

English 1028G: The Storyteller's Art II: The Rise of the Machines
Department of English and Writing Studies
Western University
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Instructor

Dr. Christopher Keep
Room 3G24, Arts and Humanities Building
Tel. 661-2111, ext. 85829
Email: ckeep@uwo.ca

Course Description

Where do I end and where does my phone (or my tablet or my laptop) begin? From Frankenstein's Monster to the robot workers of Carel Kapek's *R.U.R.*, and from the cyborg hackers of Gibson's cyberpunk classic, *Neuromancer*, to the artificial intelligences of Masamune's *manga*, *The Ghost in the Shell*, our technological prostheses have always been more than simply tools for carrying out the tasks that we have assigned them. They have been, too, the instruments by which we have sought to define what it means to be human in a world in which our microprocessor-driven devices seem to have acquired a mysterious agency, a *liveliness* all of their own. This course will study novels, short stories, and graphic novels that have sought to explore the social, political, and psychological dimensions of our increasingly intimate relationship with the technological realm. What fears and desires do these new life forms elicit in us? How do they compel us to think differently about what it means to work, think, love? And where, in the future, will we draw the line between what we want from them and what they might want from us?

The weekly course schedule consists of two hours of lecture and a third hour of tutorial discussion facilitated by a teaching assistant. In addition to providing opportunities for the discussion of reading and lecture materials, tutorials will also provide substantial instruction in effective essay writing and research methods.

English 1028G is a course in its own right. It need not be taken in combination with any other course. Students who have previously taken English 1027F (The Storyteller's Art I), will have completed the 1.0 credits in first-year English necessary to take senior-level courses in the program.

An audio podcast providing a more detailed introduction to the course can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7Q0qxzO7gY>.

Learning Outcomes

Successful students who complete the course will be able to:

- Identify and analyze basic elements of narrative literature, such as plot, character, point of view, theme, setting, imagery, diction, and tone.

- Write an essay about a work of narrative literature, containing an effective thesis supported by adequate evidence from the original text;
- Research critical commentary on literary works;
- Evaluate the relevance, reliability, and usefulness of research sources, especially those obtained through the Internet;
- Integrate outside research materials and references to the original text into an essay through use of quotations and paraphrases;
- Organize and present ideas clearly and effectively;
- Document essays using MLA format.

Required Texts

(Available in the English section at the Campus Bookstore in the University Community Centre)

Aaron, Jane E. and Murray MacArthur. *The Little Brown Compact Handbook*. Fourth Canadian Ed. (Pearson)

Asimov, Isaac. *I, Robot* (Macmillan)

Capek, Karel. *R.U.R. (Rossum's Universal Robots)* (Penguin)

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

Gibson, William. *Neuromancer* (Ace)

Masamune, Shirow. *The Ghost in the Shell: Volume One* (Dark Horse)

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein* (Broadview)

Assignments and Grade Distributions

Four Quizzes: Best Three (5% each): 15%

Passage Analysis (1000 words): 15%

Essay (2500 words): 25%

Tutorial Group Participation: 10%

Final Exam: 35%

Note: Students must pass both term work and the final examination in order to pass the course. Students who fail the final examination (regardless of their term mark) automatically fail the course.

Quizzes

Four short quizzes will be conducted during the lecture hours on randomly selected dates. Each quiz will be made up of five questions testing your comprehension of the assigned texts and recent lecture materials. Of these four quizzes, we will choose the best three (each worth 5%), to count toward your final grade, for a total of 15%.

Passage Analysis

A Passage Analysis is an assignment in which students get to develop their close reading and interpretative skills in preparation for the longer essay assignment at the end of term.

Students will be assigned an excerpt from a longer work previously studied in class. Read this passage carefully several times and provide a well-documented analysis of its structural features (its use of character, plot, setting, point of view, etc.) and its narrative style, including attention to word choice, figurative language, and use of symbolism. How does this passage contribute to the work's overarching themes and patterns of imagery? What makes this passage important to our understanding of the work as a whole?

The Passage Analysis should be approximately 1000 words or three-four pages in length. It will constitute 15% of your final grade. Further details regarding format and how to submit the assignment (including late penalties), can be found in the **Course Assignments** section below.

Essay

Students will choose from one of four essay topics to be circulated four weeks prior to the assignment's due date. Each topic will provide an opportunity for the student to develop his or her analytical and research skills, combining a close and detailed reading of the text in question with a knowledge of the secondary criticism related to its study.

You will be expected to use at least two secondary sources, but the essay is not to be a review of such secondary literature. Rather, you should use your secondary sources to either support aspects of your own argument, or to show places in which your analysis differs from that of the critics upon whom you are drawing. The essay is, first and foremost, an account of your interpretation of the text, and should read as such. Please consider using an electronic search tool, such as the MLA Bibliography or the Humanities and Social Sciences Index, to find journal articles.

Your essay should be approximately 2500 words or eight-ten pages in length. It will constitute 25% of your final grade. Further details regarding format and how to submit the assignment (including late penalties), can be found in the **Course Assignments** section below.

Tutorial Group Participation

All students will be assigned to a tutorial group of approximately fifteen students, facilitated by a Teaching Assistant. These tutorial groups are, in many ways, the heart and soul of a large lecture course such as English 1028G, affording students opportunities to raise questions and pursue issues introduced in the weekly lectures, and to share their insights with their fellow students. The tutorial groups will also provide a venue for instruction regarding researching, organizing, and writing an effective, university-level research essay, complete with secondary criticism and a list of works cited.

The Tutorial Group Participation grade will be divided between attendance (5%) and participation (5%). Participation means arriving for your tutorial on time, having read the assigned materials, and regularly volunteering informed, thoughtful, and helpful replies to questions and/or leading group discussions, as arranged by the Teaching Assistant.

In order for the tutorial groups to promote a free exchange of ideas and opinions, all students are expected to treat each other and their Teaching Assistants with dignity and respect. This means listening carefully to each others' contributions to the group discussion, and allowing each group member an opportunity to express his or her own point of view, with the objective of sharing and enriching our understanding of the literature we are studying.

Course Assignments

Essay and Passage Analysis assignments will be written according to standard essay style: typed, double-spaced, 12 point font, on white 8.5" x 11" paper. Margins will be 1." A title-page is not necessary, but the first page must include the title of the essay, your name, the course number, the professor's name, teaching assistant's name, and the date.

Originality of argument, the ability to support the argument with reference to the primary text, rhetorical persuasiveness, syntax, grammar, spelling, and accurate bibliographic citation will *all* be factors in the grading of the essay.

All bibliographic notation will employ the MLA method of parenthetical notation and a works cited page. Please see "MLA Style Tips," which you can find at the Department of English web site: <http://www.uwo.ca/english/undergrad/MLAstyletips.html>, or consult a standard style guide such as the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, which is available in the reference shelves of the D.B. Weldon Library.

Assignments will be submitted electronically through the owl site, and are due by 4:30 on the due date. Papers submitted late will be returned with a grade but no comments. Papers handed in late without prior permission will be deducted 2 per cent per day late, including weekends. Papers handed in after the assignment is returned will not normally be accepted.

Please keep at least one copy of each of your papers. Save each file on a memory stick, external drive, or other form of back up media. Retain all returned, marked assignments until you receive your final grade for the course.

Academic Accommodation Policy

Students seeking academic accommodation for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments must apply to the Academic Counseling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. Further information on how to apply for academic accommodation can be found here: http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/ssd/index.html?academic_acc

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Plagiarism

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

Plagiarism Checking: All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between Western University and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory and will be taken in each class. Chronic absences may result in a formal request to be debarred from taking the final exam, as set out in the Western Academic Calendar: "Any student who, in the opinion of the instructor, is absent too frequently from class . . . will be reported to the Dean (after due warning has been given). On the recommendation of the Department concerned, and with the permission of the Dean, the student will be debarred from taking the regular examination." Students, of course, who are debarred from taking the exam, automatically fail the course. If circumstances prevent you from attending class regularly for a period, please do let me know so that we can work out some alternative arrangement.

Writing Skills

English 1028G is a course in the academic study of literature. Though it provides instruction in essay style and research methods, it does not offer instruction in grammar and composition. Students who require such instruction are encouraged to visit the Writing Support Centre at the Student Development Centre. Details of their services can be found at: <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing>.