Posthuman Writing: Advanced Argumentation

ENC3312-4H46 | Summer B 2018

Instructor: Madison Jones	Classroom: Turlington 2305
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Class Hashtag: #UFPostHum	Office Hours: M&R 1:00pm & by appt.

Course Description

Can animals reason? Do plants write? Do objects shape human perception? Can we separate the digital from the material? This course will consider these and other questions through a diverse range of posthuman theories. By tracing histories of rhetoric and writing which counter or trouble those set forth by students of Aristotle and Descartes that deny agency to nonhumans, this course considers writing beyond, after, and even in opposition to conceptions of humanism and the human. As we question agency, we will encounter the persuasive possibilities of *alogos*, sensation, and affect and confront the limits of argumentation based on pure categories of (human) *logos*, reason, and rationality. Readings include works

Image generated by Google's artificial neural networks (ANNs).

from both classical and contemporary rhetoricians as well as theorists who engage questions of (post)humanistic inquiry in a world shaped by technological and ecological change.

Writing Requirement Objectives

- *Composition courses* provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts. Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.
- The University *Writing Requirement (WR)* ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

Course Texts

-Charlie Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky, *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing* ([web](#)).
-Sidney Dobrin, *Writing Posthumanism, Posthuman Writing* ([optional print version](#), or [digital version available through the library](#) and off-campus access via UF VPN).
-Joseph M. Williams, *Style: Lessons in Clarity and Grace* (optional).
-Daily access to your UF email account is **required** for this course.

Assignments   Points /100

Discussion Posts, 2000 words	**15**

Students will compose 4 discussion posts (500 words each) throughout the semester. *15*
Posts are focused, crafted, edited and then carefully revised. They may be assigned in
class or for homework. Review the detailed schedule below for specific deadlines. Posts
are due before class, and students should respond to two other student posts before the
following class.

Group Writing Projects, 1200 words	**15**

Hivemind Group Writing Project, 600 words   *5*
Students will compose as part of a long-form experimental group writing project over
the course of 5 class periods. During each of the four writing sessions, students will be
responsible for generating 150 words per person in various forms and in response to
prompts. Student work will be submitted and evaluated individually. In the final session,
we will revise the document in groups for clarity, cohesion, and style using the writing
and editing skills we have developed all semester.

Discussion Panels, 500 words   *10*
In groups of four, students will lead a 30 minute discussion of one scheduled reading.
Students will compose a 500 word response to a topic related to the scheduled reading
and present their responses during class.

Individual Writing Assignments, 2800 words	**45**

Paper Proposal, 700 words   *10*
This assignment is a proposal for the final project. Students will identify a topic for their
paper and address important sources they will discuss as well as opportunities and
potential obstacles for their proposed projects.

Annotated Bibliography, 500   *10*
This assignment is an annotated bibliography for the final paper comprised of a 100-
word introductory statement followed by 5 entries, each a minimum of 80-words.

Class Infographics, 100 words   *5*
We will be building a class corpus of infographics depicting the work of foundational
posthuman figures. By the end of the semester, students are responsible for contributing
a 100-word infographic documenting one figure relevant to posthuman writing.
Examples may be found at https://thinkerthoughtinfo.tumblr.com.

Animal, Vegetable, Digital-Material (Final Paper), 1600 words   *20*
The final assignment is an argumentative paper exploring a keyword, aspect, or
application of posthuman writing. Papers will engage one of the numerous
constellations of concepts within the larger framework of posthumanism (such as affect,
anthropocentrism, cyborg feminism, animal studies, naturecultures, science studies,
ecocriticism, and new materialism). Papers will build from proposals, annotated

bibliographies, and class discussions to produce an argument concerning posthumanism and showcasing the writing skills we will practice all semester. Papers may range from readings of films or texts to philosophical engagements with posthumanism.

In-Class Assignments	25

Class Participation   *20*
Class participation includes contributing to discussions; coming to class prepared and on time, participating in class activities; providing adequate drafts for group work; and paying close attention to lectures and class activities. In general, students are expected to contribute constructively to each class session. Because this course relies heavily on workshops and in-class writing activities, students should bring computers and writing tools to each class meeting. This grade includes minor assignments such as weekly writing as well as other homework and classwork assignments.

Twitter Participation   *5*
You are required to participate outside of class by posting at least once per week on Twitter (using #UFPostHum in your tweet). Tweets should consist of responses to readings or class discussions, relevant content you wish to share with the class, new concepts you encounter, and responses to other student Tweets.

Course Policies

1. *Attendance:* If students accrue **3 absences** during the term, they will receive a lowered grade. If students accrue **5 absences**, they will automatically fail the course. Numerous absences make it impossible to keep up with the course's pace.
   a. *Excused Absences:* The university exempts from this attendance policy only those absences involving university-sponsored events, religious holidays, or documented extenuating medical circumstances. Absences related to university-sponsored events must be discussed with me prior to the date that will be missed. I ask that you provide documentation for excused absences by the following class period.
   b. *Missed/Make-Up Work:* Absences, even for extraordinary reasons, will result in missing in-class work that cannot be made up; therefore, students can expect absences to have a negative impact on grades. Please note that if students are absent, it is their responsibility to keep up with due dates. If absent due to a scheduled event, students are still responsible for turning major assignments in on time.
   c. *Tardiness:* Tardiness is a major disruption to class. Please note that tardiness is defined as being more than five minutes late to class and is equivalent to half of an absence. Being late twice in a semester counts as one absence.
   d. *Field Work:* Please note that, as part of class, we will be taking a mandatory field trip on Thursday, July 19th to the UF Bat Houses from 8:20 to 9:00 pm.
2. *Assignments:* You must complete all major assignments (those with word counts listed above) to receive credit for this course. Minor assignments cannot be made up or submitted late, but the 2 lowest minor assignment grades are dropped.
   a. *Format & Submission*: Because of the course's multimedia approach, each assignment will have different formatting requirements, which we will discuss in depth. All assignments are submitted and graded electronically via Canvas.

Documents should be uploaded in .pdf format following MLA guidelines. All assignments must include a references page or slide.

b. *Late Work*: All work is due on the day indicated on the course calendar. Late class participation assignments are not accepted in this course and receive a grade of Zero. Major assignments which are submitted late will lose 10 points with an additional 5 points deducted for every 24 hours late.

c. *Maintenance Responsibilities:* Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.

d. *Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism:* Plagiarism violates the Student Honor Code and requires reporting to the Dean of Students. All students must abide by the Student Honor Code: https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/.

3. *Accommodations*: Students with *disabilities* who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/), which will provide appropriate documentation to give the instructor.

4. *Course Evaluations:* Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages asking you to go online and evaluate this course: https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/Default.aspx

5. *Wellness:* Students who face difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help may call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352) 392-1575, or contact them online: http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx

6. *Classroom Behavior & Netiquette:* Please keep in mind that this course includes diverse cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds. Some texts we will discuss and write about engage controversial topics and opinions. Online or in the classroom, students should always conduct themselves with courtesy, respect, and professionalism. Disrespectful classroom behavior will result in dismissal, and accordingly absence, from class.

7. *Harassment*: UF provides an educational and working environment that is free from sex discrimination and sexual harassment for its students, staff, and faculty: http://hr.ufl.edu/manager-resources/recruitment-staffing/institutional-equity-diversity/resources/harassment/

8. *Environmental sustainability:* Whenever possible, I will use paper-sparing electronic media to distribute course materials. Consider using electronic editions of assigned texts when they are available.

Course Calendar

I reserve the right to alter the calendar, to adjust the pace of the course or as a result of campus closure. I will notify students of any changes well in advance via email. Students should check email and Canvas regularly for updates.

Assignments and readings in the right-hand column are due before coming to class, and those listed in the middle column refer to assignments and topics covered in class.

Day	Daily Topic & Classwork	Homework (Due Before Class)
Week 1—July 2-6		

1 M	-Course Introduction -Discussion Post 1 Assigned -Lecture: What is (Post)Humanism? & Argument as Reason or Affect?	-Read: selection from Aristotle -Further reading: selection from Debra Hawhee, *Rhetoric in Tooth and Claw*
2 T	-Watch: "Do Animals Have Language?" -Lecture: Descartes and Nonhumans -Student Discussion Panel Sign Up	-Read: René Descartes, "Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting one's Reason and Seeking Truth in the Sciences"
W	No Class (4th of July)	
3 Th	-Student Discussion Panel 1 -Lecture: (Beyond) The Rhetorical Situation	-Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation" **and** Jenny Rice, "Unframing Models of Public Distribution: From Rhetorical Situation to Rhetorical Ecologies"
4 F	-Hivemind Session 1 (Collaborative)	**-Due: Discussion Post 1** -Read: Renga Poetry Packet

Week 2—July 9-13		
5 M	-Student Discussion Panel 2 -Activity: Matters of Style, part 1 -Discussion Post 2 Assigned	**-Due: Respond to 2 Peer Posts** -Read: *Style*, part 1 **and** Bruno Latour, "What is the Style of Matters of Concern?"
6 T	-Student Discussion Panel 3 -Watch: "Having intended to merely pick on an oil company..." -Lecture: Posthuman Rhetorics in the Anthropocene	-Read: George Kennedy, "A Hoot in the Dark," **and** Chris Ingraham, "Energy: Rhetoric's Vitality" **and** Bob Hicok, "Having intended to merely pick on an oil company…"
7 W	-Activity: Conducting Research -Begin screening *Madagascar*	-Read: *The Craft of Research*, part 1
8 Th	-Finish screening *Madagascar* -Student Discussion Panel 4 -Watch: "Cary Wolfe on Post-Humanism and Animal Studies" -Activity: Posthuman Questions and Definitions	-Read: Cary Wolfe, selection from *What is Posthumanism* **and** Casey Boyle, "Writing and Rhetoric and/as Posthuman Practice"
9 F	-Watch: Jimmy Butts, "100 Questions About Writing And The Future" -Hivemind Session 2 (Interrogative)	**-Due: Discussion Post 2** -Read: selection from Padgett Powell, *The Interrogative Mood*

Week 3—July 16-20		
10 M	-Watch: Raúl Sánchez, "How Do You Write About Theory?" -Student Discussion Panel 5 -Matters of Style, part 2 -Discussion Post 3 Assigned	**-Due: Respond to 2 Peer Posts** -Read: *Style*, part 2 **and** J. A. Rice, "Inscriptions of the Possible; or, A Pedagogy of Posthumanist Style"
11 T	-Workshop Proposal Drafts -Student Discussion Panel 6 -Lecture: Technofeminism	**-Due: Proposal Drafts** -Read: Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto" **and** Kristie S. Fleckenstien, "Cyborg Vision for Cyborg Writing"
12 W	-Student Discussion Panel 7 -Watch: "How Do Trees Collaborate?" -Lecture: Nonhumans and Anthropomorphism -Activity: Taking Field Notes	**-Due: Paper Proposal** -Read: Debra Hawhee, "Toward a Bestial Rhetoric" **and** James Dickey "The Heaven of Animals"
13 Th	-**No Class: Meet at UF Bat Houses** (arrive no later than 8pm) -Take field notes for Friday's class	-Read: Thomas Nagel, "What is it like to be a bat?" **and** Randall Jarrell, "The Bat-Poet"
14 F	-Discuss Field Trip and readings -Hivemind Session 3 (Constellatory)	**-Due: Discussion Post 3** -Read: Powell, et al, "Our Story Begins Here: Constellating Cultural Rhetorics"

Week 4—July 23-27		
15 M	-Matters of Style, part 3 -Discussion Post 4 Assigned	**-Due: Respond to 2 Peer Posts** -Read: *Style*, part 3
16 T	-Student Discussion Panel 8 -Lecture: Descartes and Technology	-Read: E.M. Forster, "The Machine Stops," **and** Alf Seegert, "Technology and the Fleshly Interface in Forster's 'The Machine Stops.'"
17 W	-Activity: Integrating Sources -Begin screening *Blade Runner*	-Read: *The Craft of Research*, part 2
18 Th	-Finish screening *Blade Runner*	**-Due: Annotated Bibliography**
19 F	-Discuss Screening -Hivemind Session 4 (Groupuscular)	**-Due: Discussion Post 4** -Don Byrd and Derek Owens, "Writing in the Hivemind"

Week 5—July 30-Aug 3		
20 M	-Activity: Responding to Sources	**-Due: Respond to 2 Peer Posts** -Read: Kyle Stedman "Annoying Ways People Use Sources" **and** *They Say, I Say* selection
21 T	-Student Discussion Panel 9	-Read: selections from Nicole Starosielski, *The Undersea Network* **and** surfacing.in
22 W	-Student Discussion Panel 10	-Read: Anna Tsing, "Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species" **and** Alex Reid, "Virtual Composition: Ripping.Contagion.Mushrooms"
23 Th	-Screenng: *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*	
24 F	-Discuss screening -Hivemind Revision (Revisory)	-Read back over the hivemind project and use the comment function to suggest ways to revise and reorganize the document.

Week 6—Aug 6-10		
25 M	-Activity: Infographic Workshop	-Bring a draft of your infographic to class.
26 T	-Begin Screening *The Shape of Water*	**-Due: Final Paper (by 5pm)**
27 W	-Finish Screening *The Shape of Water* -Discuss screening	-Read: Tim Gray, "Love and Danger on the 'Water' Front"
28 Th	-Course Wrap Up & Evaluations -Activity: Defining Posthumanism	