

 <b>FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY</b>	<b>NEW COURSE PROPOSAL</b> <b>Undergraduate Programs</b>		UUPC Approval <u>10-6-2025</u> UFS Approval _____ SCNS Submittal _____ Confirmed _____ Banner Posted _____ Catalog _____	
	<b>Department</b> Philosophy  <b>College</b> Arts and Letters (To obtain a course number, contact <a href="mailto:erudolph@fau.edu">erudolph@fau.edu</a> )			
<b>Prefix</b> PHM  <b>Number</b> 4133	(L = Lab Course; C = Combined Lecture/Lab; add if appropriate)  <b>Lab Code</b>	<b>Type of Course</b> <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 2px;">Lecture</div>	<b>Course Title</b> Science Fiction and Philosophy	
<b>Credits</b> (See <a href="#">Definition of a Credit Hour</a> ) 3	<b>Grading</b> (Select One Option) <b>Regular</b> <input checked="" type="radio"/> <b>Sat/UnSat</b> <input type="radio"/>	<b>Course Description</b> (Syllabus must be attached; see <a href="#">Template</a> and <a href="#">Guidelines</a> ) This course uses science fiction as a lens to explore fundamental philosophical questions. Students will examine the nature of reality, personal identity, and consciousness, addressing issues such as machine awareness, radical brain enhancement, and the structure of space and time. Emphasis is placed on the dialogue between imaginative speculation and philosophical analysis, highlighting how science fiction can illuminate enduring philosophical problems.		
<b>Effective Date</b> (TERM & YEAR) Fall 2026				
<b>Prerequisites, with minimum grade*</b> N/A		<b>Corequisites</b> N/A	<b>Registration Controls</b> (Major, College, Level) None	
<b>*Default minimum passing grade is D-. Prereqs., Coreqs. &amp; Reg. Controls are enforced for all sections of course</b>				
<b>WAC/Gordon Rule Course</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No  WAC/Gordon Rule criteria must be indicated in syllabus and approval attached to proposal. See <a href="#">WAC Guidelines</a> .		<b>Intellectual Foundations Program (General Education) Requirement</b> (Select One Option) None  General Education criteria must be indicated in the syllabus and approval attached to the proposal. See <a href="#">Intellectual Foundations Guidelines</a> .		
<b>Minimum qualifications to teach course</b> Terminal degree in philosophy				
<b>Faculty Contact/Email/Phone</b> Nicholas Baima, nbaima@fau.edu		<b>List/Attach comments from departments affected by new course</b>		
<b>Approved by</b> Department Chair <u>Nicholas R. Baima</u> College Curriculum Chair <u>Robin Larson</u> College Dean <u>[Signature]</u> UUPC Chair <u>Korey Sorge</u> Undergraduate Studies Dean <u>Dan Meeroff</u> UFS President _____ Provost _____			<b>Date</b> <u>8/26/2025</u> <u>09/23/2025</u> <u>9/25/2025</u> <u>10-6-2025</u> <u>10-6-2025</u> _____ _____	

Email this form and syllabus to [mjenning@fau.edu](mailto:mjenning@fau.edu) seven business days before the UUPC meeting.

# **FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY**

## **PHM 4133**

### **Science Fiction and Philosophy**

**Date:** Wed. 4-6:50 PM

**Building:** Social Science Boca **Room:** 370

**3 Credit(s)**

**Fall 2026 - 1 Full Term**

#### **Instructor Information**

Nicholas Baima

**Email:** nbaima@fau.edu

**Office:** SO 282

**Office Hours:** T/H 2-3 or by appointment

**Phone:** 551-297-3879

### **Course Description**

This course uses science fiction as a lens to explore fundamental philosophical questions. Students will examine the nature of reality, personal identity, and consciousness, addressing issues such as machine awareness, radical brain enhancement, and the structure of space and time. Emphasis is placed on the dialogue between imaginative speculation and philosophical analysis, highlighting how science fiction can illuminate enduring philosophical problems.

### **Instructional Method**

#### **In-Person**

Traditional concept of in person. Mandatory attendance.

### **Required Texts/Materials**

All readings will be found in Canvas Files section, divided up into topics. Please make sure to have a copy of the readings in some format in class with you so you can access and use them during class.

### **Course Objectives/Student Learning Outcomes**

1. Analyze and evaluate philosophical concepts – Examine issues in contemporary metaphysics, applied ethics, and philosophy of mind, especially as they relate to emerging technologies.
2. Apply philosophical thinking to science fiction – Interpret and critique thought experiments in films, short stories, and novels to explore ethical and metaphysical questions.
3. Develop critical reasoning and communication skills – Construct and present coherent, well-supported philosophical arguments in both writing and discussion.

### **Faculty Rights and Responsibilities**

Florida Atlantic University respects the rights of instructors to teach and students to learn.

Maintenance of these rights requires classroom conditions that do not impede their exercise. To ensure these rights, faculty members have the prerogative to:

- Establish and implement academic standards.
- Establish and enforce reasonable behavior standards in each class.
- Recommend disciplinary action for students whose behavior may be judged as disruptive under the Student Code of Conduct University Regulation 4.007.

### **Disability Policy**

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS) and follow all SAS procedures. SAS has offices across three of FAU's campuses – Boca Raton, Davie and Jupiter – however disability services are available for students on all campuses. For more information, please visit the SAS website at [www.fau.edu/sas/](http://www.fau.edu/sas/).

### **Course Evaluation Method**

1. Participation (20%)
2. 2 short answer exams. (20% each/40% total).
3. A comprehensive final exam (40%).

### **Code of Academic Integrity**

Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see University Regulation 4.001.

### **Attendance Policy Statement**

Students are expected to attend all their scheduled University classes and to satisfy all academic objectives as outlined by the instructor. The effect of absences upon grades is determined by the instructor, and the University reserves the right to deal at any time with individual cases of nonattendance.

Students are responsible for arranging to make up work missed because of legitimate class absence, such as illness, family emergencies, military obligation, court-imposed legal obligations, or participation in University-approved activities. Examples of University-approved reasons for absences include participating on an athletic or scholastic team, musical and theatrical performances, and debate activities. It is the student's responsibility to give the instructor notice prior to any anticipated absences and within a reasonable amount of time after an unanticipated absence, ordinarily by the next scheduled class meeting. Instructors must

allow each student who is absent for a University-approved reason the opportunity to make up work missed without any reduction in the student's final course grade as a direct result of such absence.

### **Religious Accommodation Policy Statement**

In accordance with the rules of the Florida Board of Education and Florida law, students have the right to reasonable accommodations from the University in order to observe religious practices and beliefs regarding admissions, registration, class attendance, and the scheduling of examinations and work assignments. University Regulation 2.007, Religious Observances, sets forth this policy for FAU and may be accessed on the FAU website at [www.fau.edu/regulations](http://www.fau.edu/regulations). Any student who feels aggrieved regarding religious accommodations may present a grievance to the executive director of The Office of Civil Rights and Title IX. Any such grievances will follow Florida Atlantic University's established grievance procedure regarding alleged discrimination.

### **Time Commitment Per Credit Hour**

For traditionally delivered courses, not less than one (1) hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction each week for fifteen (15) weeks per Fall or Spring semester, and a minimum of two (2) hours of outof-class student work for each credit hour. Equivalent time and effort are required for Summer Semesters, which usually have a shortened timeframe. Fully Online courses, hybrid, shortened, intensive format courses, and other non-traditional modes of delivery will demonstrate equivalent time and effort.

### **Course Grading Scale**

#### **Letter Grade Percentage**

A 100 - 94%

A- < 94 - 90%

B+ < 90 - 87%

B < 87 - 83%

B- < 83 - 80%

C+ < 80 - 77%

C < 77 - 73%

C- < 73 - 70%

D+ < 70 - 67%

D < 67 - 63%

D- < 63 - 60%

#### **Letter Grade Percentage**

F < 60 - 0%

### **Grade Appeal Process**

You may request a review of the final course grade when you believe that one of the following conditions apply:

- There was a computational or recording error in the grading.
- The grading process used non-academic criteria.
- There was a gross violation of the instructor's own grading system. University Regulation 4.002 of the University Regulations contains information on the grade appeals process

## **Policy on Make-up Tests, Late work, and Incompletes**

Late work is not accepted.

## **Policy on the Recording of Lectures**

Students enrolled in this course may record video or audio of class lectures for their own personal educational use. A class lecture is defined as a formal or methodical oral presentation as part of a university course intended to present information or teach students about a particular subject.

Recording class activities other than class lectures, including but not limited to student presentations (whether individually or as part of a group), class discussion (except when incidental to and incorporated within a class lecture), labs, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving student participation, test or examination administrations, field trips, and private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the lecturer, is prohibited.

Recordings may not be used as a substitute for class participation or class attendance and may not be published or shared without the written consent of the faculty member. Failure to adhere to these requirements may constitute a violation of the University's Student Code of Conduct and/or the Code of Academic Integrity.

## **Artificial Intelligence Preamble**

FAU recognizes the value of generative AI in facilitating learning. However, output generated by artificial intelligence (AI), such as written words, computations, code, artwork, images, music, etc., for example, is drawn from previously published materials and is not your own original work. FAU students are not permitted to use AI for any course work unless explicitly allowed to do so by the instructor of the class for a specific assignment. **[Policy 12.16 Artificial Intelligence]** Class policies related to AI use are decided by the individual faculty. Some faculty may permit the use of AI in some assignments but not others, and some faculty may prohibit the use of AI in their course entirely. In the case that an instructor permits the use of AI for some assignments, the assignment instructions will indicate when and how the use of AI is permitted in that specific assignment. It is the student's responsibility to comply with the instructor's expectations for each assignment in each course. When AI is authorized, the student is also responsible and accountable for the content of the work. AI may generate inaccurate, false, or exaggerated information. Users should approach any generated content with skepticism and review any information generated by AI before using generated content as-is.

If you are unclear about whether or not the use of AI is permitted, ask your instructor before starting the assignment. Failure to comply with the requirements related to the use of AI may constitute a violation of the **Florida Atlantic Code of Academic Integrity, Regulation 4.001**.

Proper Citation: If the use of AI is permitted for a specific assignment, then use of the AI tool must be properly documented and cited. For more information on how to properly cite the use of AI tools, visit <https://fau.edu/ai/citation>

## **AI Language Specific To This Course**

AI Prohibited

## **Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center**

Life as a university student can be challenging physically, mentally and emotionally. Students who find stress negatively affecting their ability to achieve academic or personal goals may wish to consider utilizing FAU's Counseling and Psychological Services (**CAPS**) Center. CAPS provides FAU students a range of services – individual counseling, support meetings, and psychiatric services, to name a few – offered to help improve and maintain emotional well-being. For more information, go to <http://www.fau.edu/counseling/>

## **Student Support Services and Online Resources**

Center for Learning and Student Success (CLASS)

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

FAU Libraries

Office of Information Technology Helpdesk

Center for Global Engagement

Office of Undergraduate Research and Inquiry (OURI)

Student Accessibility Services

Student Athlete Success Center (SASC)

Testing and Certification

Test Preparation

University Academic Advising Services

## **The Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL)**

The CTL has a variety of FREE TUTORING and other academic support services to help you succeed in your courses. You are encouraged to build your academic support team early in the term and meet with your team regularly. At the CTL, you can practice difficult course content, develop skills, and learn academic success strategies -- in person and online. Learn more about FAU academic support at [www.fau.edu/ctl](http://www.fau.edu/ctl).

## **Course Topical Outline**

### **Topic 1: Introduction**

## **Week 1 – Course Introduction**

- **Lecture:** Overview – “Where We Are Going”
  - **Reading:** Schneider, *SF*: Introduction: *Science Fiction as a Window into Philosophical Puzzles*
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## Week 2 –AI and the Singularity

- **Reading:** *Transhumanist Manifesto* (appendix), *Radical Evolution*, Chs 1–5
  - **Lectures:**
    - Schneider (audio lecture on the Singularity)
    - Nick Bostrom TED talk on death: [link](#)
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## Week 3 – Could You Be in a Computer Simulation?

- **Lecture:** Nick Bostrom – “Are You In a Computer Simulation?” [link](#)
  - **Readings:**
    - Science fact: De Marse, “Brain in a Vat”
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## Week 4 – The Nature of Mind (Part 1)

- **Lecture:** Chalmers on the Hard Problem of Consciousness [link](#)
  - **Readings:**
    - Chalmers, “The Puzzle of Conscious Experience”
    - Andy Clark, “A Brain Speaks” (in Schneider)
  - **Lecture/Video:** Jill Bolte Taylor TED Lecture [link](#)
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## Week 5 – The Nature of Mind (Part 2)

- **Reading:** Searle, “Minds, Brains and Programs”
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## Week 6 –Machine Consciousness

- **Reading:** Schneider, *Artificial You*, Chs 1–4
  - **Lecture/Video:** [Machine Consciousness video](#)
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## Week 7 – Ethics of Advanced and Nonhuman Intelligence

- **Reading/Viewing:**
    - Blade Runner (*Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*)
    - Isaac Asimov, “Robot Dreams” (Schneider)
    - Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* [link](#)
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## Week 8 – Review and Exam 1

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## Week 9 – What Do We Owe Future Generations?

- **Reading:** McAskill (excerpts provided)
  - **Lecture:** Schneider lecture on the topic
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## Week 10 – Limits of Human Knowledge (Epistemology)

- **Viewing:** Choose one: USS Calister (*Black Mirror*), *The Matrix*, *Vanilla Sky*, “Ship in a Bottle”
  - **Readings:**
    - John Pollock, “Brain in a Vat” (fiction)
    - Plato, excerpt from *Republic*
    - Descartes, excerpt from *Meditations*
    - Canvas lecture material
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## Week 11 – Should You Upgrade Yourself? (Part 1)

- **Reading/Viewing:**
    - Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (or TV adaptation)
    - Eric Olson, “Personal Identity” (Schneider SF)
    - Schneider, “Mindscan: Transcending and Enhancing the Brain”
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## Week 12 – Should You Upgrade Yourself? (Part 2)

- **Reading:**
  - Derek Parfit, “Divided Minds and the Nature of Persons” (Schneider SF)
  - Anders Sandberg & Nick Bostrom, “Whole Brain Emulation: A Roadmap” (beginning sections)



- Nick Bostrom, Are you a simulated being? (Schneider SF)
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## Week 13 – Space Time

- **Topics:** Space, Time, and Parallel Universes
  - **Readings/Viewing:**
    - Craig Callender and Sean Carroll on arrow of time
    - Theodore Sider, *Time*
    - Ray Bradbury, “The Sound of Thunder”
    - David Lewis, “Paradoxes of Time Travel”
    - David Deutsch & Michael Lockwood, “Quantum Physics of Time Travel”
    - Recommended: Kip Thorne, *Black Holes and Time Warps*
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## Week 14 – Review and Integration

- **Activity:** Class discussion integrating:
    - AI, consciousness, simulation, ethics, human enhancement
    - Reflections from Mindfest and readings
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## Week 15 – Final Presentations / Wrap-Up

- **Activity:** Exam 2

## Final Comprehensive Exam

### Title IX Statement

In any case involving allegations of sexual misconduct, you are encouraged to report the matter to the University Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX (OCR9). If University faculty become aware of an allegation of sexual misconduct, they are expected to report it to OCR9. If a report is made, someone from OCR9 and/or Campus Victim Services will contact you to make you aware of available resources including support services, supportive measures, and the University’s grievance procedures. More information, including contact information for OCR9, is available at <https://www.fau.edu/ocr9/title-ix/>. You may also contact Victim Services at [victimservices@fau.edu](mailto:victimservices@fau.edu) or 561-297-0500 (ask to speak to an Advocate) or schedule an appointment with a counselor at Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) by calling 561-297-CAPS.