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BBC: First Degree In Science Fiction

From: **Steven J. Dunn** <SDunn@logicon.com>
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BBC: First degree in science fiction

Students could be studying the latest Star Wars film, as a university offers a degree in science fiction.

The University of Glamorgan will offer a degree in Science and Science Fiction from September, with the syllabus examining the link between science fiction and 'real' science.

The degree, described by the university as being "an award about science as much as an award in science", will look at science fiction in books, television, cinema, computer games and merchandising - from the publication of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein through to the current Star Wars movie.

The university, which has previously offered a course which considered the possibility of extra-terrestrial life, wants the attraction of science fiction to become "a revolutionary new way of encouraging more people to consider careers in science and technology".

Students will tackle topics such as 'Will robots take over the earth?' - which can be considered from the perspectives of both science fiction and science fact.

The cultural significance of science and science fiction will be examined, in the context of such influences as the Cold War or the development of space travel. The range of texts will cover the spectrum of science fiction, from HG Wells to Doctor Who.

"The link between science fiction and science fact is becoming much more tangible, but is often ignored as a way of encouraging people to explore the fascinating developments in human scientific knowledge," said principal lecturer, Mark Brake.

Popularity of science fiction

According to Dr Brake, scientists wanting to raise interest in their subject need to recognise that much public understanding and interest in science and technology begins with science fiction.

Dr Brake says that the course will "harness the popularity of science fiction" alongside the "serious study of science". Students will consider fictional approaches to science in course modules, while studying formal science disciplines in other course units.

"It is important that we retain high academic standards while

developing new and innovative ways of teaching science-related courses," said Dr Brake.

The course, which will aim for "at least a hundred students" will also address the shortage of young people considering careers in teaching science.

"Society badly needs more people who are science educators, with the ability to inspire and encourage young people to develop an interest in science and technology," said Dr Brake.

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