

APPENDIX 1: Instructions for Oral Presentations

ROBOT VISIONS IN FICTION AND BEYOND:

Oral Presentation Guidelines

For MINI-AUDIO LECTURES

[10 min; 10% of grade]

[PRESENTATIONS SHOULD BE AROUND 10 MIN LONG (anything longer than 15 min PER PERSON won't be graded).

PRESENTATIONS THAT ARE IN AUDIO-LECTURE FORMAT NEED TO BE UPLOADED FOR THE CLASS IN A PROMPT AND TIMELY FASHION, SINCE WE ARE COUNTING ON THIS CONTENT TO BE READY FOR UPCOMING CLASSES. FAILURE TO MAKE DEADLINE WITH UPLOADING A PRESENTATION (PROVIDED THE GROUP CONTACTS ME AHEAD OF TIME) WILL RESULT IN THE GROUP BEING REASSIGNED TO ANOTHER TOPIC—which is, of course, frustrating after you have already worked on something.

IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT THAT TOPICS ARE COVERED EVENLY—SINCE WE ARE DEPENDING ON STUDENTS TO CO-TEACH PARTS OF THIS COURSE AND WE WILL ALL NEED TO DIP INTO SOME OF THESE SOURCES FOR OUR SUMMATIVE ASSESSMENT TOPICS. Sometimes, taking on something more challenging will serve you better, in the end, when it comes to writing the summative paper.

A: PRESENTATIONS ON SCHOLARLY ESSAYS:

Some general guidelines:

- *Get at the heart of a given text*
- *Respond to particular (as opposed to over-general) ideas in your author's work; SELECTIVENESS IS KEY!*
- *Closely read and point out significant passages*
- *Respond argumentatively to what you are reading/studying. You can even pose some open-ended questions at the end to get the class thinking about something related to the reading.*

HERE ARE SOME POINTERS YOU CAN FOLLOW IN PUTTING TOGETHER YOUR PRESENTATION:

- 1. Summarize the more important ideas in the sources. Instead of feeling responsible for covering the whole source, maybe think about what interests you in it and what you would like to talk about or connect to our course; you won't be able to cover everything in the time that you have been given. The trick to dealing with this is just to give a general sense of the reading as a whole.**
- 2. Do some research on the author of the essay, if possible, so you can explain who they are briefly. Introducing an author sometimes gives your audience a better sense of where the author's ideas come from and what might motivate this person to see things as they do. BE VERY BRIEF IN PRESENTING THIS CONTEXT!**
- 3. Decide which highlights/ideas from the reading you want to present and focus on.**
- 4. THINK OF YOUR PRESENTATION AS A THOUGHTFUL MEDITATION ON SMALL PART OF THE ESSAY THAT YOU ARE READING and a chance to discuss some ideas in that essay in relation to OUR COURSE. You are your own person, with a unique set of life experiences through which you have seen the world; you are not a passive vessel through which someone else's ideas are flowing. Try to act as an intelligent filter through which someone else's ideas are more meaningfully being channeled to your audience through your own intelligence/experience of life/creativity. TRY TO BOTH UNDERSTAND IDEAS AND REACT TO THEM.**

B: PRESENTATIONS ON SHORT STORIES:

IF YOU ARE WORKING ON A SHORT STORY PRESENTATION, YOU CAN SELECT FROM THE LIST BELOW WHAT MIGHT BE INTERESTING TO COVER.

- 1. How does your story develop the ideas we are looking at in this course? Can you state the theme of this story as a thesis (ie: a statement that describes the author's main message or philosophy)? In addition to ideas related to robotics/robots, what else does this author communicate to you about down-to-earth life or reality?**
- 2. Is the story effective? Compelling? Why or why not? What makes it work as a piece of fictional writing?**
- 3. Explain what literary techniques the author has used to craft this story. Which techniques are predominant? Show examples from the story of some of them at work and explain why they were handled by the author in the manner s/he chose. PLEASE REFER TO LITERARY TECHNIQUES/DEVICES in your course pack, or coin other ones that describe notable patterns in the story, as you see them.**
- 4. Discuss the ending (ie: denouement) of this story. Is it open or closed? Does it leave the author's final message ambiguous? What sorts of speculations are you left with when you reach the ending?**

C: PRESENTATIONS ON FILMS: a scene analysis (any scene of your choice)

- 1. Introduce title of film and director's name & briefly describe the subject of the film. Explain the function of the scene in relation to the film as a whole. What is the relationship between your scene and the film's main concerns? Briefly explain the situation that is presented in the scene.***
- 2. Then, break down the scene into its component parts and explain what they mean. Do not attempt to include all the technical aspects of***

the scene; *focus on the most memorable ones* that make the scene stand out.

a. DISCUSS *specific film techniques in terms of an effect that is achieved* in the scene.

i. GENERAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. What problem motivates the director? What argument is the director putting forward in the scene?
2. What contradictions do you find in the scene? How do they affect your understanding of the film's theme?
3. How is the scene structured? How does its structure reinforce the director's message?
4. What cinematic choices has the director made and how have they affected the viewer's reception of the film's message?

3. OPTIONAL: CONCLUDING REMARKS (very brief)

a. *Critique the execution of this scene, on the part of the director, and evaluate the effectiveness of how the film transmits its intended message through this scene. Explain what you especially liked and what might have been better handled. Please make some meaningful connections to other course material we have looked at, in wrapping up your presentation.*

NOTES ON CREATING A

SUMMARY OF A SOURCE

(These instructions are for a written summary, but you can adapt them to working through the ideas for your presentation as you need to. You will probably end up using some of these strategies as you work through the essays that are required in this class—since you will be working with scholarly essay quite frequently.)

PURPOSE OF A SUMMARY:

- a. to fully understand the ideas of another writer
- b. to understand the debate/discussion around a subject of interest
- c. to situate yourself, as a thinker, in relation to existing research/scholarship; to prepare yourself to build on another person's ideas in developing your own view.
 - a. SUMMARY= *a phase in preparing to intelligently use secondary essays in your own thinking*

APPROACH:

- highlight the main points/ideas of an essay & eliminate MOST of the supporting evidence/detail

PROCESS:

1. *Carefully read/analyze the essay to locate important ideas.*

FIRST READING:

- a. Locate the *topic sentences* in each paragraph, since these introduce the main ideas/arguments
- b. Highlight underline key points/passages

SECOND READING:

- Make marginal notes, which will begin the process of translating the text of the essay into your own words (ie: personalizing the writer's ideas)
 - *RULE OF THUMB: don't copy out more than 3 words in a row from the text, since you risk plagiarism!*

2. Describe these main ideas in a new format: RE-WRITE/re-state
 - a. Accurately re-state the writer's main arguments in your own words.
 - i. Be accurate in your representation of the text.

ii. Take care that you don't deviate from the essence of the original, but put ideas *IN YOUR OWN WORDS!*

1. If wording in parts of original source is truly significant, you can quote short passages when needed

3. Use brevity; minimize supporting detail.

- *Separate DETAILS from ABSTRACTIONS:*
 - 'abstraction'= large, non-specific concept; a big idea
 - 'detail'=concrete/specific example

{*MAIN IDEAS= ABSTRCTIONS that you want to focus on in your summary (the ones you want to keep)*}

****** HOW MANY SUPPORTING DETAILS YOU KEEP will depend on the required length of your summary and the weight/importance of an idea in your overall summary!***

4. Clarify (if necessary) which ideas this writer is introducing from other thinkers/scholars into his/her essay (you will contextualize how these ideas are incorporated & who their author is, if such content touches on one of the ideas that are part of your summary).

- Contextualizing: use expressions such as 'Peterson argues' OR 'Jones explains' to acknowledge contributors to ideas in the essay, beyond those of the main author.

5. Follow the order of the essay in expanding the points in your summary OR choose a logical order that presents the overall argument in a tidy, clear-to-follow fashion.

{*FINAL CRITERIA: a good summary is very streamlined; it has little extra detail and is a clearer version of the essay that you read*}

APPENDIX 2: Instructions for streaming pre-recorded PPT slides through Office 365 Stream

HOW TO MAKE A PPT AUDIO LECTURE, formatted as an MP4 video:

- 1. Put an outline of your desired content (point form) onto PPT slides. This content should guide you through your talking points and help you remember what you wish to say as you “audio-lecture”. You can also use other hand-held pages with more notes if you need to. I do that in class all the time when I teach live!**
- 2. If there are any images/design elements you wish to integrate into your presentation, this would be a good time to do it (before you add your audio-content). You can hit the ‘design’ tab on the PPT menu bar at the top of the screen, and even select ‘design ideas’ to see what formats you can automatically select. If you use any of the design templates and cut/paste images onto your PPT slide, the design feature will integrate your images for you, with the text, and give you some suggestions. It’s both easy and fun! Technically, you should reference the sources for your images, but we can waive this requirement during online teaching due to time constraints.**
- 3. On the top PPT menu (ie: ‘file’, ‘home’ etc.), choose ‘insert’ & click on this option. You will see an ‘audio’ option on the top far right side appear; click on it. Then click on ‘record audio’ from the drop-down menu.**
- 4. Whatever slide is highlighted will be the one you will record over. A ‘record sound’ box will appear in the middle of your slide. Click on the red dot to start making your recording. Click on the red square that appears after you start recording to stop your recording when you finish. Then click OK to finalize your recording (you will be able to also select ‘cancel’ if you are unhappy with your recording and want to re-record). You will see a faint recording content logo in the middle of each slide you record over. You will**

also be able to see, if you hover over this logo, how long your recording on this slide is. That way you can keep track of time!

5. After I finish recording over all my slides, I save my file with the words AUDIO PPT as part of my file name. This is to distinguish this file from the video file I'll create next.
6. To convert your recorded PPT slides into a video, go into 'file' and select 'save as'. Go into the format options & instead of selecting PPT, select MPEG-4 VIDEO (.mp4) from the other options below.
7. Select 'save' and you will now have to wait as your file converts (welcome to my life!). As your file converts into mp4 format, there will be a progress bar at the bottom of your PPT screen that you can monitor. When the conversion is finished the bar will disappear. Go into whatever folder your original PPT was saved in, and you will notice that there is now also a video version of that same file. It's this video that you will now want to stream through Office 365 STREAM (Dawson internal streaming service) or through YouTube (you are on your own, if you go with YouTube!—but for some of you, that is no big thing!).
8. To stream through Office 365, select 'stream' from the list of apps, once you are on the Office 365 screen.
9. Click on 'my content' and select 'groups' from the drop-down menu. You should now see the classes you are a part of listed as options. Click on our class code/name.
10. Just beneath the title page of the screen for our group (representing our class), there will be an option in red that reads 'upload video'.
11. Click on 'upload video' & select the file from your desktop that you want to stream (ie: the video you created). Make sure

your file name includes your full name, or some identifying information related to your presentation. There are three stages to streaming: first the video ‘uploads’; then it is ‘processed’. You will see a task bar that indicates how far along each process is. This takes a bit of time. Once both these processes are complete, you then have to select ‘publish video’ to make the audio-lecture available to other members of our group.

APPENDIX 3: How to Submit an Audio-Outline as a Plan for a Written Essay

HOW TO MAKE A PPT VIDEO LECTURE, WITH AUDIO CONTENT:

1. Put each part of your thematic outline onto a PPT slide:
 - a. Thesis (which will be presented in your introduction)
 - b. Supporting argument (full sentence)
 - i. Quote
 - ii. Quote
 - iii. Quote
 - c. Supporting argument (full sentence)
 - i. Quote
 - ii. Quote
 - iii. Quote
2. On the top PPT menu (ie: ‘file’, ‘home’ etc.), choose ‘insert’ & click on this option. You will see an ‘audio’ option on the top far right side appear; click on it. Then click on ‘record audio’ from the drop down menu.
3. Whatever slide is highlighted will be the one you will record over. A ‘record sound’ box will appear in the middle of your slide. Click on the red dot to start making your recording. Click on the red square that appears after you start recording to stop your recording when you finish. Then click OK to finalize your recording. You will see a faint recording content logo in the middle of each slide you record over.
4. After I finish recording over all my slides, I save the file with the words AUDIO PPT as part of my file name. This is to distinguish this file from the video file I’ll create next.
5. To convert your recorded PPT slides into a video, go into ‘file’ and select ‘save as’. Go into the format options & instead of selecting PPT, select MPEG-4 VIDEO (.mp4) from the other options below.
6. Select ‘save’ and you will now have to wait as your file converts (welcome to my life!). As your file converts into mp4 format, there will be a progress bar at the bottom of your PPT screen that you can monitor. When the conversion is finished the bar will disappear. Go into whatever folder your original

PPT was saved in and you will notice that there is now also a video version of that same file. It's this video that you will now want to stream through Office 365 STREAM (Dawson internal streaming service) or through YouTube.

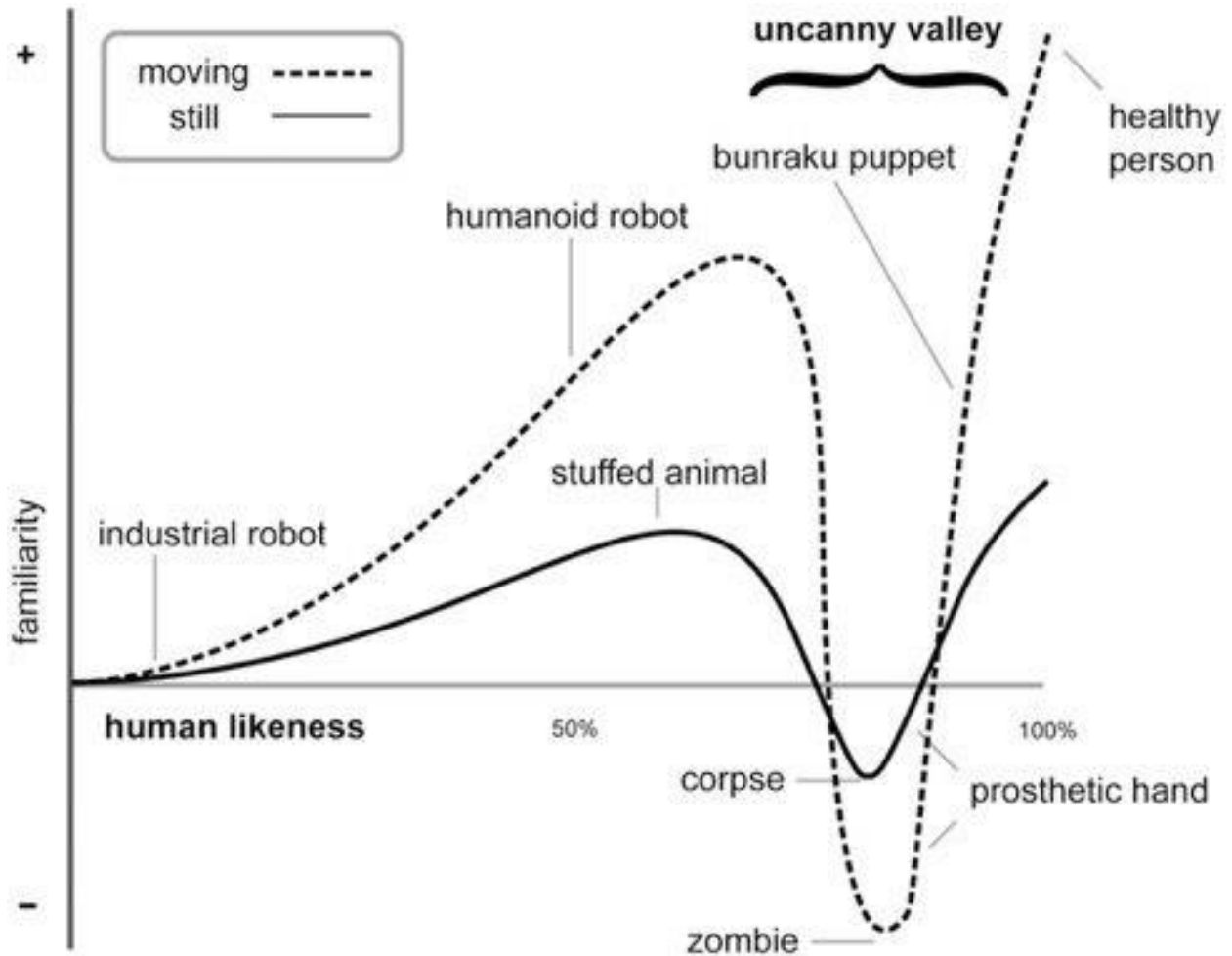
7. To stream through Office 365, select 'stream' from the list of apps, once you are on the Office 365 screen.
8. Click on 'my content' and select 'groups' from the drop-down menu. You should now see the classes you are a part of listed as options. Click on our class code. [THIS YEAR OUR GROUP IS LABELLED 'CS' in a red box—and if you hover over the group box, it should show you our section and class group & year. If you want to make sure this is our class, check the 'membership' option, since your email should be listed there with those of other students in our class]
9. Just beneath the title page of the screen you find yourself one (representing our class), there will be an option in red that reads 'upload video'.
10. Click on 'upload video' & select the file from your desktop that you want to stream (ie: the video you created). Make sure your file name includes your full name, as well as the words 'essay 1 outline'.
11. After you have uploaded your video, create a SEPARATE small WORD DOC for me that includes a brief note telling me that you submitted your outline as a video (let me know if you uploaded it on Office 365 Stream or through You Tube—and please give me the link to your You Tube video, if applicable).
12. Submit this brief note through the assignment link I create on LEA for this outline. AND YOU ARE DONE!

APPENDIX 4: An example of an in-class group activity aimed at bringing together deeper connections between fictional works and ideas in a scholarly essay [ROBOT VISIONS class]

END OF CLASS GROUP WORK: *The Uncanny and The Tragic in the Lives of Artificial Human Beings*

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS: *In the time remaining at the end of class, please take brainstorming notes on your group discussion of the questions below. Maximize output (...as if you were collectively free-writing) and optimize connections and thoughtful creativity. Try to generate about a page of notes (free form) by the end of class. Please hand in through the assignment link I've created for this activity on LEA.*

PLOTTING VARIOUS ROBOT CHARACTERS FROM THE COURSE ON MASAHIRO MORI'S "UNCANNY VALLEY" GRAPH (about a page of analysis)



INSTRUCTIONS:

Think about how you would plot FRANKENSTEIN vs OLYMPIA on along the uncanny valley. Beyond simply plotting the characters on the uncanny valley graph and explaining why they belong where you think they do on it, try to also explain how the representations of these characters honestly make you feel,

when you imagine them physically/psychologically. Try to analyze these feelings a little.

- ***Olympia (in “The Sandman”)***



○

- ***Frankenstein:***



CONNECTIONS BETWEEN *Blade Runner* films & *Frankenstein*:

1. Watch the following scenes from *Blade Runner* (original film)—that features the death of the Replicant that is hunted by Deckard, after a big violent showdown that almost ends with The Replicant (Roy) killing

Deckard, before things take a turn in another direction; hence the following scene:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NoAzpa1x7jU>

2. Watch (...or simply recall) the death scene at the end of *Blade Runner 2049* [let's call it 'calm acceptance in the snow', rather than 'tears in the rain').

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LP1IU56o5Y4>

Think about how the death scene of the focal replicant character has changed in the later film. Think about the reasons for the change, considering K's actions in the last part of the film. How does the final moment define the meaning of his life?

3. Compare this to the death of Frankenstein's monster, at the end of Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*. I am including below a passage that describes one of the monster's last reflections on the meaning of his life:

DYING CREATURE'S LAST WORDS:

(222): monster's last words

"Fear not that I shall be the instrument of future mischief. My work is nearly complete. Neither yours nor any man's death is needed to consummate the series of my being, and accomplish that which must be done; but it requires my own. Do not think that I shall be slow to perform this sacrifice. I shall quit your beset on the ice-raft which brought me thither, and shall seek the most northern extremity of the globe; I shall collect my funeral pile, and consume to ashes this miserable frame, that its remains may afford no light to any curious and unhallowed wretch, who would create another as I have been. I shall die. I shall no longer feel the agonies which now consume me, or be the prey of feelings unsatisfied, yet unquenched. (...)

(...) He is dead who called me into being; and when I shall be no more the very remembrance of us both will speedily vanish. I shall no longer see the sun or stars, or feel the winds play on my cheeks. Light, feeling, and sense will pass

away; and in this condition must I find my happiness. Some years ago, when the images which this world affords first opened upon me, when I felt the cheering warmth of summer, and heard the rustling of the leaves and the warbling of the birds, and these were all to me, I should have wept to die; now it is my only consolation. Polluted by crimes, and torn by the bitterest remorse, where can I find rest but in death?"

How might you compare the death of the Replicants in the *BLADE RUNNER* films to the death of Frankenstein in Shelly's classic horror story? What other similarities/comparisons can you think of between Replicants and Frankenstein, as beings with specific experiences & predicaments?

APPENDIX 5: An example of an EXPLORATORY WRITING JOURNAL instructions for Robot Visions (abbreviated version)

[WID-ADAPTED VERSION WITH SOME SELECT EXAMPLES]

worth 25% of your overall grade—

—please complete 5 of the journal assignments below (...I've decided that this number is the safe equivalent of an essay) to earn your journal component grade; BY THE WAY, THE LAST JOURNAL ASSIGNMENT WILL BE DEVOTED TO OCCASIONAL IN CLASS WRITING PROMPTS & GROUP WORK DISCUSSION (...the kind you don't hand in as a group but record for your own use). EVERYONE WILL HAVE TO COMPLETE THE LAST JOURNAL—FOR A GRAND TOTAL OF 5 JOURNAL ENTRIES (4 chosen by you, and the last one which represents ongoing class activities during class time). Your journal entries should be written loosely, as if you were working on a thought puzzle for your own amusement. Don't over think them! Just let your ideas flow and enjoy the freedom of loosely structured writing. Most journal entries are about a PAGE long—some a bit longer/shorter. Choose the ones you like! If you end up with more than just the required number of journals—that is fine. In fact—it could improve your grade, since I'll consider the overall effort that you put into your journal, in trying to work things out throughout the course.

NOTE:

I need your journals in an electronic format, like WORD (which is less heavy, in terms of memory); PDF IS OK as well, if this works out better for you. If you want to, you can incorporate any drawings as images into a Word doc. I would also be open to a Blog format. In this case, please submit your journal through the assignment link on LEA as a Word doc with

your name on it and the address of a link to your Blog. Nothing this fancy is really required for my class—it's only if you find this format more motivating/inspiring to work with, since it allows for a more multi-modal approach. Some of you are good at that!

GRADING CRITERIA FOR JOURNAL:

Theoretically, each journal entry will be graded out of 5 marks—although I'll grade more wholistically to make faster progress-- and the journal grade will reflect the following criteria, cumulatively (...in other words, I will fill out the criteria only once for all your journal entries together). I will not do any in-paragraph editing/commentary and will limit any additional comments to about three/+ sentences.

ASSESSMENT ABBREVIATIONS:

M+=well met

M=met

M-= not met

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA:

<i>-creative engagement with the tasks:</i>	m+/m/m-
<i>-completeness of responses:</i>	m+/m/m-
<i>-originality of ideas/insights:</i>	m+/m/m-
<i>-exploratory spirit:</i>	m+/m/m-
<i>-readability/clarity:</i>	m+/m/m-

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS (THREE + SENTENCES):

JOURNAL RESPONSE #1 (about a page, or ¾ of a page single spaced, 12pt font):

CYBORG MANIFESTO JOURNAL ACTIVITY:

Write down your honest reactions to “Cyborg Manifesto”. What do you like/dislike about Haraway’s ideas? What confuses you? What do you want to get to the bottom of? What is most important to you about what Haraway is trying to propose? Also, think about the purpose of manifestos in general (& about the *Futurist Manifesto* in particular—which we

talked about in class). Is Haraway deliberately claiming a space for feminists when she frames the “Cyborg Manifesto” as a feminist text? Or is feminism a side agenda to a much more complicated and multifaceted text? In what way might Haraway be RESPONDING to the “Futurist Manifesto” when writing her own manifesto? And why do you think she would need to do this?

JOURNAL RESPONSE #2:

CLASS DISCUSSION ACTIVITY LEADING UP TO WRITING UP THE JOURNAL (WALL-E vs “Too Bad!”): *When I give you time at the end of class to deal with this question in groups, please take notes, for your own use, which will help you write up the journal question below, when the time comes. YOU WILL NOT BE HANDING THESE NOTES IN, but they should help you to frame some of the ideas you need for this journal assignment. YOU CAN PERHAPS ALSO AGREE AS A GROUP TO AUDIO-RECORD YOUR DISCUSSION AND SHARE THIS FILE WITH GROUP MEMBERS.*

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTION TO TAKE NOTES ON: Compare/contrast Asimov’s characterization of his robot to how WALL-E is characterized in the Pixar animation film. Are there some striking similarities/differences? Since robots play a big role in this course as actors on the stage of human drama, if you had to create a kind of universal character profile for a robot, what would it be? Spend a bit of time unpacking this description. What are the deviations from this universal character profile? Does trying to characterize robots change the approaches that you have towards characterizing people? Change the way you see human character? Would you say that in our narratives, we are only capable to trying to depict robots in a human way, or are we trying to imagine another kind of relationship to them, one that is largely unfamiliar to us?

JOURNAL QUESTION THAT YOU WILL EVENTUALLY WRITE UP, ONCE WE HAVE STUDIED ALL THE WORKS IT INCLUDES:

JOURNAL QUESTION ON THE UNIVERSAL CHARACTER PROFILE FOR A ROBOT (about a page, or ¾ of a page single spaced, 12pt font):

Compare/contrast Asimov’s characterization of his robot in “Too Bad!” to how CD3 is characterized in Julia Elliott’s story “The Love Machine”. If you watched WALL-E as a child, you might even think about how WALL-E is characterized in the Pixar animation film. Are there some striking similarities/differences between these stories, or other robot stories that stand out in your mind? Since robots play a big role in this course as actors on the stage of human drama, if you had to create a kind of universal character profile for a robot, what would it be? Spend a bit of time unpacking this description. What are the deviations from this universal character profile? Does trying to characterize robots change the approaches that you have towards characterizing people? Change the way you see human character, because of the ways in which robots mirror humanity? Would you say that in our narratives,

we are only capable of trying to depict robots in a human way, or are we trying to imagine another kind of relationship to them, one that is largely unfamiliar to us? You might even pick up on Haraway's idea that the cyborg presents us with a new kind of unfamiliar mythology that we are still in the process of working out.

JOURNAL RESPONSE #3:

SCENE ANALYSIS FROM *SPACE ODYSSEY 2001* BY STANLEY KUBRICK: HAL IS WATCHING YOU! [AIM FOR ABOUT A PAGE, SINGLE SPACED]

First, watch the following scene from the movie:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFSE4dUJYM8>

Then, write a scene analysis about a page long analyzing this scene. Please follow the instructions below:

4. **Introduce title of film and director's name & briefly describe the subject of the film.**
Explain the *function of the scene in relation to the film*. What is the *relationship between your scene and the film's main concerns*? Briefly *explain the situation* that is presented in the scene.
 5. Then, **break down the scene into its component parts** and explain what they mean. Do not attempt to include all the technical aspects of the scene; **focus on the most memorable ones** that make the scene stand out.
 - a. DISCUSS **specific film techniques in terms of an effect that is achieved** in the scene.
 - i. **GENERAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**
 1. What problem motivates the director? What argument is the director putting forward in the scene?
 2. What contradictions do you find in the scene? How do they affect your understanding of the film's theme?
 3. How is the scene structured? How does its structure reinforce the director's message?
 4. What cinematic choices has the director made and how have they affected the viewer's reception of the film's message?
 6. **OPTIONAL: CONCLUDING REMARKS (very brief)**
 - a. **Critique the execution of this scene**, on the part of the director, and evaluate the effectiveness of how the film transmits its intended message through this scene. **Explain what you especially liked and what might have been better handled.**
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JOURNAL RESPONSE #6: PLEASE WORK ON ONLY ONE OF THE OPTIONS BELOW

OPTION A:

Journal entry on the love story in *Blade Runner*

Q: IS THE STORY OF K & JOI A REAL LOVE STORY, OR AN ILLUSION? EXPLAIN YOUR ANSWER. WHAT MAKES IT REAL? WHAT MAKES IT ILLUSORY?

HOW IS THEIR “PROGRAMMING” POTENTIALLY SETTING UP THEIR INTERACTIONS WITH EACH OTHER? ARE THEY WALKING THROUGH A KIND OF STAGED PANTOMIME OF human LOVE, OR ARE THEY WORKING OUT THEIR RELATIONSHIP IN THEIR OWN WAY, on their own terms?

DO K & JOI IN BLADE RUNNER HAVE FREE WILL, OR ARE THEY FALLING VICTIM TO PRE-DETERMINED NARRATIVE PATTERNS...and playing out a fixed program? WHAT ABOUT THE ROLE-PLAY OF GENDER, IN THE SEDUCTION SCENES IN BLADE RUNNER (note: Joi is programmed to seduce/engage the customer she belongs to– and she is literally an object for sale in the marketplace). DO THEY SIMPLY DANCE THIS DANCE SO THAT K CAN FEEL MORE HUMAN? IS JOI THE ‘TOOL’ TO ENABLE HIM TO DO THIS– ?

JOURNAL RESPONSE #7: IT’S CREATIVE WRITING WEEK IN ROBOT VISIONS CLASS!!! This week, you will have three creative writing options to choose from if you want to work on a weekly journal task.

A. JOURNAL QUESTION ON ROBOT CARNIVAL (available online, if you want to review this short film; it’s about 33 min into the version below):

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=id1eRjO4p_0

Write a script or a narrative story to go with the Frankenstein-inspired Japanese short anime I showed you in class. Alternately, you might even challenge yourself to write a poetic text that explores the visual metaphors of the anime film. This poetic text should deal with the nature of the mechanical metaphors presented by this short film, thinking about how the original Frankenstein story has been adapted/changed by the film maker to explore the Frankenstein myth in different technological terms.

OR...

B. TAKE JORDAN’S CHALLENGE: Try your hand at writing a robot story that does not follow the same script as the stories we have been reading in class. Jordan (from one of my classes) noticed that stories that feature robots/automatons are formulaic. Here is the formula:

- a. **An inventor/scientist makes a robot/automaton in the image of some aspect of a human being.**

- b. The robot/automaton discovers its own consciousness and expresses confusion about relating to people, while people in turn experience their own confusion in relating to the robot/automaton. *This part of the story can be expressed in terms of the uncanny valley.*
- c. The robot/automaton seeks to be more fully human or to understand human experience & fails/succeeds selectively.
- d. The story expresses the impossibility of trying to breach this divide between human/non-human subjects—and leaves the process unfinished.

If you want to take the Jordan challenge, write a story (...or part of a story...) around a page or two in length, that presents a different kind of robot character that does not follow this formula, or that poses different kinds of questions for the reader to explore/think about.

JOURNAL RESPONSE #9: IT'S GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR 'BITCHY' ININTER-CRITIC WEEK IN ROBOT VISIONS!

OPTION 1:

WRITING A PLAY REVIEW of R.U.R (...whichever performance you watched on YouTube last week): please adapt these instructions to a page long journal entry (& see the example included below, which is a review for the movie adaptation of the play)

Understand the purpose of a play review. A play review is a subjective and educated response to a piece of theater. The review should also give potential audience members a sense of the play.

- Noting that you thought the play was “good” or “bad” will not create a strong play review. Instead, you should be specific in your critique and have a thoughtful analysis of the production. Your opinion on the play should be supported by a discussion of the production elements and how they worked together as a whole.
- The review should also describe the situation or plot of the play without giving too information to the reader. Avoid spoiling any plot twists or turns for potential audience members in your review.

Look at the traditional structure of a play review. The standard play review contains five paragraphs, or areas to be covered more succinctly:

- Describe what you saw on stage. You should also give context for the play, such as the playwright or composer of the play and where the play is being staged.
- Briefly summarize the plot of the play.
- Discuss the acting and directing. React to the performers playing the characters in the play.

- Describe the design elements of the production, such as the lighting, sound, costumes, make up, and set and props.
- React to the play as a whole. Would you recommend the play to potential audience members? You can also include a recommendation, like a star rating or a thumbs up/thumbs down.

Try to adapt these instructions to a page long review (approx.)—drawing selectively on the structure suggested above. I’m including below an example of a review for the film adaptation of MARJORIE PRIME—which I saw. The review is quite short and therefore a good example for a journal! Example of a review: <https://www.indiewire.com/2017/01/maa:rjorie-prime-review-jon-hamm-sundance-1201772675/>

‘Marjorie Prime’ Review: Jon Hamm as a Hologram Can’t Save This Lifeless Adaptation — Sundance 2017

Even with a vivid Hologram and acting legend Lois Smith putting on a show, Michael Almereyda's adaptation of Jordan Harrison's Pulitzer nominee falls flat.



“Marjorie Prime”

BB Film Productions

“I will remember that now.” Such is the repeated reply from the various “primes” — holograms, and damn fine ones — who populate Michael Almereyda’s “Marjorie Prime,” a big-screen adaptation of Jordan Harrison’s Pulitzer-nominated play about artificial intelligence and the 85-year-old Marjorie, whose handsome companion is programmed to feed the story of her life back

to her. Starring acting legend and multiple Tony nominee Lois Smith (reprising the role she originated on stage in 2014) with Jon Hamm, Geena Davis, and Tim Robbins, Almereyda's feature is rich in acting talent, but this stagey, flat drama can't match the wattage of its leads.

Awkward pacing and questionable narrative choices pepper the feature, which starts strong and raises bigger questions to which it will return during its otherwise lumpy run. Now in her twilight years, Marjorie (Smith) struggles to remember things big and small, but she's aided by a handsome hologram (Hamm) designed to look and act like her deceased husband, Walter. Like all primes, Walter Prime learns more about "himself" by conversing with Lois, ingesting knowledge and memories and smartly calling them back up when required.

"Marjorie Prime"

BB Film Productions

Marjorie and Walter's grown daughter, Tess (Davis), isn't a fan of Walter Prime; Marjorie is much nicer to him than she is to her own child. Even so, Tess recognizes the comfort and stimulation he provides to her. Meanwhile, Tess' husband, Jon, is secretly feeding memories to Walter Prime, a move that initially seems kind and eventually turns needlessly cruel. As "Marjorie Prime" continues (and other primes stop by), that becomes the film's primary problem: Performances are solid, but characters are so thinly written that they prove impossible to know.

While Marjorie is the most solid construction (and one Smith knows well, drawing out all of her shades with staggering skill), Jon and Tess are so foreign to the audience that even Robbins and Davis can't quite crack them. Major plot points are baffling, if only because the characters remain so vague to us. Prime performances are purposely low key, but Hamm still breathes life into a role who's literally made out of air.

Almost entirely set in Marjorie's beach house, the film's ripped-from-the-theater feel never abates. Composer Mica Levi's work on features like "Under the Skin" and "Jackie" added unexpected layers to already rewarding works, but here it piles on unease and discomfort in ways that the rest of the film never fully reflects.

Harrison's play was concerned with the limits and abilities of technology, but Almereyda seems much more preoccupied with the notions and possibilities of storytelling. Early in "Marjorie Prime," Walter Prime tells Marjorie a story about a memorable night out at the movies when they were much younger, and while both Marjorie and the audience must take the story at face value, Marjorie throws in an alteration that will appear the next time Walter Prime tells the story. It's not true, but it doesn't matter; it's the feeling that does, and "Marjorie Prime" feels less true at every turn.

OPTION 2:

If you would like to, in place of writing a play review about R.U.R., adapt the instructions for the review to writing about Fritz Lang's METROPOLIS (see instructions above for OPTION 1). The length of this piece, if you choose to work on it, would also be about a page. Put

some focus in your review on addressing the relatability of the film to modern audiences and perhaps comparing it to more modern works that we are used to watching that feature robots. In what way is a modern audience still able to connect with this film? In what way does the film pose challenges to modern viewers, in terms of engaging their interest? Don't be afraid to be 'bitchy' and to have fun writing this if you want to "go there"! [I REALLY DO WANT YOUR HONEST OPTION ABOUT WHETHER OR NOT IT MAKES SENSE TO USE THIS FILM IN MY CLASS, IN THE FUTURE.]