# **ENG 296-CHA1: Robots & Cyborgs & Androids, Oh My!**



**Spring 2022 Semester**

**Syllabus and Course Calendar**

**Course Number/Section/Title: ENG 296-CHA1 : Robots & Cyborgs & Androids, Oh My!**

**Class Time:** Tuesdays and Thursdays 11:00AM – 12:15PM

**Class Location:** Campus Center 203

**Finals Week Date/Time:** Tuesday, May 3, 3:30PM – 5:30PM

**Instructor:** Dr. Liz W Faber (she/her/hers)

**Phone:** Call or chat on MS Teams

**Office Hours:**

* Drop-in Hours (no appointment needed): Monday, Wednesday, Friday 10:00AM-12:00PM; Tuesday, Thursday 12:30PM-1:30PM
* Appointments: [CLICK HERE](https://outlook.office365.com/owa/calendar/ProfFaber@dean.edu/bookings/) to make an appointment for any available time Monday-Friday 10AM-6PM

**E-mail address:**  efaber@dean.edu

**Textbooks and Materials**:

Required textbooks:

* Capek, Karel. *R.U.R.* Free online: <https://commons.erau.edu/oer-main/61/>
* Lange, Sue. *We, Robots*. Aqueduct Press, 2007.
* Leckie, Ann. *Ancillary Justice.* Orbit, 2013.
* All other readings, screenings, and listenings will be posted to Canvas.

Required materials: Please bring a laptop or tablet and charger with you to class each day.

***PLEASE NOTE:*** The sources with complete information about a course and its assignments are the course syllabus and the Canvas classroom site. Please consult course materials daily.

**Course Catalog Description:**   
In *Robots and Cyborgs and Androids, Oh My*! we will examine how artificial intelligence is represented in Science Fiction literature. We will explore a range of Sci-Fi machines, from the friendly helper robot to the evil supercomputer. Through the assignments, we’ll discuss themes such as the nature of human intelligence, identity and technology, and the role of robotics in our everyday lives. We’ll also look at how real-world AI researchers have historically faced the important ethical questions about how and whether we should create the types of thinking machines that Science Fiction presents.

**How This Course Fits Into your Dean Degree program/major:**

This course is a part of the All College Core and is an elective for Dean students. It addresses competences related to the overall Student Learning Goals, specifically Effective Communication, Global and Intercultural Fluency, and Critical Thinking and Creative Problem Solving Competencies.

**Course Objectives:**

By completing this course, you will be provided an opportunity to learn how to:

* Develop visual and textual literacy skills through the analysis of a range of Science Fiction texts and critical essays
* Interpret Science Fiction representations of artificial intelligence within their historical, cultural, ethical, and scientific contexts
* Locate connections among today’s technology, historical discussions of robotics ethics, and Science Fiction representations
* Articulate interpretations of and ideas about a range of texts using clear logic and thorough evidence, both verbally and in writing
* Work collaboratively to articulate ideas about Science Fiction, using multiple communicative modalities

**Course Grading**:

Reflections (40%)

Writing Project 1: Comparative Analysis (20%)

Writing Project 2: Original Short Story (30%)

Team Project: Sci-Fi Story Time (10%)

**Course Assessments and Assignments**

Reflections (Fixed Deadlines)

For each assigned reading, you will write at least 2 paragraphs of a reflection. In the first paragraph, you should summarize what you read or watched. In the second paragraph, you should reflect on your thoughts about the reading or video. Try to move beyond “I liked it,” or “I didn’t like it.” Instead, think critically about the characters, themes, metaphors, and how the reading connects to other things you may have encountered, either in class or in your everyday life. This is also the space to ask questions you might have or, in the case of the novels we read, make predictions about what you think will happen in the next part of the reading.

While Reflections make up a significant part of your grade, they should be considered low-stakes assignments designed to hold you accountable for the reading and help you collect your thoughts about a reading before class. There are no right or wrong answers, only your personal thoughts. As such, Reflections will be graded based on completion.

Writing Project 1: Comparative Analysis (Flexible Deadline)

In the comparative analysis, you will compare and contrast two fictional robots we have encountered so far in class. You should incorporate ample textual evidence to support your claims as well as supporting evidence from at least one of the secondary sources we have read. The essay should be approximately 1250 words in MLA format. Please be sure to cite all sources, both in text and in a Works Cited page.

The goals of the Comparative Analysis are to demonstrate understanding of the key themes and tropes of the robot fiction genre as well as practice using primary and secondary sources in an academic essay. The assignment will be graded holistically using a rubric. Please see the full prompt sheet for additional details.

Writing Project 2: Original Robot Fiction Story (Fixed Deadline)

Drawing on the themes and tropes we have discussed in class this semester, you will write your own original story about a fictional robot. You may write it in the form of a short story, a play, or a comic/graphic novel. In addition, you will write a brief (1-2 paragraphs) reflection on which texts inspired your story and how you incorporated various themes and tropes.

The goal of the Original Robot Fiction Story is to demonstrate understanding of key course concepts through the creative process. The assignment will be graded holistically using a rubric. Please see the full prompt sheet for additional details.

Team Project: Sci-Fi Story Time (Fixed Deadline)

In small groups, you will organize and host a college-wide event in which you do a live dramatic reading of a science fiction story. You will then lead a discussion of the story with the audience.

Dates for Sci-Fi Story Times are listed below and have already been advertised on the College-wide schedule. If you are unable to participate because of your work or class schedule, please notify your instructor ASAP to arrange an alternative assignment.

Group 1: Tuesday February 15, 7PM, “A Logic Named Joe” by F. Murray Leinster

Group 2: Wednesday, March 16, 7PM, “Goodnight Melancholy” by Xia Jia

Group 3: Thursday, April 14, 7PM, “The Governess and the Lobster” by Margaret Ronald

The goals of Sci-Fi Story Time are to demonstrate your knowledge of science fiction themes and tropes, engage with the course content in a co-curricular context, and practice oral communication skills. The project will be graded holistically using a rubric. All members of the team will earn the same grade.

Extra Credit

You may earn up to 10 points toward the Reflections grade in the following ways:

1. Attend another group’s Sci-Fi Story Time performance and actively participate in the discussion.
2. Produce an original creative project inspired by something we’ve read or the themes we’ve discussed this semester (e.g. a painting, sculpture, poem, song, etc.). If you choose to do this assignment, you will be required to present your creative project to the class during finals week.

Attendance and Participation

**Attendance**: You are expected to arrive on time and prepared for each and every class session, unless you are sick or have some other engagement that you cannot miss.

***Do not come to class if you are sick, physically or mentally. Take care of your body and mind by resting when you need it!***

Missing class for any reason will count as an absence. You may take up to 4 absences throughout the semester. Arriving to class late without notifying your instructor ahead of time will count as ½ an absence. For each absence after the 4th, you will lose 5% of your final grade.

If you cannot come to class or you know you will be arriving late, please notify the instructor by e-mail, Teams call, or Teams message. Communication is key here—you do not ever have to explain why you’re missing class, but your instructor wants to make sure that you are safe and receiving the care you need, so please be in touch.

If you do need to miss class, it is your responsibility to notify your instructor, download any missed assignments from Canvas, and get lecture/discussion notes from a classmate. Missing class does not excuse you from submitting the assigned homework in a timely fashion.

**Late Work:** Due to the nature of this course, some deadlines are fixed, while others are flexible. Reflections, Writing Project 2, and Sci-Fi Story Time Presentations have fixed deadlines and may not be completed for credit after the deadline indicated in the schedule below and on Canvas. All other assignments have flexible due dates with no penalty *only* if you discuss an extension with your instructor ahead of time. It is vital that you communicate with your instructor and your teammates when you are struggling to meet your deadlines. We can’t help you unless we know you need help.

**Participation:** Participation includes the completion of all assigned readings prior to class, any in-class and online discussion, in-class writing, activities, or quizzes, peer review assignments, and active engagement with presentations in class. All assigned readings should be completed before coming to class so that you can participate fully in class discussions. Further, reading is an active process; you should always highlight/underline important passages, write questions and notes for your meeting prep, and summarize key points in the margins. You are, of course, not required to like everything you read, but you should be able to respond to and discuss it in a clear, critical fashion.

Other Important Information

1. **Academic Honesty**: All Dean College students are expected to understand the meaning of academic honesty, and to behave in accordance with the College’s policies on academic honesty as published in the online student code of conduct.
2. **Accessibility and Accommodations:**Dean College is committed to a diverse, equitable, and inclusive environment. If you are experiencing difficulties accessing course work which interrupts your learning experience, Accessibility Services can provide resources and/or reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities, as granted in the ADA. Early planning is essential, so please feel free to make any matters known as soon as possible. Contact the Accessibility Services Office at 508-541-1942 or [accessibility@dean.edu](mailto:accessibility@dean.edu). See your professor if you need assistance contacting the Accessibility Services Office.
3. **Credit Hour:** Dean College complies fully with the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE) definition of a credit hour: a credit hour is an amount of work represented in intended learning outcomes and verified by evidence of student achievement that is an institutional established equivalence that reasonably approximates not less than:  (1) One hour of classroom or direct faculty instruction and a minimum of two hours of out-of-class student work each week for approximately fifteen weeks for one semester or trimester hour of credit, or ten to twelve weeks for one-quarter hour of credit, or the equivalent amount of work over a different amount of time; or (2) At least an equivalent amount of work as required in paragraph (1) of this definition for other academic activities as established by the institution including laboratory work, internships, practica, studio work, and other academic work leading to the award of credit hours.
4. **Recording Policy:**
   1. Dean College strictly prohibits students from any photographing, videotaping or other recording of all or any portion of any class without the express permission, in advance, from the presiding faculty member. This means that students may not take pictures, record video images or make any audio recording of any portion of a class, lecture, lab, seminar or other academic exercise without the express permission, in advance, of the professor. This also means that students may not upload or distribute any such picture, video image or audio recording of a class session without the express permission, in advance, of the professor. Any permission to make or use any such recording shall be strictly limited to the specific purpose for which that permission is granted. Any request for permission to make recordings as a disability accommodation must be presented, in advance, to the Accessibility Services Office. Students who violate this policy or who aid or encourage another person in violating this policy will be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal. For the full policy, please see the current Dean College Academic Catalog.
   2. In recognition of possible technical interruptions online, synchronous class sessions will be recorded and will be posted to Canvas, and only be available for students enrolled in that class. All recordings will be deleted at the end of the term. Students are permitted to view these recordings for educational purposes only, as related solely to this class. Students are expressly prohibited from posting, publishing, quoting from or forwarding, in whole or in part, these recordings.
5. **Changes:** Please note that this syllabus is subject to change.

**Course Outline** (subject to change)

Group 1: Tuesday February 15, 7PM, “A Logic Named Joe” by F. Murray Leinster

Group 2: Wednesday, March 16, 7PM, “Goodnight Melancholy” by Xia Jia

Group 3: Thursday, April 14, 7PM, “The Governess and the Lobster” by Margaret Ronald

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| **Date** | **Topic** | **Complete Prior to Class** |
| **Week 1** | | |
| R 1/20 | **Intro to Robot Fiction** | None! 😊 |
| **Week 2** | | |
| T 1/25 | **The Robot Uprising** | Read *R.U.R.* Epilogue + Act 1  Write Reflection 1 |
| R 1/27 | **The Robot Uprising** | Read *R.U.R.* Act 2 + Act 3  Write Reflection 2 |
| **Week 3** | | |
| T 2/1 | **Laws of Robotics** | Read “Runaround” by Isaac Asimov  Write Reflection 3 |
| R 2/3 | **Laws of Robotics** | Read *Astroboy* comic  Write Reflection 4 |
| **Week 4** | | |
| T 2/8 | **Robot Rights** | Read “Robot Rights and Human Rights” by Jennifer Robertson (pp. 1-13, stop before “Family for Robots” subheading)  Write Reflection 5 |
| R 2/10 | **Robot Rights + Intro to Writing Project 1** | Read “Robot Rights and Human Rights” by Jennifer Robertson (pp. 13-end, begin at “Family for Robots” subheading)  Write Reflection 6 |
| **Week 5** | | |
| T 2/15 | **Robot Rights** | Watch *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode “Measure of a Man”  Write Reflection 7 |
| T 2/15 | **Sci-Fi Story Time** | 7PM, Group 1, “A Logic Named Joe” by F. Murray Leinster, CC 203 |
| R 2/17 | **Killer Computers** | Read “Second Variety” by Philip K. Dick  Write Reflection 8 |
| **Week 6** | | |
| T 2/22 | **Killer Computers** | Read excerpt from *The Closed World* by Paul N. Edwards  Write Reflection 9 |
| R 2/24 | **Killer Computers** | Watch *Colossus: The Forbin Project*  Write Reflection 10 |
| **Week 7** | | |
| T 3/1 | **Killer Computers?** | Read “Cat Pictures Please” by Naomi Pritzker  Write Reflection 11 |
| R 3/3 | **Midterm Reflection** | Writing Project 1 Due |
| **Week 8** | | |
| T 3/8 | **Spring Break** | RECHARGE YOUR BATTERIES! |
| R 3/10 | **Spring Break** | RECHARGE YOUR BATTERIES! |
| **Week 9** | | |
| T 3/15 | **Robot Enlightenment** | None! |
| W 3/16 | **Sci-Fi Story Time** | 7PM, Group 2, “Goodnight Melancholy” by Xia Jia, CC 203 |
| R 3/17 | **The Singularity** | Read *We Robots* by Sue Lange, pp. 1-49  Write Reflection 12 |
| **Week 10** | | |
| T 3/22 | **The Singularity** | Read *We Robots* by Sue Lange, pp. 49-end  Write Reflection 13 |
| R 3/24 | **The Singularity** | Read “The Coming Technological Singularity” by Vernor Vinge  Write Reflection 14 |
| **Week 11** | | |
| T 3/29 | **Otherness + Intro to Writing Project 2** | Read *Ancillary Justice,* chs. 1-5  Write Reflection 15 |
| R 3/31 | **Otherness** | Read *Ancillary Justice,* chs. 6-10  Write Reflection 16 |
| **Week 12** | | |
| T 4/5 | **Otherness** | Read *Ancillary Justice,* chs. 11-15  Write Reflection 17 |
| R 4/7 | **Otherness** | Read *Ancillary Justice,* chs. 16-20  Write Reflection 18 |
| **Week 13** | | |
| T 4/12 | **Otherness** | Read *Ancillary Justice,* chs. 21-end  Write Reflection 19 |
| R 4/14 | **Special Guest! (meet online)** | Read article by Dr. Rebecca Gibson  Write Reflection 20 |
| R 4/14 | **Sci-Fi Story Time** | 7PM, Group 3, “The Governess and the Lobster” by Margaret Ronald, CC 203 |
| **Week 14** | | |
| T 4/19 | **Robot Gender** | Watch *Her*  Write Reflection 21 |
| R 4/21 | **Robot Gender** | Read excerpt from *The Computer’s Voice* by Liz W Faber  Write Reflection 22 |
| **Week 15** | | |
| T 4/26 | **Workshop** | Writing Project 2 First Draft: Please upload a rough draft of your Writing Project 2 to Canvas prior to class. You will workshop it during class. |
| R 4/28 | **Workshop** | None! |
| **Week 16** | | |
| T 5/3 3:30P | **Final “Exam” (Wrap Up + Extra Credit Presentations)** | Writing Project 2: Please upload your assignment to Canvas in .docx format before class time.  Extra Credit: Please bring your extra credit project to class and be prepared to give a brief presentation on it |