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## Final Exam

### Section 1: Identification

During our lecture we have defined many terms, seven of them will be defined here.

Humanities: As an intro to humanities class, the definition of humanities should be pretty important. From the course I believe it is the description of what being human is supposed to be. Of course this varies from person to person.

Culture: Culture is defined as the patterns of shared behavior or beliefs in a group.

Modernity: Modernity is the definition of a generation about its own innovations and culture with the idea that previous generations are antiquated.

Utopia/Dystopia: A utopia is considered a 'perfect' society. Thus a dystopia is the opposite of a perfect society. We have seen in class that these two concepts can often overlap, a utopia for some is a dystopia for others.

Posthumanism: Posthumanism is used as a critique of humanism for the changing understanding of our place in the natural world.

Panopticism: Derived from the panopticon building designed by Jeremy Bentham to watch many people at once with little manpower. The word is now synonymous with the principle of constant surveillance.

*Homo faber*: *Homo faber* is the belief that humans are masters of their own fates or being their own 'maker'.

### Section 2: Short Answer

Technological normalization is how people grow accustomed to a new technology and is very apparent in Dave Eggers *The Circle*. Kalden, or Ty is quoted with saying "some of the things we did, I just—I did just to see if anyone would actually use them."

(Eggers 262) This shows that even though the creator did not believe that the idea was good for society, he wanted to see just how far people were willing to go. The theme of Technological normalization is constant throughout the book, starting with cameras meant to watch for human rights abuses and ending with trying to read peoples thoughts. The final words speak volumes on this “The world deserved nothing less and would not wait.” (268)

*Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood shows aspects of *homo faber* through Crake creating his 'Crakers.' Crake believed that humanity was faulty and by creating his 'superior' people to replace them he was taking the fate of humanity into his own hands.

*The Circle* by Dave Eggers is heavily infused with panopticism. The releasing of SeeChange cameras saturated the society fairly quickly with watchers. Later Mai's SoulSearch program meant to find people that had previously evaded detection further exposed the population to panopticism. Overall, the Circle was using the panoptic society to gather information about its users for monetization, similar to what large tech companies are trying to do now.

### Section 3: Essay

*The Circle* by Dave Eggers represents both a utopian and dystopian society. In the beginning of the novel, The Circle is a beautiful campus described as “Heaven” by Mai saying that she “never wanted to be anywhere else”. Her first day they give her a lot of gadgets and nice equipment for her position and she is flattered by the amount of money and quality the Circle puts into its employees. The utopian aspect is further revealed by the number of people that want to work for and with the Circle, making the Circle the center of everything.

The tools that the Circle develops aid the utopian view with underlying dystopian tones. SeeChange is released as a way to watch problematic areas for human rights violations and as a way to keep an eye on your possessions and family members. While the technology was developed with good intent, the saturation of society with public access cameras creates a type of peer to peer panopticon. Further developments improve the quality of life of its user base while stripping them of more and more freedoms.

There are two people in particular that oppose the constant and mostly unnecessary innovations of the Circle. The first is Mercer who opposed the Circle from the beginning, wishing to lead a private life away from the Circle's influences. Mercer writes very eloquent letters to Mai describing the dangers of her contribution to the Circle. Ultimately Mercer decides to take his own life rather than live in a panoptic society. Kalden or Ty is also opposed to the Circle's dominance over personal data, however Ty is the creator of most of this technology and believes that if the Circle reaches completion, there will be no way to go back. Overall, the Circle has the unwavering support of most of the population on account of having the best tools and being free. Feeling that privacy is a small price to pay for the quality of life improvements, many people do not think twice about using the Circle's tools. For those that do not wish to partake, the Circle eventually got large enough that avoidance was no longer possible.

*The Circle* shows how a utopia to one person could be a dystopia to another and that we should be scared of these events happening in real life.

#### Bonus:

I believe that the Netflix series *Love, Death & Robots* would be a good addition to the class because of the digestibility of the material. Anthologies are useful because you do not need a lot of context to watch them and they could be used to bolster/counter a topic from a more substantial source.

Works Cited

Eggers, Dave. *The Circle*. San Francisco: McSweeney's Books, 2013.