

Professor C. Guertin

Office: eCreate Lab, PH 311

Office Hours: MW before class or by appt

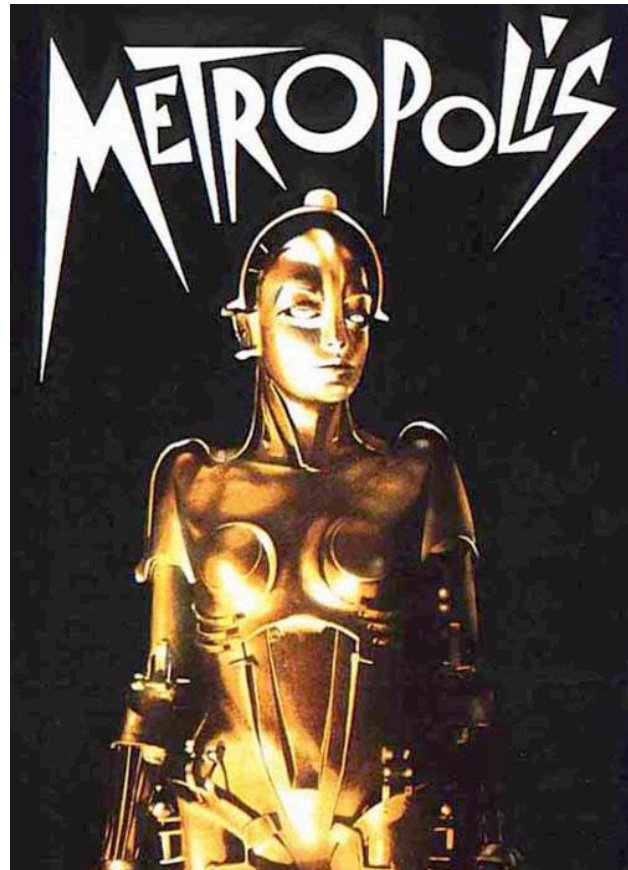
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**English 2303-014: Sexing the Machine: Gender, Technology and Science Fiction
Mondays and Wednesdays, 5:30 to 6:50, PH 310, Fall 2008**

Every time period has its own art form that speaks its nature most effectively. In 1980, Teresa de Lauretis prophetically stated that, if we compare modern and postmodern fiction with their times, science fiction will most likely be that form for us. In such a way, science fiction has come to encode our hopes, fears and dreams as they relate to the meetings of technologies, genders and bodies. This course will explore three different periods in science fiction as they relate to gender, the other great anxiety of our time: Wetware (biological life); Hardware (machine-life) and Software (intelligent-life). Sci-fi starts from the premise of ‘what if’ and explores our ambiguous feelings around gender, race, and technology—and the gendering or racializing of technology—in startling ways. Film, fictions and comics we will study include *Frankenstein*, *The Handmaid’s Tale*, *Terminator*, *Bladerunner*, *Max Headroom*, *Metropolis*, *Brazil*, *Neuromancer*, *Star Trek’s* borg, and *Battlestar Galactica’s* cylons.



Required Texts:

Atwood, Margaret. *A Handmaid’s Tale*. New York: Anchor, 1998. pb

Balsamo, Anne. *Technologies of the Gendered Body. Reading Cyborg Women*. pb
Durham: Duke UP, 1996.

Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*. (Any edition) pb

Jackson, Shelley. *Patchwork Girl, Or A Modern Monster*. Available on the computers in
the eCreate Lab. 1995.

Mitchell, W.J.T. *Me++: The Cyborg Self and The Networked City*. Cambridge, MA: MIT
Press, 2003.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. Edition TBA.

Readings from:

Dery, Mark, Ed. *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Hopkins, Patrick D., Ed. *Sex/Machine: Readings in Gender, Culture and Technology*.

Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1998.

Films/Television Episodes (a subscription to Netflix.com is recommended):

Battlestar Gallactica, Episode TBA (2004-)
Bladerunner (Scott, 1982)
Brazil (Gilliam, 1985)
Metropolis (Lang, 1927)
Star Trek TNG: “The Best of Both Worlds” (1990)
Terminator (Cameron, 1984)
Tron (Lisberger, 1982)

Course Schedule

Aug 25: Introduction to “Sexing the Machine”
Screening: *Max Headroom* (1985)

Wetware

Aug 27th- Springer, “The Pleasure of the Interface” downloadable pdf
Sept 1: Labor Day – no class
Sept 3- Balsamo, Chapter 1: “Reading Cyborgs, Writing Feminism”
Sept 8-17: *Frankenstein* (1818), Mary Shelley
Sept 22-24: *Handmaid’s Tale*
Sept 24: Balsamo, Chapter 4: “Public Pregnancies and Cultural Narratives of Surveillance”
Sept 29-Oct 1: *Brazil* (Gilliam, 1985; Wetware meets Hardware)
Oct 1: Balsamo, Chapter 3: “On The Cutting Edge: Cosmetic Surgery and New Imaging Technologies”

Hardware

Oct 4: *Metropolis* (Lang, 1927)
Oct 6-8: *Terminator* (Cameron, 1984)
Oct-13-15: *Bladerunner* (Scott, 1982)
Oct 15-20: *Star Trek’s* Borg in “The Best of Both Worlds” (1990; Wetware and hardware meet software)
Oct 22: UTA Focus on Technology Day – no class
Oct 27-29: Compare *Tron* (1982) to *Second Life*
Oct 29: ~~Mark Laidlaw, “Virtual Surreality” from *Flame Wars*~~ Library Workshop, Room TBA

Software

Nov 3: Mitchell, *Me++*
Nov 5: Vivian Sobchack “New Age Mutant Ninja Hackers: Mondo 2000” from *Flame Wars*
AND Balsamo, Chapter 6: “Feminism for the Incurably Informed”
Nov 10-12: *Neuromancer* (1984) – class debate – pick a side
Nov 17: Donna Haraway, “A Cyborg Manifesto” from *Sex/Machine*
Nov 19: Egan, “Learning To Be Me” downloadable pdf
Nov 24: Balsamo, Chapter 5: “The Virtual Body in Cyberspace”
Nov 26-Dec 1: *Patchwork Girl* (1995)
Dec 3: *Battlestar Galactica* (2004-); episode TBA

Assignments:

Blog: Keep a critical diary of your readings and viewings throughout the course. Minimum of 15 entries of 100+ words per entry. Go to <http://blog.uta.edu> to create a blog and email me the link at: carolyn.guertin@gmail.com (Weekly; 15%)

Short Paper (roughly 2 pages): Write a critical response to Claudia Springer's article "The Pleasure of the Interface. (Due Sept 3rd; 5%)

Presentation (Date as chosen; 10 minutes): Explore issues relevant to the class as presented in a primary work. Do *not* give us a plot synopsis; instead explore issues that the story or film raises. (Choose your date; 15%)

Class Debate *Neuromancer*: Choose a cyberpunk side: let the games begin (5%)

Research Essay (7-8 pages): Choose one of the questions to be assigned, research it and write an original response (Due Nov 24th; 25%)

Participation and Attendance: Much of the class will be centered around class discussions. Be sure to be there, and be prepared. (15%)

Final Exam: (date TBA; 20%)

From the UTA Catalog:

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT. The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 93112 -- The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. With the passage of new federal legislation entitled Americans With Disabilities Act - (ADA), pursuant to section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act, there is renewed focus on providing this population with the same opportunities enjoyed by all citizens. I will provide "reasonable accommodation" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty at the beginning of the semester and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY. It is the philosophy of The University of Texas at Arlington (and every other university that I have ever worked for) that academic dishonesty is a completely unacceptable mode of conduct and will not be tolerated in any form. All persons involved in academic dishonesty will be disciplined in accordance with University regulations and procedures. Discipline may include suspension or expulsion from the University.

"Scholastic dishonesty includes but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, the submission for credit of any work or materials that are attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, any act designed to give unfair advantage to a student or the attempt to commit such acts." (Regents' Rules and Regulations, Part One, Chapter VI, Section 3, Subsection 3.2, Subdivision 3.22. Definition of Plagiarism: The intentional or unintentional presentation of another person's ideas or wording as your own will not be tolerated.)

Effective learning can occur only if you are honest about your abilities as a writer. If you choose to ignore this warning and try to deceive your instructor, you may be given an incomplete for the course and be called before the Vice President for Student Affairs for disciplinary action.

See Statement at office for judicial affairs (<http://www2.uta.edu/discipline>) and I suspect scholastic dishonesty (http://www2.uta.edu/discipline/i_suspect_scholastic_dishonesty.htm). Understand that if you engage in academic dishonesty in your work for this course and if I am given the opportunity to assign you a grade (given the rules: see the second link here) I will give you an "F" for the course. It is very easy to catch people who steal!

Recommended Resources:

Attebery, Brian. *Decoding Gender in Science Fiction*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Balsamo, Anne. *Technologies of the Gendered Body. Reading Cyborg Women*. Durham: Duke UP, 1996.

De Lauretis, Teresa. *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*. Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1987.

Mark Dery, *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

Patrick D. Hopkins, *Sex/Machine: Readings in Gender, Culture and Technology*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1998.

