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## English 285

### Document Actions



### English 285, Cari Carpenter, Spring 2007

ENGL 285 H01

Spring 2007

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ARM-D 123

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### Images of Women in Literature

#### The Man-Made Woman: Technology and Women's Bodies

"How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had

selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath; his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing; his teeth of pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips."

-Mary Shelley, Frankenstein

Mary Shelley's classic tale of an ambitious young man who uses electricity and a bit of alchemy to produce a new life form raises critical questions about the implications of (literally) man-made technology. Keeping Shelley's horrifying vision in mind, we will examine how technologies, often developed and controlled by white men, have affected the representations and realities of women's bodies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We will consider technology in a broad sense, as those innovations and practices that promise to improve people's lives--including the skin-lightening and hair-straightening products that were directed at African American women in the early 1900s and the contemporary "hands-free" breast-pump that enables women to work and breast feed simultaneously. Throughout the term, we will ask a series of questions: if we understand technology as that which improves lives, to which lives do we refer? What exactly does "improvement" mean in this context? In this new millennium, we should also consider how women have developed and implemented technology. What does a feminist technology look like? What is the relationship between women and technology in today's literary and cultural representations? We will approach these questions by examining a variety of technologies including plastic surgery, art, the workplace,

reproduction, and medicine.

## **COURSE GOALS**

- A heightened familiarity with and appreciation for representations of women and women's literature;
- A sharpened ability to compare, contrast, and draw connections between literary texts;
- Enhanced close reading, writing, and speaking skills;
- Renewed skill in asking analytical, original, and compelling questions
- An appreciation of the complex relationship between technology, gender, and race.

## **COURSE TEXTS AND MATERIALS**

The following texts are available at the WVU Bookstore. If at all possible, please purchase these editions so that we are all on the same page.

Required Shelley, Frankenstein (Penguin 1992)

Harding Davis, Life in the Iron Mills (Bedford 1998)

Weldon, Life and Loves of a She-Devil (Ballantine 1983)

Butler, Bloodchild (Seven Stories 2nd ed. 2005)

Ishiguro, Never Let Me Go (Vintage paperback 2006)

Coursepack available on e-reserve:

Username: carpenter (all lower case)

Password: 601

Highly Recommended

A writing stylebook like the MLA Handbook or the Brief Holt Handbook

## **REQUIREMENTS**

1. Attendance and Participation (20% of final grade). In addition to prompt and regular attendance, this includes the following:
  - Your participation grade will be based in part on the thoughtfulness of your responses and your overall engagement in our discussions and writing activities. We don't often think of listening as an element of participation, but a productive learning environment is characterized by participants who respect others' words even if they don't agree with them. I welcome debate that is balanced with mutual respect.
  - Completion of assigned readings before coming to class. Our discussions and writing assignments require your familiarity and engagement with these readings.
  - Participation on Mix Discussion Board. You will be expected to post at least 10 replies to the class's discussion board over the course of the semester. These can be responses to others' posts, responses to the reading, or questions the readings or in-class discussions raise for you. The same courtesy and mutual respect maintained in classroom discussions will be expected in these online conversations. Your posts will be evaluated on their engagement with other posts and the issues of the course.
1. Feminist Technologies Project (15%) In a small group or on your own, you will design an original feminist technology and then present it to the class. On the day of your presentation, you will turn in a written description and analysis of your

technology, indicating why it is feminist.

2. Essays (40%) You will write two analytical essays in this course. The first will require a close reading of one assigned text; the second will be a comparison/contrast of two assigned texts.
3. Final Project (25%) The final paper, which constitutes the final exam, will give you the opportunity to examine certain texts and issues in more detail.

### **CLASS POLICIES**

Punctual attendance is required. Unexcused absences are not acceptable. If you must miss a class, please contact me in advance. Poor attendance will adversely affect your final grade (more than three unexcused absences will result in a failing grade for participation). Please make every effort to arrive to class on time; important announcements will often be made in the first few minutes of class. Absences due to serious illness, religious holidays, and personal emergencies will be excused. If a personal emergency or serious health problem arises, please contact the Office of Student Life in E. Moore Hall (293-5611); the Dean will then communicate with me regarding your situation.

Late work is not acceptable. Any assignment handed in after the class period in which it is due will be penalized for lateness (reduced 1/2 letter grade each day it is late, including the day it is due). If a personal emergency arises and you need an extension, speak to me as soon as possible about your situation. Please plan ahead for computer mishaps: always keep a back-up file of your work, and give yourself plenty of time to print.

I do not discuss grades over e-mail. Nor will I meet with a student to discuss the grade of a particular paper until 24 hours after that paper has been returned.

Plagiarism, a form of theft, is illegal. Plagiarism is defined as the submission of work that contains ideas not fully your own: ideas taken from publications, other students, your professors, the Internet, etc. Remember that you are required to cite a source if you include a direct quotation or if you borrow an idea and put it in your own words. If you have questions about the fine line between being influenced by a text or person and plagiarizing its/his/her ideas, cite the source. For a more detailed description of plagiarism, as well as the correct form for citation of sources, see a writing handbook or ask me. The consequences of a proven case of plagiarism may result in an unforgivable "F" in the course.

West Virginia University is committed to social justice. In accordance with that commitment I maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and nondiscrimination. WVU does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, disability, age, veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Any suggestion as how to promote such a positive and open environment in this class is appreciated and given serious attention.

Any student with a disability who needs an accommodation or other assistance in this course should make an appointment to speak with me as soon as possible, and make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services (293-6700 or Voice/TDD 293-7740).

## **SCHEDULE**

Each piece should be read by the date on which it is listed. This schedule is subject to change. Starred items can be found on e-reserves.

T Jan. 9 Introduction

### **Science and Technology**

R Jan. 11 \*Wajcman, "Feminist Critiques of Science and Technology"; \*Nelkin and Lindee, "The Media-ted Gene"; \*Zuckerman, "Crusader for Women in Science"; Martin, "The Egg and the Sperm" (see handout)

T Jan. 16 Frankenstein (Author's Introduction-Chapter 8)

R Jan. 18 Frankenstein (Chapters 9-12); \*Haynes, "Frankenstein and the Monster"

T Jan. 23 Frankenstein (Chapters 13-19); \*Toole, "Ada Byron, Lady Lovelace"

R Jan. 25 Frankenstein (to end)

### **Technologies of the Workplace**

T Jan. 30 \*Baxandall and Gordon, "Speed-Ups"; \*Wertheimer, "Slave Women" (118-27); *Excerpts from The Lowell Offering*; Baxandall and Gordon, "Industrial Health"

R Feb. 1 Life in the Iron Mills

T Feb. 6 \*Baxandall and Gordon, "A Puerto Rican Fights for a Garment Job"; \*Cowan, "Conclusion" Essay 1 due (in class)

R Feb. 8 \*Brodine, "Woman Sitting at the Machine, Thinking";

\*Potter, "Las Lechuzas"; \*Adilman, "Piece Work"

T Feb. 13 \*Moore, "Introduction"; \*Brown, "My Other Life"; \*Luna, "Walk in Beauty"; \*Brock, "After the Storm"; \*Miller, "A Long Hard Road" Film: Silkwood

### **Technologies of Appearance**

R Feb. 15 *Urla and Swedlund, "The Anthropometry of Barbie";* Atwood, "The Female Body"; \*Brumberg, Illustrations from The Body Project; Website: [http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.ca/film\\_fullscreen\\_evo.html](http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.ca/film_fullscreen_evo.html)

T Feb. 20 *Bordo, "Material Girl";* Gerhart, "Nipped in the bud"; Weldon, Life and Loves of a She-Devil (Chapters 1-11)

R Feb. 22 *Colen, "Change Your Looks, Change Your Life";* Hull, "After Abuse"; Life and Loves of a She-Devil (Chapters 12-19)

T Feb. 27 Life and Loves of a She-Devil (to end)

R Mar. 1 *Excerpt from Peiss, Hope in a Jar;* Advertisements for skin-lighteners and hair straighteners; \*Excerpt from Mothers of Invention, "Sarah Breedlove Walker"; Website: [http://mojones.com/mother\\_jones/MJ98/lauerman.html](http://mojones.com/mother_jones/MJ98/lauerman.html)

### **Technologies of Health and Medicine**

T Mar. 6 *Lerner, "Chemical Reaction";* Excerpt from Fadiman, "The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down"; \*Gollub, "Human Rights is a U.S. Problem, Too"

R Mar. 8 NO CLASS

T Mar. 13 *Cartwright, "Women, X-rays and Public Culture";*

"Cathy," from *Beauty Secrets*; Butler, "The Evening and the Morning and the Night"

### **Technologies of Reproduction**

R Mar. 15 *Sims, Excerpt from The Story of My Life*; Kapsalis, Terri, "Mastering the Female Pelvis: Race and the Tools of Reproduction"

T Mar. 20 *Davis, Angela, "Racism, Birth Control, and Reproductive Rights"*; Baxandall and Gordon, "Birth Control"; \*Appendix: "Abortion" Film: *Aliens*

R Mar. 22 *Saxton, "Disability Rights and Selective Abortion"*; Fine, "A History of Governmentally Coerced Sterilization: The Plight of the Native American Woman"

SPRING BREAK (Mar. 24-Apr. 1)

T Apr. 3 *Hartouni, "Breached Birth: Anna Johnson and the Reproduction of Raced Bodies"*; Wahlberg, "Ad seeks human egg donor"; \*Moore, "Woman, 57, gives birth to desired son"; Butler, "Bloodchild" Essay 2 due (in class)

### **Computers and Cyberspace**

R Apr. 5 \*Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs"; Dibbell, "A Rape in Cyberspace": [http://www.ludd.luth.se/mud/aber/articles/village\\_voice.html](http://www.ludd.luth.se/mud/aber/articles/village_voice.html)

T Apr. 10 \*Kendall, "MUDder? I Hardly Know `Er! Adventures of a Feminist MUDder"; \*Nesbitt, "New Faces of Racism"

R Apr. 12 Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (Chapters 1-6)

T Apr. 17 Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (Chapters 7-16)

R Apr. 19 Ishiguro, Never Let Me Go (to end) Film: Blade Runner

T Apr. 24 Feminist Technology Presentations 1-2

R Apr. 26 Feminist Technology Presentations 3-4 Last Day of Class

W May 2 Final Project due to my mailbox (by 5 p.m.)

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