Cyborgs and Systems

Office location: Discord Server or Zoom
Office hours: Tuesdays, 3:00-4:20 pm or by appointment, sign up <u>here</u> or email for an appointment

Course Description:

  Are you a cyborg? Why does it matter? This class will explore the figure of the cyborg, in fiction and real-life, and investigate the ways the cyborg helps us think about systems. What can the Borg expose about big data and social systems? How does Robocop help us think about police? If my phone never leaves my hand, am I a cyborg? Am I a citizen of the internet, and if so, where do I live? What is our role in these systems as humans, and how can we read, write, and think about them in ways that renders them comprehensible and subject to critique?

  English 101 is an introduction to textual analysis designed to help you develop your critical reading and writing skills. We will practice specific skills of close reading and cultural analysis, and devote significant attention to the writing process.

Course Learning Outcomes:

- Parse diverse texts.
- Integrate textual content using evidence-based analysis expressed in writing and in class-based discussion.
- Author organized written artifacts that demonstrate an understanding of style and grammar.
- Utilize academic and non-academic resources to conduct research that recognizes the importance of credibility.

Required Texts:

- *Robocop* (1987) (available on a number of web-based streaming platforms)
- Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* (your summer read)
- Additional essays, short stories, and materials posted to MOLE

Assignments and Grading:

- Assignment 1: Introductory Essay (5%)
- Assignment 2: Depicting Systems Essay (15%)
- Assignment 3: Case-study Essay (20%)
- Assignment 4: Research-supported Op-Ed (20%)
- Classwork: Homework, in-class assignments, and presentation (20%)
- ePortfolio (5%)
- Participation (15%)

Classwork:

There will be regular reading and writing assignments in and out of class, as well as a brief presentation to a small discussion group. Reading assignments will include prompted annotation, creating discussion questions based on the reading, and coming to class prepared to discuss the readings. Writing assignments done in-class or as homework will focus on specific skills and tasks, and many will help build towards the papers. All writing assignments will be done in **Google Docs** unless otherwise specified, and must be ready to go at the start of class. **All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.**
ePortfolio details will be discussed early in the semester.

Papers:

More specific information for each paper, including grading expectations, prompts, and suggested topics/formats, will be discussed as each paper approaches. All papers should be submitted in a valid file

format (assignments will specify which are appropriate), typed, double-spaced, and MLA-formatted with proper heading, margins, Works Cited, and word count.

Papers must be submitted via MOLE--if there is a MOLE-related technical problem, a paper may be submitted via email in order to meet the submission deadline, but an identical paper must be uploaded to MOLE by the student as soon as it is possible to do so. Papers will be graded and returned via MOLE only.

Late papers are penalized one third of a letter grade for each day past the deadline, including weekends, if no prior arrangement has been made with me. No papers will be accepted after the final paper deadline.

Learning Needs, Extensions, and Wellness:

Remote learning, and the socio-political-biological-environmental conditions under which we are doing it, will present new challenges and reinvent old ones. Your health, mental and physical, should be your first priority. Please be in contact if you need extensions, accommodations, or support.

Participation:

Participation is a large portion of your grade (15%), as the success of our seminar depends on your active engagement. Participation does not equal the amount of time you spend talking, nor how often you raise your hand. Participation will be graded on evidence that you actively, consistently engage with the material (in small groups, in the chat, in discussion, in office hours), that you respectfully share your insights with the class and respond to those of others, and that you both give, and respond to, thoughtful feedback (both from myself and your classmates).

If you've never been in an online learning environment before, participation will look and feel different this semester. I will offer a variety of opportunities for you to participate, and it will take some time for our class to establish our virtual discussion norms—which we will set together, and modify as needed.

Absences:
- Everyone gets one "freebie" absence during the term, but you are still expected to catch up on the work and submit it by the next class session.
- Beyond your freebie, absences are excused by medical documentation or **prior** approval by me.
- 3 unexcused absences will lower your participation grade by ½ letter
- 5 unexcused absences will lower your participation grade by 1 letter
- **6 unexcused absences will be grounds for failing the course**

Positive Participation:

- Arrive on time (or early! I'll always be "in class" 10 minutes before we start for questions or casual chat) and stay for the entire session
- Electronic devices are not a distraction during class
- Take notes (electronic or otherwise)
- Cite course texts and your peers in conversation
- Ask questions (aloud, in the chat, or in office hours)
- Contribute to discussion

Weekly Schedule:

Some notes on class readings:

My selection of a particular text does not constitute an endorsement of it—on the contrary, some of the texts are on the syllabus because I think they deserve to be challenged and that our class provides an appropriate space and resources to do so.

Course Schedule is subject to change:

The most current version of this syllabus will be posted on MOLE, and I will always email to announce that there have been changes.

Week	Date	Due:
Week 1	9/8	Syllabus
	9/10	Cyborg Module (MOLE), Introductory Essay due **Friday (9/11) 5 pm PT**
Week 2	9/15	Selection from Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer* (MOLE)
	9/17	Posner, "See No Evil" ([See No Evil](#))
Week 3	9/22	Selection from Gibson, *Neuromancer* (MOLE)
	9/24	DIY reading assignment: visual depictions of the internet
Week 4	9/29	Selection from Ball, *The System* (MOLE)
	10/1	Assignment 2 Rough Draft Due, in-class workshop
Week 5	10/6	Roanhorse, "Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience™" ([Welcome to Your Authentic Indian Experience™](#)) Belamire, "My First Virtual Reality Groping" ([My First Virtual Reality Groping. Last week I was groped in virtual…	by Jordan Belamire	Athena Talks](#)) Tiptree, "The Girl Who Was Plugged In" (MOLE)
	10/8	Selection from Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist* Kim, "The Racist Legacy of Computer-Generated Humans" ([The Racist Legacy of Computer-Generated Humans](#))

		Assignment 2 Due
Week 6	10/13	Selected episodes, *StarTrek Voyager*
	10/15	Tiptree, "The Screwfly Solution"
Week 7	10/20	Zhang, "America's Never-Ending Battle Against Flesh-Eating Worms" ([The 'Wall' That Keeps Flesh-Eating Worms Out of America](#))
	10/22	Right-to-Repair Module (MOLE) Doctorow, "The Brave Little Toaster" (MOLE)
Week 8	10/27	*Robocop* (1987)
	10/29	Police Module (MOLE)
Week 9	11/3	Election Day. Office Hours Only
	11/5	DIY Reading and Annotating Assignment (Details on MOLE)
Week 10	11/10	Assignment 3 Due
	11/12	Choice: *Terminator* (any of your choice) or *Repo Men* (2010)
Week 11	11/17	Viktoria Modesta, "Prototype" Selected episodes from *We Fix Space Junk*
	11/19	Prosthetics Module (MOLE)
Week 12	11/24	Op-Ed Pitch Due
	11/26	No Class
Week 13	12/1	Medical Device Hacking Module (MOLE)
	12/3	DIY Reading Assignment (Details on MOLE)
Week 14	12/8	The Cyborg Manifesto and its responses Module (MOLE)
	12/10	Op-Ed Rough Draft Due
Week 15	12/15	Op-Ed Presentations
	12/17	Op-Ed Due

(Menlo College's required syllabus language on accommodations, remote instruction, etc, have been removed)