



Space

Through

**DECEMBER
9 - 13
2025**
Winter School

**Literature, Theatre, Cinema,
and Other Arts**



WP 2 - Space Crew



Co-funded by
the European Union



UNIVERSEH Winter School 2025 “Space Through Literature, Theatre, Cinema, and Other Arts” is hosted by University of Rome Tor Vergata (WP 2 – Space Crew) and conceived by CLICI – Center for Italian Language and Culture. The onsite activities will take place in Rome from **Tuesday, 9th to Saturday, 13th December 2025**.

The School aims to provide participants (Bachelor’s, Master’s, and PhD students) from all UNIVERSEH partner Universities (University of Rome Tor Vergata, AGH University of Krakow, Luleå University of Technology, Communauté d'universités et établissements de Toulouse, University of Namur, Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, University of Luxembourg) to explore Space through the eyes of literature, drama, cinema, and other arts in order to investigate how they have represented the imagery of outer space. Also, exploring how this **imagery of outer space** has influenced scientists and researchers of all ages is the main goal of the School, which allows it to be a perfect target both for students from the **humanities**, as well as for all UNIVERSEH students with **professional interests in space**.

The Winter School will provide lectures, cineforum, “language and fun” activities, and networking to challenge interaction between humanities and science.

Scheduling

Online activities
24th and 27th November,
4th December 2025

CET Time Zone

Venue: Microsoft Teams

24th November 2025

9.30am-10.00am *Institutional greetings and presentation of the online module*

- **Myrka Zago**, UNIVERSEH Coordinator for the University of Rome Tor Vergata, Director of the Center of Space BioMedicine
- **Bianca Sulpasso**, Rector's Delegate for Internazionalization of University of Rome Tor Vergata, referent of WP 2 (Space Crew)

10.00am-10.30am *"The Imagery of Space in Art" - Introduction of the Winter School*

- **Florinda Nardi**, Director of CLICI – Center for Italian Language and Culture of University of Rome Tor Vergata, referent of WP 2 (Space Academy)

10.30am-11.00am *Reviving the Fable: Reclaiming the Educational Role of Science-Fiction*

Science fiction is generally defined as a genre that projects future worlds through extrapolations of science and technology. As an astrophysicist, I approach it differently: as a modern form of the educational fable. Since antiquity, fables have served to transmit knowledge and shape understanding through narrative.

- **Andre Fuzfa**, Full Professor of Astronomy, University of Namur

11.00am-11.30am *Q&A Session*

11.30 am-11.45am Break

11.45am-12.00am *Practical tips on how to live in Italy*

12.00am-1.00pm *Three...Two...One...Launch to the Italian language and culture! – games, music and much more to learn and have fun*

27th November 2025

9.30am - 9.45am *What “Fits for Italy”?*

9.45am - 10.45am *The Inner Reaches of Outer Space*

The long history of outer space in popular imagination has seen it used as a habitat of gods, as a backdrop for satire, or as an imaginary destination made tangible with advent of post-industrial revolution technologies which eventually led it to become a mainstay of the modern science-fiction genre. Notwithstanding the time period, the outer space has ever been a mirror of both society’s aspirations and

anxieties. An interesting intersection of these two tendencies can be found in stories uncommonly depicting the outer space as a source of ex nihilo solutions to our contemporary problems of over-pollution and climate change.

- **Aleksandar Joksimovic**, Expert in scientific field, ISAE-SUPAERO, Toulouse

10.45am-11.00am Break

11.00am-11.30am *Q&A Session*

11.30am-1.00pm *Three...Two...One...Launch to the Italian language and culture! – games, music and much more to learn and have fun*

4th December 2025

9.30am-10.00am *Ready to leave? Helpful advice from the Welcome Office*

10.00am-10.30am *Ready to leave? Programme of the on-site session*

10.30am-10.45am Break

10.45am-11.45am *Introduction to the novel The Martian and its author, Andy Weir*

This session takes *The Martian* – in both its novel and film forms – as a case study to explore how storytelling conveys scientific concepts, technical language, and the psychological dimensions of space travel.

- **Ophélie Malcom**, Language Teacher of Centre de Langues, University of Namur

11.45am-12.15am *Q&A Session*

12.15am-1.00pm *Three...Two...One...Launch to the Italian language and culture! – games, music and much more to learn and have fun*

22th December 2025

9.30am-10.30am *Considerations on the sidelines of the conclusion of the Winter School project*

10.30am-11.00am *Q&A Session*

11.00am-11.15am *Break*

11.15am-12.00am *Review of assigned tasks and instructions for the final paper*

12.00am-12.30am *Three...Two...One...Stop e arrivederci alla prossima!*

Onsite activities
9th-13th December 2025

Venue:
University of Rome Tor Vergata

9th December 2025

School of Humanities - Auditorium

9.30am-10.00am *Students' Welcome*

10.00am-10.30am *Institutional greetings and opening of the
Winter School*

- **Nathan Levialdi Ghiron**, Rector, University of Rome Tor Vergata
- **Myrka Zago**, UNIVERSEH Coordinator for the University of Rome Tor Vergata, Director of the Center of Space BioMedicine
- **Bianca Sulpasso**, Rector's Delegate for Internationalization of University of Rome Tor Vergata, referent of WP 2 (Space Crew)
- **Lucia Ceci**, Director of the Department of History, Cultural Heritage, Education, and Society
- **Lorenzo Perilli**, Director of the Department of Literary, Philosophical, and Art History Studies
- **Florinda Nardi**, Director of CLICI – Center for Italian Language and Culture of University of Rome Tor Vergata, referent of WP 2 (Space Academy)

- **Bashudev Neupane, Gabriele Barillà, Shikha Swaroop Sharma**, UNIVERSEH representative students, University of Rome Tor Vergata

10.30am-11.15am *The imagery of Space in the Arts – Introductory Lecture*

The representation of space has always fascinated artists from around the world and throughout the ages. Art, through the process of imagination, has always sought to transcend reality by imagining worlds beyond our own that science could not yet see, much less study. The aim of this lecture is to explore the spatial imagery created by artistic representations that has also influenced scientific debate and that derives from it. A journey through Italian literature from Dante to Calvino, through the theater with the important figure of Galileo Galilei, through the visual arts from Renaissance representations to Crivelli up to our contemporary era.

- **Florinda Nardi**, Professor of Italian Literature, University of Rome Tor Vergata

11.15am-11.30am Coffee break

11.30am-12.30am *Page & Screen: Exploring Narratives of Space*

Science fiction has long served as a meeting ground between imagination and scientific inquiry. It not only entertains but also translates complex ideas into accessible narratives, allowing wider audiences to reflect on the challenges, risks, and ethical questions of exploration.

- **Vanina Bar**, Language Teacher of Centre de Langues, University of Namur
- **Ophélie Malcom**, Language Teacher of Centre de Langues, University of Namur

12.30am-1.00pm Q&A Session

1.00pm-2.00pm Lunch break

Campus X (Via di Passo Lombardo, 341)

3.00pm-5.00pm Visit to Campus X and *Let's make Introductions* at
CLICI – Center for Italian Language and Culture

10th December 2025

School of Economics – Room P11

9.30am-10.15am *Before and After the Big Bang. Inspirations from
Italo Calvino's Ecological Narrative*

What is the relationship between human beings and natural environment? As early as the second half of the 20th century, scientists and philosophers emphasized the need to abandon the Western dualistic view, which sees a clear separation between Humans and Nature, in order to limit the anthropic impact on the planet. Human beings must change the way they conceive of themselves in relation to the planet: no longer as a dominant species engaging in environmental devastating actions, but as a species deeply integrated in the global Social-Ecological System (SES).

- **Caterina Lorenzi**, Researcher of Education and Learning Sciences, University of Rome Tor Vergata

10.15am-11.00am: *An Italian Icon in Space: Science-Fiction
Reinventions of Collodi's Pinocchio Across*

*Cinema, Novels, Comics, Toys and Amusement
Parks in the 1960s and 1970s*

This lecture explores how *Pinocchio*—conceived as Italy’s most iconic cultural figure of the twentieth century—was reimagined in the 1960s and 1970s within the new technological and space-age imaginary. Originally rooted in a late nineteenth-century artisanal culture, Pinocchio had long reflected a pre-industrial economy. From the 1960s, however, the puppet was reshaped through new materials (metal, plastic), industrial production, and the imagery of interstellar travel.

- **Luca Mazzei**, Professor of Cinema, University of Rome Tor Vergata

11.00am-11.30am Coffee break

11.30am-12.15am *The Moon and the Stars in the Romantic Imagination*

Drawing on both English and American literature of the nineteenth century, my paper investigates how Romantic writers described what lies beyond the earth, with a particular focus on their depictions of the moon and the stars.

- **Elisabetta Marino**, Professor of English and American Literature, University of Rome Tor Vergata

12.15am-1.00pm Q&A Session

1.00pm-2.00pm Lunch

School of Humanities

3.00pm-5.00pm *Three...Two...One...Launch to the Italian language and culture! – games, music and much more to learn and have fun*

5.00pm-8.00pm *Cineforum*

Presentation of the movie by **Luca Mazzei**, Professor of Cinema, University of Rome Tor Vergata

11th December 2025

School of Economics – Room P4

9.30am-10.00am *Among Sputniks and Stars: Cosmic Imaginaries in Russian Literature*

The presentation traces the “cosmic journey” of Russian literature through some several moments. It opens with Russian Cosmism, represented by thinkers such as Nikolai Fedorov and Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, who envision the cosmos as an ethical, spiritual, and collective horizon for humankind. It then turns to early Russian and Soviet science fiction, from Alexander Bogdanov’s *Red Star* to Yevgeny Zamyatin’s *We*, where outer space becomes a laboratory for competing utopian and dystopian projections of political and technological possibility. The focus then shifts to the Soviet space imaginary shaped by the launch of Sputnik, and developed in the literary works of authors such as Ivan Efremov and the Strugatsky brothers. The journey ends with some contemporary reinterpretations of cosmic imaginaries that deconstruct the Soviet cosmic paradigm: the works of Viktor Pelevin and Vladimir Sorokin,

whose writing engages with the Soviet cosmic legacy through satire, irony, and critical estrangement, revealing the cosmos as a space of cultural memory, disillusionment, and ongoing renegotiation.

- **Bianca Sulpasso**, Professor of Russian Language and Literature, University of Rome Tor Vergata

10.00am-10.45am *Imperialism, colonialism, and the space race: from literary anticipations to the political battles of the Third World* Wells uses the conquest of space and our satellite to talk about the hopes and ills of Earth, and to denounce the plagues that afflict it: in particular imperialism, militarism, and nationalism.

- **Gianluca Fiocco**, Associate Professor of Sciences of History and Documents, University of Rome Tor Vergata

10.45am-11.00am Coffee break

11.00am-11.45am *A brief history of space exploration and its echoes in culture*

The aim of this lecture is to give a brief account of the historic attempts to travel into space up to the present, and to draw the listeners' attention to some of the interesting mentions of the whole endeavour in film, literature, music and design.

- **Paulina Zapart**, Teacher of English Language and Culture, University of Krakow

11.45am-12.30am *Sounding the Cosmos: A Comparative Analysis of Astronomy Domine (Pink Floyd, 1967) and Space Oddity (David Bowie, 1969)*

The presentation will explore how popular music has contributed to shaping the cultural and imaginative landscape of outer space, focusing on two iconic tracks from the late 1960s: Astronomy Domine by Pink Floyd and Space Oddity by David Bowie. By analysing lyrical content, sonic textures, harmony and melodic lines, the presentation will highlight how each piece constructs a distinct vision of space - ranging from the psychedelic and abstract to the personal and existential - while also taking into account the historical context.

- **Alessandro Cosentino**, Researcher of Ethnomusicology, University of Rome Tor Vergata

12.30am-1.00pm *Q&A Session*

1.00pm-2.00pm: Lunch break

School of Humanities

3.00pm-5.00pm *Imagining the Cosmos: Visions of Space in Modern Sci-Fi* - Author Talk with scientist and writer Amedeo Balbi with Cineforum

- **Amedeo Balbi**, Professor of Astronomy and Astrophysics, University of Rome Tor Vergata

12th December 2025

School of Economics – Room P12

9.30am-10.15am *The Mirror of the Apes: What a 1968 sci-fi allegory can teach us about climate change, artificial intelligence, and the future of humanity*

Science fiction is both a laboratory of scientific imagination and a cultural mirror of human fears. Through tropes such as distant worlds, space travel, alternative models of physics and chemistry, or visions of Earth's future, sci-fi has long been a way to reflect on humanity — its ambitions and anxieties, its achievements and unknowns. By projecting human values onto other societies, sci-fi deflects blame and creates space for audiences to examine human nature without direct accusation. Across history, sci-fi has addressed themes as varied as racism, human rights, aging, death, sexuality, and fear of the “other.”

- **Emma Gatti**, Professor of Space Communication, University of Krakow

10.15am-11.00am *Revisiting Time and Space in Contemporary Television: The Case of El Ministerio del Tiempo*

This lecture examines the Spanish television series *El Ministerio del Tiempo* (2015–2020) as a case study of how contemporary visual arts engage with the imagination of space and time. Built around the existence of a secret governmental bureau controlling portals to Spain's past, the series constructs a narrative universe where multiple temporalities and spatialities coexist.

- **Álvarez Pérez**, Tenured Romance Languages Coordinator and Spanish Teacher, INP-ENSEEIH affiliate with University of Toulouse

11.00am-11.30am Coffee Break

11.30am-12.15am *A Long Time Ago in a Galaxy Far, Far Away... How Science Fiction Inspires Astrophysics*

Science fiction has always been more than entertainment — it sparks curiosity, fuels imagination, and often anticipates scientific discovery. From the twin suns of Star Wars to the black holes of Interstellar, these stories have profoundly influenced how we think about the cosmos.

- **Francesco Tombesi**, Associate Professor of Astrophysics, University of Rome Tor Vergata

12.15am-1.00pm Q&A Session

1.00pm-2.00pm Lunch break

Campus X (Via di Passo Lombardo, 341)

3.00pm-5.00pm *Three...Two...One...Launch to the Italian language and culture! – games, music and much more to learn and have fun*

13th December 2025

School of Humanities – Room “Moscati”

9.30am-10.30am *Voices from outer space: Space Oddity and Rocket Man*

The talk will examine two iconic songs of the late sixties early seventies that deal with outer space: David Bowie’s “Space Oddity” (1969) and Elton John’s and Bernie Taupin’s “Rocket Man” (1972). Although both songs share the same theme, they address very different issues using space travel as the backdrop of their messaging. While “Space Oddity” explores existential alienation, “Rocket man” confronts emotional uneasiness produced by the ever changing technological work landscape. The two works represent the evolution of humanity’s relationship with a changing world which is symbolized by outer space travel.

- **Donato Santeramo**, Full Professor in the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures, Queen's University in Kingston (Canada) and Director of Middlebury Italian School (USA)

10.30am-12.00am *“Rethinking Space in the Light of the Arts”* - Round table between teachers and students of the School

12.00am-1.00pm Certificate of Attendance Ceremony

1.00pm-2.30pm Lunch break with typical Italian specialties

Scientific coordinator

Prof. Florinda Nardi

Didactic coordinator

Dr. Maria Fagiolo

Mobility coordinator

Dr. Mirabela Salavastru

CLICI's staff

Dr. Michela Zompetta

Dr. Giacomo Antonio Greco

Dr. Eriona Zequiri

Erasmus+ Mobility Office's staff

Dr. Elisabetta Lunghi

Dr. Federica Giacomì

Referent of UNIVERSEH WP 2

Prof. Bianca Sulpasso