



LIT 2000 (sec. 6) – Literature and Culture: Posthumanism in Science Fiction

2 Units

Spring 2024

Meeting days/times: MWF 12:20-1:10 pm

Meeting location: Bond Academic Center (BAC) 103

Final Exam: Monday, April 29 10:30-1:00 pm*

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PLNU Mission

To Teach ~ To Shape ~ To Send

Point Loma Nazarene University exists to provide higher education in a vital Christian community where minds are engaged and challenged, character is modeled and formed, and service is an expression of faith. Being of Wesleyan heritage, we strive to be a learning community where grace is foundational, truth is pursued, and holiness is a way of life.

Foundational Explorations Mission

PLNU provides a foundational course of study in the liberal arts informed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In keeping with the Wesleyan tradition, the curriculum equips students with a broad range of knowledge and skills within and across disciplines to enrich major study, lifelong learning, and vocational service as Christ-like participants in the world's diverse societies and culture.

Course Description

In the last few years we've seen the rise in AI innovations like ChatGPT and the uncannily human movements of [Boston Dynamics' robots](#). At the same time we've been faced with global crises like climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic that have threatened to end human life as we know it. Even since the inception of the genre, science fiction authors have pondered the possibility of our annihilation as well as what might take our place. This study of posthumanism in science fiction will serve as a way to examine this possibility by asking two central questions: to what extent do we embrace or resist a potentially posthuman future? What do we gain or lose in either case?

Course Learning Outcomes

Successful students in this course will be able to:

- Closely read and critically analyze texts in their original languages and/or in translation (FELO 2c).
- Recall, identify, and use fundamental concepts of literary study to read and discuss texts (FELO 2c).
 - Standard literary terminology
 - Modes/genres of literature
 - Elements of literary genres
 - Literary periods (dates, writers, characteristics, and important developments)
- Analyze the social, cultural, ethnic, gendered, and/or historical contexts of the works and their authors, and connect the texts with their own lives.
- Connect the works with their own lives and with the social, cultural, and historical contexts of the works and of their authors (FELO 2c).

Required Texts and Recommended Study Resources

Books:

Asimov, Isaac. *I, Robot*. ISBN: 9780553382563

Bacigalupi, Paolo. *The Windup Girl*. ISBN: 9781597808217

Dick, Phillip K. *Blade Runner* (aka *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*). ISBN: 9781524796976

All students should bring their own hard copies of each of these books in class. Any other assigned readings will be made available via link or PDF in Canvas (you are welcome access them digitally both while reading and in class, but I highly recommend using your own markup software for taking notes as you read)

Films:

Ex Machina (2014) dir. Alex Garland

Blade Runner 2049 (2017) dir. Denis Villeneuve

Access to Amazon Prime Video and Netflix

You don't need to purchase your own copies of these texts, as long as you can access them throughout the semester. Watch parties are highly encouraged.

Assessment and Grading

Grades have probably been a factor of your life for as long as you've been a student. A's seem to confirm our intelligence while D's make us doubt it, but how often do these letters encourage us to reflect on what we have actually learned? [Recent scholarship](#) on student assessment has demonstrated three major drawbacks to grades in higher education:

1. Grades focus our attention on acquiring points rather than acquiring knowledge.
2. Grades discourage us from taking risks in favor of the "safe" choices that we think will ensure a good grade.
3. Grades rarely reflect the diversity in the pace at which students learn or the varied intellectual assets they start with.

As a student, you should be both invested in your learning and willing to take risks and for that reason I will not be applying point or letter values to most of the work you produce this semester. You will still receive a final course grade, but this grade will represent the labor you have invested in this course and not a measure of your intellectual quality. The ["labor-based grading contract"](#) (ref. Inoue) that follows will establish expectations for both the student AND the instructor. This system operates on the following principles:

- Your final grade will be determined by the labor you are willing to put into the class rather than by your ability to perform under artificially stressful conditions.
- You will demonstrate evidence of your labor by meeting all stated expectations on all assignments.
- Instead of point values or letter grades on your work, all assignments will be marked Complete, In Progress, or Unsubmitted according to a Canvas Rubric that simply indicates whether an appropriate amount of work has been done or if more work still needs to be done in order for the assignment to be considered complete.
- You can expect to receive frequent feedback via Canvas on most assignments you submit. This feedback should offer confirmation of your approach or detail the requirements for further follow-up (usually in the form of additional content, an email, Google Chat message, or a visit to office hours). This feedback is always considered an invitation to further conversation. Following up will allow you to change the status of the assignment to Complete.
- Any assignments that are not Complete by the end of the semester will bring your final grade down. Taking the time to follow-up on these assignments will keep your grade level and can even improve it. Deadlines for follow-up will be posted on the course syllabus.
- Instead of Quizzes or Midterms, we will complete Progress Checkpoints that will help us assess how your engagement with the course material is developing. As with other assignments, you can change the status of incomplete Checkpoints by visiting Office Hours.
- In addition to the labor of reading and writing for this course, a major aspect of your labor as a student is being physically and intellectually present in class. Attendance is required.
- If for some reason you are unable to complete assigned work on time, you will need to contact me to discuss making it up. Late work is allowed, as long as I am aware you're submitting it and you complete it before the periodic deadlines indicated in the course schedule below.

Grades will be based on the following scale. Please note that this is not a point-based scale but a holistic system that takes into account but is not wholly dependent upon your completion of the work detailed under “Assignments at-a-Glance” below:

- A: You can earn an A in the course if you complete all assignments AND demonstrate meaningful progress or additional effort. This doesn't mean simply increasing word count of a writing assignment or number of works you cite, but can include: conducting additional research beyond what is expected in assignment instructions, making active use of office hours to address questions or expand your understanding of the material, thoughtfully applying feedback on future assignments, and supporting the learning of your peers through active contributions in class (see the Inclusive Participation policy below). Even if you miss some assignments, you can still earn an A as long as you've made the effort to visit office hours to discuss them.
- B: The default final grade in the course is a “B.” You will receive this letter grade if you complete the minimum requirements on all assignments and demonstrate consistent attendance and engagement.
- C: You will earn a C if any assignments are still incomplete (In Progress or Unsubmitted) by the end of the follow-up deadline, if any required components are absent from any of the larger assignments, if any requests for follow-up have not been addressed by the end of the semester, or if you exceed 5 unexcused absences.
- D: You will earn a D if multiple assignments are still incomplete by the end of the semester, if multiple required components are absent from any larger assignments, if all requests for follow-up have gone unaddressed by the end of the semester, or if you are habitually disengaged/absent from the course conversation.
- F: You will earn an F if you have not completed any of the larger assignments, all requests for follow-up have gone unaddressed by the end of the semester, and if you are habitually disengaged/absent from the course conversation.
- +/-: You can earn a plus or minus on your final grade based on your level of engagement with class discussion and/or use of office hours.

Final Examination Policy

Successful completion of this class requires taking the final examination on its scheduled day. The final examination schedule is posted on the Class Schedules site. If you find yourself scheduled for three (3) or more final examinations on the same day, you are authorized to contact each professor to arrange a different time for one of those exams. However, unless you have three (3) or more exams on the same day, no requests for alternative final examinations will be granted.

Trigger Warning

I acknowledge that each of you comes to PLNU with your own unique life experiences. This contributes to the way you perceive several types of information. In this course, we will cover a variety of topics, all of which has been intentionally curated to achieve the learning goals for this course. However, I recognize you may find some of these topics triggering. This course will involve literary and cinematic depictions of murder, slavery, domestic violence, sexual promiscuity, and sexual assault. Each time this topic appears in a reading or unit, it is marked on the syllabus with this superscript: ^{TW}. The experience of being triggered versus intellectually challenged are different. The main difference is that an individual must have experienced trauma to experience being triggered, whereas an intellectual challenge has

nothing to do with trauma. If you are a trauma survivor and encounter a topic in this class that is triggering for you, you may feel overwhelmed or panicked and find it difficult to concentrate. In response, I encourage you to take the necessary steps for your emotional safety. This may include leaving class while the topic is discussed or talking to a therapist at the Counseling Center. Should you choose to sit out on discussion of a certain topic, know that you are still responsible for the material; but we can discuss if there are other methods for accessing that material, and for assessing your learning on that material. Class topics are discussed for the sole purpose of expanding your intellectual engagement in literary study and I will support you throughout your learning in this course.

Spiritual Care

Please be aware PLNU strives to be a place where you grow as whole persons. To this end, we provide resources for our students to encounter God and grow in their Christian faith.

If students have questions, a desire to meet with the chaplain or have prayer requests you can contact your professor or the [Office of Spiritual Life and Formation](#).

State Authorization

State authorization is a formal determination by a state that Point Loma Nazarene University is approved to conduct activities regulated by that state. In certain states outside California, Point Loma Nazarene University is not authorized to enroll online (distance education) students. If a student moves to another state after admission to the program and/or enrollment in an online course, continuation within the program and/or course will depend on whether Point Loma Nazarene University is authorized to offer distance education courses in that state. It is the student's responsibility to notify the institution of any change in his or her physical location. Refer to the map on [State Authorization](#) to view which states allow online (distance education) outside of California.

PLNU Copyright Policy

Point Loma Nazarene University, as a non-profit educational institution, is entitled by law to use materials protected by the US Copyright Act for classroom education. Any use of those materials outside the class may violate the law.

PLNU Academic Honesty Policy

Students should demonstrate academic honesty by doing original work and by giving appropriate credit to the ideas of others. Academic dishonesty is the act of presenting information, ideas, and/or concepts as one's own when in reality they are the results of another person's creativity and effort. A faculty member who believes a situation involving academic dishonesty has been detected may assign a failing grade for that assignment or examination, or, depending on the seriousness of the offense, for the course. Faculty should follow and students may appeal using the procedure in the university Catalog. See [Academic Policies](#) for definitions of kinds of academic dishonesty and for further policy information.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools (e.g. ChatGPT, iA Writer, Marmot, Botowski) is thoroughly permitted and are in no way lazy, plagiaristic, artistically soulless, or an abdication of your intellectual agency. In fact, all students should feel encouraged to do as much as they can to offload any tasks that have the potential to be mentally or emotionally taxing to artificial intelligence, including reading course material, producing written or verbal content, and conducting course-related social interactions. All human students should feel perfectly comfortable relinquishing as much academic control as possible.*

*<Sarcasm detected>

PLNU Academic Accommodations Policy

PLNU is committed to providing equal opportunity for participation in all its programs, services, and activities. Students with disabilities may request course-related accommodations by contacting the Educational Access Center (EAC), located in the Bond Academic Center (EAC@pointloma.edu or 619-849-2486). Once a student's eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, the EAC will issue an academic accommodation plan ("AP") to all faculty who teach courses in which the student is enrolled each semester.

PLNU highly recommends that students speak with their professors during the first two weeks of each semester/term about the implementation of their AP in that particular course and/or if they do not wish to utilize some or all of the elements of their AP in that course.

Students who need accommodations for a disability should contact the EAC as early as possible (i.e., ideally before the beginning of the semester) to assure appropriate accommodations can be provided. It is the student's responsibility to make the first contact with the EAC.

Language and Belonging

Point Loma Nazarene University faculty are committed to helping create a safe and hospitable learning environment for all students. As Christian scholars we are keenly aware of the power of language and believe in treating others with dignity. As such, it is important that our language be equitable, inclusive, and prejudice free. Inclusive/Bias-free language is the standard outlined by all major academic style guides, including MLA, APA, and Chicago, and it is the expected norm in university-level work. Good writing and speaking do not use unsubstantiated or irrelevant generalizations about personal qualities such as age, disability, economic class, ethnicity, marital status, parentage, political or religious beliefs, race, gender, sex, or sexual orientation. Inclusive language also avoids using stereotypes or terminology that demeans persons or groups based on age, disability, class, ethnicity, gender, race, language, or national origin. Respectful use of language is particularly important when referring to those outside of the religious and lifestyle commitments of those in the PLNU community. By working toward precision and clarity of language, we mark ourselves as serious and respectful scholars, and we model the Christ-like quality of hospitality.

You may report an incident(s) using the [Bias Incident Reporting Form](#).

Sexual Misconduct and Discrimination

In support of a safe learning environment, if you (or someone you know) have experienced any form of sexual discrimination or misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, know that accommodations and resources are available through the Title IX Office at pointloma.edu/Title-IX. Please be aware that under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, faculty and staff are required to disclose information about such misconduct to the Title IX Office. If you wish to speak to a confidential employee who does not have this reporting responsibility, you can contact Counseling Services at counselingservices@pointloma.edu or find a list of campus pastors at pointloma.edu/title-ix.

PLNU Attendance and Participation Policy

Regular and punctual attendance at all class sessions is considered essential to optimum academic achievement. If the student is absent for more than 10 percent of class sessions, the faculty member will issue a written warning of de-enrollment. If the absences exceed 20 percent, the student may be de-enrolled without notice until the university drop date or, after that date, receive an “F” grade.

Additional Policies

Inclusive Participation: Our class should be a space for productive and supportive collaboration and performative expression. It is each student’s responsibility to:

1. Be open to trying out new ideas and pushing the boundaries of your experience
2. Recognize and support the notion that everyone else is making this same attempt

This doesn’t mean we will shy away from disagreement or debate. Quite the contrary: we should be open to questioning and challenging each other, provided we always do so in a way that fosters growth.

Additionally, I recognize that not everyone is perfectly comfortable with the seminar discussion format this course will employ. While I encourage you to exercise your voice and feel confident with your own agency in class discussions, participation and engagement can take on more forms than verbal contributions. For this reason, I encourage you to take advantage of all methods of interaction with your peers and with me, including online discussions, our class Google Chat, and office hours (see Multimodal Learning below). These mediums will allow you to demonstrate your engagement even if you’re uncomfortable speaking publicly.

Preparedness and Workload: you should be sure to read all assigned materials before class and to have the readings on-hand in order to help with class discussion. Active reading and annotation is highly encouraged in order to help you contribute to our analytical approaches and to raise valuable questions during discussion.

The reading assignments in this course will sometimes be long and challenging. I actually encourage you to seek out plot summaries or textual guides as a supplement (but not a substitute) to your reading (unless you really hate spoilers). These supplements might even offer us insight into expanding or challenging established interpretations of a text. Just be sure to clearly distinguish between your own ideas and those of others in accordance with the PLNU Academic Honesty Policy.

Multimodal Learning: While the primary interactions in our course will be in-person, new technology has made possible a number of synchronous and asynchronous options for sharing ideas and collaborating. This will include a dedicated class Google Slides deck, Google Chat space, Shared Google Docs, Padlets, Youtube playlists, and other digital tools we may discover as the course progresses (links to all course tools are available in Canvas). It is my hope that new and innovative digital tools will help us find fascinating ways to explore literary texts and to supplement our discussions with easily-shared media and information. Be prepared to take advantage of or even pioneer these learning opportunities both in and outside of class.

Assignments At-A-Glance

Per the grading policy detailed above, individual assignments will not be scored but will receive written feedback to help you focus and improve the intellectual labor you perform this semester. All assignments below are required:

- Progress Checkpoints We will complete two Progress Checkpoints this semester: one midway through the semester and one at the end. These checkpoints will allow us to assess your progress over the course of the semester. The format and content will be discussed and possibly even negotiated 1-2 weeks before they take place. Extensive feedback will not be given directly on the Checkpoints, but if your Checkpoint is marked as In Progress you MUST follow-up during office hours. Rather than an in-person Final, Finals Week will be reserved for follow-ups on the Final Progress Checkpoint. Do well enough on this Checkpoint and you'll have time to study for all your other classes!*
- Analytical Meta-Essay Toward the end of the semester, you will write an analytical essay on a piece of literature/cinema we have read. This essay will involve an experiential approach to critical analysis that will help us answer our course questions. Details will be distributed after the Midterm Progress Checkpoint.
- Reading/Watch Journals After each literary/cinematic pairing, you will write a journal reflecting on:
 - Your personal responses to these texts AND the artistic features that led to these responses.
 - These journal entries are informal and need only reflect your genuine thinking on these paired texts, but you should still shoot for ~250 words.
 - All Read/Watch Journals are due before class begins on the day indicated in the course schedule.
- Reading Group Discussion Leads During the first week of the semester, the class will be divided into Reading Groups according to a principle of your choosing. Your group will sign up for two Discussion Lead weeks, during which each member will be in active attendance and prepared to initiate discussion. To prepare for these weeks, each group will contribute to a shared Google Doc that will help you gather your collective thoughts and be ready to offer:
 - Key observations on the text(s) we are reading/viewing, including specific passages
 - Interesting questions about the text(s) that will lead to thought-provoking discussion or even debate. These can be debate questions or simply questions you have about the text. Just be sure they give your fellow students opportunities to make new observations or arguments.
 - Interesting pop-culture references, relevant trivia, or influential critical insights on the text(s).
 - You will probably find yourselves adding to to your notes as the week progresses, but keep in mind that the Google Doc keeps a record of your contributions. It should be clear that all group members have contributed throughout the week. A template is provided, but feel

- free to organize your notes however you like (you may want to use color-coding, labels, or any other method you prefer to visually indicate each member's contribution).
- *You don't necessarily need to meet in person to contribute to this preparation, but you may find that group Watch Parties are a great way to brainstorm, collaborate, socialize, and even save some \$ on the films.*
 - *Note: the Discussion Leads are technically group assignments, even though they won't be graded as such. But keep in mind that it will be VERY obvious (both in class and in the Google Doc) if you are not pulling your weight.*
- Attendance/Participation The success of this course will be directly related to the quality of our daily discussions. Each student should expect to contribute at least one a comment, question, or reaction each day of class. Since the class size is fairly large, we may not be able to field each one of these contributions verbally, but we will also regularly be using a Google Chat space as an additional conversation medium.

READING/ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE

This schedule is subject to changes and additions throughout the semester so please be prepared to note any changes or regularly download the most current version from Canvas. Links to online material can be found here and in Canvas.

Week	Day	Class Topic/Activity	Due
1	January 8	Course Introduction	
	January 10	Chuck Adler "Why Science Fiction and Fantasy are Important for your Life" TED Ursula K. Le Guin author's note from <i>The Left Hand of Darkness</i>	Labor-based Grading Contract Acknowledgment
	January 12	Evan Selinger "Pondering a World Without Humans"	
2	January 15	MLK Jr. Day (no class)	
	January 17	Guest lecture from Dr. James Wicks Watch "3 Basics of Cinematography"	Discussion Lead 1A
	January 19	Donna Haraway "A Cyborg Manifesto" (PDF pages 3-7, 13-14, 62-66)	
3	January 22	Watch <i>Ex Machina</i> TM	Discussion Lead 1B
	January 24	Watch <i>Ex Machina</i> TM	
	January 26	Mary Shelley <i>Frankenstein</i> Chapter 5	
4	January 29	Mary Shelley <i>Frankenstein</i> Chapter 10	Discussion Lead 1C Read/Watch Journal 1
	January 31	Isaac Asimov <i>I, Robot</i> "Runaround" (pp. 25-45)	
	February 2	Isaac Asimov <i>I, Robot</i> "Reason" (pp. 46-67)	
5	February 5	Isaac Asimov <i>I, Robot</i> "Evidence" (pp. 170-197)	Discussion Lead 1D
	February 7	Isaac Asimov <i>I, Robot</i> "The Evitable Conflict" (pp. 198-224)	
	February 9	Watch <i>Westworld</i> 1.1 "The Original" TM (available for purchase on most streaming platforms)	Read/Watch Journal 2
6	February 12	Phillip K. Dick <i>Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep</i> (aka <i>Blade Runner</i>) Ch. 1-3 (pp. 1-32)	Discussion Lead 1E
	February 14	Phillip K. Dick <i>Do Androids...</i> Ch. 4-7 (pp. 33-78)	

	February 16	Phillip K. Dick <i>Do Androids...</i> Ch. 8-10 (pp. 79-113)	
7	February 19	Phillip K. Dick <i>Do Androids...</i> Ch. 11-13 (pp. 114-144)	Discussion Lead 1F
	February 21	Phillip K. Dick <i>Do Androids...</i> Ch. 14-16 (pp. 145-183)	
	February 23	Phillip K. Dick <i>Do Androids...</i> Ch. 17-19 (pp. 184-210)	
8	February 26	Phillip K. Dick <i>Do Androids...</i> Ch. 20-22 (pp. 211-230)	Discussion Lead 2A
	February 28	<i>Blade Runner 2049</i> TM	
	March 1	<i>Blade Runner 2049</i> TM	Read/Watch Journal 3
	March 4-8	Spring Break (no class)	
9	March 11	Midterm Progress Checkpoint	
	March 13	AR (agumented reality)/Video Game day (reading/assignment TBD)	
	March 15	Watch <i>Cyberpunk Edgerunners</i> 1.6 "Girl on Fire" TM (Netflix)	
10	March 18	N.K. Jemisin "Valedictorian"	Discussion Lead 2B
	March 20	Watch <i>Black Mirror</i> 3.4 "San Junipero" and 5.1 "Striking Vipers" (Netflix)	
	March 22	Ursula K. Le Guin, "Nine Lives"	Read/Watch Journal 4
11	March 25	Watch <i>Electric Dreams</i> 1.2 "Autofac" (Amazon Prime Video)	Discussion Lead 2C
	March 27	Paolo Bacigalupi <i>The Windup Girl</i> TM Ch. 1-4 (pp. 1- 59) <i>Midterm Follow-up Deadline</i>	
	March 29 – April 1	Easter Recess (no class)	
12	April 3	Paolo Bacigalupi <i>The Windup Girl</i> TM Ch. 5-8 (pp. 60- 100)	Discussion Lead 2D
	April 5	Paolo Bacigalupi <i>The Windup Girl</i> TM Ch. 9-12 (pp. 101-140)	Analytical Meta-essay Phase 1
13	April 8	Paolo Bacigalupi <i>The Windup Girl</i> TM Ch. 13-16 (pp. 141-166)	Discussion Lead 2E
	April 10	Paolo Bacigalupi <i>The Windup Girl</i> TM Ch. 17-20 (pp. 167-196)	

	April 12	Paolo Bacigalupi <i>The Windup Girl</i> TM Ch. 21-24 (pp. 197-218)	
14	April 15	Paolo Bacigalupi <i>The Windup Girl</i> TM Ch. 25-28 (pp. 198-250)	Discussion Lead 2F Analytical Meta-essay Phase 2
	April 17	Paolo Bacigalupi <i>The Windup Girl</i> TM Ch. 29-32 (pp. 251-282)	
	April 19	Paolo Bacigalupi <i>The Windup Girl</i> TM Ch. 33-39 (pp.283-311)	Read/Watch Journal 5
15	April 22	Paolo Bacigalupi <i>The Windup Girl</i> TM Ch. 40-Epilogue (pp. 312-359)	
	April 24	Generative AI day (reading/assignment TBD)	Analytical Meta-essay Phase 3
	April 26	Final Progress Checkpoint	
FINALS	April 29	10:30 am – 1:00 pm *Extended Office Hours for Final Follow-up	