

FACULTY OF ARTS
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
COURSE OUTLINE

ENGLISH 477: Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Worlds in Literature
(TR 15:30-16:45, SA 121)

Fall 2017

Instructor: Dr. Anthony Camara
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Office hours: R 13:15-14:15

Course description: The super-intelligent, and perhaps malicious, robot is a familiar trope in science fiction. Today more than ever before, this formulaic character looks far less like a speculative possibility than an immanent certainty. In fact, considering that “soft” artificial intelligence (AI) seems to be everywhere—in our phones, our cars, and in the drones that patrol our skies—one could say that AI is no longer an implausible thing of the future; it’s already here. This class examines depictions of AI in speculative literature and popular media such as graphic novels, films, and video games. We will be particularly concerned with science fiction’s exploration of the ethical questions implicit in the creation of AI and digital beings, problems that intersect with issues of race, gender, class, and disability, and the struggles of vulnerable peoples to be recognized as autonomous subjects. Course readings will not only include fiction, but also theoretical and technical sources that will help to explain the computer science behind AI engineering. As we look at everything from cutting-edge science fictions to documents from Silicon Valley think tanks, we will ask how the prospect of AI and virtual worlds not only changes what we write, but how we write.

Texts and readings:

- William Gibson, *Neuromancer* (Ace)
- Nalo Hopkinson, *Midnight Robber* (Grand Central)
- Greg Egan, *Permutation City* (Nightshade)
- Course reader from Bound & Copied
- Course also includes screenings of Spike Jonze’s *Her* and an episode of *Black Mirror*

Assignments and Evaluation:

- Class participation and attendance: 10%
- Critical Reader Responses (2 responses of 500 words at 15% apiece): 30%
- Final Research Paper Proposal: 10%
- Final Research Paper: 30%
- Final Exam: 20%

Class participation and attendance: Attendance and active participation are essential to the success of this course. Attendance and participation are both worth 5% of your grade. Attendance will be monitored regularly and participation will be evaluated according to engagement in interactive, small-group activities and class discussions. Any unexcused absences in excess of two class periods will reduce the final class participation and attendance grade by 20% per absence.

Sample grading rubric for participation component:

A = Student engages in all small-group activities, and frequently contributes thoughtful comments and questions to class discussions that enhance understanding of the texts being studied

B = Student engages in most of the small-group activities, and occasionally offers a comment or question in class

C = Student shows little to no evidence of engagement in small-group or class discussions

Critical Reader Responses: These short assignments function as exploratory laboratories wherein students hone potential central arguments for the final paper. Nevertheless, responses must meet standards of acceptability for turned-in, written work at the U of C. That is to say, papers are evaluated according to the clarity, organization, grammatical fluency, and argumentative sophistication that they achieve. While students do not necessarily have to formulate a thesis statement on these assignments in order to receive full credit, they are nevertheless expected to identify a critical problem or question that a text poses, suggest an answer to it, and then explain the significance of their answer to how one reads and interprets the text. The first response addresses a work from the first half of the course, while the second covers material from the latter half.

Final Research Paper: This 8-page paper must make use of at least seven secondary sources—historical, literary-critical, and/or theoretical in nature—in order to further investigate any work from our syllabus. Students propose their own topics and are highly encouraged to visit the instructor during office hours to consult. At least two class periods will be devoted to workshopping the final paper. Note that this essay must include an annotated works cited page and must follow MLA formatting and style guidelines. Please refer to the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. A 300-word proposal for this paper will be worth 10% of the final grade, while the final paper is worth 30%.

Final Exam: The registrar-scheduled final examination is a closed-book exam that covers reading and lecture material and is comprised of multiple-choice questions about the works on the syllabus. Questions cover contextual, formal, thematic, stylistic, and philosophical features of the readings. The final examination period begins on December 11th and continues through the 21st. Students must be available for examinations through the final day of the examination period.

Additional Class Policies:

- It is necessary to complete all course assignments in order to receive a passing grade.
- If the course is to be worthwhile, students must come to lecture prepared to engage with the texts, their fellow classmates, and the instructor. Therefore, students should complete all assigned readings before class and bring the relevant texts to each lecture. To prepare for class, students are advised to read actively at home by annotating their books and making a list of questions and compelling ideas as they progress through the course readings.
- There are no extra credit assignments.
- Make-up assignments, excused absences, and extensions will only be issued by the instructor in the event of extenuating circumstances.
- Assignments must be submitted to the instructor at the beginning of the class period on the date that they are due. The late penalty for assignments is 10% per day, which includes weekends and holidays. Note that late assignments will receive little, if any, feedback. Assignments more than four days late will not be accepted.
- Please turn in assignments directly to the instructor. If it is not possible to do so due to extenuating circumstances such as an emergency, take the assignment to SS 1152 and put

it in the departmental dropbox; assignments will be date-stamped and placed in the instructor's mailbox. Students should retain a copy of all assignments in the event that they are lost. Assignments cannot be returned by staff in the departmental office. Additionally, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that assignments submitted via dropbox are received by the instructor.

- Electronic submission of assignments is not permitted.
- Students are prohibited from using cellular phones and/or recording devices during lecture. Students are most welcome to use word-processing devices to take notes during class, but should not be using them to surf the internet, listen to music, email, text, etc.

Grading System:

90 + %	A+	4.0
85 – 89 %	A	4.0
80 – 84 %	A–	3.7
77 – 79 %	B+	3.3
74 – 76 %	B	3.0
70 – 73 %	B–	2.7
67 – 69 %	C+	2.3
64 – 66 %	C	2.0
60 – 63 %	C–	1.7
55 – 59 %	D+	1.3
50 – 54 %	D	1.0
0 – 49 %	F	0

A+/A (4.0); A- (3.7); B+ (3.3); B (3.0); B- (2.7); C+ (2.3); C (2.0); C- (1.7); D+ (1.3); D (1.0); F (0)

Please note that, according to the University Calendar (F.1), instructors may use their discretion when rounding upwards or downwards when the average of term work and exams is between two letter grades.

Although the A+ is solely an honorific that entails no additional points in the four-point system, the course instructor will employ this mark to distinguish superlative work that exceeds expectations in style, correctness, intellectual depth and breadth, sophistication, and originality.

Plagiarism:

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possible

suspension or expulsion from the university. Please refer to the following information and make sure you are familiar with the statement below on plagiarism.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k-2-1.html>

Scribe and Muse Club for English Students:

The Scribe and Muse Reading and Writing Club (SMRWC) fosters and champions reading and writing through community service, leadership, and engagement. We strive to enhance the academic and social experience of undergraduate students by promoting academic excellence and interaction between students, faculty, and the community, through social, cultural, and academic events <http://english.ucalgary.ca/scribe-and-muse-english-club>. Our email address is smecuofc@gmail.com.

English Department Website:

For more information about courses, programs, policies, events and contacts in the Department of English, please go to our website at <http://english.ucalgary.ca>. Please note that the course outlines posted on the English Department website constitute the official course outline for purposes of appeals. Students should verify any hard copies against this posted version. For courses which employ numerical grades, the official departmental percentage to letter grade conversion scale is also posted on the department website.

Writing support:

The Student Success Centre offers both online and workshop writing support for U of C students. <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Guidelines on e-mail Etiquette:

<https://gsa.ucalgary.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Email-Etiquette.pdf>

Library and Research Support:

Christie Hurrell, Interim Librarian for English, offers research support to students, including strategies for finding articles, books, and other library materials. Contact:

christie.hurrell@ucalgary.ca.

Find The English Pages research guide here: <http://libguides.ucalgary.ca/english>

Follow the Department of English on Facebook & Twitter:



Academic regulations and schedules:

Consult the Calendar for course information, university and faculty regulations, dates, deadlines and schedules, student, faculty and university rights and responsibilities. The homepage for the University Calendar is

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/index.htm>

Grade appeals:

Consult the following University Calendar link and request advice from the English Department office, SS 1152. Please note that “mere dissatisfaction with a decision is not sufficient grounds for the appeal of a grade or other academic decision.”

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/i.html>

Deferral of term work and final examinations:

Should you require an extension for completion of term papers or assignments beyond the deadline of five days after the end of lectures, an Application of Deferment of Term Work form must be completed. The University also has regulations governing the deferral of final examinations. See Calendar: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-6.html>, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/g-7.html>.

Student Accommodations:**ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

The student accommodation policy can be found at: ucalgary.ca/access/accommodations/policy.

Students needing an Accommodation because of a Disability or medical condition should communicate this need to Student Accessibility Services in accordance with the Procedure for Accommodations for Students with Disabilities ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy.

Students needing an Accommodation based on a Protected Ground other than Disability, should communicate this need, preferably in writing, to the course instructor.

The full policy on Student Accommodations is available at http://www.ucalgary.ca/policies/files/policies/student-accommodation-policy_0.pdf.

Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>;

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip/>

“Safewalk” Program:

Campus Security will escort individuals day or night: call 220-5333 for assistance. Use any campus phone, emergency phone or the yellow phone located at most parking lot pay booths.

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk/>

Faculty of Arts Program Advising and Student Information Resources:

Have a question, but not sure where to start? The new Arts Students’ Centre (ASC) is your information resource for everything in Arts! Drop in at SS102, call us at 403-220-3580 or email us at ascarts@ucalgary.ca. You can also visit the Faculty of Arts website at <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/undergraduate> which has detailed information on common academic concerns.

For program planning and advice, contact the Student Success Centre (formerly the Undergraduate programs Office) at (403) 220-5881 or visit them in their new space on the 3rd Floor of the Taylor Family Digital Library.

For registration (add/drop/swap), paying fees and assistance with your Student Centre, contact Enrolment Services at (403) 210-ROCK [7625] or visit them at the MacKimmie Library Block.

Contact for Students Union Representatives for the Faculty of Arts:

arts1@su.ucalgary.ca, arts2@su.ucalgary.ca, arts3@su.ucalgary.ca,
arts4@su.ucalgary.ca

Contact for Students Ombudsman's Office:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds>

Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI):

"At the University of Calgary, feedback provided by students through the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) survey provides valuable information to help with evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching, and selecting courses (www.ucalgary.ca/usri). Your responses make a difference - please participate in USRI Surveys.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is an extremely serious offence. Please read the following information carefully. The penalty routinely recommended by the English Department for documented plagiarism is failure of the course in which the offence occurred; academic probation is also routinely applied at the Faculty level. Suspension or expulsion can result from severe or repeated plagiarism.

The University Calendar states:

1. Plagiarism - Essentially plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:

- (a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),
- (b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,
- (c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,
- (d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course (although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved.

While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted.

Plagiarism occurs when direct quotations are taken from a source without specific acknowledgement, or when original ideas or data from the source are not acknowledged. Citing your sources in a bibliography is not enough, because a bibliography does not establish which parts of a student's work are taken from other sources. MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation or other recognized forms of citation must be used for this purpose. Advice on adequate documentation can be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/> <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF CONDUCT

According to the University Calendar, (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/j.html>) "The University of Calgary community has undertaken to be guided by the following statements of purpose and values: to promote free inquiry and debate, to act as a community of scholars, . . . , to respect, appreciate, and encourage diversity, [and] to display care and concern for community". The Department of English, like the university as a whole, is committed to a "positive and productive learning and working environment." This environment is characterized by appreciation and encouragement of diversity and respect for the dignity of all persons: students, support staff, and faculty. The department will not tolerate unacceptable behaviour, such as threatening gestures, threatening or abusive verbal or written communication (including e-mails), or any conduct that "seriously disrupts the lawful education and related activities of students and/or university staff".

Any cases of such misconduct should be reported immediately to the department Head, who, depending on the nature and severity of the incident, may then take further appropriate action.