FIRST-UG761 Section 001
Spring 2014: Mon/Wed 4:55-6:10pm
Prof. Amanda Licastro
Office Hours: Mondays 2:30- 4:30 p.m. office 608 (1 Washington Place).
Tuesday mornings virtually, via Skype (alicastro3), Google Hangout, or email
(amanda.licastro@gmail.com). You must email me to make an appointment.

NYU Gallatin School of Individualized Study - First Year Research Seminar

Robots, Apes, and Electric Sheep: Investigating Our Cybernetic Culture

Is the divide between human and machine becoming harder to maintain? From the Golem of folk tales to Frankenstein and even Siri, the concept of the semi-artificial person, or cyborg, is long-lived, appearing across popular, religious, and scientific imaginations. As technology becomes more personal, the cyborg becomes less alien, and the prospect of our own transformation into technologically enhanced organisms seems imminent. In this course we will investigate posthumanism through a critical look at cybernetics in our culture, examining representations in media such as literature, film, television, advertising, video games, and comics. Students will research the current state of modern medical and robotics science and use this to inform their readings of the cyborg in our society. Critiques will be framed through the lens of gender, race, and labor using the theory of scholars Katherine Hayles, Donna Haraway, Bruno Latour, Judith Bulter, and Howard Reingold. The class will engage in multimodal research projects on a WordPress blog that focus on building written and visual rhetorical skills. Readings will include fiction such as Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*, Marge Piercy's *He, She, and It,* and Karel Capek's *R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots)* , which will be paired with films such as *Blade Runner* and *The Stepford Wives*.

Course Objectives
- Communication Skills – The ability to express ideas and arguments effectively in oral, visual, and written forms.
- Reading Comprehension –The ability to read and comprehend ideas and arguments from diverse perspectives, and the ability to integrate these ideas into your own writing using correct citation and attribution practices.
- Information Literacy – An awareness of the practical skills involved in the effective use of information technology and print and electronic information resources, as well as critical reflection on the nature of information itself, its technical infrastructure, and its social and philosophical context and impact.

Academic Honesty

Do not plagiarize. Our course site will be public, and you could face legal consequences for stealing other people's work. Besides that, you can be dismissed from NYU for cheating:

"As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or

recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html for a full description of the academic integrity policy."

I will go over proper documentation style in the course of the semester in conjunction with OWL at Purdue (https://owl.english.purdue.edu/). If you have questions regarding proper citation practices PLEASE ask me or contact a librarian for help.

Disability Accommodations:

If you have a disability, please come speak with me at the beginning of the term and contact NYU's Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980.

Note: I may need to adjust this syllabus and course schedule to accommodate pedagogical needs as they arise. We will discuss all changes as a class and the new schedule will be reflected on our course blog.

Course Requirements:

Active Class and Online Participation 25%

Short Writing Assignments 20%

Digital Midterm Project 25%

Group Design Fiction Project 30%

*Please be aware that these are approximate calculations that reflect the importance of each assignment. There will be smaller assignments and extra credit added. Every assignment will be explained at length in class and through assignment sheets posted to the site.

Attendance Policy:

Attending class is essential to your success, and shows respect for your peers and me. I will allow up to 2 absences over 15 weeks. After 2, you must come speak with me and we will discuss your standing in the course. At the beginning of each class you will complete a short writing assignment. This will be used to take attendance, and if you are late you miss this activity and will not be counted as present. Similarly, **late work** will not be accepted, particularly the weekly posts to the course blogs. For the midterm and final projects you must meet with me if there are extenuating circumstances that necessitate a change.

Required Texts:

Capek, Karel, and Ivan Klima. *R.U.R.* Trans. Claudia Novack-Jones. London ; New York: Penguin Classics, 2004. Print.

Dick, Philip K., and Roger Zelazny. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. New York: Del Rey, 1996. Print.

Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. 1 edition. Chicago, Ill: University Of Chicago Press, 1999. Print.

Piercy, Marge. *He, She and It*. Reprint edition. New York: Fawcett, 1993. Print.

Tentative Schedule:

1/26	Class: Welcome! Syllabus, website, and introductions. Post intro on site by Wed. Home: **Read** Wieseltier, Leon. "Among the Disrupted." *The New York Times*. 7 Jan. 2015. Web. 19 Jan. 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/18/books/review/among-the-disrupted.html
1/28	Class: Reverse outlining. Join Zotero. Home: **Read** Chapter 1. Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. 1 edition. Chicago, Ill: University Of Chicago Press, 1999. Print. **Post** definition.
2/2	Class: Definitions. Zotero. Home: Read Jonthan Gray's chapter (specifics TBA). Begin **read**ing R.U.R. (first three acts). Capek, Karel, and Ivan Klima. *R.U.R.* Trans. Claudia Novack-Jones. London; New York: Penguin Classics, 2004.
2/4	Class: Class visit from Jonathan Gray. Home: **Read** Weiner, Norbert. "Cybernetics in History." Cybernetics. p 41-53. Print. (PDF) *Finish R.U.R.* Group 1 **post** provocations.
2/9	Class: Fishbowl. Home: **Read** Chapter 4. Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. 1 edition. Chicago, Ill: University Of Chicago Press, 1999.
2/11	Class: Thesis Statements and integrating sources. Home: Begin **read**ing Dick, Philip K., and Roger Zelazny. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*. New York: Del Rey, 1996. Print. Group 1 **post** critical readings. Group 2 and 3 post responses to two posts from group 1.
2/16	NO CLASS Watch *Stepford Wives*. (full version here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gpzjoDNztKE). **Read** Clarke, Adele. "Modernity, Postmodernity & Reproductive Processes ca. 1890-1990." P 139-155. in Haraway, Donna J. et al. *The Cyborg Handbook*. 1st edition. New York: Routledge, 1995. Print. (PDF). Continue reading *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (please finish at least through chapter 11) and Group 2 **post** provocations.
2/18	Class: Fishbowl. Home: Finish *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* **Read** Davis, Lennard. "Constructing Normalcy." N.p. Web. (PDF). Watch/ read "'Bionic Pop Star' Viktoria Modesta Invades X Factor Final." *Dazed*. Web. 15 Dec. 2014. http://www.dazeddigital.com/music/article/22934/1/bionic-pop-star-viktoria-modesta-invades-x-factor-final **Post** questions about this text for our guest speaker.
2/23	Class: Class Visit with Andrew Lucchesi. Home: Begin **read**ing Piercy, Marge. *He, She and It*. Reprint edition. New York:

	Fawcett, 1993. Print. Group 2 **post** critical readings. Groups 1 and 3 respond.
2/25	Class: Blade Runner. Home: **Read** Piercy, Marge. *He, She and It*. **Post** reflections comparing book to film.
3/2	Class: Finish Blade Runner. Home: **Read.** Piercy, Marge. *He, She and It*. Group 3 **post** provocations.
3/4	Class: Fishbowl. Home: Finish Piercy, Marge. *He, She and It*. Read Butler, Judith. "Imitation and Gender Insubordination." *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. N.p. Web. 21 Jan. 2015. (PDF)
3/9	Class: Cyberfeminism. BRING COMPUTERS. Home: "Donna Haraway - A Cyborg Manifesto." N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Aug. 2014. (PDF). Group 3 post critical readings. Group 1 and 2 post responses to two posts.
3/11	Class: Midterm Assignment. Evaluating Resources. Home: Work on midterm.
3/16-3/18	SPRNG BREAK (Work on midterm.)
3/23	Class: Bring in outlines with bibliography. Home: RESEARCH! Begin adding sources to Zotero.
3/25	Class: Library Visit. Meet in Bobst Library room 619 promptly at 4:55pm. Home: Finish draft.
3/30	Class: Peer review drafts. Home: Revise and post midterms.
4/1	Class: Present midterms. Home: Chris Arkenberg. "Inside The Near-Future World Where All Our Data And Machines Are In Constant Communication." *Co.Exist*. N.p., n.d. Web. 21 Dec. 2014. http://www.fastcoexist.com/3038393/futurist-forum/inside-the-near-future-world-where-all-our-data-and-machines-are-in-constant-
4/6	Class: "Dataism" Home: Read "We Don't Have Data, We Are Data » Cyborgology." N.p., n.d. Web. 22 Dec. 2014. http://thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/2014/12/22/we-dont-have-data-we-are-data/
4/8	Class: Final assignment. Choose groups. Home: Reading in preparation for class visit. Post questions.
4/13	Class: Class visit with Gregory T. Donovan. Home: Write Group Contracts in Google Doc. Send link.

4/15	Class: Draft proposals. Home: Work on draft in Google Doc.
4/20	Class: Annotated Bibliographies. Home: Post 3 annotated bibliography entries.
4/22	Class: Peer review proposals. Home: Post revised proposal.
4/27	Class: Designing digital projects. Home: Work on final.
4/29	Class: Conferences/Work on projects. Home: Finish and post final projects.
5/4	Class: Final presentations Home: Work on final reflection.
5/6	Class: Final presentations Home: Work on final reflection.
5/11	Final Reflections due