



DREAMS OF (HUMAN) MACHINES

BYRNE SEMINAR SPRING 2015

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Wednesdays, 1:10-2:30pm (class begins Jan 20 and ends March 31)
Scott Hall 202

Professor Nicola Behrmann

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Office Hours: by appointment

This seminar examines the role of machines and automatons in regard to the modernist crisis of representation, the fantasy of artificial procreation, and the connection between art and life. Beginning with a discussion of several key passages of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, we will investigate the ways in which dreams of human machines are linked to ways to overcome a loss; we will then look at the ways in which 19th century hysterics and their doctors influenced each other; try to make sense of Dada poems and André Breton's Surrealist concept of "automatic writing," read Franz Kafka's horror story "In the Penal Colony," travel to the Philadelphia Museum of Art to see Marcel Duchamp's famous installation *The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even (The Large Glass)*, and watch science fiction movies such as Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) and Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* (1982).

Purchase:

May Shelley, *Frankenstein*. Dover Publications (1994). **ISBN-10:** 0486282112 **ISBN-13:** 978-0486282114

All other class materials are either uploaded on Sakai (Resources) or accessible online (via links in the class schedule)

Class Schedule (tentative)

Week 1 (Jan 21)

Introduction: Being on the phone

*text: Walter Benjamin: "The Telephone" (Sakai); *movie clips: Alfred Hitchcock, *Dial M for Murder* (1954), *Psycho* (1960), and *The Birds* (1963)

Week 2 (Jan 28)

My Mother/My Monster

*text: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus* (1818), chapters 1-5, reading the whole novel is recommended

Week 3 (Feb 4)

Hysteria, Body, Technology

*text: Gilles Deleuze, "Hysteria" (in *Francis Bacon*, pp. 44-54)
http://thecomposingrooms.com/research/reading/2013/48829_0826466478.pdf); *movie clip: Alice Winocour, *Augustine* (2012)

Week 4 (Feb 11)

"Dada": War Machine and Magic Bishops

*texts: Hugo Ball, *Tenderenda* (1917) and Sound Poems; Ernst Jandl, "Schtzngrmmm"
1st response paper due (3 pages)

Week 5 (Feb 18)

The Vamp and the Machine

*movie: Fritz Lang, *Metropolis* (1927) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Za2ALUI97EA>; Andreas Huyssen, "The Vamp and the Machine" (Sakai)

Week 6 (Feb 25)

Torture Machines: Body and Law

Franz Kafka, "In the Penal Colony" and "Before the Law"

Week 7 (March 4)

"Surrealism": Automatic Writing and Memory

*texts: André Breton: "The Automatic Message"; Sigmund Freud: "Mystic Writing Pad"
Guest speaker: Josué Rodríguez, Ph.D. candidate in the Comparative Literatures Program at Rutgers
2nd response paper due (3 pages)

Week 8 (March 11)

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?

*movie: Ridley Scott, *Blade Runner* (rent or buy movie on Amazon Instant)

Spring Break

Week 9 (March 25)

Duchamp Discussion

Week 10 (Saturday, March 28)

Excursion: Duchamp's *Great Glass* in the Philadelphia Museum of Art
3rd response paper due by April 1 (3 pages)