**VANIER COLLEGE**

**FACULTY OF GENERAL EDUCATION: ENGLISH DEPARTMENT**

**Course Title:** Robots, Cyborgs, and Artificial Intelligences

**Course Number:** 603-103-MQ **Section:** 22 **Semester:** Winter, 2022

**Weekly Schedule:** Tuesday and Thursday from 14:00-16:00

**Course Hours Per Week:** 2 hours of theoretical work

2 hours of practical work

3 hours of homework

**Teacher**: Jason Katz **Office**: A-551

**Office phone:** 514-744-7500 ext 7196 **Email:** please contact meby MIO

**Office Hours:** As announced in class, posted on office door, and by appointment, via Zoom

**Prerequisites:** Students must have successfully completed Introduction to College English (603-101) to register for this course.

**Course Description:**

For centuries, writers have been fascinated by the image of the automaton – an artificial creature that looks human but isn’t. Over the 20th century, as real-life technology improved, the automaton became the robot, and other complex thinking machines, and eventually writers began exploring the possibilities of combining human bodies and brains with machines in order to create something entirely different. For a very long time, these stories might have been read as mere fantasy. Now, they read as prophecy. As our lives become more surrounded by, intertwined with, and dependent on robotics and artificial intelligence, what once seemed outlandish now seems inevitable, and we are forced to ask ourselves some questions: what forms will our artificial intelligences ultimately take? How far will they develop? What aspects of our lives will they affect? If we can indeed create a machine that thinks as we do, what differentiates us from something artificially created? What ethical, philosophical, and practical problems will the continued development of artificial intelligence present? And perhaps most important of all, what effect does such a close relationship with robots and artificial intelligences have on human nature itself? Through close readings of literary texts, we will explore ways in which writers, some excited, some concerned, some terrified, have tried to prepare us for what lies ahead.

**Objectives and Standards:**

The objective of this course is to enable students to apply a critical approach to literary themes. Students will learn to recognize a work’s literary themes, cultural context, and value system. Students will also be able to analyze a text from a thematic perspective.

On successful completion of this course, students will be able to produce a 1000-word analytical essay with the aid of reference material.

This essay, which is the Learning Integrative Assessment (LIA) for this course, will demonstrate a comprehension of themes, literary elements, and rhetorical devices. This essay will also demonstrate use of appropriate terminology and thorough revision of form and content. In addition to written expression, the evaluation of this essay will assess comprehension, analysis, and structure.

**Methodology:**

Until we return to the college in person,classes will take place on Zoom, the link for which you can find on LEA.Through lectures, class discussions, group work, and individual assignments, students will be invited to explore, discuss and clarify the features of the themes studied and to facilitate an understanding of literary terminology required to understand literature as well as to introduce the historical and cultural background of the literary works studied and to develop strategies for writing academic essays.

In class, we will engage in a variety of learning activities that may include responses and assignments, and pair and group work and projects. Other assignments may include in- and out-of-class writing activities such as short textual analysis paragraphs, thesis statements and outlines. These activities and assignments will help us in our close investigation of the themes and ideas present in the literary works.

**Required Text:** (available at Jake’s Co-Op)

*Robots, Cyborgs, and Artificial Intelligences.* Compiled by Jason Katz, Vanier College

Press, 2022.

**Evaluation:**

Quizzes, throughout the term 10%

In-class assignments, throughout the term 10%

1000-word take-home analytic essay on fiction, approx. week 6 25%

1000-word take-home analytic essay on fiction, approx. week 11 (LIA) 25%

Final exam on fiction, exam period 30%

Students should expect a quiz and/or an in-class assignment in each class.

**Chronology of Learning Activities:**

See Tentative Class Schedule below

**Attendance Policy:**

Regular attendance and active participation are required throughout the term. Missing more than 10% of in-class work without a valid reason seriously jeopardizes a student’s chance of passing the course. Students who miss 20% of in-class work will likely fail. Students who will be absent from classes for religious reasons must inform their teachers, in writing at the beginning of the semester, of the dates of these holidays and make up the work missed. These students will not then be penalized for these absences. Students with justifiable absences must submit original and verifiable documentation, such as a medical note, upon their return to class. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to justifiable absences.

**Vanier College Course-Level Policies:**

It is the student’s responsibility to be familiar with and adhere to all Vanier College Policies. A summary of the course-level policies that apply in this and all other Vanier courses can be found under “Course-Level Policies” in Important Vanier Links on Omnivox, or by following this link: <http://www.vaniercollege.qc.ca/psi/course-level-policies/>. Complete policies can be found on the Vanier College website, under Policies.

Cheating and Plagiarism (Policy number 7210-31): Any form of cheating or plagiarism will result in a grade of zero on the test or assignment and a letter from the teacher will be placed in your file. A repeated offense may lead to even more serious consequences. Please consult the Vanier Student Writing Guide, the Vanier College Catalogue, the Student Handbook, and your teacher for more information.

Note:

As long as the course is delivered on Zoom, students **must have a working webcam** to attend, and they **must have the webcam on** for the duration of every session.

Students may not create recordings of classes. Students creating unauthorized recordings violate an instructor’s intellectual property rights and the Canadian Copyright Act.

Tentative Class Schedule

CP = Course Pack

Tuesday, January 18 - Introduction and syllabus

The Nature of Artificial Intelligence:

Thursday, January 20 - “Evidence,” by Isaac Asimov, CP, p. 2-14

Tuesday, January 25 - “Liar!”, by Isaac Asimov, CP, p. 15-25

Thursday, January 27 - “With Folded Hands,” by Jack Williamson, CP, p. 26-36

Tuesday, February 1 - “With Folded Hands,” CP, p. 36-47

Thursday, February 3 - “Answer,” by Fredric Brown, CP, p. 48-49 and “Dial F For

Frankenstein,” by Arthur C. Clarke, CP, p. 50-55

Tuesday, February 8 - “The Cruel Equations,” by Robert Sheckley, CP, p. 56-65

Thursday, February 10 - Fondly Fahrenheit,” by Alfred Bester, CP, p. 74-82

Tuesday, February 15 - Lecture/Review on Essay Writing

Thursday, February 17 - Students peer review their essay ideas, outlines, etc, for Essay

#1

Artificial Intelligence and the Domestic:

Tuesday, February 22 - “The Veldt,” by Ray Bradbury, CP, p. 83-90

Thursday, February 24 - **ESSAY #1 DUE**. “Nor Custom Stale,” by Joanna Russ, CP, p.

91-104

Tuesday, March 1 - “Mediation,” by Cadwell Turnbull, CP, p. 105-110

Artificial Intelligence and the Media:

Thursday, March 3 - “A Logic Named Joe,” by Murray Leinster, CP, p. 111-117

Tuesday, March 8 - “If There Were No Benny Cemoli,” by Philip K. Dick, CP, p. 118-143

Thursday, March 10 - “If There Were No Benny Cemoli,” cont’d

Tuesday, March 15 - STUDY BREAK

Thursday, March 17 - STUDY BREAK

Tuesday, March 22 - “The Greatest One-Star Restaurant in the Whole Quadrant,” by

Rachael K. Jones, CP,.p. 144-153

Thursday, March 24 - “Masked,” by Rich Larson, CP, p. 154-159

Tuesday, March 29 - Students peer review ideas, outlines, etc, for Essay #2

Artificial Intelligence and Art:

Thursday, March 31 - “The Darfsteller,” by Walter M. Miller, CP, p. 160-177

Tuesday, April 5 - **ESSAY #2 DUE**. “The Darfsteller,” by Walter M. Miller, CP, p. 177-

192

Disembodiment and Identity:

Thursday, April 7 - “No Woman Born,” by C. L. Moore, CP, p. 193-216

Tuesday, April 12 - “No Woman Born,” cont’d

Thursday, April 14 - “Grand Jete,” by Rachel Swirsky, CP, p. 217-234

Tuesday, April 19 - “Grand Jete,” by Rachel Swirsky, CP, p. 234-242

Artificial Intelligence and War:

Thursday, April 21 - “First to Serve,” by Algis Budrys, CP, p. 243-253

Artificial Intelligence and Sex:

Tuesday, April 26 - “Mika Model,” by Paolo Bacigalupi, CP, p. 254-263

Thursday, April 28 - “Artifice,” by Naomi Kritzer, CP, p. 264-270

Tuesday, May 3 - “Seven Sexy Cowboy Robots,” by Sandra McDonald, CP, p. 271-278

Thursday, May 5 - Preparation for Final Exam

Exam Period: Final Exam