TECHNISCHE UNIVERSITÄT
IN DER KULTURHAUPTSTADT EUROPAS
CHEMNITZ

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EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY
FOR CROSS-BORDER
KNOWLEDGE SHARING

SUMMER SCHOOL

How much science is in science fiction?

August 28th–29th, 2025

DEPARTMENT OF
MEDIA PSYCHOLOGY
Chemnitz University of Technology

Day 1	August 28th, 2025
09:00	Registration Desk
09:30	**Kick-Off Presentation**
10:00	***Your Hosts Welcome You:*** Projects at the Institute for Media Research (TU Chemnitz)
11:00	**Keynote** *Prof. Dr. Jaime Banks* Syracuse University, USA
12:00	Lunch at TUC Cafeteria
13:15	**Posters & Coffee**
14:00	**Creative Workshop** Techno-Utopias, Cyberpunk & Humanism in Short-Form Prose *Denise Lee*
17:00	Individual Dinner Time
19:00	**Social Evening** Movie Night at TUC

Day 2	August 29th, 2025
10:00	**Keynote** *Prof. Dr. Sorin Cazacu* University of Craiova, Romania
11:00	**Workshop** From Sci-Fi to Science: Exploring the Boundaries of the Possible *Dr. Georg Valtin*
12:00	Lunch at TUC Cafeteria
13:15	**Keynote** *Prof. Dr. Fabio Buttussi* University of Udine, Italy
14:15	**Workshop** Writing with Machines: Exploring AI in Academic Work *Julian Bornemeier*
15:30	Wrap-Up & Goodbye

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Prof. Dr. Jaime Banks (Syracuse University, New York, USA)
Media Make the Model: How Sci-Fi Helps Shape our Reactions to Social Machines
August 28, 11:00 am

From the cute and friendly trappings of WALL-E to the cold and sinister vibes of Agent Smith, media representations of robots and artificial intelligence help to shape our ideas about these machines. This keynote will explore how science fiction—and other media forms and genres--contributes bits of knowledge to our internal mental models. We will consider how these models evolve, how they are activated, and how their activation can have real effects on how we think and feel when we encounter these social machines. In particular: How do media contribute to how we see them as mindful, moral, trustworthy, and friendly (or not)?

Prof. Dr. Sorin Cazacu (University of Craiova, Romania)
Sci-Fi Novels as Human-Machine Fusion in the Making
August 29, 10:00 am

The impact that science has on science fiction novels is overpowering, as it both reflects and casts the genre's exploration of new technologies, future developments, and societal transformations. Science fiction often stems from real scientific principles of physics, chemistry, biology, or engineering and creates speculative futuristic worlds. The connection between science and science fiction also works contrariwise: science fiction has ignited real scientific innovation. This presentation explores the ways in which sci-fi novels not only reflect the scientific trends of their time but also anticipate the evolution of science and technology.

Prof. Dr. Fabio Buttussi (University of Udine, Italy)
How Much Fiction Is in Science? An Excursus on Serious Games!
August 29, 13:15 pm

Serious games use fiction and game elements to further serious purposes, such as learning, training, and promotion of positive behaviors. This keynote offers an excursus on different types of serious games, from non-digital ones to recent examples, also using modern devices for immersive virtual reality. The keynote will also provide several examples of scientific studies conducted by the HCI Lab of the University of Udine showing the positive effects of serious games for different purposes.

Denise Lee (https://www.lizhuli.com)
Creative Workshop: Techno-Utopias, Cyberpunk and Humanism in Short-Form Prose
August 28, 14:00 pm

"Science fiction can be defined as that branch of literature which deals with the reaction of human beings to changes in science and technology." - Isaac Asimov

Science fiction often brings the outer reaches of technological potential into the societal context. The futuristic, hypothetical settings give us new playgrounds for exploring our own social natures while diving into the deepest depths of possibility. These speculations range from the dystopian to the utopian, or may simply be interpreted through a more emotionally resonant, human lens.

This workshop explores the participants' own areas of interest through a series of creative, short-form writing exercises. We will have an exchange on our chosen topics and then approach them with different perspectives and techniques to reflect on the questions: How do we think human society might respond to these advancements? What are we afraid of seeing happen as a result? And what do we hope to see?

Dr. Georg Valtin (Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany)
From Science Fiction to Science: Exploring the Boundaries of the Possible
August 29, 11:00 am

This interactive workshop explores how science fiction portrays future technologies – and how close (or far) these visions are from real scientific developments. Participants will work in small groups to examine selected technologies, compare them with current research, and evaluate their feasibility on a scale ranging from "almost here" to "impossible."

Julian Bornemeier, M.Sc. (Chemnitz University of Technology, Germany)
Writing with Machines: Exploring AI in Academic Work
August 29, 14:15 pm

This workshop explores how AI tools can support research and academic writing, from idea generation to text production. In small groups, participants will share their own experiences and present their results for collective discussion on opportunities and limitations.

High-Density Session
Your Hosts Welcome You: Projects at the Institute for Media Research
August 28, 10:00 am

Your host, the Department of Media Psychology led by Prof. Dr. Jan-Philipp Stein, is one of six chairs located at the *Institute of Media Research* (TU Chemnitz).
Kicking off the main program with an inspiring journey through various research topics, several members of the Institute's scientific staff will briefly introduce their current work:

Social Exclusion (and Coping) via Digital Media
Dr. Sarah Lutz

Strange and Beautiful? Perceived Attractiveness of Non-Human Characters
Dr. Georg Valtin

Virtual Humans in the Context of Progressive Online Movements
Jiyeon Yeo, M.Sc.

Perceptions of Social Biases in AI-Generated Imagery
Julian Bornemeier, M.Sc.

Speculative Design as Science Fiction: A Design-Led Engagement with Emerging Futures
Dr. Anne Sonnenmoser

Poster Session
Posters & Coffee
August 28, 13:15 pm

Participants are invited to present their **own research** (both WIP and concluded studies) during our poster session. Since the Summer School is designed as a more creative, media-oriented space to come together and discuss social scientific research, we encourage contributing participants to experiment with innovative and unusual ways of presenting their work on their posters (e.g., using visual elements or quotes from famous sci-fi movies).

In terms of **formal guidelines**, we are able to accomodate posters in both landscape and portrait format, ranging between DIN A0 and DIN A2.

Location

Altes Heizhaus (A15)
Courtyard of the University Main Building
Technische Universität Chemnitz

Straße der Nationen 62
09111 Chemnitz
Germany

Travel Recommendations

When traveling by airplane, you can fly into Berlin (BER), Leipzig/Halle (LEJ), or Dresden (DRS), followed by a 2-3 hour train ride to Chemnitz Main Station.

For short- or medium-distance travel, you can arrive by train or bus at Chemnitz Main Station or Chemnitz Central Bus Station, both within five minutes' walking distance from the main event venue ("Altes Heizhaus", university building A15):
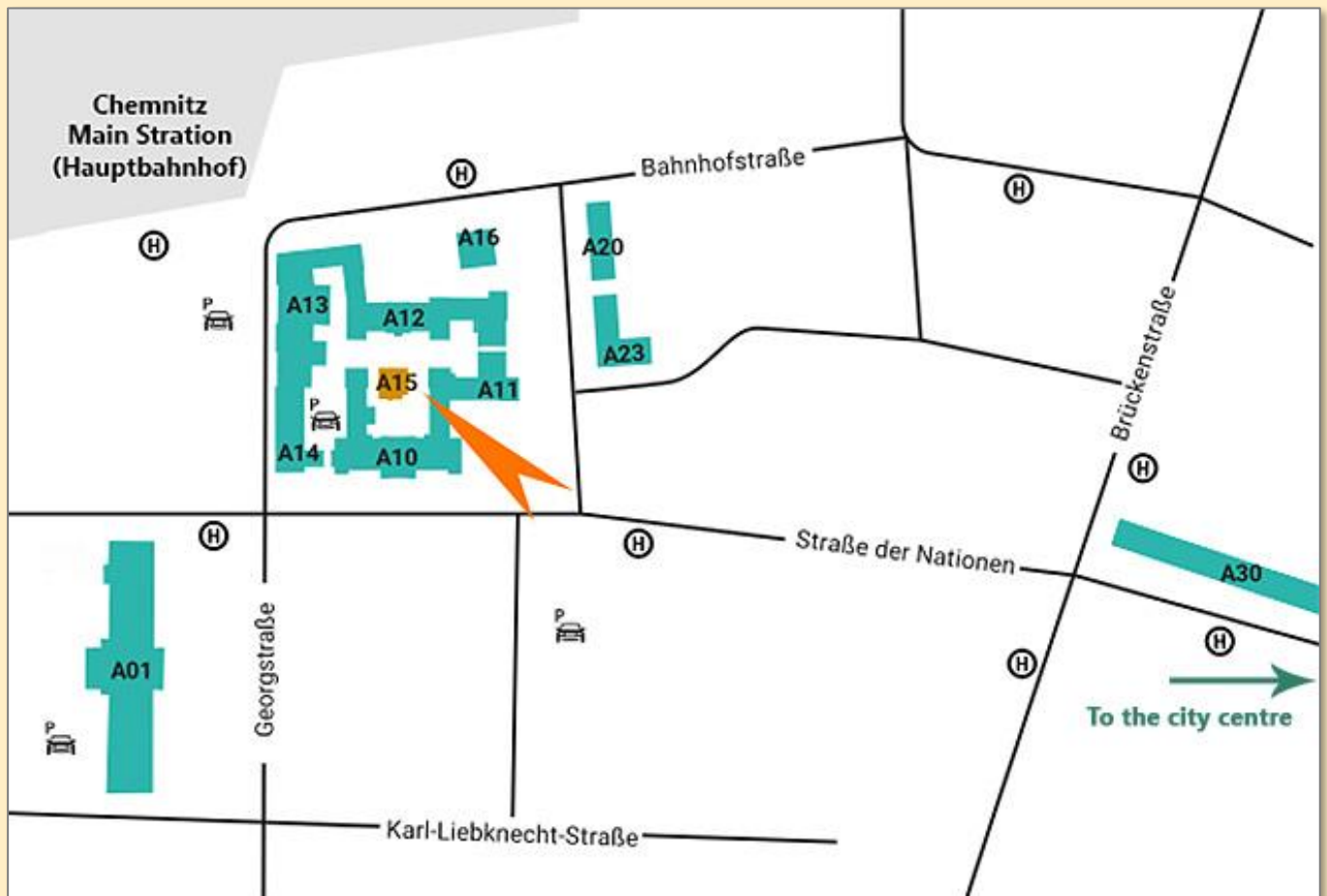
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DGPs | Deutsche Gesellschaft
für Psychologie
| Media Psychology Division

DAAD | Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service

This event is hosted by the Department of Media Psychology
Chemnitz University of Technology

Lead coordinator / Scientific supervisor: Prof. Dr. Jan-Philipp Stein
ACROSS coordinator: Ariane Korn
Conceptional support: Julian Bornemeier, Sonia Kampel, Dr. Sarah Lutz
Technical support / Logistics: Timo Freye