



AI and the Humanities

Tuesday 5:10 -7 pm
PHIL 736

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Office Hours:
Tue. 3:00 - 3:30 &
by appointment

Pop-up Office
Hours in the
classroom 15 mins
before class

Fall 2024

ENG 6130

CRN 86758
Section 10

3 credits

Artificial intelligence is a feminist issue, and technologies often have colonial implications. In fact, technologies as disruptive agents are inherently queer.

This course examines the long history of technologies leading up to the public release of ChatGPT. We will chart the Western societies' apprehension of and faith in, as the case may be, technologies of masculinist representation practices, as evidenced by science fiction, philosophical writing, and film culture.

Students learn in a hands-on environment and conduct individual research projects. From generative AI as assistive technologies to long-standing humanistic questions of agency, identity, and mind and body, critical theory provides essential tools to participate in current cultural discourses.

Through the lens of social justice, this course equips students with critical AI literacy as well as fluency in posthumanism, feminism, trans/queer studies, and critical race theory.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Summarize historical and contemporary approaches to human-machine relationships.
2. Read a text (broadly defined) closely and critically, using generative AI and critical theory.
3. Use these skills of close reading and writing to generate a short, original essay that can potentially be presented in a public, scholarly forum.

SPECIAL FEATURES

- Alexa Alice Joubin's bespoke AI Tutor chatbot
- Alexa Alice Joubin's open-access online textbook *AI and Critical Theory*
- Opportunities to collaborate with and critique generative AI

Schedule

- Week 1 Introduction to the History of AI
- Week 2 Labor Day
- Week 3 AI in Fiction
- Week 4 AI and Art
- Week 5 Writing in the Age of AI from Mimesis to Mimicry
- Week 6 AI and Social Justice
- Week 7 Fall Break
- Week 8 AI, Colonialism, Globalization
- Week 9 Guest Lecture: N. Katherine Hayles
- Week 10 AI, Feminism, and Queerness
- Week 11 AI and Critical Race Theory
- Week 12 Posthumanism and Transhumanism
- Week 13 AI, Ethics and Culture of Care
- Week 14 Thanksgiving
- Week 15 Final Project Presentation

Sample Films

- Ex Machina*, director. Alex Garland, 2014
- The Matrix*, dir. Lana Wachowski and Lilly Wachowski, 1999
- A.I. Artificial Intelligence*, dir. Steven Spielberg, 2001
- Her*, dir. Spike Jonze, 2013

Sample Readings

- Walter Benjamin, "[The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility](#)"
- Jean Baudrillard, [Simulacra and Simulations](#), University of Michigan Press, 1995
- Michel Foucault, "[Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias](#)," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Architecture / Mouvement / Continuité* (October, 1984); originally published as "Des Espace Autres," *March* 1967).
- Dennis Yi Tenen, *Literary Theory for Robots: How Computers Learned to Write*, Norton, 2024
- Malthe Stavning Erslev, *Bot-mimicry in Digital Literary Culture*, Cambridge University Press, 2024
- Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*
- Despina Kakoudaki, *Anatomy of a Robot: Literature, Cinema, and the Cultural Work of Artificial People*

- Ulises A. Mejias and Nick Couldry, chapter 1, A New Colonialism, *Data Grab: The New Colonialism of Big Tech and How to Fight Back* (University of Chicago Press, 2024), 25-56.
- N. Katherine Hayles, *Bacteria to AI: Human Futures with Our Nonhuman Symbionts* (Chicago University Press, 2025)
- N. Katherine Hayles, "[Technosymbiosis: Figuring \(Out\) Our Relations to AI](#)," in *Feminist AI: Critical Perspectives on Data, Algorithms and Intelligent Machines*, ed. Jude Browne et al. Oxford University Press, 2023, 1-18.
- N. Katherine Hayles, "[Literary Cybernetics: The Point \(of the Spear\)](#)," *New Literary History* 54.2 (2023): 1289-1294.
- Jordi Vallverdu, ed., *Gender in AI and Robotics*
- Feminist AI: Critical Perspectives on Data, Algorithms and Intelligence Machines*, selections
- Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction*
- Calvin Lawrence, *Hidden in White Sight: How AI Empowers and Deepens Systemic Racism*
- N. Katherine Hayles, "[Subversion of the Human Aura: A Crisis in Representation](#)," *American Literature* 95.2 (2023): 255-279.
- Eckart Voigts, "[Algorithms, Artificial Intelligence, and Posthuman Adaptation: Adapting as Cultural Technique](#)," *Adaptation* 14.2 (2021): 289-308
- Bethany Nowwiskie, "Capacity through Care," *Debates in the Digital Humanities* 2019
- Lisa Messeri and M. J. Crockett, "Artificial intelligence and illusions of understanding," *Nature* 627 (7 March 2024), <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-024-07146-0>
- Cambridge Handbook of Responsible Artificial Intelligence*, selections
- Dan McQuillan, *Resisting AI: An Anti-Fascist Approach to Artificial Intelligence*
- Janelle Shane, *You Look Like a Thing and I Love You: How Artificial Intelligence Works and Why It's Making the World a Weirder Place*
- Stephen Cave and Kanta Dihal, ed., *Imagining AI: How the World Sees Intelligent Machines*
- Meredith Broussard, *Artificial Unintelligence: How Computers Misunderstand the World*
- Jeff Jarvis, *The Gutenberg Parenthesis: The Age of Print and Its Lessons for the Age of the Internet*

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Course Goals

How do we ensure different systems of representation (text-generating mechanisms, novels, ideologies) are interoperable in an inquiry-driven society? How do these systems reciprocate or exchange information through human, non-human, and marginalized agents?

To answer these questions, we will apply insights from posthumanism, feminism, trans/queer studies, and critical race theory, to examine our society's evolving relationship to written words and the future of the craft of writing.

The notion of authorship faces new challenges of delineating the agency, knowability, and intentionality of written words. As generative technologies, AI tools stake claims to anonymized, collective authorship through synthesis that they deem similar to patterns in the datasets they trained on. Society's attitudes toward authorship and diverse modalities of relating to the world have evolved historically alongside and through technicity and social affordances.

Instead of thinking of AI as a surrogate (such as substituting whipped cream with soy milk in dessert), we can use intentional design in education and research to set these systems up to accomplish designated goals without causing irreparable harm, and to enhance the trustworthiness of AI.