

Almost Human

Senior Seminar
ENGL 4399.001 Fall 2015 Syllabus
TR 9:30-10:50 p.m. Preston 211
Prof. Neill Matheson
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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. Some 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, chimpanzees, automatons, clones, and androids, among other figures of the almost human, the subhuman, “fallen” humans and would-be humans. We will focus especially on two 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 theory relevant to these issues. Texts include Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*; short fiction by Edgar Allan Poe, H.P. Lovecraft, and Franz Kafka; Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*; Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*; and Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*; as well as several films.

Texts:

Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (Anchor)
Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (Del Rey)
Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (Vintage)
Edgar Allan Poe, *Selected Tales* (Oxford)
Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (Bedford)

Films:

A.I. (dir. Spielberg, 2001)
Ex Machina (dir. Garland, 2015)
Project Nim (dir. Marsh, 2011)
Upstream Color (dir. Carruth, 2013)

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. 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. Participation in class discussion.

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

Grade:

Short paper	20%
Midterm exam	20%
Final paper	30%
Final exam	20%
Participation	10%

Attendance, Participation, Preparation:

Student participation is an extremely important part of this course. The 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.

At The University of Texas at Arlington, taking attendance is not required. Rather, each faculty member is free to develop his or her own methods of evaluating students' academic performance, which includes establishing course-specific policies on attendance. As the instructor of this section, I have established the following policy: 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, tablets, 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. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://wwwb.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

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 and respectfully to the ideas of other students.

Academic Integrity:

Students enrolled all UT Arlington courses are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.

I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents' Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

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.

Americans with Disabilities Act:

UT 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)*, *The Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA)*, and *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act*. 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 disability. Students are responsible for providing the instructor with official notification in the form of a letter certified by the **Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD)**. Students experiencing a range of conditions (Physical, Learning, Chronic Health, Mental Health, and Sensory) that may cause diminished academic performance or other barriers to learning may seek services and/or accommodations by contacting:

The Office for Students with Disabilities, (OSD) www.uta.edu/disability or calling 817-272-3364.
Counseling and Psychological Services, (CAPS) www.uta.edu/caps/ or calling 817-272-3671.

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.

Title IX:

The University of Texas at Arlington does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, genetic information, and/or veteran status in its educational programs or activities it operates. For more information, visit uta.edu/eos. For information regarding Title IX, visit www.uta.edu/titleIX.

Student Feedback Survey:

At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

Final Review Week:

A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

Emergency Exit Procedures:

Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, which is located to the right and down the flight of stairs. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist individuals with disabilities.

Student Support Services Available:

UT 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. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to resources@uta.edu, or view the information at <http://www.uta.edu/universitycollege/resources/index.php>

The English Writing Center (411LIBR): Hours are 9 am to 8 pm Mondays-Thursdays, 9 am to 3 pm Fridays and Noon to 5 pm Saturdays and Sundays. Walk In *Quick Hits* sessions during all open hours Mon-Thurs. Register and make appointments online at <http://uta.mywconline.com>. Classroom Visits, Workshops, and advanced services for graduate students and faculty are also available. Please see www.uta.edu/owl for detailed information.

Electronic Communication Policy:

UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

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:

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

Aug. 27 Introduction

Sept. 1 Shelley, *Frankenstein*; Andrew Bennett and Nicholas Royle, “Mutant”

Sept. 3 *Frankenstein*

Sept. 8 *Frankenstein*

Sept. 10 Donna Haraway, “A Manifesto for Cyborgs”

Sept. 15 Poe, “The Imp of the Perverse,” “The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar,” “The Man That Was Used Up,” “Ligeia” (any edition of Poe that contains these stories is acceptable; they can be found online at <http://www.eapoe.org/works/tales/index.htm>)

Sept. 17 Poe, “Murders in the Rue Morgue,” “The Black Cat,” “Hop-Frog,” “Instinct vs. Reason—A Black Cat,” “Four Beasts in One”

Sept. 22 Giorgio Agamben, selections from *The Open: Man and Animal*

Sept. 24 *Project Nim* (film)

Recommended: *Radiolab* episode, “Lucy” (link forthcoming)

Sept. 29 Kafka, “A Report to an Academy”; Lovecraft, “The Facts Concerning the Late Arthur Jermyn” (etexts); **first paper due**

Oct. 1 Steven Best, “Minding the Animals” (etext)

Oct. 6 Lovecraft, “The Color Out of Space” (etext)

Oct. 8 *Upstream Color* (film)

Oct. 13 Midterm

Oct. 15 *A.I.* (film)

Oct. 20 Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Oct. 22 *Androids*

Oct. 27 *Androids*; Jill Galvan, “Entering the Posthuman Collective”

Oct. 29 *Androids*

Nov. 3 *Ex Machina* (film)

Nov. 5 Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*

Nov. 10 *Never Let Me Go*

Nov. 12 *Never Let Me Go*

Nov. 17 *Never Let Me Go*

Nov. 19 Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*

Nov. 24 *Oryx and Crake*

Nov. 26 Thanksgiving; no class!

Dec. 1 *Oryx and Crake*; Donna Haraway, “Race: Universal Donors in a Vampire Culture”

Dec. 3 *Oryx and Crake*

Dec. 8 *Oryx and Crake*; final paper due

Final exam: 8:00 – 10:30 a.m. Thursday Dec. 17 (in our usual classroom)