Posthuman Rhetorics

Level
Advanced Argumentation undergraduate course

Themes
- Rhetorical Theory
- Plant/Animal Studies
- Cyborg/Digital Studies
- Ecocriticism

Key Texts
Sid Dobrin, *Writing Posthumanism*

Charlie Lowe and Pavel Zemliansky, *Writing Spaces: Readings on Writing*

Casey Boyle, *Rhetoric as a Posthuman Practice*

Elizabeth Swanstrom, *Animal, Vegetable, Digital*

Debra Hawhee, *Rhetoric in Tooth and Claw*

Jennifer Clary-Lemon, *Planting the Anthropocene*

Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*

Donna Haraway, "Cyborg Manifesto"

Jacques Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am*

Michel Foucault, "Animality and Insanity"

Jenny Rice, "Unframing Models of Public Distribution"

G. A. Kennedy, "A Hoot in the Dark"

Richard Powers, *The Overstory*

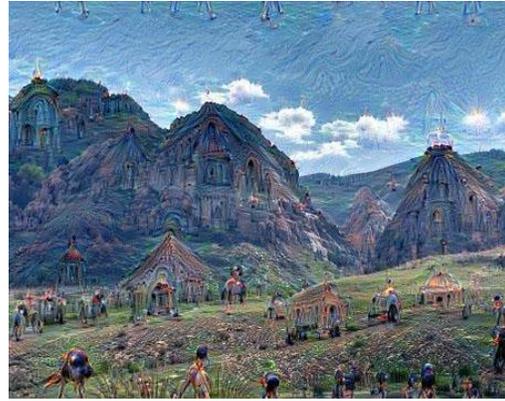Jeff VanderMeer, *Annihilation*

Image generated by Google's artificial neural networks (ANNs).

Can animals reason? Do plants write? Do objects shape human agency? Can we separate the digital from the material? This course considers these and other questions through a diverse range of posthumanist theories. By tracing histories of rhetoric and writing which counter or trouble humanism (as set forth by students of Aristotle and Descartes) that deny agency to nonhumans, this course considers writing beyond, after, before, and even in opposition to humanism and the human.

As we question the human as a stable category, we will encounter the persuasive possibilities of *alogos*, sensation, and affect and confront the limits of argumentation based on pure categories of (human) logos, reason, and rationality. Readings include works from classical and contemporary rhetoricians who engage the role of nonhumans in rhetoric and theorists of (post)humanistic inquiry. The course takes up lines of research concerning the role of posthumanism in writing and rhetoric.

Learning Outcomes
- Read and analyze recent scholarship about posthumanism and writing studies
- Survey theoretical scholarship within and outside rhetoric and writing studies
- Consider issues of nonhuman agency and technology within and beyond humanism
- Develop sustainable reading, research, and writing practices

Major Assignments

	Points	/100

Discussion Posts, 1200 words
15

Students will compose 4 discussion posts (500 words each) throughout the semester. 400 words for each post and 100 words for comments. Posts are focused, crafted, edited and then carefully revised. They may be assigned in class or for homework. Review the detailed schedule below for specific deadlines. Posts are due before class, and students should respond to two other student posts before the following class.

Group Writing Projects, 1200 words
15

Hivemind Group Writing Project, 600 words   *5*

Students will compose as part of a long-form experimental group writing project over the course of 5 class periods. During each of the four writing sessions, students will be responsible for generating 150 words per person in various forms and in response to prompts. Student work will be turned in and evaluated individually. In the final session, we will revise the document in groups for clarity, cohesion, and style using the writing and editing skills we have developed all semester.

Discussion Panels, 500 words   *10*

In groups of three, students will lead a 30 minute discussion of one scheduled reading. Students will compose a 250-word discussion plan which they will submit one week prior to discussion. The discussion plans include an outline, definitions of keywords/ideas, and a summary of the reading. Groups are responsible for including one multimedia text (music, images, video, ect.) to pair with the reading. Students will individually submit a 250 word reflection no later than two weeks after the discussion.

Individual Writing Assignments, 2800 words
45

Paper Proposal, 700 words   *10*

This assignment is a proposal for the final project. Students will identify a topic for their paper and address important sources they will discuss as well as opportunities and potential obstacles for their proposed projects.

Annotated Bibliography, 500   *10*

This assignment is an annotated bibliography for the final paper comprised of a 100-word introductory statement followed by 5 entries, each a minimum of 80-words.

Class Infographics, 100 words   *5*

We will be building a class corpus of infographics depicting the work of foundational posthuman figures. By the end of the semester, students are responsible for contributing a 100-word infographic documenting one figure relevant to posthuman writing. Examples may be found at https://thinkerthoughtinfo.tumblr.com.

Final Paper, 1600 Words   *20*

The final assignment is an argumentative paper exploring a keyword, aspect, or application of posthuman writing. Papers will engage one of the numerous constellations of concepts within the larger framework of posthumanism (such as affect, anthropocentrism, cyborg feminism, animal studies, naturecultures, science studies, ecocriticism, and new materialism). Papers will build from proposals, annotated bibliographies, and class discussions to produce an argument concerning posthumanism and showcasing the writing skills we will practice all semester. Papers may range from readings of films or texts to philosophical engagements with posthumanism.

In-Class Assignments, 250 words
35

Class Participation   *20*

Class participation includes contributing to discussions; coming to class prepared and on time, participating in class activities; providing adequate drafts for group work; and paying close attention to lectures and class activities. In general, students are expected to contribute constructively to each class session. Because this course relies heavily on workshops and in-class writing activities, students should bring computers and writing tools to each class meeting. This grade includes minor assignments such as weekly writing as well as other homework and classwork assignments.

Twitter Participation   *5*

You are required to participate outside of class by posting at least once per week on Twitter (using #UFPostHum in your tweet). Tweets should consist of responses to readings or class discussions, relevant content you wish to share with the class, new concepts you encounter, and responses to other student Tweets.