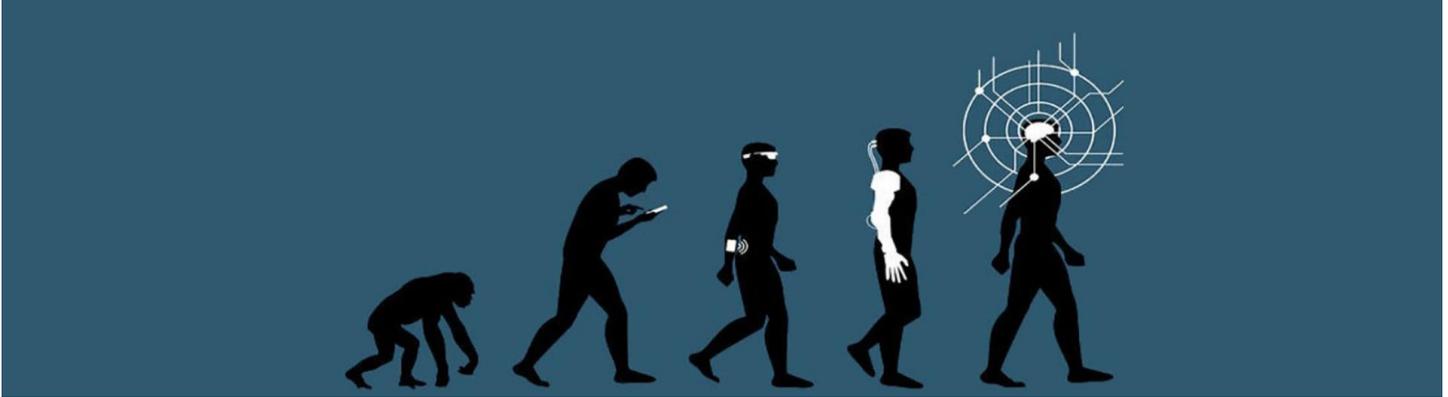


# Extending the Human: Technology, Media, and Personhood in Literature



Interpretation of Literature (ENGL:1200: 0054)  
Spring 2020 T/TH 5:00-6:15pm 207EPB

**Instructor:** Maddison McGann

**Class Hours:** We will hold class via Zoom every Tuesday/Thursday from 3:30-4:45pm.

**Office Hours:** My office hours will be held virtually from 1:00-2:30pm every Tuesday/Thursday. If you'd like to arrange a meeting (either during those times or another time), please reach out via email and I will send you a Zoom link.

**Email:** maddison-mcgann@uiowa.edu

## Course Description

How has technology emerged as a pivotal word (and concept) in public discourse? How does it affect the stories we tell about ourselves and each other? What can writing, literature, and the book teach us about what it means to be human in the midst of technological change?

In seeking to answer these questions, this course will explore the complex (and often precarious) relationship between humans and technologies, looking specifically at how the boundaries between humans and technologies have been established and breached over the past three hundred years. Taking *Frankenstein* (1818) and *The Passion* (1987) as our primary objects of study, we will investigate both the causes and consequences of technological change, reflecting on how the human/technology relationship has been understood and represented in different media and across various centuries. Along with these primary texts, we will be engaging with a number of short critical texts, as well as supplementary readings and films from writers such as M. NourbeSe Philip, Charles Dickens, Tobias Wolff, Buddy Wakefield, and Hanif Abdurraqib and filmmakers such as Spike Jonze, Jan Komasa, and Peter Weir. Ultimately, this course aims to develop new interpretive strategies for understanding how media and technology serve as extensions of the human.

## Outcomes

- Students will use and refine their skills of reading, speaking, and writing to respond critically and thoughtfully to literary texts and other media
- Students will learn to see themselves as readers, recognizing the influence of individual differences (such as gender, ethnicity, geography) and experiences on interpretation.
- Students will consider the connections between individual texts and broader cultural contexts.

## Workload expectations

For each semester hour credit in this course, students should expect to spend two hours per week preparing for class sessions. This is a three-credit hour course, so your average out-of-class preparation per week is six hours. This will fluctuate throughout the semester; some weeks will be a bit lighter and others more intense.

## List of all required texts (located at the Iowa Hawk Shop)

*Frankenstein* (Mary Shelley, 1818, ISBN: 978-0141439471, Penguin Press)

*The Passion* (Jeanette Winterson, 1987, ISBN: 978-0802135223, The Grove Press)

## Other required materials

Netflix subscription for relevant weeks (8.99\$ for select months). Please reach out to me before the start of classes if you anticipate having any difficulty obtaining a Netflix subscription.

All additional readings are located on ICON ([icon.uiowa.edu](http://icon.uiowa.edu)).

## Grading policies:

Reading and In-Class Assignments: 10%

Weekly Discussion Posts (~10 total): 15%

Participation: 10%

Midterm Exam: 15 %

Final Exam: 15%

Paper 1: 15 %

Paper 2: 20%

Pass or Fail – Final Portfolio (**This is required for all General Education Literature students. You will not pass if you do not submit.**)

**\*Note:** your first assignment and discussion post will only be worth half the points of subsequent assignments and quizzes. My aim here is to allow you a week to gauge the sort of knowledge and skills that I will be testing in this course. Similarly, the first essay will be worth less than the second essay, giving you the opportunity to course correct as the semester progresses.

You may access your grades on ICON at any time during the semester, and are encouraged to meet with me as often as you'd like to discuss how you are doing, how you could improve, and what you can work on for future assignments. **You will receive instructions and an assignment sheet for each major project**, explicitly outlining my expectations. These assignment sheets will also be uploaded to ICON. I will be as clear as possible, but please **do not hesitate to ask for clarification** if you need it. Doing an adequate job and fulfilling the assignment's basic criteria is considered average (in other words, C-level). To produce B-level work, you must fulfill assignment requirements with a higher-than-average level of effort, competence, creativity, and enthusiasm. In order to receive an A, you must demonstrate exceptional skill, completing the assignment with critical insight, creativity, and care. **Please note that these grading criteria are department-wide.**

## Statement on Arithmetic Rounding of Grades

Grades are calculated using the UI computational scheme that assigns letter grades according to an agreed university-wide formula. Results will be rounded up arithmetically. Hence, for example, 79.99 is a B- not a C+.

Grades are calculated according the following scale:

The top grade is A      B+: 87-89      C+: 77-79      D+: 67-69      F: 59 and below

A: 94-100      B: 84-86      C: 74-76      D: 64-66

A-: 90-93      B-: 80-83      C-: 70-73      D-: 60-63

## Discussion Posts

You be responsible for writing and posting a discussion post each Thursday (located under the 'Discussions' tab on ICON) on the assigned reading/viewing. These posts should be **approximately 250 words in length**, and should speak to some facet of the reading/viewing that you want to discuss in (virtual) class. **These posts should be analytical in nature, rather than summary- or opinion-based (i.e., 'I liked or disliked this character because...'). You'll want to hone in on specific passages/lines that you want to analyze, and then extend your reading out to make an argument about the larger text. Discussion posts are due to ICON every Thursday before noon (starting Week 3).** You are not required to respond to anyone else's discussion post, but you are more than welcome to if you want! You will be given points for writing the discussion points, as well as for speaking to those posts in discussion.

## Exams

There will be a midterm and a final exam for this course, per department requirements. The format for these exams will be provided in time. You will be required to analyze passages, stanzas, etc. from select texts in similar fashion to the work that you will be conducting for your close reading assignments.

## Assignments

Assignments will require students to identify, define, and explain the significance of the literary figures and concepts covered in class. Assignment sheets with full details will be uploaded to ICON under 'Assignments.' All Assignments (except for Assignment 2) must be turned in to ICON by the time specified.

The due dates for the **three** Reading Assignments are as follows (dates subject to change):

Assignment 1: Technological Hauntings – **September 24** (upload to ICON before midnight)

Assignment 2: Adapting *Frankenstein* – **November 10 and 12** (virtual presentations during class)

Assignment 3: Extending the Human – **December 8** (upload to ICON before midnight)

## Major Papers

Assignment sheets (with full details) will be uploaded to ICON under 'Major Papers.' All Major Papers must be **submitted to ICON by the time specified. I will not accept Major Papers by email or in person.**

The due dates for the **two** major papers are as follows (dates subject to change):

Paper 1 – **October 20** (upload to ICON before midnight)

Paper 2 – **November 22** (upload to ICON before midnight)

## Final Portfolio:

Each student in Gen Ed Lit is required to construct a Reflective Learning Portfolio for the course. The portfolio will must be submitted to ICON at the end of semester. It is one document that includes 1) copies of all major writing assignments and 2) a final reflective paper on what you have learned in the course. This is not meant to be an 'evaluation' of the course material or me as an instructor; rather, you are to consider your own growth as a writer, reader, and thinker throughout the course. This is a departmental requirement and is expected of all Gen Ed Lit students. **Failure to submit this assignment will result in the student receiving an F for the course**, as per department guidelines.

## 24/7 Policy for Discussing Graded Work:

With regard to any assignment at any point in the semester, I am happy to speak with you about what you did well, how you could improve, and what you can work on for future assignments. In order to keep conversations relevant, constructive, and useful to you, please discuss graded assignments with me no sooner than 24 hours after the assignment is returned and no later than 7 days after return. I will gladly email with you to set aside Zoom office-hour time or set up an appointment to talk in person. I will not discuss grades over e-mail. You must come to Zoom office hours or schedule an appointment if you wish to discuss grades.

## Attendance

You are expected to join our Zoom meetings **on time every Tuesday and Thursday, except in the case of emergency or illness.** In the case of an excused absence (those caused by illnesses, family emergencies, religious obligations, or authorized University activities), students will be offered a certain amount of leeway to receive credit for work missed. However, **that leeway hinges upon the student discussing such situations with me ahead of time or relatively soon after the event.** Anytime you are absent, look for Canvas updates and check with a peer to find out what you missed.

An unexcused absence will negatively affect the student's grade, including that of participation in discussion and other class activities. That being said, I also understand that everyone needs to miss class occasionally. Therefore, **I will allow each student three unexcused absences without penalty to his or her participation grade.** You do not need to provide any excuse for these absences, though if you know ahead of time you will be missing class, an email is expected. **After three absences, each unexcused absence will reduce your final class participation grade by 1/3 of a letter grade. Also, you cannot earn back points for missed in-class activities in the case of an unexcused absence.**

## Participation

To receive participation points, **you must be active in every Zoom meeting, as well as vocal and visual** (unless otherwise discussed). You must also, naturally, participate in discussion. In-class comments should demonstrate that you have spent time thinking critically about the text and can offer us new insights that advance class conversation. If you are not participating in class, then it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to earn a C+ or better. The expectation is that you will use class time to develop as a thinker and help your classmates do the same.

## **Zoom Etiquette**

Please make an effort to log into Zoom on time, and ready to participate as soon as class begins. In addition, please make sure to mute your microphone when others are speaking, so as to eliminate any outside noises or distractions. Finally, I would ask that you do your best not to engage in any overtly distracting behaviors while on Zoom. While remote learning is new for many of us, I nonetheless expect you to act professionally during class time.

## **Technology**

Given that the majority of our class will be held online, technology will play a major role in facilitating class discussion. If you having issues with your technology/Internet, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work to resolve the issue.

## **Late Assignments**

If (for whatever reason) you don't think that you will be able to submit an assignment on time, please reach out to me ahead of time so that we can discuss other options.

## **Electronic Communication:**

Students are responsible for official correspondences sent to their UI email address (uiowa.edu) and must use this address for all communication within UI (Operations Manual, III.15.2). **Please also check the course's ICON homepage regularly in order to catch any updates or changes. I will use ICON to post reminders for assignments, deadlines, updates, and readings, and to announce changes to the schedule and syllabus.**

I encourage you to email me your questions and concerns using your university email address. I cannot answer emails that are sent from email addresses outside the university (gmail, Hotmail, etc.). Though I will likely answer you sooner, please allow at least 2 business days (I do not answer emails Saturday or Sunday) for me to respond to correspondence.

**\*Note:** I will not review essays over email. This is something that you need to do in Zoom office hours.

## **Plagiarism and Academic Fraud**

Plagiarism is the undocumented use of another person's ideas, words, or sentences as your own. During this course we will go over what constitutes legitimate and documented use of resources versus plagiarism. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

- Copying and pasting passages from text sources, including the Internet, without quoting or acknowledging the source.
- Presenting phrases, sentences, or ideas from someone else as if they are your own — such as when you purchase a paper.
- Paraphrasing without acknowledging the source.
- Incorrect documentation.

Intentional or not, plagiarism is among the gravest of academic offenses and the penalties for it are harsh. **If you have any doubts about the work you are presenting or are unsure of proper citation, come see me before the due date.** Plagiarism can result in sanctions ranging from an F for the entire course to expulsion from the university.

## **Collaboration:**

This course practices collaboration in the form of virtual writing workshops and small or large group discussions.

## **Writing Center:**

If you are having difficulty with the writing in this course, I strongly encourage you to visit the Writing Center in addition to visiting my office hours. The Writing Center is located in 110 EPB and offers full-semester tutoring sessions, one-time appointments, and digital edits to papers within a 48-hour time frame. Visit <http://www.uiowa.edu/~writingc/> for more information and to schedule appointments. The Tutor Iowa site is also valuable for students seeking extra help: <http://tutor.uiowa.edu/>

## **Adds/Drops/Section/Changes:**

I have no authority to add, drop, or change your section of Interpretation of Literature. You may make such changes through MyUI (with some exceptions) through the first week. After that point, you may make such changes using

add/drop slips, which should be taken to the English office (308 EPB) for signature. Transfer Students: you were placed in this course based on your transcript. If you have questions, contact the English Department Office.

### **Severe Weather:**

The University of Iowa Operations Manual, Part V Chapter 16, outlines appropriate responses to a tornado or to a similar crisis. If a tornado or other severe weather is indicated by the UI outdoor warning system, members of the class should seek shelter in rooms and corridors in the innermost part of a building at the lowest level, staying clear of windows, corridors with windows, or large free-standing expanses such as auditoriums and cafeterias. The class will resume, if possible, after the UI outdoor warning system announces that the severe weather threat has ended.

### **Accommodations for Disabilities**

UI is committed to an educational experience that is accessible to all students. A student may request academic accommodations for a disability (such as mental health, attention, learning, vision, and physical or health-related condition) by registering with Student Disability Services (SDS). The student should then discuss accommodations with the course instructor (<https://sds.studentlife.uiowa.edu/>).

### **Nondiscrimination in the Classroom**

UI is committed to making the classroom a respectful and inclusive space for all people irrespective of their gender, sexual, racial, and religious or other identities. Toward this goal, students are invited to optionally share their preferred names and pronouns with their instructors and classmates. The University of Iowa prohibits discrimination and harassment against individuals on the basis of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, and other identity categories set forth in the University's Human Rights policy. For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity at [diversity@uiowa.edu](mailto:diversity@uiowa.edu) or [diversity.uiowa.edu](http://diversity.uiowa.edu).

### **Academic Integrity**

All undergraduates enrolled in courses offered by CLAS have, in essence, agreed to the College's [Code of Academic Honesty](#). Misconduct is reported to the College, resulting in suspension or other sanctions, with sanctions communicated with the student through the UI email address.

## **CALENDAR OF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS**

**This is a tentative calendar and is subject to change.** Updates will be posted to ICON and/or shared in class. Students are responsible for tracking course activities, readings, and assignments.

**\*Note:** Some of the texts we are reading depict or discuss extreme violence. Every person in our class brings years of lived experiences with them into the classroom, and all class discussions should be respectful of this fact. If you are at all concerned about the content of any texts, please don't hesitate to discuss your concerns with me.

### Week 1 (August 25/27): **Minding Media**

Tuesday, August 25:

Introductions and Syllabus Review

Smartphone Exercise (time permitting)

**Homework:** Watch: "Nosedive" (2016), *Black Mirror*, dir. Joe Wright, on Netflix  
Listen: "And What Good Will Your Vanity Be When The Rapture Comes" by Hanif Abdurraqib, [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZxsRiKJje8>]  
Read: "And What Good Will Your Vanity Be When The Rapture Comes" by Hanif Abdurraqib [<http://www.bkmag.com/2016/11/14/we-arrived-as-witness/>]

Thursday, August 27:

"Nosedive" and "And What Good Will Your Vanity Be When the Rapture Comes"

Discuss arc of the course

**Homework:** Listen: "Ode to my Bitch Face" by Olivia Gatwood [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yGzMUzrgzA>]

Read: "Ode to my Bitch Face" by Olivia Gatwood [<http://genius.com/Olivia-gatwood-ode-to-my-bitch-face-annotated>]

Week 2 (September 1/3):

Tuesday, September 1:

"Ode to My Bitch Face" Close Reading Exercise

**Homework:** Read: "Daylight Saving Time Flies like an Instagram of a Weasel Riding a Woodpecker & You Feel Everything Will Be Alright" by Regie Cabico (located under 'Readings' on ICON)  
Listen to: "Daylight Saving Time Flies like an Instagram of a Weasel Riding a Woodpecker & You Feel Everything Will Be Alright" by Regie Cabico [<https://youtu.be/0Kv17Zil018>]  
Watch: dir. Joe Wright, "The Entire History of You" (2011), *Black Mirror* on Netflix

Thursday, September 3:

Discuss "Daylight Saving Time Flies like an Instagram of a Weasel Riding a Woodpecker & You Feel Everything Will Be Alright" and "The Entire History of You"

**Homework:**

Watch: BBC Documentary on *The Industrial Revolution* [[https://youtu.be/GYIn\\_S2PVYA](https://youtu.be/GYIn_S2PVYA)]  
Read: "London" by William Blake (located under 'Readings' on ICON)  
Look at: "Manchester from Kersal Moor" (1852) by William Wyld

Week 3 (September 8/10): Industrial Hauntings

Tuesday, September 8:

Mini-Lecture: 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Britain and the Industrial Revolution

Discuss "London" and "Manchester from Kersal Moor"

**Homework:** Read: "The Signal-Man" by Charles Dickens (located under 'Readings' on ICON)

Thursday, September 10:

**Discussion Post 1 due by noon!**

Mini-Lecture: "The Signal-Man" and the Railway in the Public Imagination

Introduce Assignment 1: Technological Hauntings (**due to ICON September 24 by midnight!**)

**Homework:** Prepare for Zoom meeting: a printed *Punch* illustration

Week 4 (September 15/17)

Tuesday, September 15:

*Punch* illustrations: small group exercise

**Homework:** Read: "On Language; Return of the Luddites" by William Safire (located under 'Readings' on ICON)

Read: "Song for the Luddites" (1816) by Lord Byron

Look At: Four paintings from "Luddites Nightmare" (2016) by Richard Milward (located under 'Readings' on ICON)

Thursday, September 17:

**Discussion Post 2 due by noon!**

Mini-Lecture: Rage Against the Machine, The Luddites (Then and Now)

Discuss "On Language; Return of the Luddites," "Song for the Luddites," and "Luddites Nightmare"

**Homework:** Read: Selections from *Zong!* by M. Nourbese Philip (located under 'Readings' on ICON)

Look at: Joseph Mallord William Turner's "The Slave-Ship" (image located under 'Readings' on ICON)

Week 5 (September 22/24): **Humans as Technology**

Tuesday, September 22:

Introduce Paper 1 (**due to ICON October 20 by midnight!**)

Mini-Lecture: *Zong* and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

Discuss selections from *Zong!* and “The Slave-Ship”

**Homework:** Read: “Time and Distance Overcome” by Eula Biss (located under ‘Readings’ on ICON)

Read: “Capitalism” by Porsha O. [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6yGzMUzrgzA>]

Thursday, September 24:

**Discussion Post 3 due by noon!**

Discuss “Time and Distance Overcome” and “Capitalism”

**Homework:** Read: “Bullet in the Brain” by Tobias Wolff

Watch: *The Hater*, dir. by Jan Komasa, on Netflix

**Assignment 1 due to ICON by midnight!**

Week 6 (September 29/October 1)

Tuesday, September 29:

Discuss “Bullet in the Brain” and *The Hater*

**Homework:** Read: Buddy Wakefield’s “Convenience Stores”

Watch: “Fifteen Million Merits,” *Black Mirror*, on Netflix

Thursday, October 1:

**Discussion Post 4 due by noon!**

Discuss “Convenience Stores” and “Fifteen Million Merits”

**Homework:** Review for Midterm

Week 7 (October 6/8): **Digital Love**

Tuesday, October 6:

**Midterm Exam**

**Homework:** Read: Selections from Margaret Rhee’s *Robot Love* (located under ‘Readings’ on ICON)

Watch: *Her* (2013), dir. Spike Jonze, on Netflix

Thursday, October 8:

Discuss Selections from *Robot Love* and *Her*

**Homework:** Prepare: Rough Draft of Paper 1 for Peer Review

Week 8 (October 13/15): **Technology as Humans**

Tuesday, October 13

Paper 1 Virtual Peer Review Workshops

**Homework:** Read: *Frankenstein*, p. 5-37

Thursday, October 15:

**Discussion Post 5 due by noon!**

Mini-Lecture: *Frankenstein* and Romantic Literature

Discuss *Frankenstein*

**Homework:** Read: *Frankenstein*, p. 38-57

Week 9 (October 20/22):

Tuesday, October 20:

Discuss *Frankenstein*

**Homework:** Read: *Frankenstein*, p. 58-90

**Paper 1 due to ICON by midnight!**

Thursday, October 22:

**Discussion Post 6 due by noon!**

Introduce Assignment 2: Adapting *Frankenstein*

Discuss *Frankenstein*

**Homework:** Read: *Frankenstein*, p. 93-129

Week 10 (October 27/29)

Tuesday, October 27:

Discuss *Frankenstein*

Introduce Paper 2

**Homework:** Read: *Frankenstein*, p. 130-162

Thursday, October 29:

**Discussion Post 7 due by noon!**

Discuss *Frankenstein*

Virtual Debate: Victor on Trial

**Homework:** Read: *Frankenstein*, p. 163-197

Week 11 (November 3/5)

Tuesday, November 3:

Discuss *Frankenstein*

**Homework:** Read: *Frankenstein*, p. 197-225

Thursday, November 5:

Discuss *Frankenstein*

**Discussion Post 8 due by noon!**

**Homework:** Prepare: In-Class *Frankenstein* Presentations

Week 12 (November 10/12)

Tuesday, November 10:

**Assignment 2: *Frankenstein* Presentations**

Thursday, November 12:

**Assignment 2: *Frankenstein* Presentations**

**Homework:** Read: *The Passion*, p. 1-51

Week 13 (November 17/19): **Extending the Human**

Tuesday, November 17:

Discuss *The Passion*

Virtual Peer-Review

**Homework:** Read: *The Passion*, p. 52-82

Thursday, November 19:

**Discussion Post 9 due by noon!**

Introduce Assignment 3

Discuss *The Passion*

**Homework:** Read: *The Passion*, p. 83-128

**Paper 2 due to ICON November 22 by midnight!**

Week 14 (November 24/26)

NO CLASS – ENJOY YOUR THANKSGIVING BREAK! 😊

Week 15 (December 1/3)

Tuesday, December 1:

**Discussion Post 10 due by noon!**

Discuss *The Passion*

**Homework:** Read: *The Passion*, p. 129-160

Thursday, December 3:

Discuss *The Passion*

**Homework:** Read: *The Passion*, 161-172

Week 16 (December 8/10)

Tuesday, December 8:

Discuss *The Passion*

**Homework:** Study: Notes for Final Exam

**Reading Assignment 3 due to ICON by midnight!**

Thursday, December 10:

Virtual Final Exam Review

**Homework:** Study for final!

Week 17: Finals Week

Take-Home Final (TBD)