

**Studies in the Transhuman:  
Genetics, Robotics, Information Technology,  
Nanosciences Biopolitics and the Human Future (s)  
SLN 89887 M 6:05 PM -08:55 PM LSA 109  
Dr. Paul Privateer CSPO/FMS**

**Course Description**

This course performs a rigorous critique of the human/transhuman, exploring both in terms of their profound historical, scientific, economic, political and ideological implications. The course has two focal points: one, predominantly historical, anthropological and philosophical in nature; the second, a cultural studies focus on the ideological parameters of contemporary transhuman bioinformatic sciences.

First off, the course will assess Enlightenment notions of the *human*—exploring the scientific and technological discourse of “homo sapien”—before then moving toward the more contemporary notion of the transhuman and its ideological import for near and not so near future global culture.

We will explore several questions: what ideological forces underlie the socio-scientific production of the “human” in the eighteenth century (what was gained by this new representation of “man”) what philosophical, scientific and cultural itineraries has this “human” construct taken since its Enlightenment birth (Darwin, Nietzsche, Heidegger, The Frankfurt School, existentialism, Freud, Derrida, Watson and Crick, Sturtevant and Venter come to mind), what does a deconstruction of the “*trans*” in transhuman reveal, and what would a semiotics of the presumed “natural evolution” (implicit in grammatical positionings of the “human/transhuman” construct) yield. In essence what is the grammar of this complex ideology?

Once we have performed an autopsy on the historical anatomy of the “human,” we will then explore how various representations of the transhuman have evolved. The point of all of this to construct an archeology of both the human and the transhuman so that we can then submerge that archeology within the dominant ambitions of postmodern science and technology, particularly in the area of genetic research, robotic engineering, computer, information and digital technology and the nanosciences. By the end of the course we will be able to read this NY Times blurb—

In the next fifty years, life spans will extend well beyond a century. Our senses and cognition will be enhanced. We will have greater control over our emotions and memory. Our bodies and brains will be surrounded by and merged with computer power. The limits of the human body will be transcended as technologies such as artificial intelligence, nanotechnology, and genetic engineering converge and accelerate. With them, we will redesign ourselves and our children into varieties of posthumanity.

and identify its ideological proteins (if you will). Perhaps the prime biopolitical question for the course asks whether human technology has always been a transhumanizing force, and, if so, from where does that production arise, what are its long term effects and are there any limits to human bioprogress?

## **Course Requirements**

Students will be asked to provide five, 3-5 page critiques of course texts (50%) and a research presentation/paper (50%). Attendance is mandatory.

## **Course Texts**

Hankins, Basalia, Hannaway, *Science and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge Studies in the History of Science)

Foucault, *Order of Things*

Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution*

Garreau, *Radical Evolution: The Promise and Peril of Enhancing Our Minds, Our Bodies*

Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman : Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*

Hughes, *Citizen Cyborg: Why Democratic Societies Must Respond to the Redesigned Human of the Future*

Young, *Designer Evolution: A Transhumanist Manifesto*

Namm, *More Than Human: Embracing the Promise of Biological Enhancement*

Kurzweil, *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*

## **Syllabus**

Aug 21: Intro/Mapping: Classical Myths of the Transhuman/The Transhuman Comic Book Hero/The Pomo Transhuman.

Aug 28: Constructing the Human/Text: *The Order of Things : An Archaeology of Human Sciences* (Vintage): Part 1: Chapters 1-4

Sep 4 (Holiday)

Sep 11: Foucault Part 1: Chapters 5-6; Part 2 Chapters 7-8

Sep 18: Foucault Part 2 9-10.

Sep 25: *Science and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge Studies in the History of Science), Chapters 1-3.

Oct 2: *Science and the Enlightenment*, Chapters 4-6.

Oct 9: Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* Chapter 1-7.

Oct 16: Fukuyama, *Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution* Chapter 8-12.

Oct 23: *Garreau, Radical Evolution: The Promise and Peril of Enhancing Our Minds, Our Bodies*

Oct 30: Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman : Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*

Nov 6: Young, *Designer Evolution: A Transhumanist Manifesto*

Nov 13: Dewdney, *Last Flesh: Life in the Transhuman Era*

Nov 20: Namm, *More Than Human: Embracing the Promise of Biological Enhancement*  
Kurzweil, *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*

Nov 27: Hughes, *Citizen Cyborg: Why Democratic Societies Must Respond to the Redesigned Human of the Future*

Dec 4: Last Class: research presentations