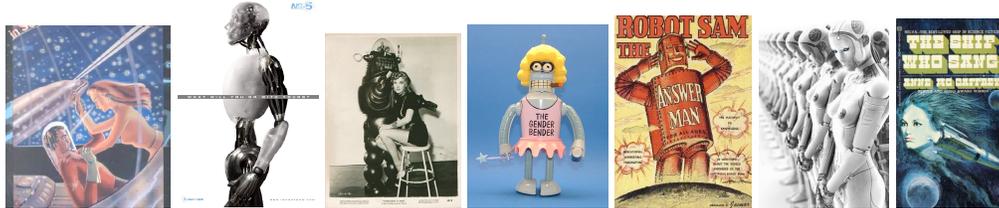


English 2303 – 004

Plug-in Girls and Robot Men: Gendered Technology in Science Fiction Film and Literature



Instructor: Bridgitte Barclay

Course Information: M/W 4:00 p.m. - 5:20 p.m.

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Office Hours: M/W 8:00 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. and Fri 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

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Course Description: Science fiction envisions “what ifs,” and that speculation is what makes it a superb site for consideration of gender alternatives. In engaging with techno-science, science fiction expresses our cultural hopes and fears and forces us to take a closer look at our assumptions about what defines “man” and what defines “woman.” By pushing what we consider the “norm,” science fiction expands what we see as possible, changing our views of reality, which is why Donna Haraway writes, “science fiction is political theory.” In this course, we will focus on the uses of male and female bodies in science fiction film and literature to study how these texts expose and offer alternatives to our assumptions about gender.

Required Readings:

Decoding Gender in Science Fiction

A Short Guide to Writing About Film

The Ship Who Sang;

I, Robot

The Road

The Handmaid’s Tale

E-Reserves Readings

Selection of movies

You may need an online movie subscription service like Netflix

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course, students will be able to do the following:

- To engage the literature with current political and social issues and vice versa
- To write with clarity to communicate effectively within the academic community
- To respond critically to course material, using synthesis and analysis
- To explain or describe the meanings of literary texts
- To apply different and appropriate critical frameworks to the analysis of texts
- To adapt writing for different styles or forms, including informal reflections, analytical essays, research essays, etc.

- To evaluate and respond to the aesthetics and philosophies of a text
- To explain culture's influence on literature, as well as literature's impact on culture

Course Requirements:

- Response Essays (35%): You will write response essays for most of the texts we read or watch. These **two-page** essays will require thinking critically about the text itself, the historical moment in which it is written, and/or the text's relationship to other texts in class. These are formal essays that will require substantial support from the reading, should be grammatically and structurally correct, and in MLA format. **I will not accept any essays in this class that are not MLA formatted.** While these essays are grounded academically, they should also push the limits. **Summaries and sheer reiterations of class discussions will not earn passing grades.** The purpose of these essays is not only to show familiarity with the reading, but also to begin exploring questions and ideas in a way that both initiates and is drawn from class discussion. This is the place to test out ideas and share them with the class. Writing these will be good preparation for the course exams. **Using an outside source on these is unacceptable and will result in a zero.**
- Group Film Presentation (30%): Early in the semester, you will be assigned a group and will sign up for 15-20-minute presentation based on an issue relating to gender and technology. You will choose one text and one film from the semester to work with (with prior approval, you may also choose films outside of those watched in class). The group will lead the class on their assigned day at the end of the semester, analyzing the film and text in the context of the course, posing a question or a thesis that will keep the presentation focused. **Everyone in class will have watched the films out of class by the first group's presentation date.** This is the final project, in place of a research paper, and should be approached with the time, research, preparation, and academic refinement you would give a research paper. **Each group should have the following requirements met: 1) each member should present in some way, the whole group working to relate the film to relevant scholarship and course content; 2) the group should engage the rest of the class in some way; 3) each group will hand in a packet including individual evaluation essays (see below) and an outline of participation (what group members did what); 4) the group must present an argument in some way (this is in place of a research essay, so consider what your thesis is for the presentation).** I know what I find interesting about these texts, but having you present and guide discussion about what you are interested in makes the class more dynamic and

creates more avenues of thought. **Be creative. Use your talents and strengths as individuals and as a group.** The point is to share with the class a depth and complexity to the film by sharing what engages you, and then to elicit discussion with critical thinking questions. Each student will also write a one-to-two-page essay explaining the presentation's relevance to the course, incorporating the scholarly approaches to the texts and relating the film to appropriate course texts and/or themes. The essay should have a thesis, topic sentences, and be a well-organized, error-free academic essay and will count for 10% of the presentation grade.

- Exams (30%): You will have three exams that will be largely in essay and/or short-answer form and based on the readings and films up to the exam date. **You should take detailed class notes and keep up with response essays in order to be prepared for this exam.** You will be required to utilize all that has been covered in class, in your readings, and in-group discussions in a deeper, more complex way.
- Participation (5%): Your preparation for class and involvement in class discussion will earn points each day. Come with the assignment read (or watched), and be ready to engage with the text in class.

Note: Please be advised that it is your responsibility to retain all of your assignments until after you have received your final grade. You cannot formally challenge a final grade if you do not have evidence of your work.

Late Work Policy: I will not accept late work beyond a week later, and it will lose a half-letter grade for each calendar day it is late. If you must miss class on a day a response essay is due, you can email it to me as an attachment.

Attendance/Late Policy: This is an interactive class in which attendance is vital. While reading the texts on your own will provide insights, the real learning comes through class discussion and lecture. Please be in class on time, ready for active participation. You are allowed three absences. Each absence over three will result in a one-point deduction of your final course percentage. The reasons for the absences do not matter, and you will not be able to make up quizzes, etc. For ANY absence, you (the student) are responsible for acquiring information about the notes and discussion you missed. If you are more than 15 minutes late to class, you will be counted absent. Manage your absences responsibly.

Formatting and Presentation: All assignments should be in MLA format. We will review this format in class, and you can also see a writing handbook for guidelines. In general, this means that assignments must be typed in 12-point font (Times New Roman for this class), double-spaced, with one inch margins all around. The first page should contain a heading and title. MLA parenthetical citations and works cited lists are also required when appropriate.

Dropping the Course: If, during the course of the semester, you choose to drop this class, it is your responsibility to fill out the appropriate documentation and pursue the procedure for dropping a course.

Classroom Etiquette: Students in this class are expected to show respect for their classmates, instructor, and guests. Disrespectful behavior is grounds for dismissal from class. This will mean an absence for the day and a required appointment with me before the next class meeting. Also, please remember to turn off cell phones during class.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism: 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, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts" (Regents' Rules and Regulations, Part One, Chapter VI, Section 3, Subsection 3.2, Subdivision 3.22). You can get in trouble for plagiarism—even if you do not intend to cheat—by failing to correctly indicate places where you are making use of the work of another. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the conventions of citation by which you indicate which ideas are not your own and how your reader can find those sources. Because I value originality and honesty, I find plagiarism especially offensive. Do not do it.

Student Success Programs: UTA offers a variety of student programs to help you connect with the University and achieve academic success, including learning assistance, developmental education, advising and mentoring, admissions and transition, and federally funded programs. Students requiring assistance academically, personally, or socially should contact the Office of Student Success Programs at 817-272-6107 for more information and appropriate referrals.

Americans With Disabilities Act: The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 93112 -- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans With Disabilities Act - (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens. As a faculty member, I am required by law to provide "reasonable accommodation" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty at the beginning of the semester and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels.

E-Reserves: Several of the readings are online and are accessible to you with the course password. To find the readings, go to the library's catalog, then the "Course Reserves" tab at the top. Select the appropriate "Instructor," "Department," and "Course" pull downs. You will sign in with your NetID and password.

Tentative Schedule

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| Aug 24 | Introduction to class; Read poems from <i>Universal Monsters</i> and view film clips (<i>Bride of Frankenstein</i> and/or <i>Cyborg</i>) |
| Aug 26 | Read "That Only a Mother" (e-reserves) and <i>Decoding Gender in Science Fiction</i> Ch. 1-3 |
| Aug 31 | Read <i>Decoding Gender in Science Fiction</i> Ch. 4-6 |

Sept 2

Read *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction* Ch. 7-end; Response

Essay Due (Prompt: Note one or two assertions that Attebery makes about gender and science fiction and relate that/those assertions to the film clips we watched in class). Hand out Exam I (Take-home Exam)

- I. Response Essays – Groups of 3 or 4 and read thesis and main points to one another.
- II. Exam – Go over

Sept 7 Labor Day

What is Human?: Technological/Mutated/Modified Bodies (and Minds)

Sept 9 Turn in Exam 1, read *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* Ch. 1 and 2, and view (in class) *Attack of the 50-Foot Woman*

Sept 14 Read “The Girl Who Plugged In” (e-reserves)

Sept 16 Read *I, Robot* Ch. 1-3

Sept 21 Read *I, Robot* Ch. 8 and 9; Response Essay Due (Prompt: What warnings do *Attack of the 50-Foot Woman*, “The Girl Who Plugged In,” and *I, Robot* give and what fears do they reflect?)

Sept 23 Read *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* Ch. 3 and 4 and view (in class) *The Last Man on Earth* (and perhaps portions of *I am Legend*)

Sept 28 Read *The Ship Who Sang* Ch. 1-3

Sept 30 Read *The Ship Who Sang* Ch. 4

Oct 5 Read *The Ship Who Sang* Ch. 5

Oct 7 Read *The Ship Who Sang* Ch. 6 and Watch *The Matrix*

Oct 12 Read *A Short Guide to Writing About Film* Ch. 5 and 6; Response Essay Due (Prompt: Choose a film technique or concept that Corrigan discusses and apply it to *The Matrix*)

Oct 14 Watch *Children of Men* out of class

Oct 19 Exam Two

Oct 21 No Class (Try to meet with film groups)

Post-Technology and Gender Roles

Oct 26 Read *A Handmaid’s Tale* Ch. 1-13

Oct 28 Read *A Handmaid’s Tale* Ch. 14-24

Nov 2 Read *A Handmaid’s Tale* Ch. 25-35 and watch *A Handmaid’s Tale* in class

Nov 4 Read *A Handmaid’s Tale* Ch. 36-end; Response Essay Due (Prompt: Science fiction deals with “what ifs,” which sometimes serve as warnings. What is Atwood’s warning (choose a portion of the text that reflects it particularly well), and is it a credible warning?)

Nov 9 Read *The Road* p. 1-74

Nov 11 Read *The Road* p. 75-159

Nov 16 Read *The Road* p. 159-236

Nov 18 Read *The Road* p. 236-end; Response Essay Due (Prompt: What warnings do

Children of Men and *The Road* give about technology? Argue whether or not each of the texts is hopeful (i.e., are we meant to learn from them and change?)

Nov 23

Exam 3

Nov 25

Thanksgiving Holiday

Nov 30

Presentations

Dec 2

Presentations