**Almost Human**

Senior Seminar
ENGL 4399.004 Spring 2012 Syllabus
TR 11:00-12:20 pm Preston 304
Prof. Neill Matheson
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office hours: TR 2:00-4:00, and by appointment
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**Course Description:**

This course will explore the cultural fascination with stories of not-quite-human beings in nineteenth-century American and British fiction, with an epilogue on late twentieth-century literary works and films. Most of these narratives belong to the categories of early science fiction or Gothic, but our concern will be less with genre than with texts that explore human nature by imagining its transgression. We will focus on beings and identities imagined to be just beyond human boundaries, defined by their uncanny nearness to the human, even as these texts often depict travel to remote regions, as if the nature or limits of the human become visible only at the ends of the known world. We will explore fictional representations of humanlike animals and animalized humans, vampires, automatons, clones, and androids, among other figures of the almost human, the subhuman, "fallen" humans and would-be humans. We will focus on two particular vexed boundaries—between the human and the animal, and between the human and the machine—considering the kinds of longings, desires, and anxieties that arise around these boundaries, and especially the central problem of empathy as it emerges in these texts. We will also read selections from the wealth of critical and theoretical work in animal studies and posthuman studies relevant to these issues. Texts include Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*; short fiction by Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne; H.G. Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*; Bram Stoker, *Dracula*; Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*; Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*; as well as several films.

This course coincides serendipitously with the English Department's Hermanns Lecture Series, which will be focused on "Animal Studies and Posthumanism" this year. Hermanns speakers will give talks on Friday, March 30. You are required for this course to attend (at least) one talk by a visiting speaker, and write a 1-2 page summary.

**Texts:**

Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (Del Rey)
Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Young Goodman Brown and Other Stories* (Dover)
Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (Vintage)
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Bedford)
Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (Broadview)
H.G. Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (Broadview)

**Films:**

*A.I.* (dir. Spielberg, 2001)
*Gattaca* (dir. Niccol, 1997)
*Let the Right One In* (dir. Alfredson, 2008)
*The Fly* (dir. Cronenberg, 1986)

Note: Films will not be shown in class, so you will need to purchase or rent them. They must be viewed before the class in which they are discussed. All of these films are available for rental through Netflix, and most of them can be rented through Blockbuster or other sources. You can also buy them online from Amazon.com or another vendor.

**Requirements:**

1. Short paper (4-6 pages).

2. Research paper (minimum 12 pages) formatted according to latest MLA standards.

3. Midterm and final exams.

4. Summary of Hermanns lecture (1-2 pages). Attend at least one lecture on March 30, 2012.

5. Participation in class discussion. Oral presentation based on research for final paper.

**Note:** All major assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

**Grade:**

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| Short paper | 20% |
| Midterm exam | 15% |
| Final paper | 30% |
| Final exam | 20% |
| Hermanns summary | 05% |
| Participation (including presentation) | 10% |

**Attendance, Participation, Preparation:**

Student participation is an extremely important part of this course. This course will primarily be organized around discussion of the readings, rather than lectures; student interests will play a major role in shaping our discussions. I expect you to come to class having carefully read the texts for each day's meeting, prepared with questions, ideas, enthusiasms, or objections.

Because this course depends on your full involvement, regular attendance is also essential for its success. More than three absences will have a significant impact on your grade for the course. More than eight absences may result in failure for the course. Late arrivals (and early departures) are disruptive, and a pattern of tardiness will also affect your grade.

**Policy on Electronic Devices:**

Please turn off and stow away all cell phones, laptops, iPads, Kindles, and other electronic devices at the start of each class.

**UTA Drop Policy:**

Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. Contact the Financial Aid Office for more information.

**Student Learning Outcomes:**

Students should be able to:

- Demonstrate critical understanding of the specific authors and texts covered in the course, and identify connections synthetically between these texts.
- Demonstrate knowledge of major themes and issues relevant to course literature.
- Demonstrate a complex understanding of the relationship between literary texts and significant historical and cultural contexts, including analyzing the relevance of important historical events or topics to specific works.
- Explain and make use of analytical and theoretical concepts and literary critical terminology covered in the course.
- Express ideas and perform analysis in clear, concise, logical, and persuasive writing.
- Express ideas clearly through relevant oral contributions to class discussion, and respond substantially to the ideas of other students.

**Academic Integrity:**

It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University. "Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts" (*Regents Rules and Regulations*).

The policy for this course is that any assignment found to involve plagiarism or other significant academic dishonesty will receive a zero. No rewrites are allowed for plagiarized papers. All incidents of academic dishonesty will be reported to the UTA Office of Student Conduct.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:**

The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored.

Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

Let me know if you have a disability, and we can work together to ensure that you are able to participate fully in the course.

**Student Support Services Available:**

The University of Texas at Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. These resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals to resources for any reason, students may contact the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107 or visit www.uta.edu/resources for more information.

**Electronic Communication Policy:**

The University of Texas at Arlington has adopted the University "MavMail" address as the sole official means of communication with students. MavMail is used to remind students of important deadlines, advertise events and activities, and permit the University to conduct official transactions exclusively by electronic means. For example, important information concerning registration, financial aid, payment of bills, and graduation are now sent to students through the MavMail system. All students are assigned a MavMail account. *Students are responsible for checking their MavMail regularly.* Information about activating and using MavMail is available at http://www.uta.edu/oit/email/. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, and it remains active even after they graduate from UT Arlington.

To obtain your NetID or for logon assistance, visit https://webapps.uta.edu/oit/selfservice/. If you are unable to resolve your issue from the Self-Service website, contact the Helpdesk at helpdesk@uta.edu.

I will use your UTA email address for course handouts and announcements, as well as to contact you individually if necessary. So be sure to check your MavMail account frequently.

**Course Schedule:**

**Note:** This schedule is provisional. I may make substitutions in readings or changes in the dates of assignments if necessary.

**Jan. 17** Introduction
**Jan. 19** Shelley, *Frankenstein*

**Jan. 24** *Frankenstein*
**Jan. 26** *Frankenstein*

**Jan. 31** Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs"
**Feb. 2** Hawthorne, "The Birth-Mark," "Rappaccini's Daughter"; Poe, "Ligeia"

**Feb. 7** Poe, "Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Imp of the Perverse," "The Black Cat," "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," "Hop-Frog," "Instinct vs. Reason—A Black Cat," "The Man That Was Used Up" [*Any edition of Poe that contains these stories is acceptable. Alternatively, they can be found online at http://www.eapoe.org/works/tales/index.htm]

**Feb. 9** Agamben, selection from *The Open: Man and Animal*

**Feb. 14** Stoker, *Dracula*; **first paper due**
**Feb. 16** *Dracula*

**Feb. 21** *Dracula*
**Feb. 23** *Let the Right One In* (film)

**Feb. 28** *Dracula*
**Mar. 1** *Dracula*

**Mar. 6** *The Fly* (film); Bruce Clarke, "Communicating *The Fly*"
**Mar. 8 Midterm**

**Mar. 12-16 Spring Vacation!**

**Mar. 20** Well, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*
**Mar. 22** *Moreau*; Haraway, "Race: Universal Donors in a Vampire Culture"

**Mar. 27** Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*
**Mar. 29** *Androids*

**Mar. 30 Last day to drop classes**
**Mar. 30 Hermanns Lecture Series on "Animal Studies and Posthumanism"**

**Apr. 3** *Androids*; Katharine Hayles, "Boundary Work in the Mid-Sixties Novels of Philip K. Dick"
**Apr. 5** *A.I.* (film)

**Apr. 10** Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*
**Apr. 12** *Never Let Me Go*

**Apr. 17** *Never Let Me Go*
**Apr. 19** *Never Let Me Go*

**Apr. 24** *Gattaca* (film)
**Apr. 26** Presentations

**May 1** Presentations; **final paper due**
**May 3** Presentations

**Final exam: Tues. May 8 11:00-1:30 p.m.** (in our usual classroom)