MAN AND THE MACHINE

COURSE INTRODUCTION

How much does the machine rule your life? How often do you use your cell phone, iPod, computer, and internet in one day? By contrast, what role does nature play in your life? Technology is an ever-present factor in our world, even if we do not often think about its importance or ramifications; technology has fundamentally reshaped our relationship to nature and to ourselves. In the modern world, writers, philosophers, and artists have struggled to come to grips with the assertion of technology into everyday life. In this course, we will examine literature, art and film—the products of these struggles—to ask: Has technology and the machine made our lives better or worse? Where do we stand in relation to the machine? Has it overcome us, made us like it in its image, or does it remain a servant to us? How has it affected our relationship to nature, to God, and to ourselves?

WHY THIS COURSE?

In this second semester of the Augustine and Culture Seminar, we focus on modern writers from the seventeenth century to the present day. The concerns of the moderns are, in many ways, different than those of the ancients. Undertaking this theme of “Man and the Machine” allows us to think about a fundamental issue that has profoundly shaped the modern world. This course will also continue your development as a critical reader and strong writer, forming a foundation for your tenure here at Villanova. My goals for you for this semester are to:

1. Gain an awareness of major writers, thinkers, and artists of the modern world
2. Grow stronger in your ability to analyze larger themes and issues presented in our readings
3. Engage successfully in class discussion, contributing your thoughts to our intellectual community
4. Write well, with strong, clear arguments supported by insightful observations
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Daily Reflections     10%
Essays (5 total)   60%
Participation     20%
Final Exam    10%

Note: To earn a grade in the A range for this course will require excellence in the areas above. I reserve grades in the A range for outstanding work that demonstrates true intellectual engagement.

Daily Reflections. For every class for which you do not have an essay due, you will write a two to three paragraph reflection on the readings for the day. These daily reflections are your opportunity to analyze the readings and to practice writing on a regular basis. Be sure to reference the text in your reflection, and seek out arguments. The ideas you explore in your daily reflections should also form the basis for your essays. These daily reflections are due by 12:30 a.m. the late evening/early morning before we have class by posting them to our course webpage under “Daily Reflection” on Blackboard Vista. Late daily reflections will not be accepted. You are also to bring a hard copy of your paper to class to refer to in our discussion and to turn in to me. I will grade these reflections on a –, √, + scale. Also considered in your daily reflection grade will be the one to two page reflections you will write after attending three cultural events (see below).

Essays. While daily reflections will form one part of your writing portfolio (see below) for the semester, the majority of your portfolio will consist of three 4-page papers and two 5-page papers. These papers are polished pieces of writing and should include a clear thesis statement, supporting evidence drawing from the texts, strong transition and topic sentences, and a clear conclusion. They should be in 12-point font, double spaced, and with standard margins. Also be sure to include a title with your essay. For these essays, I will ask you to consider comparatively our readings in questions I will give in advance. In addition to turning in a hard copy of your essay to me in class, essays are also to be posted to Blackboard Vista prior to class. You will also be asked to revise two of your essays in the semester.

Participation. Participation in this seminar course is vital to your success. Coming to class does not by itself count as participation. You are expected to come prepared, having read and thought about our readings and bringing the texts with you. Most importantly, you are expected to engage in class discussions, offering your thoughts and responding to those of your classmates. If you are not prepared for class, or you do not speak in class, you will not achieve a successful participation grade. Regular attendance in this course is not only expected by me and your fellow seminarians in order to contribute to scintillating conversation, but it is also required by university policy. I will take attendance at the beginning of each meeting; I expect you to be on time for class. If you miss more than 4 classes, you will fail this course. If you
have more than two unexcused absences, each additional absence may result in your final grade being lowered by one letter.

**Final Exam.** This exam will ask you to consider the larger theme of the course in light of our readings. I will give you the format of the exam later in the semester.

**Cultural Events**

For this semester, you are required to attend 3 cultural events and write a 1-2 page reflection paper. This paper is due **within 5 days** of the event. Please include in your reflection paper the name and date of the event. Two of the cultural events will be of your own choosing; I will announce events for you to choose from throughout the semester. The third event we will attend together as a class:

*Metropolis*, Japan, 2001, Villanova Cultural Film Series, Monday, February 18, 2008, 7:00 pm, Connelly Center Cinema

**Writing Portfolio**

Over the course of the semester, you will create a Writing Portfolio—both electronic and hard copy—consisting of the various daily reflections, drafts, essays, and other writings created for this course. You are to collect all of your writing in a folder that comprises your writing portfolio. At our writing conferences (see below), we will discuss the progress of your writing.

**Writing Conferences**

You will meet with me twice this semester to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of your writing and your progress in the course.

**Writing Center**

The Villanova Writing Center is an excellent resource for your entire career at the university. I encourage you to make use of the center throughout the semester and beyond. Know also that you can use the Writing Center at any point in the writing process, including brainstorming for your papers.

Villanova Writing Center  
202 Old Falvey Hall  
610-519-4604 for an appointment  
www.writingcenter.villanova.edu

**Academic Integrity**

You are expected to uphold academic integrity as outlined by the university. In the spirit of St. Augustine, students at Villanova are expected to engage in and contribute
to a culture of cooperation and trust. This means avoiding cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, multiple submissions of work, and assisting in or contributing to dishonesty. For the first offense, students who plagiarize or cheat on any assignment will receive either an F for the assignment or an F or the course (depending on the severity of the offense), and a letter will be filed with the student’s dean and with the Vice President for Academic Affairs. A second offense either in this course or any other course at Villanova will result in dismissal from the university with a permanent indication of the reason for dismissal on the student’s transcript.

**Learning Needs**

It is the policy of Villanova to make reasonable academic accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities. If you are a person with a disability please contact me after class or during office hours and make arrangements to register with the Learning Support Office by contacting 610-519-5636 or at nancy.mott@villanova.edu as soon as possible. Registration is needed in order to receive accommodations.

**Class Etiquette**

Our discussions will be conducted in an atmosphere of respect for each other and each other’s ideas. Comments that are racist, sexist, homophobic or otherwise disrespectful do not have a place in our discussions.

Although we are focusing on technology this semester, personal use of technology in our class will be limited. Please silence your phones before class to minimize disruptions to our discussion. Texting and instant messaging are also not allowed. Your full attention to our discussion is requested, and required, in our classes.

**A Note About Deadlines and Make-Up Work…**

You are expected to meet the deadlines outlined in this syllabus. Essays will be penalized **one full grade** for each day that they are late and will not be accepted at all three days past the due date. The final exam will not be offered early. No extra credit will be offered.

**Texts**

These texts are available for purchase in the Villanova University Shop:

Please also purchase this book online (please pay attention to the ISBN number):


Other readings will be available on WebCT/Blackboard Vista and online.
READING & ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

Note: The readings marked with (B) are available on Blackboard Vista (formerly WebCT). Please also note that this is an approximate schedule and I reserve the right to change readings and assignments.

MAN AS MACHINE

Week One
1.14 M Course Overview and Introduction

Week Two
1.21 M NO CLASS—MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY
1.23 W D.H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923), Ch. 2 “Benjamin Franklin”
http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/LAWRENCE/dhlch02.htm

Week Three
**Essay 1 due (4 pages)**

Week Four
2.4 M (B) Thomas Carlyle, “Signs of the Times” (1829)
2.6 W Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818), Preface, pp. 1-32
**Writing conferences this week**

Week Five

Week Six
**Cultural Event: Metropolis, Rintaro, Japan, 2001, 7:00 pm, Connelly Cinema**
2.20 W (B) Charles Darwin, Ch. 21 “General Summary and Conclusion: Natural Selection and Sexual Selection” in *The Descent of Man* (1871)
**Essay 2 due (5 pages)**
LIVING WITH THE MACHINE

Week Seven
2.25 M (B) Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* (1845)
2.27 W (B) John Ruskin, “The Nature of Gothic” in *The Stones of Venice* (1853)

Portfolios due with revision of Essay 1 and reflection on your writing

Week Eight
3.3 M NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK
3.5 W NO CLASS—SPRING BREAK

Week Nine

Essay 3 due (4 pages)

MAN’S RELATIONSHIP TO THE MACHINE

Week Ten
3.17 M *Metropolis*, Fritz Lang, Germany, 1927, Part I (film)
3.19 W *Metropolis*, Fritz Lang, Germany, 1927, Part II (film)

Week Eleven
3.24 M NO CLASS—HAPPY EASTER!

Writing conferences this week

Week Twelve
3.31 M (B) E.M. Forster, “The Machine Stops” (1909), Part I and II
4.2 W (B) E.M. Forster, “The Machine Stops” (1909), Part III

Week Thirteen
4.7 M Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932), Ch. 1-3
4.9 W Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932), Ch. 4-7

Essay 4 due (4 pages) with revision of Essay 3
Week Fourteen
4.14 M Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932), Ch. 8-12
4.16 W Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1932), Ch. 13-18

Week Fifteen
4.21 M *The Matrix*, Wachowski Brothers, USA, 1999, Part I (film)
4.23 W *The Matrix*, Wachowski Brothers, USA, 1999, Part II (film)

Week Sixteen
4.28 M Discussion of *The Matrix*, reading to be announced
4.30 W Summary discussion

*Essay 5 due (5 pages); portfolios due with all writings*

**Final Exam:** Thursday, May 8, 2008, 8:00-10:30 am, SAC 210