Perspectives on Inquiry:
The Technology Question
Section 07
Michigan Technological University
Fall Semester 2010

Instructor
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Office Hours
Wednesdays & Fridays, 12:30-1:30; Thursdays, 10-11:00

Course Texts
Frankenstein
The Ghost Map
The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks
Oryx and Crake
Rivethead

Course Description
Many of us at universities like Michigan Tech tend to think of technology as a boon, a blessing, or, at least, a tool to make life easier. Why, then, do so many works—fiction and nonfiction—challenge our views? Why are technological creatures, such as Frankenstein’s “creature,” so often depicted as gothic monsters? Why are so many of the dystopias we read about in science fiction, like Oryx and Crake, the result of technological disasters? Why do social commentators, in books like Rivethead, write about the withering effects of technology on the human soul? What was lost and what was gained by “giving” Henrietta Lacke “immortal life”? And, how did technological advancements and shortfalls contribute to London’s 19th century cholera epidemic? We’ll take up questions like these in order to consider the pros and cons of technology—and to prepare you to live more responsibly as professionals and citizens in the 21st century.

Course Goals
This course is designed to increase your thinking, communication, and reading skills, as well as your creative problem solving abilities, and thus to prepare you for university level work.

The course aims to engage you in active inquiry about significant questions of an interdisciplinary nature. It also encourages you to identify more thoughtfully with MTU’s mission to promote leadership, creativity, professionalism, and diversity. Specifically, by the end of the course, you should be better able to:

- Consider, understand, and recognize the value of new or different ideas and positions as alternatives to your own
- Use research, evidence, and reasoning to support your own views
- Produce useful and useable written, visual, and oral communications

Course Policies
Following are policies for this class.

**Blackboard and Email:** Check them regularly. "The Technology Question" is a hybrid course. This means that we will meet regularly in class, but that materials and assignments are also available via Blackboard and email. In addition, I will use Blackboard and email to post announcements and discussions.

I will use Blackboard as supplements to my office hours. I will be in my office during these times and encourage you to drop by, but I will also be available to “chat” on Blackboard. If you contact me online at times other than these, I will get back to you, but not immediately.

Finally, I’ll use email to review your work—see below—so make sure you stay in the loop.

If you need help with Blackboard management, mail me right away. You can also contact Blackboard support.
Web: [http://blackboard.mtu.edu](http://blackboard.mtu.edu)
Email: courses@mtu.edu

**Review and final drafts:** When I review drafts of your writing, send them to me as Word attachments on email. I’ll use the “comment” function and return them to you, again as email attachments. Please do not send PDFs since I can’t use the comment function in this format.

When peer reviews are scheduled, bring either paper or electronic/laptop copies of your drafts to class. Write cut comments for three other students or use the comment function to make your comments.

When I grade final drafts, email them to me, along with all the planning documents and drafts you have accumulated during the document cycle. I’ll reply via email. I will not post grades to Blackboard, so you should keep track of your grades as I send them to you.

**Due date/time & late work:** Note due dates and times. I generally do not accept late work. If I do, I will drop the final grade by one letter: an “A” becomes an “A/B”; a “C” becomes a “C/D,” etc.

**Replacement work:** Keep electronic copies of your work since you are responsible for replacing it should it be misplaced.

**Collaborative work:** Group members are responsible for working as a team and at a distance. Appraise each other of your current work by emailing drafts and/or progress updates at the end of each day. Workplace teams experience, and manage, crowded schedules and conflicting commitments in electronic environments. I expect you to do the same.

**Academic honesty:** Unless the assignment calls for a collaborative effort, I expect that the work you submit will be yours. If you are referring to, or using, other sources, including your own work for another class or project, remember to acknowledge them,
using proper form. Evidence of copied or plagiarized work is cause for serious disciplinary action by the University.

If you have questions about your work with other sources, mail me. I consider learning how to document sources a challenge; if you don’t remember how to do this—or never learned—this is the class to secure that skill.

Readings: I expect you to read the texts assigned in the syllabus before the class session and to actively and thoughtfully discuss the topics for a given session. Additional readings may be assigned during the semester for which you will be responsible.

Attendance: I expect you to attend every required class meeting, ready to participate fully and thoughtfully. If you miss more than three classes, I will drop your final grade. If you miss six, I will fail you. If you must be absent, please contact me via e-mail or speak with me in person.

Electonic devices: Silence iPhones, cell phones, blackberries, palm pilots, etc. before class begins. Use your laptops to locate information that contributes to the work of the class. Social networking and checking personal email during class is disrespectful to me and to other students.

Office hours: I will be in my office on Wednesdays and Fridays, from 12:30-1:30, and on Thursdays from 10-11:00. If you have questions or concerns, please drop by or “chat” with me on Blackboard.

Discrimination and Harassment: MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities ACT (ADA) of 1990. If you have a disability and need reasonable accommodation for access to education and services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Dean of Students (7-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, department chair, or the Affirmative Action office (7-3310).

Safe Place: I am a member of Safe Place. Its mission statement: “The GLBT Safe Place Program strives to reduce homophobia and heterosexism on Michigan Tech’s campus. Through education, advocacy, and awareness, the program contributes to an open campus climate that is safe and accepting to all members of the University community.”

I encourage you to engage in lively discussions; I also expect everyone to be courteous and respectful.

Assignments
Although I may alter assignment descriptions or change due dates—always with your interests in mind—I have planned the following projects for this semester, several of which involve a brief oral presentation:
1. Memo report
2. Interview report
3. Online/Ding informational document
4. Bio-Pic
5. White paper
6. Online responses/discussions

**Grading**

If you have questions about your grade at any time during the semester, let me know so that we can discuss them.

You can earn an A or B in this class if you complete all assignments and reach deadlines, do quality work, and demonstrate genuine commitment. You’ll earn a C if you meet deadlines with satisfactory effort or if some of your assignments are incomplete. You’ll receive a D or F if your assignments are poorly executed or overdue, or if your attendance, participation, and/or effort are unsatisfactory.

**Grading Standards and Rubric**

Following are my explanations of what constitutes a particular grade, as well as a rubric, parts of which I apply to written, oral, and design work.

*A (truly excellent).* A work is an example of highly effective communication. It makes its purpose clear, reflects concern for its audience’s needs and responses, and is detailed, persuasive, effectively organized, exhibits appropriate format and tone, and is grammatically correct.

*B (very good).* B work is effective and would succeed in most communication circumstances. It may lack the polish or effectiveness of an A.

*C (satisfactory).* C work is effective though it lacks features necessary to succeed completely with an audience. Its purpose may not be entirely clear, it may not be effectively organized; it may not exhibit an appropriate tone or format, or it entails grammatical errors that make it more difficult to read or understand than necessary.

*D (poor).* D work does not communicate effectively for several reasons. It may display an inadequate understanding of purpose or audience. It may lack information or be unpersuasive. Its organization may be confusing or misleading, and its tone or format may be inappropriate. It may be difficult to understand or contain serious errors in grammar.

*F (unacceptable).* F work does not satisfy the requirements of the assignment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content Meets assignment</strong></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Most aspects</td>
<td>Significant gaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Argument</strong></td>
<td>Interestingly and clearly advanced</td>
<td>Clearly advanced</td>
<td>May be good but only implied</td>
<td>Ambiguous or absent, generic or trite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Support</strong></td>
<td>Valid and sufficient support provided</td>
<td>Some gaps or weak support</td>
<td>Some support, but weak or not clearly relevant</td>
<td>Poor support or connections not shown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Insight</strong></td>
<td>Original and creative</td>
<td>Demonstrates thought</td>
<td>Conventional or generic</td>
<td>Superficial or incomplete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization Logical ordering</strong></td>
<td>Establishes and follows a pattern</td>
<td>Follows a pattern</td>
<td>Generally follows a pattern; some gaps</td>
<td>Unapparent pattern or hard to follow</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Paragraphs</strong></td>
<td>Coherent and unified</td>
<td>Usually coherent and unified</td>
<td>Some incoherent or not unified</td>
<td>Incoherent or lacking unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transitions</strong></td>
<td>Provided as needed</td>
<td>Provided as needed</td>
<td>Sometimes missing</td>
<td>Enough missing to cause confusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Style Sentences</strong></td>
<td>Correct and varied, according to meaning</td>
<td>Correct, with some variety</td>
<td>Correct, but elementary</td>
<td>Surface errors, such as comma splices or fragments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Diction</strong></td>
<td>Precise, correct, creative</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Some debatable word choices</td>
<td>Frequent misuse of words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spelling</strong></td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Correct</td>
<td>Very few mistakes</td>
<td>Misspellings confuse meaning</td>
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</table>