

Making Humans: Creation and Creativity

English 124.007

Fall 2020

T, Th 1-2:30 pm EST

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<https://umich.zoom.us/j/92552424959>
passcode: write

This course considers the idea of human creation from two perspectives: creation of the human and creation by humans. Throughout our time together we will ask fundamental questions about what makes us human, and what role “making” plays in our human experience. The first part of the semester will focus on stories of humanity’s origins. Readings will include creation narratives from a wide range of cultures and excerpts from John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. The second part of the semester will shift slightly as we think about humans making other humans, especially in narratives that seek to circumvent sexual reproduction such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, and the film *Ex Machina* (2014). Along the way, we will consider issues such as gender, sexuality, disability, race, class, procreation, artificial intelligence, and craftsmanship. As this is also composition class, we will spend a significant amount of time discussing technique and strategy and work toward refining our own skills as humans who create through writing.

This class is about writing and academic inquiry, with a special emphasis on literature. Good arguments stem from good questions, and academic essays allow writers to write their way toward answers, toward figuring out what they think. In this writing-intensive course, you will focus on the creation of complex, analytic, well-supported arguments addressing questions that matter in academic contexts. The course also hones your critical thinking and reading skills. Working closely with your peers and the instructor, you will develop your essays through workshops and extensive revision and editing. Readings cover a variety of genres and often serve as models or prompts for assigned essays; the specific questions you pursue in essays are by your own interests.

Learning Goals for English 124:

- To produce complex, analytic, well-supported arguments that matter in academic contexts.
- To read, summarize, analyze, and synthesize complex texts purposefully in order to generate and support writing.
- To analyze the genres and rhetorical strategies that writers use to address particular audiences for various purposes and in various contexts.
- To develop flexible strategies for revising, editing, and proofreading writing of varying lengths.
- To develop strategies for self-assessment, goal-setting, and reflection on the process of writing.

Required Texts:

All texts will be available through our Canvas site. You are of course welcome to purchase a physical copy of *Paradise Lost*, *Frankenstein*, or “The Fifth Head of Cerberus” (available in a short story collection of the same name). If you choose to do so, any edition is fine, but you may want a scholarly edition of *PL* to make use of annotations and footnotes.

Course Requirements:

This course calculates grades a bit differently than you may be used to. You will be assessed on the amount of work that you do, not the quality of your writing. I'll talk more about my reasoning behind this framework, and the logistics in class. The basic requirements, though, are 4 major essays, peer review workshops, and robust and consistent engagement in class (attendance and participation in online discussions).

DAILY COURSE SCHEDULE:

UNIT ONE: CLOSE READING

- Sept 1:** course syllabus and
- Sept 3:** Mike Bunn, "How to Read Like a Writer"
"The Victors"
- Sept 8:** xxx
- Sept 10:** xxx
- Sept 15:** xxx
- Sept 17:** xxx
- Sept 22:** Fill out Revised Labor Contract
Write Personal Narrative about Relationship with writing (20 mins)
Huron and Wyndot creation story
Mishomis: Ojibway origin story
- Sept 24:** Genesis creation story
Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*: pp. 3-6, 15-19, 335-8 (reading pages 6-15 is optional!)
Peer Review Guidelines
- Sept 29:** Jeremiah Chamberlain, "Workshop is not for You"
First draft of Close Reading Essay due
Include 1-2 page memo
- Oct 1:** **Peer Review Workshop**
- Oct 6:** Final Draft due

UNIT TWO: CRITICAL ANALYSIS

- October 8:** *Paradise Lost* Book 4, lines 440-502; Book 7, 59-130, 500-640
- Oct 13:** *Paradise Lost* Book 8, 204-520
- Oct 15:** James Weldon Johnson, "The Creation"
Keith Ratzlaff, "Creation Story"
Nicole Calihan, "The Origin of Birds"
- Oct 20:** Stuart Greene and April Lipinsky "Drafting Introductions" & "Drafting Conclusions"
First Draft of Critical Analysis due
Include 1-2 page memo
- Oct 22:** **Peer Review Workshop**
- Oct 27:** Final Draft of Analytic Argument due

UNIT THREE: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

- Oct 29:** *Frankenstein* –pp. 94
- Nov 3:**
NO CLASS: ELECTION DAY!!!
Visit govote.umich.edu
Text "umvote" to (833)4-UMVOTE = (833)486-8683 or
Email voterregquestions@umich.edu
- Nov 5:** *Frankenstein* pp. 95-259
- Nov 10:** *Frankenstein* pp.259-end
- Nov 12:** Gene Wolf, "The Fifth Head of Cerberus"
- Nov 17:** *Ex Machina*

Nov 19: First Draft of Comparative Analysis due
Include 1-2 page memo
Peer Review Workshop

Nov 24: no class: Thanksgiving Break

Nov 26: no class: Thanksgiving Break

UNIT FOUR: RESEARCH BASED REVISION

Dec 1: Final Draft of Comparative Analysis due
Mark Gaipa, "Breaking Into the Conversation"

Dec 3: Emily Masup, "Why is 'It' Gendered"
Angela Watercutter, "*Ex Machina* has a Serious Fembot Problem"

Dec 8: Library Module on Academic Integrity

Dec 11: Proposal, Bibliography, and Gaipa Map due **1pm EST**

Office Hours:

Office Hours are a great way to ask questions, seek help, or just talk more about things in the text which excite you! We'll meet for at least **one required conference**, during which we'll discuss a draft of one of your essays. I will be holding virtual office hours Wednesdays and Fridays from 3-4pm EST. Please use the [Office Hours Queue](#). If you wish make an appointment outside of his time, send me an email to schedule a meeting.

Zoom Recordings

Course lectures will be audio/video recorded and made available to other students in this course. As part of your participation in this course, you may be recorded. If you do not wish to be recorded, please contact me the first week of class (or as soon as you enroll in the course, whichever is latest) to discuss alternative arrangements.

Peer Review Workshops:

Writing is a social activity. As such, peer review workshops are an integral part of our course. **It is crucial that you participate in peer review workshops as your fellow classmates depend on your feedback.** We will talk more about what genuine, earnest engagement looks like in this setting.

- **If you miss a peer review workshop, you must arrange to receive feedback on your draft to receive credit for completing the draft.** You can meet with a tutor at Sweetland or arrange for another student to read your draft. You must then write a

response to the feedback that you receive and submit your response with your final essay.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice

This classroom constitutes a community, and in order to have a successful community, it is essential that *all* members of the community feel respected. I'll do my best to run class in a way that allows all voices to equally participate and feel comfortable in our space. If there is ever an instance where you do not feel comfortable or welcome for any reason, I urge you to talk with me about it.

Academic Integrity:

Plagiarism may be understood as any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community. **If you commit an act of academic dishonesty in this course either by plagiarizing someone's work or by allowing your own work to be misused by another person, you will face the following consequences:**

- You will fail the assignment and may fail the course.
- I will report the incident to the Director of the English Department Writing Program.
- I will also forward your case, with an explanatory letter and all pertinent materials, to the LSA Assistant Dean of Student Affairs.
- The Dean will determine an appropriate penalty, which may involve academic probation and/or community service.
- If you commit plagiarism while you are already on probation for plagiarism, you may be asked to leave the University.

Accommodations

If you have a disability and need an accommodation to participate in this class or to complete course requirements, please ask Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) to provide documentation of the accommodations that you need. Then, please share this documentation with me as soon as possible, preferably within the first few weeks of class. I will treat as private and confidential any information that you share.

If you do not have a documented disability but feel like you would benefit from further educational support for other reasons, please contact me. I greatly value inclusivity within the classroom and will work with you to find strategies and resources to ensure that you get the most out of this class.