

New class will explore physical science through science fiction

Sci Fi Physics course enrolling for fall, will use pop culture to illuminate scientific concepts

BAYTOWN, TX — A new course debuting this fall at Lee College will give students the chance to learn the fundamentals of physical science by exploring well-known movies, television shows and stories of science fiction — from “Star Wars” to “Interstellar,” “X-Men,” “Back to the Future” and more.

Sci Fi Physics is an introductory class designed for students who are not majoring in technical fields, but need a science elective to complete their Lee College degree or certificate. Evan Richards, Ph.D., instructor of physics and pre-engineering, will teach the course on Monday and Wednesday afternoons.

While many science classes involve heavy analysis and multiple mathematical equations, Sci Fi Physics will focus instead on exposing students to major concepts of physical science in a way that is more exciting, engaging and relevant to their daily lives and interests. Material from science fiction movies, television shows and short stories will be used as the launching pad for more in-depth examinations of basic physical science principles.

“Science fiction fascinates people and physical science has a lot to say about that,” said Richards, who often reflects on his own expertise in physics and engineering when evaluating the validity of scientific ideas highlighted in popular culture. He looks forward to helping students link and compare Hollywood’s version of physical science — like invisibility and time travel — with real concepts and ideas.

“I want to cast a wide net with this class,” Richards said. “I think it will really be engaging and capture people’s imaginations. I want to reach the student who says, ‘I want to broaden my mind and horizons a little bit.’ If I can use that curiosity to teach them something about science, then that’s great.”

Registration for Sci Fi Physics and other fall 2016 classes at Lee College is ongoing. For more information about the course, search for “PHYS 1415 – F02A” in the online course catalog at catalog.lee.edu or contact Richards at erichards@lee.edu.