

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

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

HUM/CCR 199H Fall: Technology and the Human

Fall 2010, Monday 3-5 pm, place TBA



Image source: http://future.wikia.com/wiki/Artificial_womb

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

Dr. Christine Lehleiter

Office: Odette Hall 312
Office hours: TBA
E-mail: christine.lehleiter@utoronto.ca
Phone: 416-926-2319

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 me 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. 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 (20 %): 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 (10%): 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.) I will provide study questions related to the reading assignments, to which you can refer in your Blackboard contribution. However, 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 Mondays, 10 a.m. No late work will be accepted.

Group Project (20%): 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 class. The project will be graded for content as well as presentation skills (detailed criteria will follow).

Final Paper (35%): For this project you work individually on an in-depth interpretation of one text, film, or problem discussed in class. If you consider it helpful, you may refer to additional materials. The assessment of your essay will be based on the soundness and originality of your argumentation (detailed criteria will follow). See due dates in the course program.

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:	20%
Blackboard Contributions:	10%
Group Project:	20%
Final Paper:	35%

Required texts

Texts will be provided in paper or electronic format. Students are expected to have a copy of the assigned text available in class.

Avoidance of Academic Offenses

From the Academic Integrity Handbook: “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.utoronto.ca/govcncl/pap/policies/behaveac.html>) which all students are expected to know and respect, it is an offence for students to: To use someone else’s ideas or words in their own work without acknowledging that those ideas/words are not their own with a citation and quotation marks, i.e. to commit plagiarism. To include false, misleading or concocted citations in their work. To obtain unauthorized assistance on any assignment. To provide unauthorized assistance to another student. This includes showing another student completed work. To submit their own work for credit in more than one course without the permission of the instructor. To falsify or alter any

documentation required by the University. This includes, but is not limited to, doctor's notes. To use or possess an unauthorized aid in any test or exam. There are other offences covered under the Code, but these are by far the most common. Please respect these rules and the values which they protect."

Course Program

WEEK I (Monday, 13 September): **Introduction**

- Syllabus
- Introduction to course topic

WEEK II (Monday, 20 September): **Redemption through technology?**

- Heinrich Kleist, *The Puppet Theatre*
- Thomas Parke Hughes, *Technology and the Second Creation*

WEEK III (Monday, 27 September): **Mechanization takes control**

- Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Faust II* (act 5) and *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*
- Thomas Parke Hughes, *Creating an Ecotechnological Environment*
- **Reflective Journal due!**

WEEK IV (Monday, 4 October): **Is technology human?**

- Arnold Gehlen, *Human Being* (excerpt)
- Siegfried Giedion, *Mechanization Takes Command* (excerpt)

WEEK V (Monday, 11 October): **Thanksgiving, no class**

WEEK VI (Monday, 18 October): **Transportation: Mobilizing the Masses**

- Ford, *My Life and Work* (1-32, 77-115)
- Callender, "Gandhi Dissects the Ford Idea" (*N.Y. Times Magazine*, 1931)
- Thomas Parke Hughes, *American Genesis* (203-26)
- David A. Hounshell, *The Ethos of Mass Production and Its Critics*
- Schivelbusch, *Railway Journey* (1-44, 89-112, 113-32, 129-33, 159-70)

WEEK VII (Monday, 25 October): **Urbanization: Metropolis**

- Le Corbusier, *Modern City* (excerpts)
- Film: Lang, *Metropolis*

WEEK VIII (Monday, 1 November):

- **Group Project Presentations**

Note: November 3, last day to drop courses with F section codes from academic record and GPA

WEEK IX (Monday, 8 November): **Fall Break, no class**

WEEK X (Monday, 15 November): **Creating the Human I**

- Ovid, *Pygmalion*
- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*

WEEK XI (Monday, 22 November): **Creating the Human II**

- E.T.A. Hoffmann, *The Sandman*
- Film: Ridley Scott, *Blade Runner*

WOCHE XII (Monday, 29 November): **Biopower and Biotechnology I**

- Franz Kafka, *In the Penal Colony*
- Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (excerpt) and *History of Sexuality* (excerpt)

WOCHE XIII (Monday, 6. December): **Biopower and Biotechnology II**

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

There will be NO final exam.