

Beyond the Human

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 Office Hours: Philosophy Hall 408c
 M + W 4-6pm
<http://bit.ly/QDjvls> to confirm a spot

Fall 2012, Columbia University
 CLENW 3770
 Hamilton Hall 607
 M 10:10A-12:00P

Course Description

In the age of animal rights, artificial intelligence, drone warfare, and corporate personhood, we gradually find ourselves no longer the sole proprietors of what once seemed like the exclusive purview of the human condition. Thinking beyond the human is a chance to reflect critically on cognition, language, law, literature, war, and culture from the perspective of animals, machines, and complex systems.

In this course we will ask “What is it like to be a bat?” along with Thomas Nagel, analyze elephant paintings, simian and machine-generated poetry, contemplate the rhizome along with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, question the history of drone warfare with Manuel de Landa, consider the lobster with David Foster Wallace, ponder insect semiotics with Jakob von Uexküll and Franz Kafka, define life with Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana, investigate information and systems theories with Norbert Wiener and Claude Shannon, and explore the inner lives of cyborgs with Donna Haraway and Isaac Asimov.

Excursions into the worlds of philosophy, legislature, fiction, film, software, MMORPG, and a trip to the zoo will help frame our discussion.

Grading and Course Requirements

The students are expected to write short, weekly response papers to the readings, extending the class discussion to the class blog. These informal conversations should serve as the basis for the midterm paper / project proposal (due Week 7), which will we discuss in detail in class and during office hours. The final paper / project is due the last week of class.

30% Blog and class participation
 30% Midterm paper / project proposal
 40% Final paper / project

Required Books

Most of the reading will be provided as .pdf links from this document (Columbia U. login usually required). I encourage you to print or to use a good e-reader (something like GoodReader for iPad) on which you can take notes. The following several books will be available at Book Culture on 536 West 112th Street:

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Dial Press, 1999.

~~Powers, Richard. *Galatea 2.2*. Picador, 2004.[‡]~~

Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Del Rey, 1996.

~~Wells, H. G. *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Dover Publications, 1996.~~

Pynchon, Thomas. *The Crying of Lot 49*. Harper Perennial, 2006.

Academic integrity

When in doubt, cite! Plagiarism is insulting to your fellow students, your instructors, and to the university at large. It wastes my time and yours and is ultimately not worth the risk. Consult Columbia's guidelines at <http://www.college.columbia.edu/academics/integrity> or ask me for help early in the writing process.

¹ Out of print now. Swapping out.

WEEKLY READING LIST

Week 1: Introduction

Course mechanics. Grading and assignments. Academic integrity. Topics covered.

Week 2: Humanism and the Humanities

- Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Dial Press, 1999, ch. 1-5.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. "[Existentialism Is a Humanism](#)," lecture given in 1946 and reproduced in *Existentialism from Dostoyevsky to Sartre*, ed. Walter Kaufman, Meridian Publishing Company, 1989: 345-69.
- Humanist Manifesto [I](#) & [II](#), American Humanist Association website.
- Nussbaum, Martha C. "[Cultivating Humanity in Legal Education](#)." *The University of Chicago Law Review* 70, no. 1 (January 1, 2003): 265–279.
- Diamond, Cora. "[The Importance of Being Human](#)." *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements* 29 (1991): 35–62.

Explore: The American Humanist Association website; Auguste Comte and his [Religion of Humanity](#); [The Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)

Week 3: Post- Trans- Super- Ultra- Anti-

- Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Dial Press, 1999, ch. 5-10.
- Althusser, Louis. "[Marxism and Humanism](#)." In *For Marx*, 219–249. Verso, 2010.
- Heidegger, Martin. "[Letter on Humanism](#)," in *Basic Writings* ed. Wulf, transl. Capuzzi & Gray. New York: Harper & Row, 1977 [1946].²
- Derrida, Jacques. "[The Ends of Man](#)." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 30, no. 1 (1969): 31–57.³
- Wolfe, Cary. [What Is Posthumanism?](#) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010: xi-xxxiv.
- Fukuyama, Francis. "[World's Most Dangerous Ideas: Transhumanism](#)." *Foreign Policy*, no. 144 (2004): 42–43.

Explore: [H+](#) and the [Transhumanist Declaration](#), [Singularity Institute](#), [body modification](#), <http://www.kurzweilai.net/essays>

UNIT I: TECHNOLOGY

Week 4: Artificial Life and Intelligence

- Powers, Richard. [Galatea 2.2](#)
- Turing, A. M. "[Computing Machinery and Intelligence](#)." *Mind* 59, no. 236. New Series (October 1, 1950): 433–460.

² Added late. Read only if you covered the other readings.

³ Available on [JSTOR](#), uni login required.

- Riskin, Jessica. "[The Defecating Duck, or, the Ambiguous Origins of Artificial Life.](#)" *Critical Inquiry* 29, no. 4 (June 1, 2003): 599–633.
- Searle, John. 1980. "[Minds, Brains, and Programs.](#)" *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 3, 417-424.

Explore: Siri, [The Policeman's Beard is Half Constructed](#), [AI vs. AI](#); [Boston Dynamics](#); [Amazon Mechanical Turk](#) (Artificial Artificial Intelligence)

Week 5: Singularity

- Butler, Samuel. [Erewhon](#). Ch. 23-25.
- Asimov, Isaac. [Runaround](#).
- Text: Edgar Allan Poe, "[Maelzel's Chess-Player](#)" [Text-02], *Southern Literary Messenger*, April 1836, 2:318-326.
- Shannon, C.E.; , "[Computers and Automata](#)," *Proceedings of the IRE* , vol.41, no.10, pp.1234-1241, Oct. 1953.
- Chalmers, David. "[Singularity: A Philosophical Analysis.](#)" *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 17:7-65, 2010.
- Yudkowsky, Eliezer S. "[The AI-Box Experiment](#)".
- Landa, Manuel de De. [War in the Age of Intelligent Machines](#). Zone, 1991: 127-179.

Explore: [The Policeman's Beard Is Half-constructed](#), [Metaprogramming](#), [Self-modifying Code](#), [The System Design of the IBM Type 701 Computer](#), [Drone FOIA](#)

Week 6: Man-Machine

- Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Del Rey, 1996: ch. 1-15
- Licklider, J.C.R., "[Man-Computer Symbiosis](#)", *IRE Transactions on Human Factors in Electronics*, vol. HFE-1, 4-11, Mar 1960.
- Bush, Vannevar. "[As We May Think](#)" *The Atlantic*. 176.1 (1945). Print.
- Engelbart, D C. [Augmenting Human Intellect: A Conceptual Framework](#). Menlo Park, Calif: Stanford Research Institute, 1962.
- Heidegger, Martin. "[The Question Concerning Technology.](#)" pp307-333.
- Haraway, Donna Jeanne. "[A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century.](#)" In *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*, 149-181. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Hutchins, Edwin. "[How a Cockpit Remembers its Speeds.](#)" *Cognitive Science* 19, no. 3 (1995): 265-288.

Explore: [Quantified Self](#); [Daito Manabe](#) and [friends](#); Kraftwerk: [The Robots \(Die Roboter\)](#), *Die Mensch-Maschine* [1](#) & [2](#); [nootropics](#)

UNIT II: ANIMALS

Week 7: As Food and Pets

- Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Del Rey, 1996: ch. 15-22.
- Butler, Samuel. [Erewhon](#). Ch. 26-27.

- White, E.B. "[Death of a Pig.](#)" *The Atlantic*, January 1948.
- Diamond, Cora. "[Eating Meat and Eating People](#)," in *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions*.
- Shell, Marc. "[The Family Pet.](#)" *Representations*, no. 15 (July 1, 1986): 121–153.

Explore: pro- and anti- PETA debates, meat eating and vegetarianism in the media, [Animal Welfare Act](#)

Week 8: Insect Semiotics

PROJECT PROPOSAL DUE

- Kafka, Franz, and Ritchie Robertson. [The Metamorphosis](#). Translated by Joyce Crick. Oxford University Press, USA, 2009.
- Wallace, David Foster. "[Consider the Lobster.](#)" In *Consider the Lobster and Other Essays*, 235–255. Back Bay Books, 2007.
- Nagel, Thomas. "[What Is It Like to Be a Bat?](#)" *The Philosophical Review* 83, no. 4 (October 1, 1974): 435–450.
- Uexkull, Jakob von. [A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans: With A Theory of Meaning](#). Translated by Joseph D. O'Neil. Univ Of Minnesota Press, 2010: 44-135.

Explore: <http://www.elephantart.com>, [Lobster Liberation](#), [Insect Architecture](#), [Pain experience in hermit crabs?](#)

Week 9: The Human Animal

- Wells, H. G. [The Island of Dr. Moreau](#). Dover Publications, 1996: Ch. 1-7.
- Agamben, Giorgio. [The Open: Man and Animal](#). Translated by Kevin Attell. Stanford University Press, 2003.
- Sloterdijk, Peter. "[Rules for the Human Zoo: A Response to the Letter on Humanism.](#)" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 27, no. 1 (2009): 12–28.
- Derrida, Jacques. [The Animal That Therefore I Am](#). Translated by David Wills.⁴

UNIT III: SYSTEMS

Week 10: Social Organism

- Sturgeon, Theodore. [More Than Human](#). New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1953. Part 1-2.
- Spencer, Herbert. [The Social Organism](#) (1860) from *The Man Versus the State: With Six Essays on Government, Society, and Freedom*. Indianapolis, Ind: Liberty Classics.
- Wheeler, W. M. "[The ant-colony as an organism](#)," *Journal of Morphology*, 22: 307–325 (1911).
- Durkheim, Émile, and Karen E. Fields. c New York: Free Press, 1995. Pages 216-225, 433-448.

Explore: Hölldobler, Bert, Edward O. Wilson, and Margaret C. Nelson. [The Superorganism: The Beauty, Elegance, and Strangeness of Insect Societies](#). New York: W.W. Norton, 2009. Print.

⁴ Go through the [Columbia JSTOR](#) portal if you are having trouble accessing JSTOR material from home.

MANDATORY OFFICE HOURS Friday 10/30
NO CLASS MONDAY, DECEMBER 3

Week 11: Emergence / Entropy

- Sturgeon, Theodore. [More Than Human](#). New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1953. Parts 2&3.
- Pynchon, Thomas. *The Crying of Lot 49*. Harper Perennial, 2006.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Felix Guattari. [A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia](#). Translated by Brian Massumi. 1st ed. University of Minnesota Press, 1987: 1-26.
- Wiener, Norbert. "Entropy and Progress." In *The Human Use Of Human Beings: Cybernetics And Society*. Da Capo Press, 1988.

Explore: Nyquist, H. "Certain Factors Affecting Telegraph Speed." *Trans. Am. Inst. Electr. Eng.* XLIII (1924): 412–422; Hartley, RVL. "Transmission of Information." *Bell System Technical Journal* 7, no. 3 (July 1928): 535–563; Shannon, Claude. "A Mathematical Theory of Communication." *Bell System Technical Journal* 27, no. 3 (1948): 379–423.

Week 13 (make-up): Concluding Discussion / Trip or Event

FINAL PAPERS/PROJECTS PROPOSAL DUE FRIDAY DECEMBER 21st (before midnight)