

Please note: this is a preliminary version of the syllabus. Changes might occur.

**The University of Toronto  
Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures**

**CCR 199Y: Technology and the Human**

**2013-14, Wednesday 1-3 pm, place TBA**

**Course Description**

Technology has changed our lives: from railway to car and plane, from telegraph to phone and e-mail, and from wooden artificial limbs to organic prosthetics, scientific knowledge has enhanced human capacities. At the same time, though, this development is also experienced as a threat: killing missiles, controlling 'Big Brothers,' and frightening monstrous creatures are the flip-side of technological advancement. This course examines the following questions: What is the relationship between technology and the "human"? Can there be progress of technology without a regress of humanity? Or is technology liberating us from the bonds of nature? We will discuss possible answers by looking at some of the most relevant materials in literature, philosophy, and cultural history (including film) from the eighteenth century to Post-Modernity. However, we do not want to deal with this pressing topic only theoretically. Since technology does not remain in the ivory tower of academia but concerns our every-day life, we will strive to find our own stance towards technology by observing our daily experiences. Therefore, some of the assignments will prompt you to explore your own technological environment.

**Course Objectives**

The primary objectives of this course are to introduce students to conceptualizations of the relationship between technology and the human as they are reflected in literature and culture and to enhance students' ability to analyze and interpret texts.

**Instructor's Contact Information**

Instructor: Christine Lehleiter  
Office: Odette Hall 318  
Office hours: Tuesday, 1-3 PM and by appointment  
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**Course Requirements**

Attendance and participation (15%): Regular attendance is mandatory. Absences will only be excused according to University regulations: for example, religious holidays, serious accidents or illness (medical note required), and serious family circumstances (written documentation required). Please notify your instructor at least a week in advance in case you know you need to miss class. In addition to excused absences each student may have one (1) unexcused absence. Each unexcused absence after the first will result in a reduction of the final grade. Besides regular attendance, your participation represents a substantial part of your final grade. I expect you to come to class in time, having

completed all the readings and assignments. You must bring to class a copy of the assigned text/s. You are responsible for contributing to and stimulating a meaningful exchange of ideas. You will be graded according to quality and frequency of your participation.

Reflective Journal (25 %): You are asked to write a journal in which you note, describe and reflect on the impact of technology in your everyday life. This journal is understood as a first exploration of the leading questions of our class on a personal level: What space does technology occupy in my life? Does it help me or does it hinder me in what I want to achieve? How does it shape my self-understanding? And how would my life be different without technological assistance? See due date in the course program.

Blackboard Contributions (5%): You will need to read the assigned texts and to contribute on Blackboard's "Discussion Board" in preparation for class. Please make yourself familiar with Blackboard, if you do not know the portal yet: <https://portal.utoronto.ca>. Unless otherwise indicated, you can write on any aspect or question of the text which seems interesting to you. You are expected to read your classmates' contributions. Your work on Blackboard will help you to participate in class and contribute to a lively discussion. Blackboard contributions will be marked with 0 or 1. As long as your contribution is directly related to the assigned text/task, has the required length and is submitted in time, you will earn 1 point. You can miss one (1) of these assignments without penalties. Blackboard contributions are due Tuesdays, 7 p.m. No late work will be accepted.

Test (30%): You will write one test.

Group Project (25%): For this project you will work in a group of 4 or 5 people (depending on class size). Each group will explore the problems and possibilities of one technology. These projects will be presented and discussed in the last class. You will produce a portfolio accompanying this group project to document your work. The project will be graded for content as well as presentation skills (detailed criteria will follow).

**A note on missed or late work:** you can only obtain credit for your work if the absence or delay is related to reasons for excused absences as defined above. Except for emergencies, all excuses for missing an exam or for late assignments must be discussed with me before the exam or due date. Except for emergencies, I will NOT accept excuses given after the exam or due date. An unexcused late assignment or missed exam will result in a zero.

### **Evaluation of Course Work (Final Grade)**

Attendance and Participation:	15%
Reflective Journal:	25%
Blackboard Contributions:	5%
Test:	30%
Group Project:	25%

## **Required texts**

1. A course reader will be available at *The Copy Place*, 720 Spadina Ave, Suite 100, Toronto M5S 2T9, phone: (416) 961 - 2679. The Copy Place is located on Spadina Avenue between Bloor Street West and Harbord Street.
2. Robert J. Sawyer, *The Terminal Experiment* ISBN 978-0-14-317511-7

## **Avoidance of Academic Offenses**

Academic integrity is one of the cornerstones of the University of Toronto. It is critically important both to maintain our community which honours the values of honesty, trust, respect, fairness and responsibility and to protect you, the students within this community, and the value of the degree towards which you are all working so diligently. According to Section B of the University of Toronto's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters (<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>) which all students are expected to know and respect, it is an offence for students knowingly: to forge or in any other way alter or falsify any document or evidence required by the University, or to utter, circulate or make use of any such forged, altered or falsified document, whether the record be in print or electronic form; to use or possess an unauthorized aid or aids or obtain unauthorized assistance in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work; to personate another person, or to have another person personate, at any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work; to represent as one's own any idea or expression of an idea or work of another in any academic examination or term test or in connection with any other form of academic work, i.e. to commit plagiarism; to submit, without knowledge and approval of the instructor to whom it is submitted, any academic work for which credit has previously been obtained or is being sought in another course or program of study in the University or elsewhere; to submit any academic work containing a purported statement of fact or reference to a source which has been concocted. Please respect these rules and the values which they protect.

## **Accessibility Needs**

The University of Toronto is committed to accessibility. If you require accommodations for a disability, or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: [disability.services@utoronto.ca](mailto:disability.services@utoronto.ca) or <http://studentlife.utoronto.ca/accessibility>.

## **Course Program**

*In what follows, you will find the planned course program. Changes might occur.  
Please check Blackboard regularly for the most current course information.*

## **Technology and the Human**

- Introduction to course topic

## **Prosthetics: Redemption through Technology?**

- Heinrich Kleist, *The Puppet Theatre*
- Pat Murphy, *Inappropriate Behavior*

### **Ecotechnological Environment: Can We Control?**

- Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust II*
- Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*

### **Man and Machine: Is Technology Human?**

- Arnold Gehlen, *Human Being*
- Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology*

### **Creating the Human**

- E.T.A. Hoffmann, *The Sandman*

### **Transportation: Mobilizing the Masses**

- Henry Ford, *My Life and Work*
- Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey*

### **Biopower and Biotechnology I**

- Franz Kafka, *In the Penal Colony*
- Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*

### **Biopower and Biotechnology II**

- Gregory Stock and John Campbell (eds.), *Engineering the Human Germline*
- Bronislaw Szerszynski, *Deep Surface*

### **The Future is Now**

- Robert J. Sawyer, *The Terminal Experiment*

### **Group Projects**

- Group Project Presentations