Generally speaking, science fiction, or, more broadly, speculative fiction of any kind, can be utilized as a vehicle of philosophical exploration in two distinct but interconnected ways. First, its natural accommodation of beings and circumstances of a hitherto unencountered kind permits the postulation of settings and events in which familiar ideas and attitudes can be tested and the limits of their applicability determined. Second, in a manner analogous to mathematics, it can be used to explore what the bounds of coherent speculation are.

 Weeks 1, 2, 3, 4  Time Travel

 H.G. Wells  The Time Machine (chapter 1)
 Robert A. Heinlein  By His Bootstraps
 Donald C. Williams  The Myth of Passage
 Michael Dummett  Causal Loops
 C.J.S. Clarke  Time in General Relativity
 Brian Gerstein  Troud’s Plan

 Weeks 4, 5, 6  Artificial Intelligence

 Isaac Asimov  I, Robot (‘Reason’, ‘Runaround’)
 Olaf Stapledon  Last And First Men (ch.XI, sections 1 and 2)
 Alan Turing  Computing Machinery and Intelligence
 John Searle  Minds, Brains and Programs
 Samuel Butler  Erewhon (Darwin Among the Machines chs. 23-25)

 Weeks 6, 7, 8  The Problem of Other Minds

 Lewis Padgett  Private Eye
 Edward Bellamy  To Whom This May Come
 Ludwig Wittgenstein  Philosophical Investigations (sections 239-436)

 Weeks 8, 9  Probability and Confirmation

 Robert M. Coates  The Law
 Antony Ferry, R.C. Dennis  The Mail Order Prophet
 J.L. Borges  The Library of Babel
 H.G. Wells  The Country of the Blind
 W.W. Jacobs  The Monkey’s Paw
 Bertrand Russell  The Metaphysician’s Nightmare

 Weeks 9, 10, 11  Personal Identity, Scepticism, and Solipsism

 H.G. Wells  The Story of the Late Mr. Elvesham
 John Locke  An Essay Concerning Human Understanding (ch. XXVII Identity and Diversity)
 Bernard Williams  The Self and the Future
 P.F. Strawson  Individuals (ch.2 ‘Sounds’)
 Robert A. Heinlein  They
 J.L. Borges  Tlön Uqbar, Orbis Tertius
 Gene Roddenberry  The Cage (Star Trek first pilot 1965)
 O.K. Bouwsma  Descartes’ Evil Genius
 Ray Bradbury  No Particular Night Or Morning
Philosophical Ideas in Science Fiction

George Orwell  
*Nineteen Eighty-Four* (excerpts to be specified)

Ludwig Wittgenstein  
*Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (5.6-5.641)

Bertrand Russell  
*Our Knowledge of the External World* (chs. III and IV)

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*The Analysis of Mind* (Memory)

H.P. Lovecraft  
The Shadow Out of Time

Hilary Putnam  
Brains in a Vat

Weeks 11, 12, 13, 14 Space, Time, and Mind

Arthur C. Clarke  
The Wall of Darkness

Olaf Stapledon  
*Star Maker* (chs. XIV and XV)

C.S. Peirce  
Abstracts of 8 Lectures (The Topological Basis of the Logic of Continuity)

G.W. Leibniz  
Monadology

Immanuel Kant  
*Critique of Pure Reason* (The Amphiboly of Concepts of Reflection)

Fred Hoyle  
*October The First Is Too Late* (ch.7 ‘Adagio’)

Isaac Asimov  
The Last Question

Kurt Gödel  
A Remark about the Relationship between Relativity Theory and Idealistic Philosophy

There will be a take-home exam. Final grade will be determined by quality of both written work and class participation.

Note: The university has directed that all syllabi make note of the existence of The Rutgers Self-Reporting Absence Website (https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra), as well as of the request that it be utilized by students to indicate the date(s) and reason for their absence from class.