometimes it's more than what it looks like. The important thing is how you blend everything and how you keep the perception of a fluid choreography through all of these different pieces."

Tim Webber of VFX house Framestore CFC was responsible for the three-and-a-half minute single take of Kee giving birth, helping to choreograph and create the CG effects of the childbirth. Cuarón had originally intended to use an animatronic baby as Kee's child with the exception of the childbirth scene. In the end, two takes were shot, with the second take concealing Claire-Hope Ashitey's legs, replacing them with prosthetic legs. Cuarón was pleased with the results of the effect, and returned to previous shots of the baby in animatronic form, replacing them with Framestore's computer-generated baby.

**Contemporary References**

*Children of Men* takes an unconventional approach to the modern action film, using a documentary, newsreel style. Film critics, Michael Rowin, Jason Guerrasio and Ethan Alter, observe the film's underlying touchstone of immigration. Alter notes that the film "makes a potent case against the anti-immigrant sentiment" popular in modern societies like the United Kingdom and the United States, with Guerrasio describing the film as "a complex meditation on the politics of today."

For Alter and other critics, the structural support and impetus for the contemporary references rests upon the visual nature of the film's exposition, occurring in the form of imagery as opposed to conventional dialogue. Visually, the refugee camps in the film intentionally evoke Abu Ghraib prison, Guantanamo Bay detention camp, and The Maze. Other popular images appear, such as a sign over the refugee camp reading "Homeland Security". The similarity between the hellish, cinéma vérité stylized battle scenes of the film and current news and documentary coverage of the Iraq War, is noted by film critic Manohla Dargis, describing Cuarón's fictional landscapes as "war zones of extraordinary plausibility."

In the film, refugees are "hunted down like cockroaches", rounded up and put into cages and camps, and even shot, leading film critics like Chris Smith and Claudia Puig to observe symbolic "overtones" and images of the Holocaust. This theme is reinforced in the scene where an elderly refugee woman speaking German is seen detained in a cage, and in the scene where British Homeland Security strips and beats illegal immigrants; a song by The Libertines, "Arbeit Macht Frei", plays in the background. "The visual allusions to the Nazi roundups are unnerving," writes Richard A. Blake. "It shows what people can become when the government orchestrates their fears for its own advantage."

Cuarón explains how he uses this imagery to propagate the theme by cross-referencing fictional and futuristic events with real, contemporary, or historical incidents and beliefs:
They exit the Russian apartments, and the next shot you see is this woman wailing, holding the body of her son in her arms. This was a reference to a real photograph of a woman holding the body of her son in the Balkans, crying with the corpse of her son. It’s very obvious that when the photographer captured that photograph, he was referencing La Pietà, the Michelangelo sculpture of Mary holding the corpse of Jesus. So: We have a reference to something that really happened, in the Balkans, which is itself a reference to the Michelangelo sculpture. At the same time, we use the sculpture of David early on, which is also by Michelangelo, and we have of course the whole reference to the Nativity. And so everything was referencing and cross-referencing, as much as we could.

In the closing credits, the Sanskrit words "Shantih Shantih Shantih" appear as end titles. Writer and film critic Laura Eldred of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill observes that *Children of Men* is “full of tidbits that call out to the educated viewer”. During a visit to his house by Theo and Kee, Jasper says “Shanti, shanti, shanti.” Eldred notes that the “shanti” used in the film is also found at the end of an Upanishad and in the final line of T. S. Eliot’s poem *The Waste Land*, a work Eldred describes as “devoted to contemplating a world emptied of fertility: a world on its last, teetering legs”. However, “shanti” is also a common beginning and ending to all Hindu prayers, and literally means “peace,” referencing the invocation of divine intervention and rebirth through an end to violence.

**Processing: Five things I learnt from this article are...**

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Recent Dystopias — The Hunger Games: Gary Ross (2012)

This is the final example text we will look at in this study. As of the start of 2013, the most recently released dystopian science-fiction film is *The Hunger Games*. It too is based on novel literature. The novel series by Suzanne Collins will each be adapted into a film series over the next two years.

**In a nut shell:**

*The Hunger Games* is a 2012 American science fiction adventure film directed by Gary Ross, based on the novel of the same name by Suzanne Collins. The film stars Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson, Liam Hemsworth, Woody Harrelson, Elizabeth Banks, and Donald Sutherland.

The story takes place in a dystopian post-apocalyptic future in the nation of Panem, where boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 18 must participate in the Hunger Games, a televised annual event in which the "tributes" are required to fight to the death until there is one remaining victor. The protagonist, Katniss Everdeen (Lawrence), volunteers to take her younger sister's place in the games. Joined by her district's male tribute Peeta Mellark (Hutcherson), Katniss travels to the Capitol to train for the Hunger Games under the guidance of former victor Haymitch Abernathy (Harrelson).

The film was released on March 21, 2012, in France and in the US on March 23, 2012, in both conventional theaters and digital IMAX theaters. When the film released, it set records for opening day ($67.3 million) and opening weekend for a non-sequel. At the time of its release, the film's opening weekend gross ($152.5 million) was the third-largest of any movie in North America. It is the first film since *Avatar* to remain in first place at the North American box office for four consecutive weekends. The movie was a massive box-office success by grossing $685 million worldwide against its budget of $78 million, making it the third highest grossing film in the United States and ninth highest grossing worldwide of 2012. It was released on DVD and Blu-ray on August 18, 2012.

*The Hunger Games* received positive reviews, with praise for its themes and messages, as well as Lawrence's performance as Katniss. Like the novel, the film has attracted criticism for its similarities to other works, such as the Japanese novel *Battle Royale*, its film adaptation, and the Shirley Jackson short story "The Lottery." Collins' novel and screenplay drew on sources of inspiration such as the myth of Theseus, Roman gladiatorial games, reality television, and the desensitization of viewers to media coverage of real-life tragedy and war, not to think as just an audience member, "Because those are real people on the screen, and they're not going away when the commercials start to roll."[13]

The film was nominated for a Golden Globe for the song "Safe & Sound," and was nominated for two Grammys for the songs "Safe & Sound" and "Abraham's Daughter."
Precedents in film and literature
Charles McGrath, writing for The New York Times, said that the film will remind viewers of the television series Survivor, a little of The Bachelorette, and of the short story "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson published in 1948 by The New Yorker. David Sexton of The Evening Standard compared The Hunger Games unfavorably to Kinji Fukasaku's Japanese film Battle Royale, as did several other critics; the novel had earlier faced criticism for its similarities to the novel Battle Royale by Koushun Takami. Jonathan Looms of The Oxford Student argues that it is "unfair that the film is only drawing comparisons with Battle Royale" but that it "is a veritable pastiche of other movies" as well, comparing it to The Truman Show, Death Race, the Bourne films, and Zoolander, and that it is common for artists to borrow from and "improve on many sources. Quentin Tarantino has built his career on this principle." It reminded an author at Salon of the 1932 film The Most Dangerous Game.

Wheeler Winston Dixon, a film professor at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, listed several precedents: Battle Royale, Jackson's "The Lottery", William Golding's Lord of the Flies, Metropolis, Blade Runner, Death Race 2000, and George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four. Manohla Dargis in The New York Times compares it to Battle Royale, Ender's Game, and Twilight, but contrasts The Hunger Games in terms of how its "exciting" female protagonist Katniss "rescues herself with resourcefulness, guts and true aim." Steve Rose of The Guardian refers to the film as "think Battle Royale meets The Running Man meets Survivor." Writing in The Atlantic, Govindini Murty made a list of touchstones the film alludes to, from the ancient Greek, Roman and Egyptian civilizations to modern references such as the Great Depression, the Vietnam and Iraq Wars, and reality television. For her part, author Collins cites the myth of Theseus, reality television and coverage of the Iraq War as her inspiration.

Themes
Interpretations of the film's themes and messages have been widely discussed among critics and other commentators. In his review for The Washington Times, Peter Suderman expressed that "maybe it's a liberal story about inequality and the class divide. Maybe it's a libertarian epic about the evils of authoritarian government. Maybe it's a feminist revision on the sci-fi action blockbuster. Maybe it's a bloody satire of reality television", but concludes the film only proposes these theories and brings none of them to a reasonable conclusion.

More notes on themes can be viewed at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hunger_Games_(film)#Themes](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Hunger_Games_(film)#Themes)

Gross Profit
$408,010,692 (USA) (6 September 2012)
£4,900,177 (UK) (25 March 2012)
AUS$16,201,212 (Australia) (1 April 2012)
NZ$1,625,729 (New Zealand) (25 March 2012)
What is “Used Future”?
We see early examples of the ‘used future’ convention in *Star Wars*, and then definitely in *Alien*, and it comes into its own as a dominant feature in *Blade Runner*.

For the longest time science fiction was all about portraying and very futuristic view of what the concept of ‘future’ included: a perfect and polished, white gleaming plastic (think Star Trek and all the early portrayals if what future technology would look like). Even the cartoon, “The Jetsons” set in the early 2000s shows flying cars and completely automated domestic kitchens….

In dystopian films, the convention known as ‘used future’ acknowledges that even in the future, there will still be garbage, things will still break and need to be fixed (For example: Millennium Falcon’s Hyperdrive in *Star Wars*); clothes will be ripped and torn and dirty, there will still be beggars and poverty. The not so nice aspects of current society will prevail into the future’s physical make-up and will still be part of everyday life.

Sometimes dystopian films use all neo-noir techniques to portray their key ideas/themes etc (for example *Gattaca*), sometimes they focus on all used future (For example *Children of Men*), sometimes the two combine as seen in *Bladerunner*.

**TASK:** Think about the concept of ‘used future’ explained above and for each of the films identified below, give evidence from these films of a used future being portrayed.

**Blade Runner:**

**Children of Men:**

**Minority Report:**

**In Time:**

**V for Vendetta:**

**The Island:**

**Useful links about used future:**
http://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/UsedFuture &
http://www.kk.org/thetechnium/archives/2008/12/the_used_future.php