IDS 2935 (Section 1IM1): The Posthuman Condition
Quest 1: Identities

I. General Information

Class Meetings

- Fall 2023
- Wednesday, Periods 8-9 (3:00-4:55), ARCH 215
- Friday, Period 8 (3:00-3:50), MAT 114

Instructor

- Dr. Anthony Manganaro
- University Writing Program, 2215 Turlington
- Office hours: Monday 1:45-2:45
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Course Description

Humans evolve. And technology is rapidly changing what it means to be human. As we march towards smartphone dependence, AI ubiquity, human-enhancement technologies, and mind uploading, our species is approaching what some call a "posthuman" state. What are the possibilities and perils of a posthuman future, and how should we prepare for it? Many people have stakes in this question: politicians, religious leaders, science fiction writers, physicians, filmmakers, and more. But so do you. To explore this wide-ranging topic, we'll read and watch an array of humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences texts, practicing humanities methodologies to analyze how the posthuman condition might impact our society. Ultimately, you'll consider this topic from multiple angles and will have the tools to communicate effectively about it, drawing from course texts and your personal experiences.

Quest and General Education Credit

- Quest 1
- Humanities
- Writing Requirement (WR) 2000 words

This course accomplishes the [Quest](#) and [General Education](#) objectives of the subject areas listed above. A minimum grade of C is required for Quest and General Education credit. Courses intended to satisfy Quest and General Education requirements cannot be taken S-U.

Required Readings and Works

Recommended Text:

Bullock, Richard, Michael Brody, and Francine Weinberg. *The Little Seagull Handbook,* 3rd ed. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2017.

Materials and Supplies Fees:

N/A

II. Graded Work

Description of Graded Work

Public-Facing Essay: *1,000 words; due on weekend following Week 5*
Students write a journalistic piece for the general public on how technology affects our everyday world. They must cite at least three course texts from Weeks 2-4 (the weekly themes are "Technology & Orientation," "Social Media Addiction," and "The Power of Algorithms") and incorporate two interviews. (We will discuss appropriate interview practices and strategies for developing effective questions.)

Film Presentation: *8-12 minutes each; Weeks 9-11*
Groups of 3-4 collaborate on a visual aid (e.g. Power Point) and give an oral presentation on a science fiction film of their choosing. Presenters close-read 3-5 representative frames, analyzing how the film engages with the course themes. **See "Rubric for Film Presentation" under "Grading Rubrics" below.*

Analytical Paper: *1,000 words; due in Finals Week*
Students write a thesis-driven analytical essay answering what a posthuman future might look like and how we should prepare for it. The essay will cite from at least six sources from all three units combined.

Weekly Reflections: *12 entries responding to a different prompt each week*
Throughout the semester, students will reflect on the course texts and themes: entries should include firsthand observations, self-reflective insights, and thoughts about how our readings and

conversations relate to their personal experiences. Each entry should offer observations or reflections relating to technology dependence, artificial intelligence, or transhumanism; include concrete detail; and demonstrate critical thinking, analysis, and self-reflection.

Weekly Presentation: *8-10 minutes each; nearly every Wed. throughout semester*
Groups of 2-3 present on the previous week's topic while bringing in new research to "add" to the conversation. Presenters use PowerPoint to cite new research and make original contributions to previous week's topical discussions. **See "Rubric for Weekly Presentation" under "Grading Rubrics" below.*

In-class Activities: *Every class session*
Every session will include an in-class activity or two. Each activity is worth 5 points (see "Rubric for In-class Activities" below). Activities may include reading quizzes; group discussions on the readings; group participation projects; mini presentations; writing reflections; and variations of the above. Unless absences are "excused", students cannot complete in-class activities outside of class.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:

Public-Facing Essay *(WR Credit)***:** 200 points
Film Presentation: 80 points
Analytical Paper *(WR Credit)***:** 250 points
Weekly Reflections: 60 points
Weekly Presentation: 60 points
In-class Activities: 350 points (*subject to change)
TOTAL: 1,000 points.

Grading Scale

For information on how UF assigns grade points, visit: https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/

A	94 – 100%		C	74 – 76%
A-	90 – 93%		C-	70 – 73%
B+	87 – 89%		D+	67 – 69%
B	84 – 86%		D	64 – 66%
B-	80 – 83%		D-	60 – 63%
C+	77 – 79%		E	<60

Grading Rubrics

Writing Assessment Rubric and Statements

	SATISFACTORY (Y)	UNSATISFACTORY (N)
CONTENT	Papers exhibit at least some evidence of ideas that respond to the topic with complexity, critically evaluating and synthesizing sources, and provide at least an adequate discussion with basic understanding of sources.	Papers either include a central idea(s) that is unclear or off-topic or provide only minimal or inadequate discussion of ideas. Papers may also lack sufficient or appropriate sources.
ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE	Documents and paragraphs exhibit at least some identifiable structure for topics, including a clear thesis statement but may require readers to work to follow progression of ideas.	Documents and paragraphs lack clearly identifiable organization, may lack any coherent sense of logic in associating and organizing ideas, and may also lack transitions and coherence to guide the reader.
ARGUMENT AND SUPPORT	Documents use persuasive and confident presentation of ideas, strongly supported with evidence. At the weak end of the Satisfactory range, documents may provide only generalized discussion of ideas or may provide adequate discussion but rely on weak support for arguments.	Documents make only weak generalizations, providing little or no support, as in summaries or narratives that fail to provide critical analysis.
STYLE	Documents use a writing style with word choice appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline. Sentences should display complexity and logical sentence structure. At a minimum, documents will display a less precise use of vocabulary and an uneven use of sentence structure or a writing style that occasionally veers away from word choice or tone appropriate to the context, genre, and discipline.	Documents rely on word usage that is inappropriate for the context, genre, or discipline. Sentences may be overly long or short with awkward construction. Documents may also use words incorrectly.
MECHANICS	Papers will feature correct or error-free presentation of ideas. At the weak end of the Satisfactory range, papers may contain some spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors that remain unobtrusive so they do not muddy the paper's argument or points.	Papers contain so many mechanical or grammatical errors that they impede the reader's understanding or severely undermine the writer's credibility.

- The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning.
- The instructor will evaluate and provide feedback before the end of the course on all of the student's written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization.
- WR course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course.

Rubric for Film Presentation (Group Project)

Each group is assessed on the following criteria (totaling 80 points):

Content
The film's content and context – including its director, release date, and plot summary – are clearly and concisely described to an outside audience. **10 points**

Significance
The relation of the film to course themes is expertly elucidated, and interesting connections are made between the film and course texts. **10 points**

Close Reading
In-depth analyses of 3-5 representative frames demonstrate perceptive identification of film techniques and connect those filmmaking choices to the film's overall themes. **40 points**

Presentation Style
Presenters speak engagingly with appropriate voice quality, pacing, and rhythm; maintain eye contact and confident body language; and interact with the audience in Q&A session. Text on screen is limited (the audience is "listening" more than "reading"). Group members speak for roughly equal amounts of time. Presentation is between 8-12 minutes overall. Presentation is energizing and lively. **20 points**

Rubric for Weekly Presentation (Group Project)

Each group is assessed on the following criteria (totaling 60 points):

Textual Explanation
The what/when/why of the 2+ new texts are clearly and concisely described. Texts are well-chosen (they relate to last week's themes yet go beyond course discussions; they are timely; they are legitimate sources [i.e. not blogs]). Texts are briefly paraphrased/summarized/quoted in middle slides and fully cited in a Works Cited slide. **20 points**

Original Discussion
Presenters relate the new texts to course themes in original and novel ways. Presenters add to last week's conversations in their verbal discussions of the texts that go beyond summary: i.e. making connections, adding thought-points, stirring debate, consolidating opinion, etc. **20 points**

Presentation Style

Presenters speak engagingly with appropriate voice quality, pacing, and rhythm. Words on the screen are helpful but limited (the audience is "listening" more than "reading"). Group members speak for roughly equal amounts of time. Presentation is between 8-10 minutes overall. Presentation is energizing and lively. **20 points**

Rubric for In-class Activities

The style of activities varies per session. Some may include reading quizzes; group discussions on the readings; group participation projects; mini presentations; writing reflections; and variations of the above. Every activity is worth 5 points.

Strong (5 points): The student put deep thought into the assignment and communicated effectively (whether through writing, oral communication, or participating with classmates)

Good (4 points): The student put above-average thought into the assignment and communicated moderately effectively (whether through writing, oral communication, or participating with classmates)

Average (3 points): The student did the assignment but with half-hearted effort and did not communicative effectively

Below Average (2 points): The student attempted the assignment and communicated the basic expectations but did not fully complete the assignment

Failing (1 point): The student attempted the assignment but did not communicate the basic expectations

III. Weekly Schedule

Unit color code:

UNIT 1: HOW TECHNOLOGY AFFECTS US TODAY (Weeks 2-5)

UNIT 2: SCIENCE VS. SCIENCE FICTION (Weeks 6-11)

UNIT 3: THE DEBATES (Weeks 12-16)

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
Week 1	• **Topic:** Intro to Course Questions and Defining Terms • **Summary:** Core concepts like "evolution," "AI," "transhumanism," and "the posthuman" are introduced, along with our main questions: what are the possibilities

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	and perils of a posthuman future, and how should we prepare for it? Readings familiarize students with definitions, stakeholders, historical context, and methodologies that we'll use in later weeks.
Week 2	**Topic:** Technology & Orientation **Summary:** We begin *UNIT 1: HOW TECHNOLOGY AFFECTS US TODAY*. Introduction of "Public-Facing Essay" (due at end of Week 5) and expectations of experiential and reflective methodologies involved in this unit. Readings, viewings, and students' personal reflections explore our sense of spatial navigation (e.g. Virtual Reality) and reliance on technology.
Week 3	**Topic:** Social Media Addiction **Summary:** We reflect on our personal relationships to social media and consider the implications of social media's influence on teenagers today.
Week 4	**Topic:** The Power of Algorithms **Summary:** How "free" are we if we are constantly being influenced by advertisers and social media giants? This week we delve deeper into the implications of what it means to live in a world dominated by Big Data and algorithms. Students will be completing their out-of-class interviews as we discuss essay-writing techniques.
Week 5	**Topic:** Utopias or Dystopias? **Summary:** As UNIT 1 concludes with public-facing essay advice, we reflect on how our species orients itself in space and time, finds connection through social media, and is influenced by algorithms. What are the values and pitfalls of utopian and dystopian modes of thinking as we imagine possible futures? **Assignment:** "Public-Facing Essay" due Sunday following Week 5.
Week 6	**Topic:** Science Fiction: Literary Analysis **Summary:** Introduction to *UNIT 2: SCIENCE VS. SCIENCE FICTION*. In weeks 6-7, we'll learn humanities methodologies; in weeks 8-11, we'll read about innovations in AI and gene editing while analyzing works of science fiction in literature and film that comment upon those innovations. This week we'll discuss science fiction as a critical genre and continue to practice methods of close-reading fiction.
Week 7	**Topic:** Science Fiction: Film Analysis **Summary:** Moving from prose fiction to film, we start to practice film analysis techniques. (Students will apply these modes of analysis in their "Film Presentations" in Weeks 9-11.) This week we'll introduce the presentation expectations and students will learn film studies vocabulary and practice frame and scene analysis in class.
Week 8	**Topic:** AI in the Sciences

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	• **Summary:** In the first of four topical weeks about current innovations, we explore what AI is capable of in the worlds of medicine and industry. During these four weeks, students are collecting research content for their final paper, developing close-reading skills by analyzing humanities texts, and making personal connections to weigh the pros/cons of these innovations.
Week 9	• **Topic:** AI in the Arts • **Summary:** AI is currently capable of writing poetry, composing music, and creating visual art. However, what are the limitations of these encoded acts? How do we define creativity anyway? Are these works of art valuable to us? Why or why not? • **Assignment:** "Film Presentations" (groups 1-3)
Week 10	• **Topic:** Human Upgrades: The Body • **Summary:** We transition from analyzing AI as a separate category from humans to directly understanding how technology can upgrade our selves. An introduction to CRISPR, gene editing, and how we can understand human "upgrades" within the fields of kinesiology, medicine, and philosophy. • **Assignment:** "Film Presentations" (groups 4-7)
Week 11	• **Topic:** Human Upgrades: The Mind • **Summary:** Soon we may be upgrading not only our eyes and ears, but our memory, creativity, and processing power. A look into the science behind "mind uploading" and the implications of altering the human brain. • **Assignment:** "Film Presentations" (groups 8-9)
Week 12	• **Topic:** The Transhumanists • **Summary:** Introduction to *UNIT 3: THE DEBATES*. This week we read the bold claims of The Transhumanists, a philosophical group in favor of human upgrades. "Analysis Paper" expectations are introduced.
Week 13	• **Topic:** Against Transhumanism • **Summary:** What are the most pressing arguments against transhumanism? We read from scientists, religious studies professors, and other academics while tackling this debate from a variety of angles. Students consider their own biases while also putting these new voices in conversation with Bostrom, Musk, and other transhumanists.
Week 14	• **Topic:** Other Voices on Transhumanism • **Summary:** We explore more criticisms of transhumanism through disability and feminist lenses, and more accepting takes from a Buddhist lens and from transhumanists. Students start giving and receiving feedback on sample paragraphs of their final essays.
Week 15	• **Topic:** Final Paper Advice

Week	Topics, Homework, and Assignments
	• **Summary:** Students write outlines for their Analytical Essays while receiving feedback from peers and the professor on grammar, punctuation, organization, and thesis statements.
Week 16	• **Topic:** Final Paper Submissions • **Summary:** Course wrap-up, evaluations, and final questions answered before submission of final assignment. • **Assignment**: "Analysis Paper" due Finals Week.

IV. Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the Quest and General Education learning outcomes as follows:

- **Content**: *Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline(s).*
  - Identify, describe, and explain how technology addiction and AI affects our society from a variety of perspectives. **(Quest 1).** *Assessments: Reflective Journal, Public-Facing Essay.*
  - Describe and explain how Transhumanist objectives may affect our society in the future. **(Quest 1)**. *Assessments: Reflective Journal, Analytical Essay*
  - Identify, describe, and explain themes that humanities texts explore relating to technology dependency, AI, and a posthuman future. **(Quest 1, H).** *Assessments: Reflective Journal, Film Presentation, Analytical Essay.*

- **Critical Thinking**: *Students carefully and logically analyze information from multiple perspectives and develop reasoned solutions to problems within the discipline(s).*
  - Analyze and evaluate patterns in multidisciplinary texts that speak to common themes and concerns in technology dependency, AI, and Transhumanist goals. **(Quest 1, H).** *Assessments: Reflective Journal, Public-Facing Essay, Film Presentation, Analytical Essay.*
  - Close-read prose fiction and film to evaluate *how* humanities texts express points of view. **(Quest 1, H).** *Assessments: Reflective Journal, Film Presentation, Analytical Essay*
  - Analyze and evaluate answers to complicated questions arising from technology dependency, AI, and Transhumanist goals. **(Quest 1, H).** *Assessments: Reflective Journal, Analytical Essay.*

- **Communication**: *Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline(s).*
  - Develop and present lucid, organized, and effective oral and written responses during class sessions and on all major assignments that relate to our course themes. **(Quest 1,**

H). *Assessments: Reflective Journal, Public-Facing Essay, Film Presentation, Analytical Essay.*

- **Connection**: *Students connect course content with meaningful critical reflection on their intellectual, personal, and professional development at UF and beyond.*
    - Connect own experiences with the experiences of others as gleaned from interviews and course texts. **(Quest 1, H).** *Assessments: Reflective Journal, Public-Facing Essay.*
    - Reflect on how course themes and texts relate to personal experiences outside the classroom environment. **(Quest 1, H).** *Assessments: Reflective Journal, Public-Facing Essay, Analytical Essay.*

V. Quest Learning Experiences

1. Details of Experiential Learning Component

Students will interview two subjects outside the course for the "Public-Facing Essay" and use the interviews to explore how technology affects our everyday world. Additionally, the "Weekly Reflections" ask students to document their personal experiences (e.g. through firsthand observations) to reflect on how technology dependency and AI influence their day-to-day lives.

2. Details of Self-Reflection Component

Since the course's theme is how technology is changing our species, every major assignment has a built-in element of self-reflection. Specifically, the "Weekly Reflections" are assessed upon how thoroughly the student reflects upon their environment in relation to the course themes. Additionally, during class sessions, students will frequently discuss how course topics change the way they understand themselves, others, and their society.

VI. Required Policies

Attendance Policy
Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at:
https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx

Regular promptness, attendance, and class participation is expected. A typical class session involves activities totaling 5-10 points, so it is in the student's best interest to maintain consistent promptness and active attendance. In-class assignments cannot be made up outside of class, unless the student provides documentation that makes their absence "excused": university-sponsored events, such as athletics and band; religious holidays; illness or serious family emergencies (with written documentation).

Late Work

Late unexcused submissions of major assignments will be deducted 10% of possible points every 24 hours after the due-date: after five-plus days, the highest grade a student can receive on a late assignment is 50% of the total, but it will not be deducted further for lateness.

Students Requiring Accommodation

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

UF Evaluations Process

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/.

University Honesty Policy

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor or TAs in this class.

Counseling and Wellness Center

Contact information for the Counseling and Wellness Center: http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx , 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.

The Writing Studio

The writing studio is committed to helping University of Florida students meet their academic and professional goals by becoming better writers. Visit the writing studio online at http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/ or in 2215 Turlington Hall for one-on-one consultations and workshops.