

35th IAA SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE AND SOCIETY (E5)
Interactive Presentations - 35th IAA SYMPOSIUM ON SPACE AND SOCIETY (IP)

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FEAR AND HOPE IN SPACE STORYTELLING: WHAT SCIENCE FICTION CAN TELL US ABOUT
PUBLIC VIEWS ON SPACE.

Abstract

Stories are how we learn about the world, and science fiction in particular has often been cited as a first entry for people interested in the world of space and space exploration. The genre of horror, meanwhile, is frequently viewed as a reactionary response to a society's fears and anxieties. While they are not the same genre, both science fiction and horror are often discussed in one breath, and science fiction often utilizes elements of horror combined with hope to explore and examine anxieties and dreams about humanity's future with space and technology.

The 2010s saw major movement in space policy, particularly within the United States. The decade also saw a series of commercially successful space-based science fiction movies that defy easy classification on the scale of horror to hopeful; 2013's *Gravity*, 2014's *Interstellar*, 2015's *The Martian*, and 2016's *Arrival*. By comparing the thematic and narrative techniques of fear and hope through the three movies and examining the patterns in their commercial successes, we can tease out public perspectives on space and examine how the impact of those perspectives can also be seen in developments in space policy before, during, and after the 2010s.

Narrative fiction set in, or about space can serve as a reflection of our relationships with current law and policy, and a way of building future generations thoughts and perspectives on shaping policy. By examining the interactions between hope, curiosity, and horror in science fiction and how those themes gain traction in different markets, we can gain insights into the public views on space and their impacts on policy.