Proposal

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Science fiction at the service of the social sciences: the Matrix Universe

Methodology: Lecture-conference, English

Description and objectives:

The recurrent and increasing interest in the genre in the popular culture especially in the last decade draws special attention to its meaning among many disciplines. This short series of lectures aims at introducing to the students the idea of diversification of the sources for the knowledge about society. The course will revise the idea of knowledge in the broader context of the philosophy of social thinking, society as a narrative or a text, the role of fiction as a source of such knowledge and the result of it. In sum, the course aims to explain why and how we can use fiction as such a source.

We will also explore the main theoretical problems raised in the proposed narratives by analyzing their plot and the characters in the context of the existing social theories and social epistemological approaches and discuss the appearing social and scholarly criticism of the proposed narratives and their meaning as a source of the knowledge of social processes and changes. The course will look at the Matrix universe (3 movies and Animatrix) in the framework of the Bourdieusian work. We will revise the main elements of the Bourdieu's social theory and explore the possibility of their application in the analysis of the sci-fi genre for the further understanding of the social dynamics. We will also look at other possible interpretations of the genre and the Matrix narrative itself.

Prerequisite:

General knowledge of the proposed genre and/or of Bourdieusian framework

Themes to be discussed:

1. Bourdieu's sociology
   The session will revise the main concept of the Bourdieu's social theory and the theory of social change: such as fields, habitus, capital and practices as well as their relevance to both the topic of the class and the social studies. (Session may include a Skype conference with Dr. Raúl A. Mora, PhD in Language in Literacy and Bourdieu scholar at Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana)
2. Matrix: Habitus and fields
   This session will focus more specifically on the analysis of the Matrix universe in the framework of Bourdieusian concepts of habitus and fields, their dynamics, meaning and changes not only for the purpose of understanding the Matrix, but rather for the purpose of understanding the application of the theory, its relevance and proposal as

well as understanding of the processes of the social knowledge construction and its application.

3. Matrix: Capital and practices
This session will focus more specifically on the analysis of the Matrix universe in the framework of Bourdieusian concepts of the capital and practices, their dynamics, and meaning not only for the purpose of understanding the Matrix, but rather for the purpose of understanding the application of the theory, its relevance and proposal as well as understanding of the processes of the social knowledge construction and its application

4. Comparison and proposal
This session will discuss other novels of the genre and their use for better understanding of the social dynamics and processes. The session will also look at other possible interpretations of the genre besides the proposed framework.

Evaluation (three options):

- a short story (maximum 1500 words) of the sci-fi novel of social criticism representing Bourdieusian theoretical framework,
- sci-fi image (painting, sketch) with a brief (maximum 300 words) explanation/summary representing both social commentary and Bourdieusian framework,
- or a short comics completing the same task

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Milner, Andrew. (2011). Science Fiction and the Literary Field. Science Fiction Studies. Vol. 38, No. 3, pp. 393-411. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5621/sciefictstud.38.3.0393

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