

LIT 3046: Woman as Cyborg
 Tu 1:30 – 3:50, HDR 101A

Prof. Maria Sachiko Cecire
 mcecire@bard.edu
 Aspinwall 306
 Office hours Mondays 2-4
 or by appointment (please email)

From the robot Maria in the 1927 film *Metropolis* to the female-voiced Siri application for iPhone, mechanized creations that perform physical, emotional, and computational labor have been routinely gendered female in both fiction and reality. In this course, we will discuss how gynoids, fembots, and female-identified machinery reflect the roles of women's work and women's bodies in technologized society. Why might it matter that the words "typewriter" and "computer" used to refer to women who typed and performed calculations? How are sexualized fembots marked both by their total manipulability and ultimate inaccessibility? What can cyborgism contribute to feminist theory? We will draw upon scholarship by Anne Marie Balsamo, Rita Felski, Donna Haraway, Andreas Huyssen, and others as we explore the relationships between women, modernity, and mechanization in a range of cultural texts. These will include written works from ancient Greece, Karel Capek's 1923 play *R.U.R.* (in which the word "robot" first appeared), Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives*, and William Gibson's *Neuromancer*; examples from film and television such as *Blade Runner*, *Wall-E*, the reimagined *Battlestar Galactica*, and episodes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, as well as real-world androids and computer programs.

This course is cross-listed with Experimental Humanities and Gender and Sexuality Studies.

Required Texts:

Anne Marie Balsamo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body*. Duke UP, ISBN 9780822316985

*Ruth Cowan, *More Work for Mother*. ISBN 9780465047321

Karel Capek, *R.U.R.* Penguin, ISBN 9780141182087

William Gibson, *Neuromancer*. Penguin, ISBN 9780441569595

Ira Levin, *The Stepford Wives*. HarperCollins, ISBN 9780060080846

*Marissa Meyer, *Cinder*. Square Fish, ISBN 9781250007209

Readings marked (RD) can be found at ReservesDirect: <http://reservesdirect.bard.edu/>

You will also need access to a Netflix account for some television episodes and films; these are noted on the syllabus. Screenings for the rest will be held in our classroom from 5-7pm on dates noted on the syllabus (mostly Wednesdays).

* These texts are not yet in the bookstore; they will arrive later in the semester.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction

- 9/2: Introduction and syllabus
 Ovid, "Pygmalion and Galatea," from *The Metamorphoses* (in class)
- 9/4: Screening: *Blade Runner* (5-7pm)

Week 2: Simians to Cyborgs : Woman and the "Natural" vs. "Cultural" Body

- 9/9: *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982)
 Donna Haraway, "Primateology is Politics by Other Means" (RD)
 Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" (RD)
 Basalmo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body*, Introduction and Ch. 1
 Sarah Perkins Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper" (RD)

Week 3: The Gender of Modernity

- 9/16: *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1927. 2 hrs 28 min, Netflix [search "Metropolis Restored"])
 Excerpt from Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (RD)
 Andreas Huyssen, "The Vamp and the Machine" (RD)
- 9/17: Screening: *Top Secret Rosies* (5-7pm)

Week 4: Women's Work

- 9/23: Karel Capek, *R.U.R.*
Top Secret Rosies: The Female Computers of World War II (2010)
 Christopher Keep, "The Cultural Work of the Type-Writer Girl" (RD)
 Andreas Huyssen, "Mass Culture as Woman" (RD)

Week 5: Domestic Labor

- 9/30: Ira Levin, *The Stepford Wives*
 Ruth Cowan, *More Work for Mother*
 Betty Friedan, "The Problem that Has No Name," from *The Feminine Mystique* (RD)
- 10/1: Screening: *Her* (5-7pm)

Week 6: Affective Labor

- 10/7: *Her* (Spike Jonze, 2013)
 Jason Farago, "*Her* Is the Scariest Movie of 2013" (RD)
 Nancy Folbre, "'Holding Hands at Midnight': The Paradox of Caring Labor" (RD)
 Michael Hardt, "Affective Labor" (RD)

Week 7: FALL BREAK (no class)

- 10/15: → Midterm paper due to Aspinwall 306 by 5pm

Week 8: Beauty Dolls

- 10/21: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, "I Was Made to Love You," S5E15 and "Intervention," S5E18 (45 min each, Netflix)
 Basalmo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body*, Ch. 2 and 3
 Carina Hart, "Gilding the Lily" (RD)
 Jonathan Swift, "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed" (RD)

Week 9: Reproductive Labor

- 10/28: Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*
 Basalmo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body*, Ch. 4
 Mary Ann Doane, "Technophilia" (RD)

Week 10: Sex/Killing Machines

- 11/4: William Gibson, *Neuromancer*
Battlestar Galactica Miniseries, Part I (1.5 hrs, Netflix)
 Basalmo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body*, Ch. 5

Week 11: (Dis)embodiment and the Posthuman

- 11/11: *Battlestar Galactica* Miniseries, Part II (1.5 hrs, Netflix)
 N. Katherine Hayles, Prologue, and Ch. 1 and 2 of *How We Became Posthuman* (RD)
 Throwback to *Her* (2013) and William Gibson, *Neuromancer*

Week 12: Raced Bodies

- 11/18: Lisa Nakamura, "Race In/For Cyberspace" (RD)
 Catherine S. Ramírez, "Cyborg Feminism" (RD)
 Octavia Butler, "Speech Sounds" (RD)
 Janelle Monae, "Tightrope," "Many Moons" (YouTube)
 Daylanne English and Alvin Kim, "Now We Want our Funk Cut" (RD)

11/19: *Screening: Wall-E* (5-7pm)

Week 13: Fembots and Cyborgs in Youth Culture

- 11/25: *Wall-E* (2008)
 Marissa Meyer, *Cinder*

Week 14: TBD

12/2: TBD

Week 15: Conclusions

- 12/9: Basalmo, *Technologies of the Gendered Body*, Chapter 6 and Conclusion

Week 16: Completion Days (No Class)

12/16: → *Final Paper Due to Aspinwall 306 by noon*

EXPECTATIONS

What to bring: **a)** the correct edition of the text(s) we are discussing, when this has been specified, and **b)** any secondary reading in *hard copy*. Laptops will not be admitted to the class except in special circumstances, pre-approved by me. You may not bring food to class, but drinks are fine.

Academic integrity: Plagiarism is “[t]he action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own; literary theft” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Bard takes academic honesty very seriously, as do I. See the Student Handbook (<http://www.bard.edu/dosa/handbook/>) under “Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty” for Bard’s policies regarding academic integrity, and for ways to ensure that you do not inadvertently plagiarize in your work.

Academic Etiquette: I will try to respond to student emails in as timely a fashion as possible, but be aware that I do not respond to email after 6:00pm or before 9:00am Mon-Fri, or on weekends. Please plan your emailing accordingly.

Grading:

Participation	20%	Attendance*, preparation, discussion
Assignments	20%	Presentations, blog, other assignments
Midterm Paper	25%	8-10 pages
Final Paper	35%	20 pages

NB: All papers must have an interesting, informative title.

***Attendance policy:** Each student may miss up to two classes over the course of the semester without a negative impact on your grade, no questions asked. Each missed session beyond the second will reduce your final grade by one level (A to A-; A- to B+, etc.). If lateness becomes a chronic problem, it will begin to count towards absences. For special circumstances, please see me.

****Paper submission policy:** Late papers are accepted, but will be reduced one level for each day late, beginning immediately after the session at which the paper is due. I do give extensions, but they **must be requested at least 48 hours in advance**.