



**AHST 2331-002 (29453)**  
**Understanding Art: Robots, Cyborgs,**  
**and AI in Art History**  
**Dr. Charissa N. Terranova**  
**Spring 2025**  
**W 10:00-12:45 pm**  
**ATC 2.705E (EODIAH seminar**  
**room on the mezzanine of ATC)**

L: Maria or the Machine-Human in Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927).  
R: Actress Brigitte Helm takes a break in costume on the set of the film.

**Description:** This class serves to relativize the power of AI by telling its history. It focuses on robots, cyborgs, and AI embodied in the fine arts, design, and film c. 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE-present. Students participate through reading, writing, short presentations, and discussion.

**Goals and Outcomes:**

- Define and understand the history of robots, cyborgs, and AI in the fine arts, design, and film, c. 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE-present.
- Learn and improve public speaking skills
- Learn and improve critical thinking skills
- Learn and improve expository writing skills

**Requirements:**

Students are required to attend every class, complete all assignments (reading, writing, and presentations), and participate with candor, verve, and commitment in class.

**Organization of Class Meetings:**

Every Wednesday, classes begin with student presentations, which are followed by brief discussion. Then, after a 10- to 15-minute break, the professor gives a 50-minute lecture. Students are encouraged to engage the professor in discussion **while** giving the lecture. Please raise your hand to ask questions or interject.

**Attendance Policy:**

Attendance is mandatory. Absences are excused for religious holidays and illness with a doctor's excuse. Students are allowed one unexcused absence, after which each unexcused absence results in the lowering of the final grade by 1/2. Students with illnesses that require extended periods of absence are encouraged to officially withdraw from the class. Importantly, since this class is 2 hrs. and 45 mins., it is two classes in one. Each class meeting thus counts as two class meetings. Organizationally, each meeting is divided in half. Absence from either half counts as a single absence, making two absences for an entire class missed. If a student does not return from break for the second half of class, this counts as a single absence.

### **Assignments: Essays and Presentations (10% each: 10 x 10 = 100%)**

Students make 12 five-minute presentations of a short essay based on the weekly reading assignment. The two lowest of twelve grades will be dropped. For each of these presentations, students read an essay they've written about the single aspect of the week's reading assignment that interested them most. This could be an object, event, person, or type of technology. Students introduce, explain, and historically situate the person or thing through an image and in **their own words**: with one picture and in a five-minute essay that is 650 words in length. The presentation setting in the classroom is intimate, taking place around a table and in front of a screen projecting the student's uploaded image. Students may stand in front of the screen or sit at the table to read their essays. Essays and images are due the night before class presentations. Here's a recap of what's required:

- Students present 12 5-minute, 650-word (2.5 page) essays in short presentations based on an object, event, person, or type of technology from the week's reading assignment.
- Students read their essays in class.
- Students write about:
  - What they liked most in the week's reading assignment.
  - Why, in their opinion, they liked it.
  - How the author wrote about it.
- Students may seek additional information outside of the essay through research.
- External sources should be cited in footnotes, which are automated in Word software.
  - Watch this video on the proper formatting of a footnote and how to make a footnote in Word: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HYiSx4ljrKU>.
- Students should upload the essay and an image by 5 pm the night before each presentation.
- Plagiarism and/or using AI to write your essay will result in heavy penalties and potential failure.
- The use of AI in AHST 2331-002 Understanding Art is considered a form of plagiarism, which can result in dismissal from the university.
- Read here to learn more about plagiarism:
  - <https://conduct.utdallas.edu/dishonesty>
- Essays should have the following formatting:
  - Papers should be written in Word (.doc or .docx) software.
  - The text should have 12 pt. font.
  - The body of the text should be double spaced.
  - In the upper left-hand corner of the first page, list your name, the instructor's name, course number and name, and date in single-spaced font.
  - An italicized essay title that you've invented should be centered at the top of the page after this heading.
  - The essay should have formal pagination. Continuous page numbers starting with the first page should appear at the center bottom of each page. This is automated in Word software [.doc or .docx]). Watch this video to learn how: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4iOj96PoRg>.
  - The paper should include an image with a caption stating who made it, what or who it is, the year it was made, and the source.

### **Schedule:**

#### **Wednesday January 22**

Topic: Introduction

#### **Wednesday January 29**

Topic: AI Hallucinations: Contemporary Art and AI, Guest Speaker Ken Rinaldo  
Reading Assignment: Ken Rinaldo, "AI Hallucinations" (2025).

#### **Wednesday February 5**

Topic: Contemporary Art and Nonhuman Embodiments, Guest Speakers Brittany Ransom and Kathy High

Reading Assignment: Brittany Ransom, "The Sixth Element, DIY Cyborgs, and the Hive Mind of Social Media," in *The Routledge Companion to Biology in Art and Architecture*, Charissa N. Terranova and Meredith Tromble, eds. (New York: Routledge Press, 2016).

Kathy High, "Ways In? Processing Messages Received," in *Public: Art, Culture, Ideas*, Vol. 31 No. 59 (2019) 60-71.

### **Wednesday February 12**

Event: Screening and Discussion of Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982)

### **Wednesday February 19**

Topic: Robots, Cyborgs, and Dystopian Futures

Reading: Nigel Wheale, "Recognising a 'human-Thing': cyborgs, robots and replicants in Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*," *Critical Survey*, Vol. 3, No. 3 Text into performance (1991) 297-304.

### **Wednesday February 26**

Topic: Cyborgs, Cybernetics, and Feedback in Art History, Guest Speaker Merve Sahin

Reading Assignment: Manfred Clynes and Nathan Kline, "Cyborgs and Space" *Astronautics* (Sept, 1960) 26-27, 74-76.

### **Wednesday March 5**

Event: Screening of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927)

### **Wednesday March 12**

Topic: Robots, Dehumanization, and Modern Cities of the Future, c. 1927

Reading Assignment: Paula Comacho, "The Dehumanizing of Modern Life: Iris Barry on *Metropolis*," *Anglo Saxonica*, Ser. III, No. 14 (2017) 109-117.

### **Wednesday March 19 Spring Break: No Class**

### **Wednesday March 26**

Topic: Robots, Cyborgs, and Posthumanism

Reading Assignment: Richard Teleky, "The Cyborgs Next Door: Thinking about Posthuman Studies," *Queens Quarterly*, Vol. 122, No. 22 (Winter, 2015).

### **Wednesday April 2**

Topic: [Forthcoming] Guest Speaker, Joost Rekveld

Reading Assignment: TBA

### **Wednesday April 9**

Topic: Nineteenth-Century Automata

Reading Assignment: Jenny Hendrix, "Among the Automata," *The Paris Review* (May 22, 2012).

### **Wednesday April 16**

Topic: Ada Lovelace, Algorithms, and the Babbage Machine

Reading Assignment: Betsy Morais, "Ada Lovelace, the First Tech Visionary," *The New Yorker* (Oct. 15, 2013).

### **Wednesday April 23**

Topic: Frankenstein I

Reading Assignment: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) Letter 1-Ch. 11. <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/84/84-h/84-h.htm>

**Wednesday April 30**

Topic: Frankenstein II

Reading Assignment: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus* (1818) Chs. 12-24.

<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/84/84-h/84-h.htm>

**Wednesday May 7**

Topic: Ancient and Medieval Robots, Cyborgs, and AI

Reading Assignment: E. R. Truitt, "Surveillance, Companionship, and Entertainment: The Ancient History of Intelligent Machines," *The MIT Press Reader* (Nov. 21, 2024).