


«Two Men Enter, One Man Leaves». Dystopias, Post-Apocalypses and Science Fiction Films as Didactic Tools for Teaching

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Abstract: This publication analyses the potential of the use of science fiction films, in particular the post-apocalyptic and dystopian sub-genres, for the teaching of human geography in secondary education. After a brief review of the usefulness of the use of cinema and in particular of the science fiction genre for teaching social sciences in education, three films belonging to these categories (Akira, Children of Men and District 9) are highlighted with their corresponding activities. This paper ends with an annotated list of films suitable for showing in the “Geography and History” classroom of Third of ESO (the Spanish Compulsory Secondary Education), equivalent to the United States’ 9th grade High School or Britain’s Year 10.

Key word: didactics of geography

Introduction

Education is not an easy process. There are no magic formulas in teaching. Sometimes what works for some groups of students is not useful for others, and it is always difficult to fight the student’s lack of learning motivation as they are over-stimulated by everything around them, especially the abundance of leisure time, which contrasts with a formal education that many adolescents do not fully connect with. In view of these circumstances, it is sometimes necessary to change the approach and use other tools. This is the purpose of didactics. To create new educational instruments or develop alternative perspectives on established strategies in order to make the teaching-learning process successful. Sometimes it is useful to be unorthodox and to get closer to the concerns, interests and tastes of the students in order to promote a fruitful teaching of, in this particular case, human geography. This article is based on my former experience as a geography and history teacher in secondary education in Spain. Although I focused my teaching mainly on the use of primary sources as tools for learning, I did not disdain mass culture as an educational background and, of course, there is no tool with such a high potential as cinema. Although it is obviously an entertainment for profit, it is still an attractive and captivating tool, ideal for analysing the representation of past realities as well as the present. As such, I made abundant use of cinematography at all educational levels as a didactic tool for teaching history and geography.

In the case of human geography, I decided to use a particular type of cinema, science fiction, because, paradoxical as it may seem, moving away from cognizable reality can allow us to know it better. On the one hand, because this type of cinema, so reviled by some and loved by others, including teenagers, is dramatic and very entertaining since it presents new worlds or different visions of our existence. This divergence can be used in the classroom to then ask students to delve into the conditions, causes and context of such imaginary worlds, thus strengthening students’ analytical skills, which can then be used to better understand how humans fit into today’s world, which I see as the purpose of human geography. This article starts with a theoretical look at the

use of film and, in particular, science fiction cinematography, and then I propose the use of three specific films, which I deem notable for their quality and background, and a list of films suitable for use in the classroom.

Theoretical foundation

If there is one art that defines contemporaneity, it is the cinema and, in fact, as Kaspar Maase asserts in his fascinating essay «Diversión ilimitada. El auge de la cultura de masas (1850-1970)», the invention of the Lumière brothers can be described as “the first modern mass art” which, moreover, “made possible, practically at every moment, the aesthetic experience of exploring the possibilities of the human, with fullness of imagination, feelings and thoughts” (Maase, 2016, pp. 20 and 110; translations of Spanish texts are of my own). Although cinema initially emerged as a cheap form of entertainment for the lower classes, the taste for this new playful experience quickly became interclassist, spreading to society as a whole. As a consequence, film production and consumption accelerated dramatically and on a global scale soon after the Lumière brothers created it in 1895.

Although in recent times its role and social influence have been considerably redefined, in accordance with the crisis of live cinema exhibition theatres and the rise of online audiovisual platforms, and, on the other hand, the change in the tastes of a large part of viewers who prefer fiction in serial format, it continues to be a first-rate form of entertainment. In fact, although we have lived in the golden age of serialised fiction for more than two decades, cinema continues to occupy a privileged place in this time of hundreds of supposedly unmissable serials and their thousands of hours of due attention if one wants to keep up to date with the latest audiovisual product. Because of its more contained format, although it must be said that today's blockbusters try to stretch their success and profits by generating sequels and prequels that are often unnecessary and mediocre in comparison with the original material from which they draw, cinema is a more accessible escape and, moreover, more referential in the collective imagination.

The following pages are primarily intended to provide the theoretical basis that contextualises and supports the usefulness of the use of film as a resource for teaching geography. However, I begin with some reflections on its use in the teaching of history, since there is a greater tradition of its use in the latter discipline, and also because in many countries, such as Spain, both disciplines are associated in the academic curriculum of secondary schools through the concept of social sciences. The experiences, characteristics and advantages of the use of science fiction as a didactic resource for teaching geography in secondary education are presented immediately below.

Film as a source for history and geography

There is no subject in secondary education to which more research and bibliography related to the use of film in the classroom has been devoted than history and, moreover, with good reasons. Although cinematography from the beginning has been interested in recreating the past, and although it is very interesting the mere interpretation and exegesis of history offered by historical cinema, the truth is that film production is a historical document in itself, either as fiction or in its documentary variant (Rosenstone, 1995; De Pablo Contreras, 2001 and Caparrós Lera, 2007). Of course, it is not an objective source, as cinema responds to a specific time, particular interests and ideological conditioning factors. It is certain, yes, but the same applies to the rest of the sources used by the historian: none of them are objective and impartial

except in the yearnings of the nostalgics of the crudest positivism. Here we can allude to Jean-Luc Godard, the mythical director of the Nouvelle Vague, who said that “cinema is not an art which films life: the cinema is something between art and life” (Roud, 2010, p. 6). Thus, starting from this interesting Godardian premise, cinema can be qualified as multifaceted evidence. It is a very useful and dynamic evocative source for the knowledge of the most diverse aspects of human existence, from the material to the intangible, especially mentalities, but as well the political, economic, social and ideological circumstances of the time and the people behind its creation and development must also be taken into account and analysed. As Marc Ferro, the great patriarch of film analysis as a historical source, rightly argued, cinema:

“Through its knowledge of the present, it helps to understand what the past could have been, since history is also the relationship between past and present, since what is in the present is the heritage of the past (Ferro, 2008, p. 162)”.

The obvious qualities and opportunities of the use of film led to consider its usefulness in the educational field based on several premises (Flores, 1982; Hueso, 1983; Monterde, 1986; Fernández Sebastián, 1989; Ambrós & Breu, 2007; Breu, 2012). On the one hand, the realisation that film is a very powerful medium for transmitting information and historical stereotypes makes it valuable to approach its existence, if only to delimit the historical limits of a medium that has to be considered first and foremost as entertainment motivated by profit. For its creators, scriptwriters, producers and directors, historical accuracy is indifferent or, directly, a very minor concern, unless you are Ridley Scott, and you like to get into trouble (Salvans, 2024).

On the other hand, and in direct correlation, because of the motivation that their use awakens in students who, to a large extent, and leaving aside the school experience, enjoy a historical knowledge that is particularly nourished through informal and non-formal learning based on popular culture. Thus, cinema, television, video games and social media platforms make up the student's most solid historical substratum. In view of this, the teacher must not remain indifferent and, as far as possible, must get as close as possible to the concerns and ways of perceiving the past by the students. Thus, regarding film, the teacher should not be content with a role of verifying the historical accuracy or otherwise of a film, but should consider its use as an opportunity to influence different types of learning, to use it as a source for interpreting both the past and the present, and also as a way of working not only on the educational curriculum but also on values and attitudes in an era of unrest such as today's. It is not simply a decorative resource to be used as a way to work not only on the curriculum but also on values and attitudes in an era of unrest such as the present. It is not simply a decorative resource for this or that educational content: it is a teaching tool (Bolufer, 2015, p. 11). Here I radically agree with Julio Montero:

“Many historians think that films are inaccurate, distort facts, mix fiction and reality, trivialise and romanticise people, movements and processes. In short, they falsify history. They do not mention another underlying issue: they take authority away from historians. It is as if the past were at the mercy of others without... an owner” (Montero, 2001, p. 29).

However, this article does not intend to focus on the use of film as a didactic tool for the teaching of history but of geography. To no one's surprise, geographers have also come to regard film as a relevant source for geographical knowledge (Lukinbeal and Zimmermann 2006, pp. 315-317; Escher 2006, pp. 308). Although starting from a merely descriptive analysis of the landscape, this approach has evolved in complexity and depth in a similar way to that proposed by historiography (Escher, 2006; Aitken and Dixon, 2006, pp. 328-332; Gamir Orueta & Manuel Valdés, 2007, pp. 171-186;

Gamir Orueta, 2012). Cinema has been used by all the sub-disciplines of physical and human geography (Gamir Orueta & Manuel Valdés, 2007, pp. 164-168).

As with the current approach of history to celluloid, what is filmed is as important as what is interpreted on film. Thus, as Stuart C. Aitken and Deborah Dixon rightly point out, "we can no longer talk of film representing, or mimicking, reality, because we can no longer assume that there is a single, coherent reality waiting out there to be filmed" (2006, p. 327) although, and this is not exclusive, we cannot ignore "the importance of film in the formation of the collective geographical imaginary" (Gamir Orueta & Manuel Valdés, 2007, p. 187). This is the case, for example, with Miguel García-Martín's highly entertaining "Viaje al centro del extrarradio desde Los Chichos a Rosalía: una geografía flamenca de las periferias urbanas españolas", which studies in terms of urban geography, through the centre-periphery antagonism and social geography, the construction of a Spanish marginal identity based on an integral analysis of flamenco in its musical and cinematographic representations (García-Martín, 2022). What is certain is that this reality-cinema interrelation has given rise to a very interesting new approach to film geography and, likewise, to fantastic initiatives such as the "GeoCine" project of the Carlos III University that "investigates the relationship between audiovisual fiction and geographical space" (<https://geocine.uc3m.es/>) and others that go further, such as "Film Geographies", an online project where geographers and other social scientists join with filmmakers to develop a geographical cinema broadcasted on Internet (Jacobs, 2024).

Even if the didactics of geography alone maintained formerly certain reservations about its use (Bailey, 1985, pp. 146-147), educational experiences concerning the use of cinematography and geography, both physical and human, in college and high school are by no means uncommon. In fact, their use is increasingly being explored in more and more depth, as the growing literature shows. For example, with regard to the university environment, we can highlight experiences linked to sub-disciplines of human geography such as local and regional geography (Vogeler, 2012), the rural environment from an interdisciplinary perspective (Gómez Fernández, 2021), transport geography (Martínez Puche, 2008), etc.

With regard to secondary education, I would like to start from an early research from 1983 which, in the context of the Francoist General Education Law (LGE, Ley General de Educación) of 1970 in Spain, put on the table the use of documentaries from, and this is important to understand the historic context of this early experience, the film collections of several foreign embassies in 8 or 16 mm cinema format as an educational complement for the teaching of geography. This research considered that film had great potential and thus defined it as "the best method for observing spatial reality", due to its qualities for the development of students' faculties, from the development of their critical capacities to their imagination, allowing them to move away from the exclusively memoristic approach in favour of an active teaching and also as a tool against the monotony of the classroom (Zárate Martín; Vázquez González; Blanco Andray & Martín de Hijas 1983, pp. 83-84). Since these first steps, experiences have followed and, returning again to the field of human geography, applied to sub-disciplines such as social geography (Colomer Rubio and Morote Seguido, 2022), urban geography (González González and Bolao Merlo, 2018), sustainability and environment (Gómez, 2016 and 2017), cultural geography (Crespo Guerrero, 2010), social and economic geography and migrations in the spectacular work of Anabel Calvo (2008) etc., as well as extremely interesting projects where film is applied to geographic teaching such as the Brazilian "Rede Internacional de Pesquisa «Imagens, Geografias e Educação»" (Machado de Oliveira Junior; Gasparotti Nunes & Girardi, 2021).

As can be guessed, this article does not deal with the use of cinematography as a didactic tool for analysing the physical environment but as an instrument for greater understanding of the areas of human geography that are taught in “Geography and History” class in the third year of ESO (Educación Secundaria Obligatoria or Compulsory Secondary Education) to teenage students between the ages of fourteen and fifteen, a course equivalent to the United States’ 9th grade High School or Britain’s Year 10. Although it may seem that documentary film is the most appropriate kind of film due to its (supposedly) more objective viewpoint –a perception that, moreover, as has been highlighted, does not necessarily correspond to reality– the focus is on fictional film without undermining the usefulness of the documentary type for teaching (Ozder, 2014). Specifically, I consider the convenience of using certain film genres of cinema usually connected with science fiction: dystopian and post-apocalyptic, such as, for example, the fabulous Mad Max saga. Precisely the expression that gives the title to this article comes from the not enough appraised “Mad Max 3: Beyond Thunderdome”. However, I won’t use any of the films of one of the greatest dystopian and post-apocalyptic sagas ever although I think all of them are perfect to use in class.

Science fiction films and their use in education

Under the label of science fiction we find such a huge number of different stories, themes, settings, contexts and plots that it is an absolute pipe-dream to define with certainty, or at least in a synthetic way, the myriad of narratives in whatever format that are linked to this genre since it was created, even with its antecedents, by the American pulp magazines in the first decades of the 20th century (Booker & Thomas, 2009, pp. 3-12). Although it can be said science fiction is a child of the Industrial Revolution due to its original connection with technological and scientific progress, certainly nowadays the link with science, that is, its plausibility, is not such a determining factor when defining this genre, nor, although they seem to be consubstantial since its inception is the traditional science fiction’s extrapolation with the present or speculation with respect to their deviation (Landon, 2014; Parrinder, 1980, pp. 1-28). Thus, this multifaceted category combines everything from the futuristic and technologically advanced to the dreamlike nature of reality, from the evocative to the unusual, from the otherworldly to the impossible, and the barriers with other genres, such as fantasy and horror, are often indistinguishable. It is popular culture, but it can also transcend its limits: it can be simple and straightforward, overly simplistic and clumsy, but also sophisticated and complex. In any case, it appeals to the imagination.

Even though it was born as a literary genre, it soon spread to other formats, from comic-books and radio serials to, and this is what is relevant in this article, celluloid and television. In particular, the cinema boosted the genre’s popularity, although it is also true that this explosion was sometimes made through audiovisual products of poor quality, even if some of them were very entertaining, which meant that part of the audience depreciated its value in spite of the notable authors and impressive literary and filmic works from its start (Brosnan, 1991; Cornea, 2007; Mousoutzanis, 2013; Bould, 2014). In the face of an elitist discourse that undervalues this type of fiction, considering it crude, childish and of poor quality, it is well worth turning to Sturgeon’s Law. Faced with the accusation that 90% of science fiction was rubbish, the great science fiction writer Theodore Sturgeon argued that “90% of everything is rubbish”.

If there is one discipline in which science fiction has aroused interest, it is in the scientific-technical field. In the first place, it stands out the interest of scientific research and popular science in analysing science fiction films in measuring the plausibility of what is proposed from a purely scientific perspective. This is represented by the

concept of "Hollywood Physics" The scientific bibliography and popularisation of its plausibility is extensive, as, for example, in audiovisual products such as Star Trek, Matrix, Interstellar, Blade Runner, etc. (Krauss, 1993; Yeffeth, 2005; Thorne, 2014; Oliver, Higgs & Clayton, 2021). In this line of informal education, film can serve as an inspiration for active learning. This is the case with Star Wars. Although it is not advisable to recreate a fully operational Death Star because, as Admiral Ackbar would say, "it is a trap", the engaging book «Star Wars Maker Lab: 20 Craft and Science Projects» (DK Children, 2018) promises to "teach a young Padawan to become a Master of science".

If we move to formal education, although science fiction has been used in all kinds of disciplines, from philosophy to language and literature and physical education, following on from the previous paragraph, as I said above, the area of education where the use of science fiction films as a didactic resource has been most developed is the science-technical field. Thus, since the 1970s in the USA, it has been used for the most varied disciplines that fall into this broad category (Barceló García, 2005) and especially in connection with the aforementioned concept of "Hollywood Physics". In this way, two particular uses are perceived in teaching: as a way of contrasting the image that cinema offers of these scientific disciplines and, in particular, with the aim of assessing the veracity of what is shown or its potential rigor. In this way, there is no shortage of experiences of didactic use, whether at university level, from particular experiences such as the use of the figure of the xenomorph from the Alien film series as a model for working on the taxonomy of Arthropods in the Degree in Early Childhood Education at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid (Álvarez-Millán; Mora-Urda & Pérez-Martín, 2022) or also as a vehicle for teaching experience. This is the case of the very interesting university course "Física en la Ciencia Ficción" offered for years at the University of Oviedo in Spain (Palacios, 2007) or, from the other side of the pond, the various courses taught since 1995 by Juan Espinoza Gutiérrez at the Universidad Metropolitana de Ciencias de la Educación in Chile (Espinoza Gutiérrez, 2018). The same naturally occurs in secondary education (García Borrás, 2006 & 2011; Petit Pérez & Solbes Matarredona 2012, 2015, 2016 & 2023; Borrás Quirós, 2016; Grilli Silva, 2016; Callejas Arévalo, 2019). In this respect, the project Science Fiction in Education (SciFiEd) stands out. Financed by the European Union from 2012 to 2014 in Cyprus, this project "provided teachers with tools, training, and guidance that assisted them in enhancing their teaching, making science more attractive to students, connecting it with real-life issues such as the environment, and providing girls and other marginalised groups with access to science" (Vrasidas; Avraamidou; Theodoridou; Themistokleous & Panaou, 2015). As Miquel Barceló García rightly asserted, "science fiction offers possibilities of wonder and admiration" (2005, p. 4) that enable its use and strengthen the motivation of students, that is, that object of desire that every teacher seeks to generate, emphasise and maintain in their class. But not only this, but, as Espinoza Gutiérrez very suggestively appreciated, "science fiction is an excellent strategy to contextualise the teaching-learning of science" (2018, p. 23).

I share these last two perceptions on the use of film. The use of tools other than those normally used in teaching, whether they are linked to a more traditional approach or to more active methodologies, and said this without falling into false dichotomies, must be justified in accordance with educational assumptions that prove to be beneficial to the teaching process. On this basis, it can be stated unequivocally that science fiction has useful qualities for the learning of the so-called social sciences education, in particular for the hegemonic disciplines of history and geography

Particularly the allegorical nature of this type of film, which is fully consubstantial to this type of fiction, should be highlighted, making it particularly relevant for its exhibition and work in the classroom. Science fiction stories, whether they deal with the implausible,

the remote or the close, usually present the world in which they are set, its characteristics, its internal keys or the circumstances that have contributed to its development. That is the concept of worldbuilding, which is “the process of constructing a complete and plausible imaginary world that serves as a context for a story” (Zaidi, 2019, p. 17). With respect to dystopian and post-apocalyptic cinema, worldbuilding is not usually subtle. Film productions that fall into these two categories tend to present dichotomous visions, exaggerations and extreme characteristics that contextualise and justify the existence of the world they present. Herein lies the key to their use in the geography classroom: such characteristics can be perfectly at odds with the material, ideological, political, social, economic and cultural conditions of our world. As Patrick Parrinder said, “science fiction, in many obvious and not-so-obvious ways, reflects the nature of modern society” (1980, p. 29) and, here I agree with A. Bowdoin Van Riper, in particular, science fiction cinema exhibits, even more than dramatic cinema, “the concerns [...] of the present with particular precision and clarity” (Van Riper, 2017; Ambrós & Breu, 2007, pp. 107-108), offering clear messages and, as well, as being openly biased if the story demands it, without the constraints of trying to attend to exact reality, which, as we have seen above, is not a preferential objective of the historical cinema either, although filmmakers need to show internal consistency in their films. As Von Stackelberg & McDowell said, worldbuilding is “the creation of imaginary worlds with coherent geographic, social, cultural, and other features” (2015, p. 25)

This flexibility becomes versatility by allowing us to connect imagined realities, which may be more or less similar to our own, with the particular context of our world, and also to analyse the subjectivities, interests and ideology of their creators. As Frederic Krome points out, science fiction by exhibiting “its use as a pedagogical tool becomes more logical” in the history classroom as it can be “primary source, for it reveals the anxieties, hopes and aspirations of an era” (Krome, 2021, p. 99 and 2024, p. 111; Breu, 2012, p. 20). In this sense, the contribution of A. Bowdoin Van Riper is very suggestive. He proposes its use in the teaching of history because, although it is obviously a discipline focused on the analysis of the past, the use of science fiction makes it possible to get rid of this essential premise and thus play with otherness in order to consider alternative scenarios with which to develop “thought experiments” in the classroom. This is what it does, for example, with the subject of the Cold War and the science fiction cinema created during this period of latent conflict (Van Riper, 2017), a subject dealt with extensively by the aforementioned Krome and other authors (Krome, 2021, pp. 99 and 2024, 63-76; Tiburcio Moreno, 2024).

To Frederic Krome's intelligent suggestion that “the not-so-secret ingredient of science fiction is history” (2024, p. 111), we can perfectly well add a tagline: “and geography”. Every film is set in a physical space, takes place in specific physical and/or anthropic landscapes, and is also situated in a particular material context, with specific social, economic, cultural, ideological and political settings. They reflect more or less distant and more or less diverse societies, which can be analysed and studied in the classroom in a similar way to the way we do regarding the present world. As interestingly argued by Fátima Velez de Castro, the use of film should be structured around three functions: research, interpretation and teaching (2016, p. 446) and, in this case, it is perfectly possible to work on scenarios that are more or less unconnected to reality and then, through inference, contrast them with the curricular contents.

Of course, some geographical research has linked science fiction with geography. Although it has its antecedents, it is well worth starting with the wonderful collective book “Lost in space. Geographies of Science Fiction”, edited in 2002 by Rob Kitchin and James Kneale, which takes a broad geographical look at both the literature and films of this genre. The beginning of the foreword is truly eloquent: “the two things for which science fiction is best known are these: the creation of new environments, and

the evocation of a sense of wonder. New places are wrought and telling futures conjured, and within both we hold up a mirror to ourselves” (2002, p. xi). In this excellent publication, apart from other readings (Kingsbury, 2002; Doel & Clarke, 2002), the urban spatial analysis by the aforementioned researcher Stuart C. Aitken stands out, focusing on the science fiction and horror cinema represented by the engaging film “Dark city” (1998) directed by Alex Proyas (Aitken, 2002), a subject that had been analysed by John R. Gold in a pioneering publication, «From 'Metropolis' to 'The City': Film visions of the Future City, 1919-1939» (Gold, 1985; see also Quílez Aznar & Pueyo Campos, 2022). On the other hand, Chris Lukinbeal and Stefan Zimmermann's cultural, political, economic and representational geographical analysis of Roland Emmerich's highly entertaining 2004 catastrophe film “The Day of Tomorrow” (Lukinbeal & Zimmermann, 2006) is also estimable.

On the use of dystopian and post-apocalyptic cinema in the teaching of geography in secondary school

The aim of this article is to discuss the didactic and educational potential of three science fiction films for geography classes: “Akira” (Director: Katsuhiro Otomo. 1988), “Children of Men” (Director: Alfonso Cuarón. 2006) and “District 9” (Director: Neill Blomkamp. 2009). All of them share several common traits: their enormous filmic quality, being very entertaining, and fit to the conforming geographic contents established to the third year of ESO, which are circumscribed to the topics of human geography.

These movies belong to what could be called dystopian cinema and, in the case of the first two, also to the post-apocalyptic subgenre. The post-apocalyptic subgenre is about a world similar to our own that is decaying or severely disintegrating for the most diverse reasons, such as a nuclear conflict, an environmental disaster, technological irresponsibility, a plague, or any similar compelling reason and where the surviving population faces the dangers, tries to survive and adapt to the harsh conditions of the world they have been forced to live in, trying, in some cases, to perpetuate the previous living conditions and, in other stories, to create new ways of cohabitation (Booker & Thomas, 2009, pp. 53-64). Dystopias, on the other hand, are about problematic, nightmarish societies, where existence is a drama for a large part of the population in contrast to an oppressive ruling minority that exercises its dominance through the use of one or more tools of coercion as brute force, law, religion, science or any other similar tyrannical instrument. Dystopian societies, more or less similar to the society of our time, are totalitarian and dehumanising, and seek to perpetuate themselves in the face of all dissent by seeking to control all aspects of existence (Booker & Thomas, 2009, pp. 65-74).

These two categories of science fiction, which in many cases hybridise with other genres such as horror, fantasy or cyberpunk, are perfect for use in the classroom. Whether subtly or, more often, in a more blatant way, they tend to use unrestrained satire to survey an undesirable world, the living conditions of its inhabitants and the causes and conditioning factors that explain this state of affairs. In this way, they are ideal productions for examining the material conditions and the space where they take place, but also the society, economy, political, ideological and cultural order of these imaginary worlds. Likewise, and in direct correlation, they are excellent vehicles for analysing both their message, socio- cultural context and underlying ideology, as well as certain values and attitudes worthy of working on in the classroom. In short, they are a good exercise for the classroom, and here I endorse Van Riper's reflections which, although he refers to dystopias, are valid for both subgenres: they “are grim warnings

of the depths to which society could fall if it wantonly indulges its worst vices: ignorance, intolerance, laziness, or wastefulness" (Van Riper, 2017).

In short, the use of cinematic science fiction and, in particular, dystopian and post-apocalyptic cinema, has many advantages in the secondary school geography class. Here is a brief review:

Firstly, it involves a high degree of motivation both for the teacher and, most importantly, for the students. It is convenient to break away from the standard classroom from time to time and, moreover, with an attractive, dramatic audiovisual product which, a priori, is not usually used in education. In my experience, carrying out activities based on this type of fiction captures the students' attention and encourages them to work with more passion and efficiency. As Pilar Isern argues, "such is the power of cinema: to create an unreal reality that transcends the screen, that exceeds all dimensions of space and time, and that is capable of trapping and captivating us" (1997, p. 15).

It gives rise to well-founded and comprehensive analyses. Starting from the imagined unreality of these more or less future and unfortunately prophetic worlds, learning is generated that can be extrapolated to the analysis of geographical reality. In other words, inference skills are developed and, consequently, significant learning takes place, both in terms of the contents of the film and the intentionality and messages they conceal. In short, it strengthens the development of students' critical thinking through the fulfilment of the different types of analysis that can be carried out both internally and externally to these films.

The often-moralising nature of these films and their recreation of scenes, developments and, in short, extreme realities that are often presented, gives rise to an analysis of attitudes and values that can be contrasted with our society.

Cinema, and in this specific case of science fiction, gives rise to multidisciplinary and even interdisciplinarity approaches. Apart from film learning itself, it can be interrelated with the knowledge and methodologies of all the disciplines of secondary education, from history to philosophy, language and literature, biology, etc. In this way, it can work in conjunction with other subjects in the course.

The activities allow for the improvement of reading and writing skills and the debates that arise in the classroom help to improve the students' oral skills. In short, it enables the development of a wide range of discursive skills.

To summarise, cinema is a didactic tool used in the learning of social sciences in the last decades due to its undeniable qualities both in terms of motivation and disciplinary learning. This research focuses on a particular type of cinema, science fiction, and especially on two sub-genres such as dystopian and post-apocalyptic films, according to the advantages that the use of extreme and fictional scenarios provides to understand our own reality. For this reason, the RESULTS section will exemplify this use in a didactic proposal based on three specific films and will also offer a compendium of films from both subgenres that I consider suitable for screening. This compendium is divided into two parts. A table where I emphasise the possible disciplinary and attitudinal uses of all these films and, afterwards, an annotated summary of each of them by me.

Methodology

This paper is based on my past personal experience as a former secondary school teacher and my present as lecturer of didactics of social sciences. However, I must emphasize my undisputed love for science fiction. Since I was a kid I have enjoyed this genre both in comic-books, literature and cinema and through the systematic reading of numerous essays tending to analyse science fiction, some of which I have used to construct this research (Booker & Thomas, 2009; Brosnan, 1991; Cornea, 2007; Everman, 1995; Hubble & Mousoutzanis 2013; Ketterer, 1976; Latham, 2014; Moreno, F. Á. (2010). Besides these works, I want to underline an essay in comic-book format (Dollo & Morissette-Phan, 2022).

With regard to the formative value of science fiction films as a tool for learning social sciences and leaving aside the scientific papers that I have used and are cited in the bibliography, I highlight a number of monographs (Burgess & Gold, 1985; Ferro, 2008; Kitchin & Kneale, 2002; Krome, 2024; Parrinder, 1980; Van Riper, 2017). However, I must emphasize the contributions of Kitchin & Kneale, Krome and Van Riper.

To prepare my teaching proposal and my compendium of films, including the annotated summaries, I have relied exclusively on my teaching experience, the teaching strategies I have designed of my own, the Spanish educational framework and my personal tastes. The data for the film metadata and posters come from the website <https://www.filmaffinity.com> and the film quotes from <https://www.imdb.com/>. Apart from that, I have used my own DVD and Blue-ray versions of "Children of Men", "Akira" and "District 9" as I rewatched again these films to create the activities written below.

Results

Teaching proposal

From the list of films suitable for use in Third year of ESO's "Geography and History" class that I have placed in the second part of this section, I have selected "Akira", "Children of Men" and "District 9" for several reasons. Firstly, due to their great filmic quality: they can be considered works of art of science fiction and true modern classics of the genre; secondly, because I consider them perfect to be worked on in the classroom due to the facilities they provide for geographical and interdisciplinary analysis and for the great wealth of values and attitudes to be analysed with the students and, thirdly, because in the past when I was a secondary school teacher I have already successfully worked on two of them, the films directed by Neill Blomkamp and Alfonso Cuarón, and I could see how all the premises of this research were fulfilled. With regard to Akira, I have chosen it both for its undeniable value and for its nature, since it is an animated film. However, I do not do so for a mere exercise in filmic tokenism but because, in contrast to a stance that continues to see this type of cinema as something childish or juvenile, this 1988 feature film is proof of the maturity of this film style and, furthermore, is absolutely relevant to the purpose of this article. In fact, it would not be the first time that animation has been considered as a tool for geographical learning (Kenna & Russell III, 2017).

Below, I offer the activities that I propose for each film, as well as a brief evaluation and basic technical data sheet from the website <https://www.filmaffinity.com/>. The theatrical posters come from the same webpage.

Akira

"Akira" is Katsuhiro Otomo's masterpiece and the film adaptation of the manga of the same name, written and drawn by Otomo himself. This fast-paced post-apocalyptic film set in a Tokyo reborn after a nuclear conflict, presents a society in a deep crisis at all levels, from the political to the economic and social, which sees the organisation of the Olympic Games as an opportunity to get back on its feet. However, power struggles and widespread disenchantment, exemplified by a student revolt and a religious cult that heralds the arrival of someone called Akira, foreshadow that everything is about to change.

This example of anime, the name by which Japanese animation is known, is unanimously considered a masterpiece of the genre, key to the expansion of Japanese animation around the world, and is also an extremely influential film in aesthetic, plot and narrative terms for all subsequent cinemas. No wonder it was chosen by The Guardian newspaper as one of the best science fiction films ever (O'Neill, 2010).

It is a very motivating film because of its plot and pace and ideal for dealing with the geography of this post-apocalyptic world. In this way, it is possible to analyse the features of social, political, urban and economic geography in this fragile society. It also makes it possible to examine certain attitudes and values from a comparative perspective with the present. From the consideration of the human being in general terms to values such as friendship and coexistence.

Figure 2.
Akira theatrical poster.



Note: From www.filmaffinity.com. Year: 1988. Running time: 124 minutes. Country: Japan. Director: Katsuhiro Otomo. Screenwriter: Katsuhiro Otomo, Izo Hashimoto. Original manga: Katsuhiro Otomo. Music: Shoji Yamashiro

Table 1.
Akira activities.

Context	Explain in your own terms and in less than 200 words the plot of this film.
	What is the history behind Neo Tokyo?
	Who is Akira?
	How is science represented?
Geography	Analyse the city of Neo Tokyo. How is this city depicted? How does it differ from today's Tokyo? Do you detect any urban problem? Explain them.
	What is society like in the film?
	What is the economic situation like in Neo Tokyo?
	Analyses politics in the film. Is it a democracy?
	With regard to education, analyse how it is presented in the film. Interpret this dialogue from the film: "This school is your last chance! If trash like you that can't keep up with the academic ability of regular students...and can't adapt to living in a group screw up here, it's the end of the road! Even if you're under 15, if you get more than 50 penalty points on your record, you're sent to the regular courts! [...] Aren't any of you listening? You lost me halfway through! Discipline!"
	What is the role of religion?
Values and attitudes	Are human rights respected in this future society?
	What values are conveyed in the film? Give reasons for your answer.
Critical analysis	What does this film convey? Analyse its ulterior motives.
	Write a critical review of the movie.

Children of Men

This is an excellent film directed by Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón, winner of the Oscar for best director for "Gravity" (2013), based on a novel by British author P. D. James. It is about a world that is slowly falling apart due to a terminal birth crisis. Women are infertile and no new babies have been born for more than eighteen years due to uncertain causes. This drama is brilliantly highlighted at the beginning with the terrible news of the murder of the last person to be born on the planet, an Argentinian boy who was killed by an admirer when he was only 18 years, four months, twenty days, sixteen hours and eight minutes old. In terms of its narrative style, careful production and clear message, it is unquestionably a true work of art in dystopian and post-apocalyptic filmmaking.

This film is simply fantastic for classroom screening and analysis. I have used it in several ESO's 3rd grade classes, and it works perfectly. It is a fast-paced, highly motivating film that engages the audience from the first minute. It gives rise to deep reflections on the geographical curriculum as well as an analysis of the values of a world in irreversible decline, and also provides an opportunity to generate a very rich debate in class.

Figure 2.
Children of men theatrical poster.



Note: From www.filmaffinity.com. Year: 2006. Running time: 105 minutes. Country: United Kingdom. Director: Alfonso Cuarón. Screenwriter: David Arata, Alfonso Cuarón, Timothy J. Sexton, Hawk Ostby, Mark Fergus. Novel: P.D. James. Music: John Tavener. Cast: Clive Owen, Julianne Moore, Michael Caine, Chiwetel Ejiofor, Pam Ferris, Peter Mullan.

Table 2.
Children of men activities

Context	Explain in your own terms and in less than 200 words the plot of this film.
	Explain carefully the causes behind this dystopian future and its consequences.
	What is the Human Project?
	Who are the Fishes? What do they pretend?
Geography	Analyse the film from the point of view of geography. Fundamentally its demographic, economic, political, environmental and social perspectives.
	How did the British population and government react to this crisis?
	Examine the urban geography of the film's locations, especially London and Bexhill.
	What is the role of religion?
Values and attitudes	What values are represented in the film? What is the value of life in this near-future setting?
	Evaluate the motivations and personalities of the main characters.
	If this future was real, do you think the reaction of people and governments would be similar? And yours? What about you?
Critical analysis	What does this film convey? Analyse its ulterior motives.
	Write a critical review of the movie.

District 9

District 9, the debut feature of such an interesting director as Neill Blomkamp, is a fine film that presents the aftermath of the arrival almost two decades earlier of an alien spacecraft loaded with over a million passengers in the South African city of Johannesburg who were taken in as refugees in a squalid ghetto called District 9. The film revolves around Wikus van der Merwe, a worker in the Extraterrestrial Civilisation Relations Department of Multi-National United (MNU), an arms manufacturing company that has been subcontracted to deal with these new arrivals, who has been tasked with their eviction and rehousing in another camp at 200 Km. which, later in the film, is described as a concentration camp. In the course of the eviction he is affected by an extraterrestrial liquid that progressively mutates him into an alien, making him the target of the ambitions of various groups who want to exploit his hybrid genes.

It is a very good film that, precisely, reflects the essential values that I believe a science fiction film can offer in the classroom. This South African film is an unsubtle allegory of racism and apartheid in which the black population is replaced by the alien population in terms of hatred, suspicion, fear and repulsion by the majority of South African society. In this way, while brilliantly using the subterfuge of science fiction cinema and, in particular, the dystopian sub-genre, the film succeeds in launching various messages in favour of tolerance, respect and coexistence, making it a great work to analyse from a geographical perspective, from migrations and demographics, to urban, social and political geography, as well as sustainability and the environment.

Figure 3.
District 9 theatrical poster.



Note: From www.filmaffinity.com. Year: 2009. Running time: 111 minutes. Country: South Africa. Director: Neill Blomkamp. Screenwriter: Neill Blomkamp, Terri Tatchell. Music: Clinton Shorter. Cast: Sharito Copley, Jason Cope, David James, Mandla Gaduka, Eugene Wanangwa, Kenneth Nkosi.

Table 2.
District 9 activities

Context	Explain in your own terms and in less than 200 words the plot of this film.
	Why have aliens come to Earth?
	What is District 9?
	What is the purpose of the Multinational United (MNU) company and what role does it play in the film?
	What do humans think about aliens? Has their opinion changed over time?
	What is Wikus van der Merwe's personal development?
Geography	Examine District 9 from an urban point of view.
	Investigate the relationship between humans and extraterrestrials on political, economic, social and demographic levels.
	What is the alien society like? Describe it carefully.
Values and attitudes	What is the human attitude to aliens?
	What rights do newcomers have?
	How would humans react if aliens suddenly appeared? What do you think the response would be like? Similar to that shown in the film?
	What does this film convey? Analyse its ulterior motives.
Critical analysis	Write a critical review of the movie.

"Logan! Listen to me! I'm your friend. I understand. We all go crazy once in a while. Nobody knows except me. I won't tell. I could have turned you in. I didn't. But she's a runner. But it's over. Terminate her! Now! You're a Sandman! Now, Logan! Now!"														
Mad Max (1979)	▼	▼	X			X	X	X	X	X		X		
"The Nightrider, that is his name, the Nightrider (...) Remember him when you look at the night sky".														
Mad Max 2: the Road Warrior (1981)	▼	▼	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
"Be still, my dog of war! I understand your pain. We've all lost someone we love, but we do it my way! We do it my way. Fear is our ally. The gasoline will be ours. Then you shall have your revenge".														
Escape from New York (1981)	▼				X	X	X	X	X		X			
"The name's Plissken!"														
Blade Runner (1982)	▼		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
"I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off shoulder of Orion. I watched c-beams glitter in the dark near the Tannhäuser Gate. All those moments will be lost in time, like tears in rain. Time to die.".														
1984 (1984)	▼		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
"Thoughtcrime is death. Thoughtcrime does not entail death. Thoughtcrime IS death. I have committed even before setting pen to paper the essential crime that contains all others unto itself.".														
Brazil (1985)	▼			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
"This is your receipt for your husband... and this is my receipt for your receipt.".														
Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome (1985)	▼	▼	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
"Max: I don't know anything about methane. Aunty Entity: You can shovel shit can't you?"														
Robocop (1987)	▼			X	X	X	X			X	X	X		
"Come quietly or there will be... trouble".														
The Running Man (1987)	▼			X	X	X	X		X			X	X	
"Are you ready for pain? Are you ready for suffering? If the answer is yes, then you're ready for Captain Freedom's Workout.".														
Akira (1988)	▼		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
"Look at what they abandoned in their panic, they were afraid! They were too scared, so they hid it away from the public. They forgot all shame and honor, cast off the civilization and science we had created, and shut the lid of the Pandora's Box they themselves had opened".														
Delicatessen (1991)	▼	▼	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
"Nobody is entirely evil: it's that circumstances that make them evil, or they don't know they are doing evil".														
Mutant Action (1993)	▼		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
"You fool! There are no women in planet Axturias!"														
Demolition Man (1993)	▼			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
"He doesn't know how to use the three seashells!"														
Twelve Monkeys (1995)	▼	▼			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
"Wiping out the human race? That's a great idea. That's great. But more of a long-term thing. I mean, first we have to focus on more immediate goals".														
Gattaca (1997)	▼		X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
"I belonged to a new underclass, no longer determined by social status or the color of your skin. No, we now have discrimination down to a science".														
The Postman (1997)		▼	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
"I was an aerospace engineer. I helped design the Galileo space station. I dream it's orbiting Earth forever, with a dozen human skeletons all grinning at each other. Laughing at us down here".														
The Matrix (1999)		▼	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
"This is your last chance. After this, there is no turning back. You take the blue pill - the story ends, you wake up in your bed and believe whatever you want to believe. You take the red pill - you stay in Wonderland and I show you how deep the rabbit hole goes".														
AI Artificial Intelligence (2001)		▼	X	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
"Please make me a real boy... so my mommy will love me and let me stay with her".														
28 Days After (2002)		▼	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
"Look, if someone gets infected you've got between ten and twenty seconds to kill them. It might be your brother, or your sister, or your oldest friend. It makes no difference. And just so you know where you stand, if it happens to you, I'll do it in a heartbeat".														
The Day After Tomorrow (2004)		▼	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
"Jason Evans: What do you think's going to happen to us? Jack Hall: What do you mean? Jason Evans: I mean "us". Civilization? Everyone? Jack Hall: Mankind survived the last ice age. We're certainly capable of surviving this one. All depends on whether or not we're able to learn from our mistakes".														
The Island (2005)	▼		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
"Oh, no. It's so much more than that. I have discovered the Holy Grail of science. I give life. The agnates, they're simply tools, instruments. They have no souls. The possibilities are endless here. In two years' time. I will be able to cure children's leukemia".														

(2015)														
"Do not, my friends, become addicted to water. It will take hold of you and you will resent its absence".														
10 Cloverfield Lane (2016)		▼					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
"NO! NO! No, no! No! Don't open that door! You're going to get all of us killed!".														
Shin Godzilla (2016)		▼		X			X	X	X	X	X	X		
"Man is more frightening than Gojira".														
Ready Player One (2018)	▼		X	X	X	X			X	X	X		X	X
"Let the hunt for Halliday's Easter Egg, begin".														
Civil War (2024)	▼	▼	X			X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
"Lee: 300. For half a tank and two cans. Pete: 300 buys you a sandwich. We got ham... or cheese? Lee: 300 Canadian. Pete: ... Okay".														
Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga (2024)	▼	▼	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
"There will always be war. But to get home, Furiosa fought the world".														
The Substance (2024)	▼		X	X			X				X		X	X
"Have you ever dreamt of a better version of yourself? Younger, more beautiful, more perfect. One single injection unlocks your DNA, starting a new cellular division, that will release another version of yourself. This is the Substance".														

Annotated synopses

Fahrenheit 451 (Directed by François Truffaut. 1966). The legendary French director Truffaut directed this fine adaptation of Ray Bradbury's immortal novel of the same name, where in a dystopian world the government has decided to eliminate all written text in order to control the population and avoid questioning its power. In this delusional society, firemen no longer save property or lives from fire but use it to destroy books that are found. Although it is an old film for the current cinematic tastes of teenagers, students can easily approach the film and explore the society of the film culturally, politically and socially.

The planet of the apes (Directed by Franklin J. Schaffner. 1968). Spectacular film about the misadventures of an American astronaut played by Charlton Heston on a planet dominated by the great apes and where humans, who are depicted as mere beasts, are subjected to their rule. This fascinating film, undoubtedly one of the best science fiction films ever made, is a wonderful allegory for racial discrimination and environmental damage. Consequently, it is perfect for dealing with the political, social and environmental relations of this peculiar scenario.

The omega man (Directed by Boris Sagal. 1971). Richard Matheson's masterful novel 'I Am Legend' has been adapted into three films. Although none of them are perfect, and the one played by Will Smith is particularly horrifying, the film starring Charlton Heston is entertaining and a child of its time. In this dreadful scenario a deadly virus has wiped out all of humanity and there is only one survivor left, who shares the planet with a group of mutants who hate the past represented by this human relic and therefore seek to eliminate it at all costs. Apart from being very entertaining, it is a great film for dealing with the social and political conditions of this new world that has arisen after the apocalypse of mankind.

THX 1138 (Directed by George Lucas. 1971). Before Star Wars, George Lucas made this film about an oppressive and dehumanising dystopian world where humanity has taken refuge underground and where its inhabitants don't even have names, but wear a combination of numbers and letters, and are tightly controlled by a priestly caste and a robotic police force. Though at times lacking in pace and predictable, it is a good film for scrutinising the political and social characteristics of an abhorrent world.

Soylent green (Directed by Michael Fleischer. 1973). This wonderful film, and in fact my preferred science fiction film since I was a kid, is set in a futuristic overpopulated city of Los Angeles beset by terrible environmental conditions, where resources are scarce, there is a huge social crisis and its members are trying to survive as best they can. In this terrible future, the detective played by Charlton Heston investigates the murder of one of the executives of the Soylent company. This adaptation of Harry Harrison's film is a complete and gripping film, perfectly relevant to the present day even if it emerged in its final form as an allegory of the 1973 oil crisis. It is perfect for dealing with urban geography, demography, political geography, social geography and sustainability.

Westworld (Directed by Michael Crichton. 1973). This film, far more remarkable than the uneven recent TV series, is about a theme park where wealthy tourists come to relive the history of ancient Rome, medieval Europe or the American West, through an immersive experience where they are the protagonists and robots appear as non-player characters. Of course, it all goes wrong. Robots turn into killing machines and especially the robot cowboy shooter interpreted by Yul Brynner, takes it personally if that premise is even possible. It is an entertaining and useful film to deal with geographical aspects, such as consumerism and human relations, but also the values of our society and even, going historical, the perception of the past.

A Boy and His Dog (Directed by L. Q. Jones. 1975). This uneven film based on a story by the brilliant Harlan Ellison is about a teenager of questionable morals who survives in a devastated world with the sole companion of his dog, an intelligent animal endowed with telepathic abilities. Although it has not aged well, it is a good film for dealing with issues of sustainability, social, urban and political geography.

Rollerball (Directed by Norman Jewison. 1975). In this dystopian future, the world is completely controlled by a group of corporations that also organise and sponsor the main entertainment: rollerball, an ultra-violent sport that is broadcasted on a global scale. The growing fame of the world's best player, the captain of the Houston team played by James Caan, makes this corporate cartel uncomfortable and they try to remove him. An unhappy James Caan start questioning this world and his past. Although this film has not also aged well, it is a good film for analysing the society, economics, media and politics of a world controlled by big business.

Logan's Run (Directed by Michael Anderson. 1976). This interesting film is about a society of survivors who, after a nuclear catastrophe, decided to isolate themselves in a closed environment where draconian rules are strictly followed in order to avoid a population and resource crisis. Thus, strict reproductive policies are followed, and a vital age limit of 30 years cannot be exceeded. This film, sometimes camp sometimes kitsch, is a very entertaining one. It is ideal to deal not only with the demography but also with the social and political geography of this dystopian society and the outside world.

Mad Max (Directed by George Miller. 1979). In a world falling apart, plagued by an increasingly dangerous environmental, social and political crisis, a police force is still in place trying to control Australia's roads. Mad Max Rockatansky, considered the best of all cops, sees his life destroyed when a group of amoral bikers take the lives of his wife and son. This shocking film, a child of its time and the embers of the 1973 Oil Crisis, is the great masterpiece of post-apocalyptic cinema. It is a film particularly well suited to deal with the sustainability, society and politics of a world in rapid transition to the palpable disaster of the following instalments of this brilliant saga.

Mad Max 2: the Road Warrior (Directed by George Miller. 1981). This fast-paced film introduces us to the world that was first glimpsed in the first Mad Max instalment, and which has definitely collapsed. The struggle for resources drives this new world and strength is the only language that some of the survivors understand. A wandering Max simply seeking to subsist ends up in a community that controls an oil well in the middle of the desert that is the object of desire of an aberrant band of ultraviolent scavengers led by a ruthless Lord Humungus. This vibrant film is exemplary in addressing issues of sustainability, economic, political and social geography.

Escape from New York (Directed by John Carpenter. 1981). This list would be incomplete without a film by John Carpenter. In a dystopian future, crime has skyrocketed so much in the USA that the government has decided to turn the island of Manhattan into a huge prison where criminals are thrown and forgotten. After a terrorist attack, the US President's plane crashes on the island and Snake Plissken, a former military man turned bank robber, is tasked with rescuing him in exchange for a pardon. This quintessentially Carpentarian film is good for analysing the social and political geography of a US far removed from moral commiseration.

Blade Runner (Directed by Ridley Scott. 1982). This true landmark of cinema is about a future in which bioengineering has developed replicants, human-identical humanoids who, genetically enhanced, take on the toughest and most dangerous jobs. This film is the story of a blade runner played by Harrison Ford, a policeman tasked with dealing with every rogue android and given the job of suppressing a newly arrived group on Earth led by their leader Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer). Featuring the most fascinating cityscape in science fiction cinema, this fascinating film is ideal for dealing with the demographic, economic, urban, political, social and environmental aspects of this multi-corporate dominated world.

1984 (Directed by Michael Radford. 1984). This brilliant film adaptation of George Orwell's great and grim novel is set in a future world dominated by a paranoid dictatorship headed by Big Brother, where a nobody, Winston Smith, a member of the single party and worker in the Ministry of Truth, which is in charge of rewriting the past, lives a relatively peaceful existence until something happens. As well as offering thought-provoking topics for discussion, the film provides an opportunity to inspect a huge range of issues, from politics to society and economics in a dictatorial world.

Brazil (Directed by Terry Gilliam. 1985). This satirical film, a transcript of 1984 by Monty Python's Terry Gilliam, is about a dystopian future where bureaucracy and the system paranoia determine the existence of an eccentric society. Although it is a peculiar film, it provides a good opportunity to examine the society, economy and political structure of this bizarre future.

Mad Max 3: Beyond Thunderdome (Directed by George Miller and George Ogilvie. 1985). Although not the most popularly favoured film in the greatest of all times post-apocalyptic film saga, it is a great film, very entertaining and singularly fit for exhibition in class. This time it narrates the misadventures of Max in Bartertown, a city built in the desert and commanded with an iron fist by Aunt Ama (Tina Turner), who wants the road warrior to free her from the tutelage of a peculiar guy called Master Blaster, the pairing of a terrifying giant and a dwarf mechanical genius, who supplies energy to this brutal enclave. It is a very good film to check the political, social, economic, urban, political and political structure of this settlement as well as the environmental context of this dystopian future.

Robocop (Directed by Paul Verhoeven. 1987). In this fast-paced film we are introduced to a city of Detroit where the threat of rampant crime forces its mayor to delegate policing to a corporation, the OCP. On his first day on the job in the city's most dangerous precinct, a policeman named Murphy is viciously murdered. The OCP uses his mortal remains to transform him into a cybernetic organism designed to fight crime as its tagline indicates, "Robocop, half man, half machine, all cop". This fantastic and fun film provides a great deal of insight into the economy, society, politics and the media world of this society in crisis.

The running man (Directed by Paul Michael Glaser. 1987). In this entertaining film, a satire based on a Stephen King book set in the near future, criminals are forced to participate in an over-the-top TV quiz show where they must survive a group of colourful killers if they want to go free. Ben Richards, a former police officer played by Arnold Schwarzenegger, who had refused to obey a criminal decision by his superiors, ends up being punished by the authorities of this dystopian world to participate in this reality show. This film, tremendously eighties, is interesting for dealing with themes such as the political, urban and social geography of a deeply unpleasant world where consumerism and media exposure are considered supreme values.

Akira (Directed by Katsuhiro Otomo. 1988). This marvel, the adaptation of Otomo's own manga, is set in Neo Tokyo, a city built on the ruins of the ancient Japanese capital devastated after a nuclear war. In this city, wracked by violence, inequality, political strife and religious discord, lives a teenager named Caneda, leader of a youth biker gang, who becomes embroiled in a larger-than-life story. This cinematic spectacle is great for covering absolutely all of the content of the third grade Geography and History curriculum.

Delicatessen (Directed by Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro. 1991). A great film about a post-apocalyptic France where a butcher, faced with a shortage of food, makes cutlets out of everyone who comes his way. This is a film full of black humour that will delight students. It is very useful to deal with aspects of sustainability, economic and social geography as well as an interesting debate on the most burning human values.

Mutant action (Directed by Álex de la Iglesia. 1993). This fantastic Spanish mix of comedy and action film takes place in a not-too-distant future where a group of mutants, i.e. the marginal, ugly and disabled, are grouped into a terrorist gang that fights the snobbish posh. This film narrates the adventures of this commando led by Ramón Yarritu (Antonio Resines) who decides to kidnap the daughter of the owner of the Orujo Corporation and take her to Planet Axturias, where there are no women. This hilarious film is remarkable for examining the urban, economic, political and social geography of a hilarious future.

Demolition Man (Directed by Marco Brambilla. 1993). A highly entertaining film about a cop named John Spartan (Sylvester Stallone) sentenced to rehabilitation in a cryogenic chamber for the unconventional and extremely violent police methods he used in apprehending the dangerous criminal Simon Phoenix (Wesley Snipes). Once Phoenix is released decades later, he organises an orgy of destruction for which an entirely different, peaceful and seemingly benign world, where violence and crime are unknown, along with cholesterol-laden foods and toilet paper, is unprepared. Faced with the inability of the authorities to stop Phoenix, Spartan is released from his cryogenic prison and is shocked by a new world, as evidenced by the hilarious three shells scene, for which he is unprepared. This entertaining film is good for analysing the economic, political, social, urban and environmental characteristics of this peculiar future.

Twelve monkeys (Directed by Terry Gilliam. 1995). In this dystopian future, a disease has ravaged the earth, forcing humanity to live underground. In order to find out more about the virus and tackle its elimination, a group of scientists create a time machine that ends up being used by a prisoner played by Bruce Willis. I am not going to deceive you, this second film by the great Terry Gilliam is not an easy film, although it might be interesting to show it in the classroom and, in this way, see how students analyse the social and political keys to this complex world.

Gattaca (Directed by Andrew Niccol. 1997). In this dystopian world, genetic engineering is widely used to prevent irregularities, malformations and other human characteristics considered abominable. Any newborn who is not subjected to an eugenics programme is considered invalid and is removed from the labour, economic and social elite. This is the case of the protagonist, played by Ethan Hawke, who hides his low genetic condition and tries to thrive in a world that unfailingly regards him as inferior. Although at times tediously paced, it is undoubtedly a great film for dealing with the demographics, social geography and politics of this abnormal world.

The Postman (Directed by Kevin Costner. 1997). A film that, for all its faults, deserves a better reputation than it has. In the aftermath of a nuclear war, American civilisation has collapsed and the struggle for survival leads to an arid and merciless world. One man tries to get rid of his enemies by posing as a postman, a reminiscence of a lost past that ends up implying a new beginning in this context of despair. Although very long, and this is a huge problem for classroom viewing, it is a great film for dealing with the economic, political, urban and social conditions of this dystopian future.

The Matrix (Directed by the Wachowski Sisters. 1999). This modern science fiction classic is undoubtedly one of the most influential films of the last twenty-five years. It tells the story of a computer programmer named Thomas Anderson who, faced with an uneasy feeling of not finding his place in the world, tries to escape by acting as a computer hacker under the pseudonym Neo. One day he is contacted by a terrorist group led by a certain Morpheus who reveals to him that the reality he knows is a lie. This huge, fast-paced film is great for dealing with issues such as sustainability and social geography.

A.I. Artificial Intelligence (Directed by Steven Spielberg. 2001). This entertaining film takes place in a distant future characterised by a disastrous climate crisis that has led to the establishment of limits on the human birth rate due to the scarcity of resources, and where advances in robotics have made it possible to create a whole legion of cybernetic servants that serve the human population in the most varied ways. The plot revolves around David, a very special robot boy, the first of his kind and endowed with characteristics that make him very similar to humans, who is adopted by a family beset by misfortune, as their natural son is in a state of suspended animation waiting for a cure to be found for the rare disease he suffers. It does, however, and David is cast out of the family. This splendid film is apt for analysing the demography, sustainability, economic geography and social geography of this future.

28 Days After (Directed by Danny Boyle. 2002). I have only included two films from the zombie sub-genre to avoid saturating the list, and “28 Days After” certainly stands out for its quality and for breaking away from the saturated patterns of this type of film. A group of ecological activists free some animals affected by a peculiar variant of rabies which, unfortunately, unleashes an epidemic that infects practically all the inhabitants of the United Kingdom, transforming them into violent, irrational beings. Four weeks later, a man (Cillian Murphy) awakens from a coma in a hospital to find himself in an uninhabited London except for these zombies who, naturally, try to kill

him. It's a great film for dealing with the social, political and urban geography of a horrific future where both men and zombies act like monsters, although as a horror film it may not be suitable for all audiences.

The day after tomorrow (Directed by Roland Emmerich. 2004). This entertaining film, a Roland Emmerich's trademark, is certainly, and I can speak from experience, a sure hit in the classroom. It deals with the immediate and radical consequences of global warming on a world that is unprepared despite scientists' attempts to take action. As a result, the Earth is facing a new ice age with devastating consequences. Its projection in the classroom is perfect for dealing with the environmental constraints leading to climate catastrophe and the economic, political and social responses resulting from it.

The Island (Directed by Michael Bay. 2005). While not a major film, it is an entertaining story about a future society surviving in a closed environment after a pollution apocalypse, whose members aspire to move to the island, the last healthy space on the planet. Obviously, the reality is different, and a terrible secret is hidden in this place. This is a fast-paced film which, although by no means outstanding in its excellence, provides an opportunity to value a multitude of ethical issues as well as the demographic, economy and social features of this dystopia.

V of Vendetta (Directed by James MacTeigue. 2005). Although it lacks the bite, grimness and brilliance of the original Alan Moore and David Lloyd's comic-book on which it is based, it is an interesting film to screen in the classroom. It is about a recent future where the UK is controlled by a dictatorship that controls it tightly through media, religion and police action, but is challenged by a mysterious character called V who recruits a young girl named Evey to his cause. It is a good film for examining the political, media and social conditioning factors of this oppressive world.

Children of men (Directed by Alfonso Cuarón. 2006). In the near future there is a terminal demographic crisis, as no one has been born for more than eighteen years. In a world on the brink of human extinction, power struggles, intolerance, xenophobia and fear are rampant. However, there is hope. It is a spectacular film, very dynamic and entertaining, where you can work on all aspects of geography in the third year of ESO as well as many values. For these reasons, and because I have used it on several occasions in the classroom, I consider it a perfect film to be screened.

Idiocracy (Directed by Mike Judge. 2006). This slapstick comedy is about a future where only the stupidest members of society have reproduced and where two survivors from the past arrive by chance after being subjected to a military experiment that is certainly reminiscent of what Fry experienced in Futurama. Although in their time they were both considered fools, in this dystopian future they turn out to be the world's greatest geniuses. As a film, this parody is a bit of a disaster in terms of filmic quality, although it does provide ample grounds for critical reflections on demography, economic, political and social geography. The prologue alone is worth watching at class.

Wall-E (Directed by Andrew Stanton. 2008). This fantastic Pixar film tells the story of a lone robot, the last survivor of a collective of machines programmed to clean up the environmental disaster that forced humanity off the planet, whose humdrum existence is shaken one day. This animated wonder is great for addressing issues of sustainability, urban geography, economics and social issues of both Earth and, as well, the human survivors on space.

District 9 (Directed by Neil Blomkamp. 2009). This is a great film about an alien spacecraft that suddenly appeared twenty years ago in the sky over South Africa and whose inhabitants, who aspire to be considered refugees, are forced to live in a special area, District 9. This place is a veritable ghetto where they live badly, are exploited and abused by the South African government and society. It is a spectacular allegory about migration and racism that is also very useful for dealing with aspects of social, urban and political geography.

The Road (Directed by John Hillcoat. 2009). This is a pretty good film and very entertaining. Although the precise reasons for the world's upheaval are not specified, a colossal environmental crisis has wiped out civilisation as we know it, forcing the survivors into a disheartening existence. This film focuses on the efforts of a father starring Viggo Mortensen to ensure the safety and innocence of his son in a terrible world as they march down a road in search of a safe space. It is a moving story to address the economic, political and social conditions of this harsh new world. It should be noted that this fine adaptation of Cormac MacCarthy's novel can be a challenging and tough film for students.

2012 (Directed by Roland Emmerich. 2009). This feature is an excellent example of recent disaster cinema that, while not a masterpiece of film art, is great for classroom screening. In this movie, loosely based on the premise of the Mayan legend that supposedly predicted the end of the world in 2012, the earth faces a colossal crisis due to its internal overheating. A disaster that imminently threatens the life of the planet. As the world's most powerful nations prepare to confront this risk, an unsuccessful writer, who barely wants to enjoy the children he had with his ex-wife, accidentally discovers the plans of world governments. Explosions, adrenaline and drama in abundance are useful for dealing with the environmental, political and social conditions of this world in crisis.

Repo Man (Directed by Miguel Sapochnik. 2010). In a dystopian future, medical advances have managed to improve the longevity and quality of life of its inhabitants in exchange for a very high monetary cost. All those who undergo such treatments and do not pay are hunted down by the "repo men", that is, agents of recovery who do not hesitate to snatch the implants from them in a brutal manner. One day, the best of the repo men (Jude Law) is forced to use an artificial heart but unfortunately for him its cost is finally unaffordable, and he must flee from his former colleagues. This entertaining film is useful for dealing with the economic, social and political geography and as well the health geography of a rather questionable world.

The Book of Eli (Directed by Albert and Allen Hughes. 2010). A typical post-apocalyptic film in which society has collapsed and a new order has arisen governed by the law of the strongest, although there are some who try to make amends. Despite the presence of Denzel Washington, it is not exactly an unforgettable film and could easily pass for a post-apocalyptic Ned Flanders' fantasy. However, because of its broad brush and certain interesting scenes and scenarios, it is an evocative film to contrast the new political, social and economic realities of a world without rules and, consequently, it is suitable for geographical learning.

Rise of the planet of the apes (Directed by Rupert Wyatt. 2011). Excellent modern prequel to 1968's classic "Planet of the Apes". A group of chimpanzees are used as test subjects for a retrovirus designed to combat Alzheimer's disease, resulting in a significant increase in their intelligence and also their aggressiveness. However, because of the undesirable consequences of this drug, all the chimpanzees are eliminated except for one, a baby called Caesar who is raised by the scientist leading

this project and who, after various vicissitudes, will end up leading the ape rebellion against humans. It is a great film for dealing with the health geography and the economic, political and social characteristics of this new ape society in contrast to the human one.

The hunger games (Directed by Gary Ross. 2012). This undisguised copy of the Japanese novel and film “Battle Royale”, which I do not recommend in this article because of its excessive violence, is a film that does not stand out for its cinematographic qualities although it can be useful in the classroom as it is considered motivating for students. It is about a dystopian society where several teenagers are selected to fight each other in a televised deathmatch for the whole population. It is a work that can be interesting for analysing the demographic, economic, social and, above all, political context of this world.

Dredd (Directed by Pete Travis. 2012). This adaptation of the incredible comic book by John Wagner and Carlos Ezquerro unfortunately passed unnoticed on the screens despite its undeniable quality and visual appeal. It deals with a dystopian future where, after a nuclear conflict, the whole of the east coast of the USA and Canada forms a brutal megalopolis called Mega-City One. Law enforcement is carried out by magistrates, the judges, who act in a plenipotentary manner as judge, jury and executioner in a world ravaged by violence. The story is about the struggle between Judge Dredd and his companion Judge Anderson and the drug dealer Ma-Ma, who runs a criminal empire out of a huge block of flats. This violent film is interesting for addressing issues of urban geography, economics, politics, social issues and sustainability in this brutal dystopian world.

Elysium (Directed by Neil Blomkamp. 2013). A highly entertaining science fiction film starring Matt Damon in which society is divided between the richest, who live on a luxurious space station orbiting the earth, while the great mass of poor people survives on an impoverished earth and dream of going to live in space. It is a good film for inspecting the social, political, economic, urban and environmental coordinates of a bleak future.

Pacific Rim (Directed by Guillermo del Toro. 2013). A film about giant robots (jaegers) piloted by humans facing huge monsters (kaijus) cannot fail in the classroom, especially if it has the quality of this suggestive film by Mexican director Guillermo del Toro. This glorious visual exercise is very useful for dealing with the political, social, economic, urban geography and sustainability of a threatened world.

Her (Directed by Spike Jonze. 2013). Although this film cannot properly be defined as a dystopia or a post-apocalyptic film, although it is set in the not-too-distant future, it is an interesting one. It introduces us to a low-flying writer (Joaquin Phoenix) who is in the process of separating from his wife and who acquires an operating system with the voice of Scarlett Johansson, with whom he gradually falls in love. It is a film that, depending on the group, could be suitable for the classroom and is useful for dealing with dehumanisation, consumerism and other issues that can be dealt with in social geography.

World War Z (Directed by Marc Forster. 2013). This fast-paced film, based on Max Brooks' complex novel, tells the story of how the world is being driven to apocalypse by a strange virus that transforms humans into zombies. A former UN worker named Gerry Lane, played by Brad Pitt, is forced to get involved to protect his family in the investigation of this catastrophic disease that threatens global existence. It is a good, highly entertaining film, dealing with a world on the road to devastation and issues of

health geography, politics, social, economic, demographics and sustainability as well as a whole set of values linked to the human experience.

The Maze Runner (Directed by Wess Ball. 2014). This first instalment in a film saga of questionable quality is about a survival competition between a group of young people in an apocalyptic future. It is a film that appeals to teenagers and can be used to examine the sustainability, social and political geography of a murky world.

The Lobster (Directed by Giórgos Lánthimos. 2015). A very good film starring Colin Farrel and Rachel Weisz, but not so easy to apply in the classroom because of its treatment of sexuality, although it is not scandalous either. It is about a society where bachelorhood and masturbation are forbidden and where people without partners are taken to a hotel where they have to find a new partner, or they will be transformed into animals. It is a very interesting film to deal with ethical issues and also with social geography, demography and politics.

Mad Max: Fury Road (Directed by George Miller. 2015). In a post-apocalyptic future where war and human-induced climate change have destroyed the environment, the struggle for resources is cruel and merciless, creating new social conditions and domination. This time the focus is not so much on Mad Max as on a woman, Imperator Furiosa (Charlize Theron), who, in spite of being considered the trustworthy woman of Immortan Joe, the brutal leader of The Citadel, tries to flee this atrocious community along with the leader's wives. This fabulous, adrenaline- pumping film is great for analysing the environmental, demographic, economic, political and social conditions of a future dominated by scarcity.

10 Cloverfield Lane (Directed by Dan Trachtenberg. 2016). In this unsettling film, the second in the Cloverfield trilogy although it can be watched without having seen any of the other two instalments, a woman is involved in a car accident while fleeing of an unhealthy relationship. She wakes up chained in a house where her warden, played by John Goodman, warns her that, while she was unconscious, an unknown threat has rendered the earth's surface unlivable. It is an interesting film for dealing with social geography and sustainability.

Shin Godzilla (Directed by Hideaki Anno and Shinji Higuchi. 2016). While I could mention more films linked to the legendary figure of Godzilla, the monster born of the trauma caused by the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and who has starred in dozens of films since 1954, this particular film is notable for a number of reasons. While there is also action and destruction associated with the wanderings of this being, it also focuses in a peculiar way on the reaction of the authorities, ironically portraying Japanese bureaucracy as inefficient, slow and futile. It is a useful film for dealing with political and urban geography.

Ready Player One (Directed by Steven Spielberg. 2018). This undisguised and economically well-spun homage to 1980s nostalgia presents a future world in which society is turned to computer simulation to the detriment of real life. Apart from being a good film, very agile and attractive for students, this Steven Spielberg's feature is interesting for analysing the urban geography and the economic and social conditions of a world obsessed with this immersive technology.

Civil War (Directed by Alex Garland. 2024). Although there is no science fiction component here, this film is interesting in that it presents a dystopian future of a United States divided by a terrible civil war. The film is about a group of journalists who delve into the war scenarios of this bloody conflict. Although as a film it is a little uneven at

times, it is a good film for analysing the political and social conditions, as well as certain values and attitudes, derived from a scenario that, unfortunately, enters the probable.

Furiosa: A Mad Max Saga (Directed by George Miller. 2024). In this latest instalment to date of the Mad Max saga, Max Rockatansky barely has a cameo as the focus is on Imperator Furiosa, the real protagonist of the previous Fury Road instalment, and how she went from being a girl kidnapped from her community to becoming the powerful and trustworthy woman of the autocrat Immortan Joe, lord and master of The Citadel. In this instalment, we are introduced in greater depth to the world anticipated in the previous instalment and the rivalries for power in this devastation. It is suitable for analysing the economic, political, social and environmental conditions of this post-holocaust world.

The substance (Directed by Coralie Fargeat. 2024). Although this film cannot be considered truly a dystopian film, it is interesting or using at class, although is also a bit tough and unsettling, as it deals with the fear of aging. A celebrity (Demi Moore), afraid of losing her status, decides to use a new product that promises to solve her fight against wrinkles. Although it is an irregular film, where sometimes you do not understand why things happen, it is interesting to analyze the demographics, society, economics and mentalities of a society that is exactly like ours.

Discussion

Regarding what was formulated in the INTRODUCTION section and defined in the RESULTS section, I must highlight the following ideas:

That I consider viable the use of science fiction films, and in particular films belonging to the dystopian and post-apocalyptic sub-genres, as a didactic resource for the teaching of geography in similar terms to how it has been proposed for the teaching of history. Firstly, because of its motivating nature for students accustomed to enjoying this type of cinema and, secondly, because the analysis of imaginary worlds, often paradigmatically extreme, allows for advanced and critical geographical analysis which can then be used to study our reality through a process of inference. In other words, designing and using activities such as the ones I propose in the classroom allows us to develop critical thinking and foster the development of students' geographical notions.

The compendium of dystopian and post-apocalyptic films I have offered provides a wide variety of film resources that can be used in the classroom and that can be adjusted to the classroom according to its internal characteristics. In this way, one or another film can be chosen depending on various factors such as the geographical curricular contents and the values and attitudes implied to be worked on in class, the degree of maturity of the class and the teacher's own tastes.

Conclusions

Education is a difficult profession, especially in our times. Faced with a world dominated by new technologies, and where AI is developing in a way that is still difficult to foresee its long-term consequences, by social networks and by an overabundant sensory stimulation as well as a massive leisure culture, the teacher must not take a back seat, but try to take advantage of this changing context to continue his or her educational work in the most varied scientific disciplines. In the case of the so-called social sciences in education, in particular history and, in this case, especially geography, the most diverse teaching strategies and resources emanating from this reality can be used in order to attract students, motivate them and, most importantly,

facilitate their learning. In this sense, cinema is a prodigious tool that fulfils all these purposes. Even the most superficial cinematography can be used in order to develop cognitive tools of inference towards our time and space. This is what I propose with science fiction cinema and, in particular, with the dystopian and post-apocalyptic sub-genres. They are a particularly valuable type of film to contrast with the academic curriculum and, moreover, provide valuable fresh air in the classroom. The three films I have chosen, known for their good quality and entertaining nature, are great for an in-depth study of a wide range of issues of human geography, from social to urban analysis, passing through economic and political relations, demography or interaction with the environment, as well as to establish suggestive moral debates. The comparison with different realities based on imaginary and extreme premises such as the arrival of a million aliens seeking refuge, an immediate future where no children are born and humanity is condemned to extinction, or a society which, although it has survived a nuclear conflict, is fraying as in the case of *Akira*, allow new opportunities for social analysis to be generated for students who can exercise their social analysis skills in a scenario to which they are not accustomed. This departure from traditional educational schemes helps to increase students' motivation and strengthens their critical analysis of 'real' social reality through a mechanism of inference that is typical of active learning. For these reasons, its projection in the classroom is highly recommended for teachers who teach geography in secondary education and further. If students understand that any tool is useful for deepening social analysis, if students understand that informal and non-formal learning also contribute to sustaining and solidifying what is taught in the classroom, then it will have been worthwhile.

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