

ENG 111 Topics: Literature, Film, Cultural Studies (W)

The Cyborg in Posthumanism

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(No phone calls please).

Block 3: Monday October 27-Wednesday, November 19
Athens Room, Thomas Commons
We will meet mornings 9-11 am and again in the afternoon, from 12:30-3pm.

Texts:

Frankenstein by M. Shelley. Ed. Wolfson, Longman Cultural Edition.

There are a great number of PDF files on Moodle, many of which I will ask you to print and bring to class.

This course investigates the figure of the cyborg—the blended human/machine creature that has proven fascinating and generative for science fiction enthusiasts and critical theorists alike. We will read a few early imaginations of the cyborg (such as *Frankenstein's* monster) and view a great many recent science fiction films (such as *Alien*, *The Terminator*) and television shows (such as *Battlestar Galactica*, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*) to explore increasing human interaction with technology. The cyborg speaks both to fears people have, of the human body being controlled by the machine, and wishes people have, for an evolution of the human beyond biological limits. The possibility of severing consciousness from bodies—through artificial intelligence, through co-opting bodies—will be a topic we explore in some considerable depth. Posthuman scholarship has studied the cyborg alongside the animal as two sites disruptive to the philosophy of “humanism;” this course will explore how the cyborg forces a re-examination of humanism, consciousness, bodies, gender, disability, and sexuality, among other topics.

Your **grades** will be based on your performance on both in class work and longer assignments. The breakdown for the worth of these assignments is as follows:

Participation and Quizzes 15%
Blogs 15%
Paper One 10%
Paper Two 15%
Annotated Bibliography 15%
Final paper 30%

The **quizzes** are simple and you will either receive full credit or no credit. This is my way of ensuring that students complete all the reading on time and have a good understanding of it. If you are not on time for class you will not be allowed to take the quiz.

The **participation** grade is simple. You will receive credit for participating if you contribute anything at all to the discussion on any given day: a complex thought, clarification, any kind of question related to the assignment, etc. If you do not participate in the discussion you will receive no credit.

The **paper** grades include participation in draft workshops. See below for a fuller description of the paper assignments.

The **blogs** will involve you creating and maintaining a blog for the duration of the course. Developing any idea from class discussion (and not just summarizing it) is a good way to start thinking about your entries. You can be a bit outlandish with these topics, but the quality of the idea and the writing will be graded. You do not have to “prove” your point, but you should be able to suggest it vividly. You can also use these as places to explore, or even draft, portions of your larger paper assignments. You will be required to post at least two entries a week (weeks will end on Tuesday, beginning with the second week, for a total of three weeks) of at least 300 words and respond to at least three others’ entries. Responses do not have a minimum word count requirement but should illustrate a critical engagement with your peers.

Missing more than five classes (morning and afternoon count as two) will constitute reason for failure. Religious holidays and college events are the only things that count as excused absences (nota bene: **illness is NOT an excused absence**). Please notify me in advance if you will miss a class for either of the excused reasons. And, of course, missed daily work, quizzes, and participation reflect negatively on those components of the final grade.

Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with **academic integrity**. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is her or his work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College’s requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in *The Catalogue*, under the heading “Academic Honesty.”

Students who need **accommodations for learning disabilities** must provide documentation from a professional qualified to diagnose learning disabilities. For more information see cornellcollege.edu/disabilities/documentation/index.shtml

Students requesting services may schedule a meeting with the disabilities services coordinator as early as possible to discuss their needs and develop an individualized accommodation plan. Ideally, this meeting would take place well before the start of classes.

At the beginning of each course, the student must notify the instructor within the first three days of the term of any accommodations needed for the duration of the course.

Paper one asks you to analyze a literary text, either *Frankenstein* or *The Sandman*. You should use quotes to prove a point that is *arguable*, which means that it makes a point in a rhetorical fashion. Think of this argument as the answer to a question that has more than one good answer.

Good topics to consider might be:

What does a human inability to recognize the automaton in *The Sandman* suggest about humanity? The future of automation? Or the importance of consciousness?

How do the uses of science factor into the development of the Creature in *Frankenstein*? What role does feeling play in the definition of humanity?

Minimum: four pages. Due: November 3rd.

Criteria:

- use close reading to develop an analytical perspective
 - use evidence (in the form of quotes) to prove your point
 - properly document all quotes, citations, and research
 - develop an interesting thesis (must be last sentence of first paragraph)
- must be arguable
- must be a coherent overview of the paper; must also be unified (no “three point” theses)
- use the analysis or argumentative paper genre
 - have introduction (that draws in a reader) and conclusion (that restates thesis w/o cut and paste; also must “point outwards” at larger aspects of your argument)
 - transition between subjects adequately
 - no five paragraph theme; no plot summary (or very limited)
- must adhere to the standards of academic writing

Paper two is similar to the first paper. However, your analysis should be of a film or TV show we’ve watched up to this point. I’d also like you to draw on at least one of the critical readings (not the newspaper articles—you can use these in addition to a critical reading, but not in the place of a critical reading). Don’t forget that using evidence from a film or TV show is essential and can take a variety of forms, but extensive plot summary should not be one of them.

Minimum: four pages. Due: November 10th.

The **annotated bibliography** asks you to find resources related to your final paper. I would like you to find eight sources and annotate five of them. See the handout (on moodle) about how to do an annotation.

Paper three is a definitional argument: you will define an important term for this course. Specific or broad terms like consciousness, the body, prosthesis, networks, or the posthuman are all acceptable. You should use examples from the course viewing and reading assignments. You should also incorporate external research from your annotated bibliography.

Remember, definitional arguments often gain strength by specifying what something is not in addition to what something is. To that end, I want your final paper to ask a research question in the form of “What is the body?,” using the term of your choice. This questions should be the last sentence of your first paragraph. Then offer three different, somewhat conflicting definitions (as bulleted points). Pick one of these definitions to explore and argue for in the following pages.

Minimum: eight pages. Due: November 19th.

Tentative reading schedule:

Please have each selection read *before* the class period it is due.

October

M/27	Morning:	View <i>Alien</i>
	Afternoon:	Class intro
T/28	Morning:	Unit One: 19 C literature and the burgeoning posthuman; <i>The Sandman</i>
	Afternoon:	Read NYtimes articles
W/29	Morning:	<i>Frankenstein</i> , through Chapter 3 of Volume 2 (about halfway)
	Afternoon:	Writing arguments.
R/30	Morning:	<i>Frankenstein</i> , through the end
	Afternoon:	<i>Terminator II</i>
F/31	Morning:	Unit Two: Unrecognizable machines; Read Haraway, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs”
	Afternoon:	Draft workshop

November

M/3	Morning:	Paper one due ; Read Hayles
	Afternoon:	<i>Star Trek: Data</i>
T/4	Morning:	Library Research
	Afternoon:	<i>BSG</i>
W/5	Morning:	Vinge, “Technological Singularity,” Terranova
	Afternoon:	<i>BSG</i>
R/6	Morning:	Cary Wolfe, from <i>What is Posthumanism?</i> Bostrom, “Why I want to be a Posthuman When I Grow Up”
	Afternoon:	<i>Moon</i>
F/7	Morning:	Clark, “Reinventing Ourselves” Unit Three: Our bodies no more

	Afternoon:	Draft workshop
M/10	Morning:	Paper two due; Rutsky
	Afternoon:	<i>Star Trek: Borg</i>
T/11	Morning:	Hughes, “Transhumanism and Personal Identity”
	Afternoon:	<i>The Matrix</i>
W/12	Morning:	Sentientia, “Freedom by Design”
	Afternoon:	<i>Her</i>
R/13	Morning:	Unit four: Consciousness, bring TWO annotations to class
	Afternoon:	<i>Blade Runner</i>
F/14	Morning:	Prisco, “Transcendent Engineering”
	Afternoon:	Draft workshop
M/17	Morning:	Annotated bibliography due Hans Moravec, “Pigs in Cyberspace”
	Afternoon:	<i>BSG S3</i>
T/18	Morning:	Draft workshop
	Afternoon:	<i>Star Trek: Into Darkness</i>
W/19		Paper three due

