

PHIL 3050 CYBORGS AND MONSTERS

UCCS SPRING 2019

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Why are we here?

Welcome to PHIL 3050 – Cyborgs and Monsters! This course will examine the familiar yet strange figures that occupy such central places within our culture, science and imagination. By reading philosophy, science, literature, and viewing selected films we will have the opportunity to explore the significance of the complex and ambivalent figure of the cyborg. We will explore how these figures are represented and try to understand what they mean. Why are they both disturbing yet popular? We will compare mechanistic cyborg theories of reality and consciousness to non-mechanistic theories from philosophy and biology and we will ask

what cyborgs figures tell us about who we are and who we think or fear we are becoming.

Course Outcomes

Upon completing the course, students will be able to:

- 1) Identify major theories about the cyborg – both for and against.
- 2) Explain key philosophical, scientific, and literary concepts.
- 3) Apply techniques for cultural critique.
- 4) Analyze works of philosophy, science and literature that present alternate views.
- 5) Collaborate to create different cyborg and non-cyborg futures.

Required Course Texts:

- * Susan Schneider, ed. *Science Fiction and Philosophy: From Time Travel to Superintelligence*, Wiley-Blackwell; 1st edition (May 18, 2009).
- * Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, Chapter 2, Provided on Canvas.
- * Lynn Margulis and Dorian Sagan, *What is Sex?*, Chapter 1 “A Universe in Heat,” Provided on Canvas.
- * Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods, and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness*, Excerpts on “The Postmodern Sublime,” Provided on Canvas.

Graded Assessments:

1+1 Assignments (10 points each): Multiple times over the course of the semester you will have the opportunity to complete a 1+1 assignment. After viewing the week's video-lectures and reading the

assigned chapters from the textbook, you will choose 2 things from Dr. O.'s lecture presentation that you found most interesting, and tell us how each thing relates to the week's course material. For full-credit, your submissions should follow this format:

Paragraph #1

- A full paragraph exploration of the first thing from Dr. O.'s lecture that interested you.
- Include an explanation of any theories, concepts, ideas related to what you're discussing.
- Supporting quotations from the assigned-reading (required).

Paragraph #2

- A full paragraph exploration of the second thing from Dr. O.'s lecture that interested you.
- Include an explanation of any theories, concepts, ideas related to what you're discussing.
- Supporting quotations from the assigned-reading (required).

For full-credit, your submissions should follow this format each time. Submit your work properly on Canvas. Do not submit your work in the “comments box” or as an external attachment. These submissions will not be graded.

2. Evaluate and Create, Know and Explore Assignments (10 points each): Multiple times during the semester you will be given the opportunity to reflect thoughtfully on Dr. K.'s video-blog and the accompanying assigned readings, and to write a 1-page personal response to specific prompts provided on Canvas. Make sure to read the specific instructions accompanying each prompt. Do not submit your work in the “comments box” or as an attachment. These submissions will

not be graded.

3. Film Analysis (5 points each): You will have the opportunity to watch several short-films for credit this semester. In most cases, we will ask you to complete a Film Analysis for each film. The Film Analysis should be no more than 1-page in length, and should follow this format:

- A 2-3 sentence summary of what happens in the film (these films are not only very short, but also open to multiple interpretations, so there is not necessarily a single “correct” summary).
- Then, please address the following questions:
 - In what ways are humans (or biological life-forms, more generally) and technology portrayed as interconnected in the film?
 - Does the film present an image of the future in which technology has made life for humans “better” or “worse”? Explain.

4. Essay (30 points): At the beginning of Week 8, you will be assigned a specific area of focus for your two, end-of-semester assessments. Each student will have the opportunity to conduct special research into either one chapter from the *Science Fiction and Philosophy* textbook, or one required reading from a supplemental text (such as Bergson’s text or Kearney’s text), as selected by the professors. Feel free to consult secondary sources, as needed, in order to acquire competence in your area of special focus.

Once your research is completed, you will create a character based on your assigned area of focus. This area of focus may be scientific or philosophical in nature – and the character that you create should be an actual person from the course reading materials in this area of focus. For

instance, your character may be (among many other possibilities) an evolutionary biologist, a cyborg, a monster, a follower of the philosopher Ray Kurzweil, a student of Henri Bergson, a computer programmer, a brain in a vat, an inhabitant of the Matrix, etc.

The point of creating and developing this character is two-fold. First, you will write your essay *from the perspective of your created character*. This means that you will not simply be telling us what Kurzweil (for example) believed and what his contributions to contemporary theory were, you will be writing *as* Kurzweil, in the first-person, defending your views and arguing for their importance. Feel free to anticipate potential criticisms of your view, and try to respond to them in a way that your character might have been likely to do.

Alternately, you may write a short-story based on your character that prominently integrates philosophical themes, concepts, or worldviews. If you choose the short-story option, however, you must include a brief abstract at the beginning of your story detailing the philosophical or scientific ideas you are working with.

Please make sure to follow all the Writing Guidelines listed in this syllabus!

Essays should be approximately 2 pages in length.

5. Act and Interact Assignment (30 points): At the beginning of Week 13, you will be assigned to a city-team for the Act and Interact assignment (which will take place during Week 14). This will be your second opportunity to use your created character.

Once you have completed your research, and submitted your essay, you will collaborate with your team-members to create an imaginary city based on your collective outlook on the issues discussed this semester.

You should start by choosing a name for your city and creating either an emblem, symbol, or flag to represent its central beliefs.

Next, each student/character will specify how they would contribute to the city and describe what these contributions would entail. Finally, working collaboratively, and using course materials as a guide, each student will work with team-members to create and discuss in as much detail as possible the city's culture. This will involve deciding what the city's science, philosophy, and culture might look like.

Your team should address questions including (but not limited to) the following: What sort of values will your city promote? How will your city view outsiders or "strangers"? What will life inside your city be like? How will science, philosophy, and technology factor into this? How will your city view the relationship between biological humans, cyborgs, and artificially intelligent entities? What sort of special laws or regulations will your city adopt? What sort of future will your city seek to promote?

Please also dedicate some consideration to describing your city's limits or weaknesses.

Once the collaborative process has been completed, each team should draft a final "summary" document describing its city and containing a summary of what each character has contributed. This document will include the names of all students on the team who participated. Once the document has been finalized, each student will submit it on Canvas.

Your individual grades will be determined based on the quality, creativity, and accuracy of your various contributions to your team's Discussion Board.

Grading Breakdown:

A: 100%-94%; A-: 93%-90%; B+: 89%-87%; B: 86%-84%; B-: 83%-80%; C+: 79%-77%; C: 76%-74%; C-: 73%-70%; D: 69%-60%; F: 60% >

Homework/Discussions/Project Policy:

No late work will be accepted. You will be responsible for submitting your work on time. Specified protocol for all submissions must be followed. All assessments will be turned-in or posted on Blackboard.

Plagiarism and Cheating:

Plagiarism is intellectual theft and will not be tolerated. Any idea you owe to someone else that is not general knowledge must be documented. Honest intellectual work on all assignments and tests is expected. Any plagiarism and/or cheating will result in a zero.

Disability Services:

If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, it is your responsibility to register with Disability Services and provide them with documentation of your disability. They will work with you to determine what accommodations are appropriate for your situation. To avoid any delay, you should contact Disability Services as soon as possible. Please contact Disability Services for more information at Main Hall room 105, 719-255-3354 or dservice@uccs.edu.

UCCS Policy Links:

Plagiarism: <http://www.uccs.edu/las/las-plagiarism-policy.html> Student Code of Conduct and Behavior Policy: <http://www.uccs.edu/dos/student-conduct.html> Discrimination and Harassment: <http://www.uccs.edu/vcaf/policies/uccs-policies.html>

Writing Guidelines:

1. Use a title page for your final paper only.
2. You must have page numbers on each page except the title page. Your first page of actually writing is page 1.
3. Your papers must be double-spaced, 12 pt. Times New Roman or a nice easy to read font with 1" margins.
4. Use subtitles where appropriate. They give order and structure to your paper.
5. You must document all your sources in the final paper through a recognized format (MLA, Chicago, APA etc.).

6. Your final essay must contain a Bibliography that properly documents all of your sources. (This page does not count as one of your required pages.) Please document ALL secondary sources on the required readings.

7. Information in your writing must be organized in well-constructed paragraphs with minimal grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors. Carefully check spelling, punctuation, grammar, capitalization, paragraphing, and documentation. Underline or italicize book titles, magazines, and journal titles.

8. Do not be overly autobiographical. Do not write, “I think that X is true because of Y.” Simply write “X is true because of Y.” Any personal pronouns must relate directly to the substance of your paper.

9. Periods and commas go inside quotation marks—“Like this.”—not outside of them—“Like this”.

10. Use but don’t overuse direct quotations from sources. I want to know how YOU summarize the material.

11. Paragraphs should contain one main idea. They should not go on for several paragraphs, nor should they be only one sentence.

12. Don’t give a report on the life of a philosopher or a paper that is merely describes ideas without explaining them.

Weekly Schedule:

Week 1: January 22-27

- View: Dr. Olkowski's lectures on BB
- Read: The chapters below from *Sci-Fi and Philosophy*
- Ch. 1 Brain in a Vat
- Ch. 2 Are You In a Computer Simulation?
- Ch. 3 Excerpt from *The Republic*
- Discussion Board: Personal Introductions
- Assignment: 1+1

Week 2: January 28-February 3

- View: Dr. Kuzma's video-blog on BB
- Read: The chapter below from *Sci-Fi and Philosophy*
- Ch. 18 The Man on the Moon
- Assignment: Evaluate and Create, Know and Explore #1
- View Short-Film: "True Skin"
- Assignment: Film Analysis

Week 3: February 4-February 10

- View: Dr. Olkowski's lecture on BB
- Read: pp. 98-105 from *Creative Evolution*
- The General Idea of Evolutionary Progress
- Assignment: 1+1

Week 4: February 11-17

- View Dr. Kuzma's Video-Blog on BB
- Read: The chapter below from *Sci-Fi and Philosophy*
- Ch. 17 Superintelligence and Singularity
- Assignment: Evaluate and Create, Know and Explore #2
- View Short-Film: "Sight"
- Assignment: Film Analysis

Week 5: February 18-24

- View: Dr. Olkowski's lecture on BB
- Read: pp. 105-135 from *Creative Evolution*
- The Relation of Animal to Plant
- Assignment: 1+1

Week 6: February 25-March 3

- View: Dr. Olkowski's lectures on BB
- Read: The chapters below from *Sci-Fi and Philosophy*
- Ch. 5 The Matrix as Metaphysics
- Ch. 9 Who am I? What am I?
- Ch. 14 The Mind as the Software of the Brain
- Assignment: 1+1

Week 7: March 4-March 10

- View Dr. Kuzma's Video-Blog on BB
- Read: The excerpt below from *Strangers, Gods, and Monsters*
- The Postmodern Sublime
- Assignment: Evaluate and Create, Know and Explore #3

Week 8: March 11-17

- View: Dr. Olkowski's lectures on BB
- Read: pp. 135-178 from *Creative Evolution*
- The Main Directions of the Evolutions of Life
- The Nature of Intellect and the Nature of Instinct
- Assignment: 1+1
- **Characters for Essays Assigned**

Week 9: March 18-24

- Read: The chapter below from *Sci-Fi and Philosophy*
- Ch. 12 Robot Dreams
- View Film: *I'm Here* by Spike Jonze
- Complete: Evaluate and Create, Know and Explore #4

Week 10: Spring Break: March 25-March 31

Week 11: April 1-7

- View: Dr. Olkowski's Lectures on BB
- Read: The chapters below from *Sci-Fi and Philosophy*
- Ch. 15 Cyborgs Unplugged
- Ch. 26 The Quantum Physics of Time Travel
- Assignment: 1+1

Week 12: April 8-14

- View Dr. Kuzma's Video-Blog on BB
- Read: The excerpt below from *What is Sex?*
- The Universe in Heat
- Assignment: Evaluate and Create, Know and Explore #5
- View Short-Film: "Plurality"
- Assignment: Film Analysis

Week 13: April 15-21

- View: Dr. Olkowski's lecture on BB
- Read: pp. 178-185 from *Creative Evolution*
- Life and Consciousness
- Assignment: 1+1
- Final Essay Due by Sunday, April 21 at 11:59pm.

Week 14: April 22-April 28

- ACT AND INTERACT ASSIGNMENT – IN TEAMS
- Group Summary Due by Sunday, April 28 at 11:59pm.