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ASU launches new course on science and Hollywood

BY ALDEMARO ROMERO
AND JOHN M. PRATTE
SPECIAL TO THE SUN

From the silent film era to Steven Spielberg movies, science and scientists have been represented in many shapes and forms.

Now, a new course at Arkansas State University will examine not only how accurately Hollywood has presented those themes, but also how they reflect the societal view of science and scientists throughout times.

The idea for the course developed following the success of last year's "Science Flicks" series in which a science-based movie was shown at the Science Building at ASU-Jonesboro each month followed by a panel discussion with experts from the field.

Now the coordinators of the "Science Flicks" series are adding to this experience a bigger academic dimension. Movies will still be presented to the general public, but students can choose to participate in the experience by digging deeper into the issues presented.

Students interested in this course will watch complementary movies at the library, read a textbook and papers and actively participate in the discussions about these movies.

Among the topics to be discussed will be the public perception of science, how to watch for science content in movies, the portrait of space aliens, representation of objects colliding against Earth, environmental catastrophes, nuclear wars, uncontrolled germs, computers gone wild, the portrayal of scientists, predictions about the future, and scientific accuracy in movies in general.

Course's instructors

The course will be offered at undergraduate and graduate levels. The instructors will be Drs. Aldemaro Romero and John Pratte. Romero, a biologist, has written more than 500 articles and books to both learned and popular audiences. He has also written, produced, and directed more than 1,500 radio shows and 50 television documentaries in the United States, Europe and Latin America.

Pratte, a physicist, has been a longtime advocate for the use of narrative in teaching science, having presented papers on the subject at academic conferences. His most recent research has been on the use of alternative methods for teaching hands-on science.

The general public will

PLEASE SEE COURSE, A9



Universal Studios

Steven Spielberg is shown while filming "Jurassic Park," one of the most famous science-fiction movies of all time.

COURSE: General public gets in free

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still have the opportunity to see the movies and participate in the discussion. Movie showings will take place at the Lab Science Building in room LSE 219 every third Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. beginning in September. Admission to the gen-

eral public is free.

For more information visit biology@astate.edu.

Dr. Aldemaro Romero is chairman and professor at the Department of Biological Sciences. Dr. John M. Pratte is chairman and professor at the Department of Chemistry and Physics at ASU.