

ENGL 357 F

Posthuman Narratives

Dr. Edmond Y. Chang
Drew University
Spring 2014



ENGL 357
Section F
TuTh
11:50 AM-
1:05 PM
Seminary 214
Spring 2014
Drew University
Dr. Edmond Y.
Chang



“THE BODY MUST BURST FROM ITS BIOLOGICAL, CULTURAL, AND PLANETARY CONTAINMENT.”
—Stelarc

“The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled, postmodern collective and personal self. This is the self feminists must code.”
—Donna Haraway

CARY WOLFE defines posthumanism as the “historical moment in which the decentering of the human by its imbrication in technical, medical, informatic, and economic networks is increasingly impossible to ignore” (xv). Popular narratives and imaginings of the posthuman are decidedly polar. On the one hand are dystopian fears over machine intelligence, cloning, and the loss of life, liberty, and humanity. On the other hand are dreams of better, stronger, faster bodies and minds, transcendence, immortality, global harmony, and enlightenment. Looking at scholarship, science fiction and cyberpunk, real and imagined technologies, and video games, this class will take up these fears and possibilities to explore and interrogate the intersections of technology and the body, the mind, and what it means to be (post)human.

A REQUIREMENT for this class is a well-developed curiosity and a willingness to explore and interrogate interdisciplinary lines of inquiry. Our class will be organized around an intensive survey of readings engaging literature, scholarship, old and new media, and popular culture. This class will take up reading and playing as critical practice, extend and expand what it means to close read, and how literature and digital texts can be deployed as theory, as dramatizing the concerns, wonders, struggles, and politics of lived life and experience. This class will spend the semester reading, thinking, playing, researching, and writing about various narratives and how and what these texts argue, reveal, narrate, hide, perpetuate, and complicate the world we live in.

SPECIFICALLY, our course goals include:

- **Close Reading:** we will employ a range of close reading skills and strategies to engage with literary and digital texts.
- **Synthesizing:** we will bring a variety of texts, scholars and/or theories into conversation in creating arguments about literary and digital texts.
- **Knowledge:** we will develop and demonstrate a knowledge of key texts, terms, and theories of trans- and posthumanism.
- **Writing:** as a writing intensive course, writing will be used as a mode of learning and as a way to share ideas and research. We will use writing to practice critical and analytical thinking about literature and digital texts and to reflect on our writing process and revision.
- **Information Literacy:** we will use of a range of disciplinary research tools, can find and evaluate sources appropriate to subject of study.
- **Integration:** we will integrate the above skills and deploy them simultaneously in our work.

Requirements & Grading

Your grade should not be the sole exigence or motivation for this class. It is the hope of the course that you walk away from English 357 with something more. Find some pleasure and some edification and some knowledge from this class (or any class really) and success is usually not far behind. With that in mind, your grade will be a reflection of engagement, effort, close reading, critical thinking, writing, and participation.

“Imagination is more important than knowledge.”
—Albert Einstein

“I don’t pretend we have all the answers. But the questions are certainly worth thinking about.”
—Arthur C. Clarke



Required Course Texts & Materials

- ENGL 357 Course Reader (available in Sitterly 108)
- Dick, Phillip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep.*
- Gibson, William. *Neuromancer.*
- Butler, Octavia. *Dawn.*
- Irrational Games. *Bioshock.*
- Web access and an active Drew email account.



Course Requirements
Response Papers (40%)
Final Paper (20%)
Critical Review (10%)
Class Participation (30%)

Critical Response Papers (40%)

The majority of the writing you will do for this class is in the form of short, critical, analytical response papers. These single-spaced, one-page writings serve as reactions to, close readings of, analyses of, and articulations of the texts and connections you see, read, and talk about in class. These responses are more than just summaries or personal reactions and will be graded on clarity, focus, coherence, critique, and your ability to concisely formulate arguments. You will be required to generate a response paper approximately every other week for a total of 8. See the response paper prompt for more details.

Mash-Up “Mixed-Paper” Final Project (20%)

Your final paper project will be a “mixed-paper,” a mash-up that collects together four of your short response papers, revise them, and incorporates the addition of images, verse, and other kinds of evidence, all of which is framed by an introduction and conclusion page. The “mixed-paper” asks you to think critically about the course questions and texts, to make connections, and to create an argument across texts and different kinds of evidence. See the “mixed-paper” final project prompt for more details and explanations.

Critical Review (10%)

You will be required to write a short, 500-750 word, single-spaced critical review of a text not covered by the course that you believe fits the critical, theoretical, and intellectual stakes of this class. You will locate a text, close read the text, and generate an academic critique and assessment of the text’s value for study. In other words, what text might you include in a class like ours? You **must** have your text **approved** by the instructor. The critical review will be turned in and published on the course blog and is due by the last day of instruction.

Participation and Preparedness (30%)

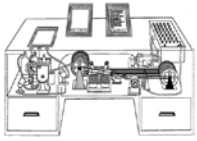
Preparedness and participation forms a large component of your final grade. It is essential that you prepare for class, attend class, and participate. Missing class may seriously compromise your ability to do well in this class. Moreover, negative participation will hurt your participation grade. Participation is determined by 1) your **respectful** presence in class and interactions with me and others, 2) your **willingness** to discuss, comment, and ask questions, 3) your **preparation** for class, which includes bringing required materials to class and doing all of the assigned reading for class, 4) your **engagement** in presentations and group work, and 5) your care and use of the class *moodle*—henceforth called the “class blog”—bookmark the address, check and comment regularly, think of the blog as an extension of class:

<https://moodle.drew.edu/2/course/view.php?id=1434>.

Finally, failure to turn in homework, incomplete assignments, or late papers will negatively impact your participation grade.

Attendance

Attendance is required. If you are absent, you miss the explanation of an assignment, the discussion of a reading, the chance to participate, and overall, the class as a community of learning. Also, you are expected to be in class on time. Class will start immediately at the appointed time. In the first minutes of class I may make important announcements, establish the agenda for the day, begin immediately with an important lesson, or field questions. If you come in after we start class, even by only a few minutes, you are late and will be mark as such. Chronic or conspicuous attendance problems will negatively



Response Paper Formatting

1) 1" margins top, bottom, left, and right on each page.

2) Single-spaced block header with your name, date, course, my name.
For example:

Student Name
ENGL 357
January 27, 2014
Chang

3) Response (week number and title (e.g. Week #4: Race in *Neuromancer*).

4) Response papers are single-spaced and can be in block paragraph format.

5) Standard Times Roman Font, 12 point only.

6) Correct MLA citation and bibliographic format.
Bibliography if necessary.

affect your overall participation grade for the class. Moreover, absences for more than eight class session (50% of class time) will result in a failing grade regardless of reason. There are no excused or unexcused absences. If you know you are going to or must miss class, please let me know (via email) as soon as possible and make any necessary arrangements. When you do miss class, always find another student to get class notes or see me during office hours in order to make up missed work in a timely manner. You are always responsible for all material covered during your absence.

Assignment Format

All papers must be typed or produced on a word processor. All documents should be saved in Microsoft Word format; if you do not have access to Word, then save your documents in RTF or Rich Text Format.

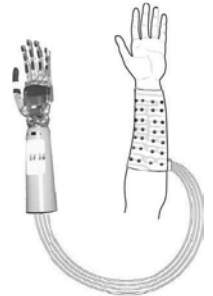
All papers must follow the manuscript format outlined by the assignment. All papers must use MLA citation and documentation conventions. All papers must be neatly printed (in black), stapled in the top, left-hand corner if necessary, and should not be three-hole punched. Papers that do not follow these format guidelines will not be accepted. They will be returned unread to you. Papers will be regarded as late until they are resubmitted in the proper format. The Research Proposal and the Critical Review have different manuscript guidelines detailed by their assignment prompts.

Always make a backup copy of every paper you turn in, lest you be one of the unhappy people whose paper is eaten by the computer. You may even want to take the precaution of e-mailing your paper to yourself as an attachment at least a couple of times during the drafting process and certainly BEFORE you exit the document for the last time and leave the computer. This way, even if you lose your flash drive or your paper gets mysteriously erased, you still have a copy in your e-mail files.

Evaluation Rubric

Over the course of the semester, your assignments will receive feedback and comments that will identify what you are doing well and what still needs improvement. Your grades assess your fulfillment of the assignment, the quality of work, detail, analysis, and argumentation, overall effort, and finally, style, polish, and risk taking. Consider the following evaluation rubric as signposts or a kind of legend to your progress and evaluation:

- **Outstanding (A/A+):** Offers a very highly proficient, even memorable demonstration of the trait(s) associated with the course or assignment goal(s), including some appropriate risk-taking and/or creativity.
- **Strong (B+/A-):** Offers a proficient demonstration of the trait(s) associated with the course or assignment goal(s), which could be further enhanced with revision, additional support, and creativity.
- **Good (B-/B):** Effectively demonstrates the trait(s) associate with the course or assignment goal(s), but less proficiently; could use revision to demonstrate more skillful and nuanced command of trait(s).
- **Acceptable (C/C+):** Minimally meets the basic course or assignment requirement, but the demonstrated trait(s) are not fully realized or well-controlled and would benefit from significant revision.
- **Inadequate (D/D+):** Does not meet the course or assignment requirement; the trait(s) are not adequately demonstrated and require substantial revision on multiple levels.



Late Assignments

All assignments must be done completely and turned in on time. Late assignments will be penalized half a grade for every day that they are late. So, if your essay is late by one day and you received a B- for your work, then your final grade would be a C+. Moreover, I will not comment on late work. However, you still need to complete late work or you will receive a zero. If you miss class on the due date of a paper, you must notify me and make arrangements to get the paper to me as soon as possible. **Unless previously arranged, I DO NOT accept assignments via email.** Remember that a paper has not been officially handed in until it is in my hands. Never turning anything in late is always the best policy.



Finding Help

My office and office hours are listed in the left sidebar. I am available during that time and by appointment to help you. I encourage you to come see me early in the semester even if it is just to talk about the class, about the assignments, or about school in general. I may ask you to meet with me when I think a conference would be useful. My office is located on the third floor of Sitterly House (southeast of Brothers College), Room 303. See <<http://www.drew.edu/map/buildings/sitterly-house/>>.

Contact Ed

Office:
Sitterly 303
Office Hours:
W 12-2 PM
Th 2-4 PM
or by appointment
E-mail:
echang@drew.edu
AIM or Google Talk:
EDagogy



I am also available electronically by email and the course blog. Email and the blog are the best means of contacting me. I will do my best to answer your emails and blog posts, usually **within twenty-four hours**. If there is an emergency and you need to reach me, please contact the main English office in Sitterly 108. Furthermore, when time permits, I will supplement my office hours with virtual hours via AOL Instant Messenger or Google Talk (**nickname: EDagogy**); if I am logged in, during reasonable hours, you are more than welcome to discuss the class or ask questions. Please, when you initiate an IM conversation for the first time, please identify yourself to me; also, be **patient** because my responses may not be immediate.

You can find additional writing help at the Drew University Writing Center, a good resource for this class and other classes. The Writing Center is located on the first floor of Brothers College (opposite Java City) and offers a variety of services including help with papers, brainstorming ideas, help with reading, and research. See <<http://www.drew.edu/writingstudies/writing-center>> to make an appointment and for more information. Further resources, both on- and off-campus can be found on the Links page of the course website: <<http://www.edmondchang/357/links.html>>.

Learning (With) Technology

Unless you have an official accommodation, the use of technology in our classroom is a privilege, not a right. Mobile devices like phones, media players, and cameras should be off and put away. Computers and tablets should be used for note-taking, in-class work, and readings only. Print is generally preferred for course texts and readings, but full-size e-versions are acceptable provided the student is able to readily highlight, annotate, and index. Finally, be conscientious and respectful in the use of the course website and social media and post no material from class to the internet or non-class sites without explicit permission from the instructor and the class. Keep in mind these three rules: 1) Use the Right Tool for the situation and the task—keep it simple and elegant, 2) Practice Best Practices—it must improve or enhance your learning, 3)

Be a Good Neighbor—it cannot distract or detract from others’ learning. Inappropriate use and abuse of technology in class will result in the taking away of technology privileges for the offending student and/or class as a whole.

Academic Integrity

All students are required to uphold the highest academic standards. Plagiarism, or academic dishonesty, is presenting someone else’s ideas or writing as your own. In your writing for this class, you are encouraged to refer to other people’s thoughts and writing—as long as you cite them. Many students do not have a clear understanding of what constitutes plagiarism, so feel free to ask questions at any time. For our class, plagiarism includes:

- a student failing to cite sources of ideas
- a student failing to cite sources of paraphrased material
- a student failing to site sources of specific language and/or passages
- a student submitting someone else’s work as his or her own
- a student submitting his or her own work produced for another class

If you have any doubt about how to cite or acknowledge another’s writing, please talk to me. It is always better to be safe than sorry. Any case of academic dishonesty will be dealt with according to the guidelines and procedures outlined in Drew University’s “Standards of Academic Integrity: Guidelines and Procedures.” A copy of this document can be accessed on the CLA Dean’s U-KNOW space by clicking on “Academic Integrity Standards.” **Play it smart, don’t plagiarize!**

Accommodations

Should you require academic accommodations, you must file a request with the Office of Disability Services (BC 119B, anambiar@drew.edu). Please use the link: <http://www.drew.edu/academicservices/disabilityservices/register>. It is your responsibility to self-identify with the Office of Disability Services and to provide faculty with the appropriate documentation from that office at least one week prior to any request for specific course accommodations. There are no retroactive accommodations. The deadline to request Letters of Accommodations (LOAs) for all students currently registered with the Office of Disability Services is 02/10/2014.

**syl-la-bus: n 1: a summary outline of a discourse, treatise, or course of study or of examination requirements
2: subject to change**

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Week 1: January 27-31

Introduction to the Course & Syllabus
Vannevar Bush, “As We May Think” (1945)
C.L. Moore, “No Woman Born” (1944)
“The Transhumanist Declaration”

<http://transhumanism.org/resources/TenQuestions.pdf>

Transhumanist FAQ: <http://www.extropy.org/faq.htm>

Week 2: February 3-7

Cary Wolfe, “Introduction: What is Posthumanism?”
Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* (1968)

Week 3: February 10-14

N. Katherine Hayles, “Prologue” & “Chapter One”
Lisa Lowe, “Imagining L.A. in the Production of Multiculturalism”
Blade Runner (1982)



“If one is lucky, a solitary fantasy can totally transform one million realities.”
—Maya Angelou

“The future is already here—it’s just not very evenly distributed.”
—William Gibson

“I entered the classroom with the conviction that it was crucial for me and every other student to be an active participant, not a passive consumer...[a conception of] education as the practice of freedom... education that connects the will to know with the will to become. Learning is a place where paradise can be created.”
—bell hooks

Week 1 or 2 Critical Response (CR) is recommended.

Mon 1/27
First Day of Classes

JANUARY						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Week 4: February 17-21

Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto"
Eva Cherniavsky, "Body"
James Tiptree, Jr., "The Girl Who Was Plugged In" (1974)

Week 5: February 24-28

Thomas Foster, "Introduction: Cyberpunk's Posthuman Afterlife"
William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (1984)

Week 6: March 3-7

Amanda Fernbach, "The Fetishization of Masculinity in Science Fiction"
J. Halberstam, "Gender"
Gibson, *Neuromancer* (cont.)

Week 7: March 10-14

Lisa Nakamura, "Race in the Construct"
The Matrix (1999)

Week 8: March 17-21

Thomas Foster, "The Souls of Cyberfolk"
Roderick Ferguson, "Race"
Octavia Butler, *Dawn* (1987)

Week 9: March 24-28

Naomi Jacobs, "Posthuman Bodies and Agency"
Siobhan Somerville, "Queer"
Butler, *Dawn* (cont.)

Week 10: March 31-April 4

Greta Aiyu Niu, "Techno-Orientalism"
Vijay Prashad, "Orientalism"
Robot Stories (2003)

Week 11: April 7-11

Kanta Kochhar-Lindgren, "Disability"
Shelley Jackson, "My Body" (1997)
Nisi Shawl, "Maggies" (2004)
Ted Chiang, "Liking What You See: A Documentary" (2002)

Week 12: April 14-18

Bionic Woman (2007)
Almost Human (2013)

Week 13: April 21-25

Bioshock (2007)
Chang & Welsh, "'Would You Kindly?': *Bioshock* and Posthuman Choice"
<http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr/2011/03/10/would-you-kindly-bioshock-and-posthuman-choice>

Week 14: April 28-May 2

Bioshock (cont.)

Week 15: May 5-9

5/5 Last Day of Instruction (Flip Day)
5/6 Reading Day
5/7 Reading Day
5/8 Finals Begin

FEBRUARY						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

Mon 3/10-Fri 3/14
Spring Recess

Start *Bioshock*

Week 10 or 11 CR is recommended.

APRIL						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

5/5 Critical Review Due

5/8 Final Paper Due

Week 5 or 6 CR is recommended.

MARCH						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Fri 4/18 Good Friday Holiday

MAY						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						