

Binghamton University

## The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB)

---

Comparative Literature Faculty Scholarship

Comparative Literature

---

Spring 2019

### Course Syllabus (SP19) COLI 214B--Literature & Society: "A.I. and Other Radical Humanisms in Cyberpunk and Science Fiction"

Christopher Southward

*Binghamton University--SUNY*, [csouthw1@binghamton.edu](mailto:csouthw1@binghamton.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://orb.binghamton.edu/comparative\\_literature\\_fac](https://orb.binghamton.edu/comparative_literature_fac)



Part of the [Applied Ethics Commons](#), [Comparative Literature Commons](#), [Comparative Philosophy Commons](#), [English Language and Literature Commons](#), [Ethics and Political Philosophy Commons](#), [Philosophy of Science Commons](#), and the [Rhetoric and Composition Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Southward, Christopher, "Course Syllabus (SP19) COLI 214B--Literature & Society: "A.I. and Other Radical Humanisms in Cyberpunk and Science Fiction"" (2019). *Comparative Literature Faculty Scholarship*. 16. [https://orb.binghamton.edu/comparative\\_literature\\_fac/16](https://orb.binghamton.edu/comparative_literature_fac/16)

This Other is brought to you for free and open access by the Comparative Literature at The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). It has been accepted for inclusion in Comparative Literature Faculty Scholarship by an authorized administrator of The Open Repository @ Binghamton (The ORB). For more information, please contact [ORB@binghamton.edu](mailto:ORB@binghamton.edu).

**Course Description:**

As that which we call "technology" continues to evolve as both concept and practice, we discover ever more inventive ways to answer its call, and science fiction seems to serve as a universal standpoint from which global societies manage to confront, question, and reimagine the nature of our shared humanity as a radically technical relation. While the growing social pervasiveness of artificial intelligence and the attendant encoded transformations of "the human" appear, together, to form a relatively absolute horizon of political thinking, social agency, and aesthetic experience, it seems certain that our current crisis also offers us possibilities to create more open and egalitarian interpersonal, intercultural, international, and interspecies modes of existence. Our task this semester will be to imagine, think, and explore such possibilities and prepare to activate them within our current and future historical present.

**General Education Fulfillment:**

This course will fulfill the General Education Composition (C) requirement. Binghamton University requires students enrolled in C-courses to write a minimum of 20 pages of expository prose within the framework of each course with the minimum expectation of the Objectives and Learning Outcomes listed below.

**Objectives and Expected Learning Outcomes:**

(1) Demonstrate an understanding of the course content through formal academic writing; (2) demonstrate the ability to construct effective prose that demonstrates critical thinking and advances sound conclusions appropriate to the course and discipline; (3) demonstrate the ability to revise and improve writing in both form and content.

**Course Requirements and Grading:**

(1) Four (4) 1-page prospectuses: (=5% each, or 20% of the final grade). Here, students are expected (i) to present a working title and clearly defined working thesis, (ii) to develop one or two solid lines of argument in response to and incorporating source texts, and (iii) to state the sources to be used and their relevance to proposed theses and arguments. Each prospectus will be annotated and graded simply as "Submitted/Credit" or "Not Submitted/No Credit."

(2) Ten (10) Take-home Reading Quizzes: (=2% each, or 20% of the final grade). Each quiz will be graded in accordance with a rubric provided in advance.

(2) Four 5-page papers, to be submitted via Turnitin.com (=15% each, or a cumulative 60% of the final grade). Papers are to be type-written and double-spaced in 12-point font using 1-inch margins and MLA citation conventions and include a bibliography. Papers will undergo drafting and revising in consultation with the instructor. Paper drafts will be graded only negatively in the event of non-submission (= -15% for each instance of non-submission). Paper revisions will be graded in accordance with a rubric provided in advance.

**\*Late submissions of work will not be accepted without prior instructor approval and will factor as 0% in grade calculation.**

**\*Please inform the instructor by email of any special learning needs you may have no later than the day of the Course Add/Drop deadline.**

**Campus-wide and Regional Emergency, Non-emergency, and Recreational Resources:**

Students, faculty, staff, and University administrators understand the pressures associated with higher education, and we urge each of you take good, holistic care of yourselves, your friends, and your families, and to reach out to this network early should you find yourself in need. The following is a list of on-campus resources available to you:

1. Anderson Center for the Arts: 607-777-2787
2. Binghamton Philharmonic: 607-723-3931
3. Binghamton University Bear Necessities Food Pantry: Rockefeller Center 168, M-F 1:45-3:45pm
4. Binghamton University Counseling Center: 607-777-2772

5. Binghamton University Dean of Students: 607-777-2804
6. Binghamton University Decker Student Health Services Center: 607- 777-2221
7. Binghamton University Harpur College Advising: 607-777-6305
8. Binghamton University International Student & Scholar Services: 607-777-2510
9. Binghamton University Interpersonal Violence Prevention: 607-777-3062
10. Binghamton University Police: From a campus phone, dial 911; from a cell phone, dial 607-777-2222.
11. Binghamton University Recreation Center (West Gym; East Gym): 607-777-PLAY
12. Fuertes Observatory, Ithaca: 607-255-3557
13. KNOW Theater: 607-724-4341
14. Kopernik Observatory and Science Center, Vestal: 607-748-3685
15. New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation: [www.parks.ny.gov](http://www.parks.ny.gov)
17. Reserve America (Campgrounds and Camping Reservations): [www.reserveamerica.com](http://www.reserveamerica.com)
18. Roberson Museum and Science Center; Clayworks Pottery Studio: 607-772-0660

### **A Note on Academic Integrity:**

Plagiarism consists in the unacknowledged use of another person's work. Students enrolled in this course are required and expected to do their own work, and instances of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to plagiarism, will be addressed in accordance with University policy. Students in need of clarification of the University's policies concerning plagiarism and acceptable academic practice are encouraged to review them online at the following links:

<http://libraryguides.binghamton.edu/citation/honesty> and [http://www.binghamton.edu:8080/exist/rest/bulletin/2017-2018/xq/2\\_academic\\_policies\\_and\\_procedures\\_all\\_students.xq?\\_xsl=/bulletin/2017-2018/xsl/MasterCompose.xsl](http://www.binghamton.edu:8080/exist/rest/bulletin/2017-2018/xq/2_academic_policies_and_procedures_all_students.xq?_xsl=/bulletin/2017-2018/xsl/MasterCompose.xsl)

**\*Please don't plagiarize! Students who submit plagiarized work will receive an "F" for each applicable assignment.**

**\*Thank you for joining our course! I look forward to working with you!**

### **Reading Schedule:**

All scheduled readings are required unless labeled "Optional." Please note that the instructor reserves the right to alter the reading schedule on short notice as needed. All scheduled texts are available on MyCourses.

#### **Week 1**

- Tues, 01/22:** Introductions and Course Overview  
 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak—"Can the Subaltern Speak?," Pts. I-II in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, pp. 66-86  
 Guillermo Gómez-Peña—*Dangerous Border Crossers*, Pt. II, "Migrant Provocateurs," pp. 82-132
- Thurs, 01/24:** Maurice Blanchot—"The Proper Use of Science Fiction," in *Imagining the Future: Utopia and Dystopia*, Andrew Milner, et. al., Ed., pp. 375-383  
 Peña—*Crossers*, Pt. III, "Conversations across the Border Fence," pp. 133-173 **(Optional)**  
 Dorothy Smith—"Women's Perspective as a Radical Critique of Sociology," in *Sociological Inquiry*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (1974), pp. 7-13  
 Spivak—"Subaltern," pp. 86-104

#### **Week 2**

- Tues, 01/29:** Ray Bradbury—"There Will Come Soft Rains"  
 Barry Brummett— *Rhetoric of Machine Aesthetics*, Ch. 2: "Aesthetics, Machines, and Rhetoric," pp. 1-28 **(Optional)**  
 Luisa Hall—"How We Feel About Robots That Feel," *MIT Technology Review*, 10/24/2017  
 Martin Heidegger—"The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, pp. 3-19

**Take-home Reading Quiz #1 Due in Class**

**Thurs, 01/31:** George Anders—"Alexa, Understand Me[!]," *MIT Technology Review*, Vol. 120, No. 5, pp. 26-31  
Brummett—*Rhetoric*, Ch. 3: "Electrotech: High Technology Machine Aesthetics," pp. 56-88 **(Optional)**  
Steven Connor—"Psychotechnographies," Ch. 1, *Dream Machines*, pp. 7-24  
Heidegger—Cont. "Question," pp. 20-35  
Rachel Metz—"Growing Up with Alexa," *MIT Technology Review*, Vol. 120, No. 5, pp. 70-74  
**Paper #1 (one-page) Prospectus Due in Class**

### Week 3

**Tues, 02/05:** Jean Baudrillard— *The System of Objects*, Pt. C: "The Metafunctional and Dysfunctional System: Gadgets and Robots," pp. 107-118  
Karel Čapek—"Rossums Universal Robots," Introductory Scene and Act One  
**Take-home Reading Quiz #2 due in Class**  
**Paper #1 Prospectus Annotated and Returned in Class**

**Thurs, 02/07:** Baudrillard—"Gadgets and Robots," pp. 119-133  
Čapek—"Robots," Act Two  
Istvan Csicsery-Ronay, Jr.—"The SF of Theory: Baudrillard and Haraway," in *Science Fiction Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3 (1991), pp. 387-404 **(Optional)**

### Week 4

**Tues, 02/12:** Čapek—"Rossum's Universal Robots," Act Three  
Donna Haraway—*A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*, Chs. 1-2, pp. 5-27  
**Take-home Reading Quiz #3 due in Class**  
**Paper #1 Draft Due 2:50pm, Turnitin.com**

**Thurs, 02/14:** Asimov—"Reason," in *I Robot*  
Haraway—*Manifesto*, Chs. 3-4, pp. 28-44

### Week 5

**Tues, 02/19:** Asimov—"Escape!," in *I Robot*  
David Byrne—"Eliminating the Human"  
Haraway—*Manifesto*, Chs. 5-6, pp. 45-68  
**Take-home Reading Quiz #4 due in Class**  
**Paper #1 Draft Annotated and Returned in Class**

**Thurs, 02/21:** Ray Bradbury—*The Illustrated Man*, "Prologue: The Illustrated Man" and "The Veldt," pp. 1-19  
Alette De Bodard—"Immersion," @aliettedebodard.com

### Week 6

**Tues, 02/26:** Nicholas Barber—"Why *2001: A Space Odyssey* Remains a Mystery," *BBC Culture*, 04/04/2018  
Bruce Kapferer—*2001 and Counting: Kubrick, Nietzsche, and Anthropology*, Intro. and Ch. 1: "The Social and Political Context and Intellectual Themes," pp. i-31  
Stanley Kubrick, Dir.—*2001: A Space Odyssey*  
**Take-home Reading Quiz #5 due in Class**  
**Paper #1 Revision Due 2:50pm, Turnitin.com**

**Thurs, 02/28:** Julie Carpenter, *Culture and Human-Robot Interaction in Militarized Spaces*, Ch. 3: "Our Emotional Engines," pp. 33-40  
Kapferer—*2001 and Counting*, Ch. 3: "A Space Odyssey and Beyond," pp. 93-107  
Kubrick—*2001* (continue)

### Week 7

Tues, 03/05: Carpenter— *Culture*, Ch. 5: “Robot Design as Rhetoric,” pp. 50-62  
Connor—“Shutdown,” Ch. 9, *Dream Machines*, pp. 186-188  
Kubrick—*2001* (finish)

**Take-home Reading Quiz #6 due in Class**

**Paper #1 Revision Graded and Returned in Class**

Thurs, 03/07: Silvana Caporaletti—“Science as Nightmare: ‘The Machine Stops,’ by E.M. Forster,” in *Utopian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (1997), pp. 32-47  
E.M. Forster—“The Machine Stops,” Ch. 1: “The Air-ship,” pp. 3-13

**Paper #2 Prospectus Due in Class**

### Week 8

Tues, 03/12: Forster—“The Machine Stops,” Ch. 2: “The Mending Apparatus,” pp. 14-23

**Take-home Reading Quiz #7 due in Class**

**Paper #2 Prospectus Annotated and Returned in Class**

Thurs, 03/14: Forster—“The Machine Stops,” Ch. 3: “The Homeless,” pp. 24-32

**Paper #2 Draft Due 2:50pm, Turnitin.com**

**Spring Break: Sat, 03/16 - Sun, 03/24**

### Week 9

Tues, 03/26: Heidegger—“The Turning,” pp. 36-49, in *Question*  
Ernest Hogan—“Guerrilla Mural of a Siren’s Song,” in *Alien Contact*

**Take-home Reading Quiz #8 due in Class**

**Paper #2 Draft Annotated and Returned in Class**

Thurs, 03/28: Hogan—“Guerrilla” (finish)

### Week 10

Tues, 04/02: Lana and Lilly Wachowski, Dirs.—*The Matrix* (1999)  
Jean Baudrillard— *Simulacra and Simulation*, Ch. 13: “Simulacra and Science Fiction”

**Take-home Reading Quiz #9 due in Class**

**Paper #2 Revision Due 2:50pm, Turnitin.com**

Thurs, 04/04: Baudrillard—*Simulacra and Simulation*, Ch. 11: “Holograms”  
Joshua Raulerson—“Cracking the Code,” Ch. 7, *Technoculture, Transhumanism, and Science Fiction in the 21st Century (Optional)*

Wachowski, Dirs.—*The Matrix* (finish)

**Take-home Reading Quiz #10 due in Class**

### Week 11

Tues, 04/09: Raulerson—“Mind, Matter, and Markets,” Ch. 3, *Technoculture*  
Rudy Rucker—*Postsingular*, Part I, pp. 5-51

**Paper #2 Revision Graded and Returned in Class**

Thurs, 04/11: Rudy Rucker—*Postsingular*, Part II, pp. 52-91  
Gilbert Simondon—“The Genesis of Technicity,” Pt. III, Preface, and Ch. 1, *On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects*, pp. 167-190

**Paper #3 Prospectus Due in Class**

**Week 12**

**Tues, 04/16:** Rudy Rucker—*Postsingular*, Part III, pp. 92-144  
Simondon—"The Relation between Technical Thought and Other Species of Thought,"  
Pt. III, Ch. 3, *Mode*, pp. 191-222

**Paper #3 Prospectus Annotated and Returned in Class**

**Thurs, 04/18:** Rudy Rucker—*Postsingular*, Part IV, pp. 145-179

**Week 13**

**Tues, 04/23:** Octavia E. Butler—*Parable of the Sower*, Chs. 1-8

**Paper #3 Draft Due 2:50pm, Turnitin.com**

**Thurs, 04/25:** Butler, *Parable*, Chs. 9-16  
Ingrid Thaler—"Dystopian Future and Utopian Vision," Ch. 3, *Black Atlantic and Speculative Fictions (Optional)*

**Week 14**

**Tues, 04/30:** Butler, *Parable*, Chs. 17-25

**Paper #3 Draft Annotated and Returned in Class**

**Thurs, 05/02:** Butler—"Speech Sounds"

**Week 15**

**Tues, 05/07:** Mamoru Oshii, Dir.—*Ghost in the Shell* (1995)

**Paper #3 Revision Due 2:50pm, Turnitin.com**

**Thurs, 05/09:** Oshii, Dir.—*Ghost* (1995) (finish)  
Course review, reflections, and SOOTs

**Paper #3 Revision Graded and Returned in Class**

**Finals Week:**

**Thurs, 05/16:** **Final Paper due 4:30pm, Turnitin.com**