Contact Information

Office: Walker 307
Office hours: T/Th, by appointment
Telephone: 7-2447
E-mail: cyselfe@mtu.edu

Required Texts:


Additional readings on reserve and as assigned: students must photocopy these readings and bring them to class on the day they are assigned.

Movies as assigned:
*Desk Set*, Hepburn and Tracy
*Frankenstein*, Whale’s and Branagh’s adaptations
*Blade Runner*, Scott

Course Information

This course will explore the relationship between humans and computers by focusing on such questions as the following:

- What is the contemporary relationship between humans and machines?
- What role does language play in this relationship?
- What role does visual representation play in this relationship?
- What are the historical roots of this relationship?
- What relationship between humans and machines should we seek to establish?

Students will look at this relationship and these questions from several perspectives, among them:
• through fiction, reading Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Asimov's *I, Robot*;
• through film, watching *Frankenstein*, *Desk Set*, and *Blade Runner*;
• through theater, reading *R.U.R.*, by Karel Capek, the first person to use the word "robot";
• through viewing works of art and reading poetry that portray the relationships between humans and computers;
• through non-fiction, reading Bettleheim's "Joey, the Mechanical Boy" and Taylor's "Shop Management."

Students will—among other assignments—complete a number of readings, contribute weekly to an online class discussion, write and respond to pre-reading and pre-viewing questions and lead class discussions, write a film history, complete a final project that explores the relationship between humans and computers in an area of personal interest and in media of their choice, and compile a portfolio of their best work.

**Student Goals for This Course**

Michigan Tech’s General Education Program has identified the following goals for students in this section of Perspectives on Inquiry. All assessment of student performance will be based on these goals:

• students will become active learners through inquiry into interdisciplinary questions;
• students will learn how knowledge from a variety of perspectives can be integrated to provide richer and more complex insights;
• students will begin to acquire the intellectual habits of critical thinking, critical reading, accuracy and thoroughness, creativity, reasoning from evidence to support arguments;
• students will learn how to give others' ideas and positions thoughtful consideration; gain experience in effective oral, written, and visual communication; acquire research skills (e.g., textual, empirical, etc.); and develop effective strategies for learning and time management;
• students will learn to identify with the MTU mission of promoting diversity, creativity, leadership, and teamwork in order to meet the changing needs of our society.

**Grading**

The following assignments will be used to determine your grade in this course:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leading Class Discussion and previewing/reading questions (Expert Team)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-reading/Pre-viewing postings (answers to the expert team’s questions and response to another person’s post)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Poem</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Film History for <em>Blade Runner</em></td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weekly reading assignments, class preparation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final project (web based)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portfolio</td>
<td>20%</td>
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Attendance, Participation and Reflection

Attendance and participation is crucial. Missing more than three classes this term will result in a lower course grade. Active, voluntary, and regular participation in discussions (both online and face-to-face) is expected of students for a passing participation grade. Each week, 5-minute reflective writes will ask students to reflect on what they have learned in connection with the class and what questions remain unanswered. The quality of thinking you demonstrate within these reflections—and the level of intellectual engagement they indicate—will help determine your participation grade. See me if you want some indication of the quality-level for your reflections.

Pre-reading/Pre-viewing Questions, Answers, and Responses

Before class sessions in which we discuss a reading or movie, each class member will read the assigned text (or view it) carefully, write answers to the pre-reading and/or pre-viewing questions authored by the expert team (see below), and—every other week—post these answers on the threaded discussion board. (Students with last names beginning A-L will post answers to questions on even weeks of the term and students with last names beginning M-Z will post answers to questions on odd weeks of the term.) All students will answer all questions in writing every week—those students not posting their answers online in a particular week are responsible for saving all of their responses and bringing these to the class period during which the work is discussed. These will be checked, on occasion by the teacher. The deadline for these answers is the beginning of the class period in which they are discussed.

Every other week students will also post at least one response to someone else’s answers, as well. (Students with last names beginning M-Z will write and post responses to someone else’s answers on even weeks of the term and students with last names beginning A-L will write and post responses to someone else’s answers on odd weeks of the term.) The goal of this response is to enter into a meaningful collaborative dialogue with a different class member each time. The deadline for these response posts is Sunday night at 8:00 pm.

Expert Team: Leading Class Discussion/Evaluating Answers

At least once, and possibly several times during the term, class members will be responsible for presenting a reading or a film to the class as a team of experts. The expert team will read/view the item at least two weeks before it is due on the syllabus, create a series of pre-reading/pre-viewing questions for the class (to be posted on the threaded discussion board on the dates indicated), and lead the discussion on this item—focusing on what the reading/viewing helps us understand about the relationships between humans and computers.

The pre-viewing/pre-reading questions formulated by expert teams should not focus on yes/no answers or the simple recall of facts; rather, they should involve students in thinking critically about the relationships between humans and computers, making connections among readings, analyzing arguments, and formulating responses to important issues and themes.

The expert team’s class presentation should be no longer than 30 minutes and consist of 1.) a short written summary of the important points of the reading/viewing (with bulleted lists when possible, all carefully proofed), 2.) a class activity designed to improve students’ understanding of human-computer relationships as illustrated by the reading/viewing, and 3.) efforts to elicit contributions from—and the active involvement of—as many class members as possible.

As they lead the class, the expert team will not simply ask the pre-viewing/pre-reading questions they posted; rather, they will use these questions as a springboard for further exploration. For
instance, the expert team may focus on an area that students seemed to have trouble with when answering the pre-viewing/pre-reading questions. The expert team’s presentation should demonstrate a clear familiarity with the readings/viewings assigned.

The expert teams’ efforts to lead class discussion will be evaluated by peers.

As part of the expert-team effort, teams will evaluate students’ answers to the pre-reading/pre-viewing questions and students responses to answers—filling out an Evaluation Sheet for each student in the class who is not on the expert team. These evaluations sheets are due to the instructor two class periods after the class discussion of the reading/viewing takes place.

**Film History for Blade Runner**

Students will write a 1-2 page history of the film *Blade Runner* that uses at least 4 print sources and 3 electronic/digital sources. This history will discuss how the film came about and investigate its producer, director, author of the screenplay, and actors. Among the questions the history might address are the following: When and where was it filmed? How long did the film take to make and why? What story does it tell (brief—this assignment should not focus too much on this summary), When was it released? How did it fare with the public and the critics? As discussed in class, use notes to identify the sources of your information, and also provide a bibliography. (Use APA style; put these materials at the end of your history). For APA citations to electronic sources see <http://www.apastyle.org/elecref.html>; for APA citations to print sources use 4th edition of the APA *Publication Manual* and see index at <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~sources/examples/about.html>. NOTE: See Film History Assignment; read <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~sources/about/why.html>, read the MTU Student Handbook for a discussion of plagiarism as a form of academic dishonesty, and then see me for help on avoiding plagiarism.

**Final Project**

At the end of the term, you will complete a substantial project (worth 20% of your grade) that provides a visually-based argument or essay about some aspect of the human-machine relationship of interest to you, and an accompanying written explanation and analysis of the argument/essay. Multiple and mixed media/genres are encouraged, but the project should demonstrate considerable intellectual engagement with the readings/viewings/issues/questions we encounter in class and a significant set of additional materials you seek out on your own, outside of class. The project should also demonstrate professionalism in organization and presentation.

**Portfolio**

At the end of the term students will compile a portfolio in which they assemble the best work they have done during the term and reflect on the nature of the learning they have done.

**Computer Elements**

This course will require that you use several kinds of computer applications. If any of these are unfamiliar to you, please see me as soon as possible so that you can access the course materials:
listserv: UN1001-26-I@mtu.edu (for course updates, assignment changes, questions of general interest to all students in the course)

e-mail: cyselfe@mtu.edu (for questions that should go directly to the teacher)

threaded discussion: <http://skipper.hu.mtu.edu/~cyselfe> (for posting pre-reading questions, answers, and responses to other students’ answers). When you go to this site, select the correct class (I’ll have at least two classes sharing this space), and login as a new user. Be sure to jot down the password you choose—only you have access to it. Only access this discussion from a computer on campus.

web: You will be expected to know how to browse the web using a program like Navigator and how to create a simple web page using Composer. (I will provide help with this, but see me during the first week of class.)

Special Notes:

If you have a disability covered under the Americans with Disability Act, or any other special needs, please see me during the first week of class—or as soon as possible—so that we can arrange a reasonable accommodation.

As the instructor, I reserve the right to modify the content and syllabus of this class throughout the term to meet the needs of students.

Syllabus

WEEK 1
Aug. 28 Due: Discussion: Course requirements and structure.

Aug. 30 Due: Send Dr. Selfe an e-mail message (cyselfe@mtu.edu with the following information (first name, last name, login name (the one you use for the university computing system), password, and preferred email address). Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein first third, hand out pre-viewing questions for Whale’s Frankenstein.

Discussion: Whale’s Frankenstein (watch in class). Five minute reflection: What did you learn in this class this week? What questions about readings/assignments/issues remain unanswered/unclear for you?

WEEK 2
Sept. 4 Due: If you have just joined the class, send Dr. Selfe an e-mail message (cyselfe@mtu.edu with the following information (first name, last name, login name (the one you use for the university computing system), password, and preferred email address). Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, second third; browse <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/frankenstein/frankhome.html>; hand out pre-reading questions for Shelley’s Frankenstein; post answers to questions for Whale’s Frankenstein.

Discussion: Whale’s Frankenstein (discuss in class).
Sept. 6  **Due:** Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, final third, read [http://www.nttic.or.jp/special/robot/index_e.html](http://www.nttic.or.jp/special/robot/index_e.html)

**Discussion:** Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein* (discuss in class). Five minute reflection: What did you learn in this class this week? What questions about readings/assignments/issues remain unanswered/unclear for you?

**WEEK 3**

11 Sept.  **Due:** Taylor’s “Shop Management” (on reserve at Library), first third of Capek’s *RUR*; hand out pre-viewing questions for Branagh’s *Frankenstein*.

**Discussion:** Branagh’s *Frankenstein* (watch in class).

13 Sept.  **Due:** Second third of Capek’s *RUR*, post pre-reading questions for *RUR*; post answers to questions for Branagh’s *Frankenstein*.

**Discussion:** Branagh’s *Frankenstein* (watch and discuss), . Five minute reflection: What did you learn in this class this week? What questions about readings/assignments/issues remain unanswered/unclear for you?

**WEEK 4**

Sept. 18 **Due:** Final third of Capek’s *RUR*; post pre-reading questions for “Shop Management” and “Counting Forward, Counting Backward”; post answers to questions for *RUR*.

**Discussion:** Capek’s *RUR*, .

Sept. 20 **Due:** Cheuse’s “Counting Forward, Counting Backward,” first third of Asimov’s *I, Robot*; post answers to questions for Taylor and Cheuse; post pre-reading questions for “Unabomber’s Manifesto” [http://www.wwfreepress.com/unabb.html](http://www.wwfreepress.com/unabb.html) and Bennehum’s “Ballad of the Unabomber.”

**Discussion:** Taylor’s “Shop Management” and Cheuse’s “Counting Forward, Counting Backward,” . Five minute reflection: What did you learn in this class this week? What questions about readings/assignments/issues remain unanswered/unclear for you?

**WEEK 5**

Sept. 25 **Due:** Read the “Unabomber’s Manifesto” [http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/~howard/Anarchism/Unabom/manifesto.html](http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/~howard/Anarchism/Unabom/manifesto.html) and Bennehum’s “Ballad of the Unabomber”; post answers to questions for “Unabomber Manifesto” and Bennehum; post pre-reading questions for *I, Robot*.

**Discussion:** What is progress? and “Unabomber’s Manifesto” and Bennehum .

Sept. 27 **Due:** Second third of Asimov’s *I, Robot*; post pre-reading questions for “The Technological Imperative”; post answers to questions for *I, Robot*.

**Discussion:** *I, Robot*, . Five minute reflection: What did you learn in this class this week? What questions about readings/assignments/issues remain unanswered/unclear for you?

**WEEK 6**

Oct. 2 **Due:** Post pre-viewing questions for *Desk Set*.

**Discussion:** *Desk Set* (watch in class, finish for home work); schedule out of class showings.

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Oct. 4  
**Due:** Post answers to questions for *Desk Set*

**Discussion:** Meet in Library with Dave Bezotte, right inside the main entrance. Start on 1-2 page history of *Blade Runner* as a film. Five minute reflection: What did you learn in this class this week? What questions about readings/assignments/issues remain unanswered/unclear for you?

**WEEK 7**

Oct. 9  
**Due:** Mumford’s “The Technological Imperative” and completed viewing of *Desk Set*; post pre-reading questions for the United Nations report and the 1999 and 2000 NTIA reports on the digital divide ((Falling Through the Net: Defining the Digital Divide and Falling Through the Net: Toward Digital Inclusion—read Executive Summaries only) <http://digitaldivide.gov/reports.htm>; post answers to questions for “The Technological Imperative”.

**Discussion:** “The Technological Imperative” and *Desk Set*

Oct. 11  

**Discussion:** NTIA Reports, __________________ _______. Five minute reflection: What did you learn in this class this week? What questions about readings/assignments/issues remain unanswered/unclear for you?

**WEEK 8**

Oct. 16  
**Due:** Post answers to questions for the United Nations Report; post pre-reading questions for “The Rise of the Fourth World”;

**Discussion:** What is global progress? and United Nations report,

Oct. 18  
**Due:** Post pre-reading questions for Jones and Adcock’s “In Search of Poetry” and Brautigan’s “Machines of Loving Grace” <http://wordsworth2.net/resourcelliterary/machlovg.htm> and Piercy’s “The Secretary Chant” <http://wordsworth2.net/resourcelliterary/sechant.htm>.

**Discussion:** discuss “The Rise of the Fourth World”

Five minute reflection: What did you learn in this class this week? What questions about readings/assignments/issues remain unanswered/unclear for you?

**WEEK 9**

Oct. 23  
**Due:** Post answers to questions for “In Search of Poetry” and “Machines of Loving Grace” and “The Secretary Chant.”

**Discussion:** “In Search of the Poetry...” and “Machines of Loving Grace” and “The Secretary Chant,” __________________________; discuss final projects.

Oct. 25  
**Due:** TBA

**Discussion:** Electronic Poetry. Five minute reflection: What did you learn in this class this week? What questions about readings/assignments/issues remain unanswered/unclear for you?
WEEK 10
Oct. 30
Due: Quoting, summarizing, paraphrasing exercise
Discussion: Quoting, summarizing, paraphrasing exercise

Nov. 1
Due: TBA
Discussion: More Quoting, summarizing, paraphrasing. Five minute reflection: What did you learn in this class this week? What questions about readings/assignments/issues remain unanswered/unclear for you?

WEEK 11
Nov. 6
Due: Poetry assignment
Discussion: Show and read your original poem; be prepared to talk about your favorite poem from the electronic poetry collection; post pre-viewing questions for Blade Runner.

Nov. 8
Discussion: Cyborg Exercise. Five minute reflection: What did you learn in this class this week? What questions about readings/assignments/issues remain unanswered/unclear for you?

WEEK 12
Nov. 13.
Due: Browse <http://scribble.com/uwi/br/off-world.html>; post answers to questions for Blade Runner.
Discussion: Blade Runner (watch in class).

Nov. 15
Due: TBA
Discussion: Blade Runner (watch and discuss in class). Five minute reflection: What did you learn in this class this week? and what use will you make of what you learned?

WEEK 13
Nov. 27
Due: Draft of final project, post pre-reading questions for Bettleheim’s “Joey: A Mechanical Boy.”
Discussion: Draft critique

Nov. 29
Due: Post answers to questions for Bettleheim’s “Joey: A Mechanical Boy.”
Discussion: Course evaluations, discuss Bettleheim’s “Joey: A Mechanical Boy.” Five minute reflection: What did you learn in this class this week? What questions about readings/assignments/issues remain unanswered/unclear for you?

WEEK 14
Dec. 4
Due: Draft of portfolio
Discussion: Peer review of portfolio
Dec. 6
Due: Favorite web sites (if time permits)
Discussion: Course evaluations, oral presentations on favorite web site.

WEEK 15
Dec. 11/13
Due: Portfolio and final project
Discussion: Oral presentations on Final Project