FS 101: Academic Discourse I  
Section 23: “In Our Image”  
Fall 2008  
Bob Roos

Home page: http://cs.allegheny.edu/~rroos/fs101F2008/  
or http://cs.allegheny.edu/wiki/fs101F2008

Course Description and Syllabus

Office Hours: My office is in Alden 105, extension 2883. My hours are Mon. 2:30 – 4:00 p.m., Tues. 9:30 – 11:30 a.m., Wed. 1:30 – 3:00 p.m., Thur. 10:30 – 11:30 a.m., and by appointment. The best way to schedule an appointment is to send me an e-mail.

Texts: Gaby Wood, Edison’s Eve: A Magical History of the Quest for Mechanical Life; Mary Shelley, Frankenstein; Diana Hacker, A Writer’s Reference, Sixth Edition; Jo Sprague and Douglas Stuart, The Speaker’s Compact Handbook, Second Edition. NOTE: you will probably continue to use the last two books in FS 102 and maybe later courses, so this is an investment for the future, not just for this class.

Learning Objectives: By the end of this course, you should have

- learned the major historical events in the evolution of automata and robots
- learned about a number of instances of “artificial life” in historical and contemporary literature and the other arts
- improved your information-seeking skills
- developed an awareness of your own writing style — your strengths and weaknesses — and begun to develop a strategy for improving your writing
- become more aware of your public speaking strengths and weaknesses and begun to make improvements
- gained familiarity with the College: its educational philosophy, its graduation requirements, the opportunities and services it can provide

Grading: (All percentages are approximate!)

- Attendance, participation in discussions approx. 20%
- Two formal papers approx. 15% each
- Student-led discussion approx. 5%
- Two formal oral presentations approx. 10% each
- Other assignments (short papers, Web, etc.) approx. 15%
- Take-home essay exam approx. 10%

Policies:

E-mail.

Handed out on 29 August 2008  
Handout # 2
“The use of email is a primary method of communication on campus. … All students are provided with a campus email account and address while enrolled at Allegheny and are expected to check the account on a regular basis.” [The Compass, 2008–2009, p. 5]

I will sometimes need to send out announcements to the class about things such as clarifications to assignments, changes in the class schedule, or other matters. I will use your Allegheny College e-mail account to do this. It is your responsibility to check your e-mail (I suggest at least once a day), and to make certain that your e-mail is working correctly (able to send and receive messages).

**Attendance and Participation.** It is expected that students in this course will attend every class. Attendance will be taken periodically and a portion of the final grade will be determined by attendance. You are expected to be present in mind as well as body, so participation in class discussions is also expected, as well as asking questions of other student speakers during their oral presentations, offering constructive comments, both oral and written, about one another’s work, and so on.

Whenever possible, advise me of legitimately excusable absences (such as illness, death in the family, or certain College sponsored activities) *prior to* the class you will be missing. (For instance, if you are ill on Tuesday evening and are fairly certain you will be unable to attend Wednesday’s class, send me an e-mail or phone me to let me know the night before if at all possible.)

Here are examples of excuses that are not valid: “I’m going home for the weekend and my parents are picking me up at 10 on Friday.” “My alarm didn’t go off and my roommate didn’t wake me up.” “I have two exams on Monday and I need to study for them.” “I didn’t prepare my oral presentation so there’s no point in showing up.” (I could list many more examples!)

If you know in advance of specific conflicts due to athletic events or other College-related reasons, please have the coach or other college official provide me with a list of dates and reasons as soon as possible so I can avoid problems in scheduling discussions, oral presentations, etc.

**Late Policy.** Every assignment will have a given due date and time (usually the time will be “at the beginning of class” on the due date). If the assignment is handed in after that, there will be a late penalty (minimum of 15% of the grade, increasing as more time passes). No assignment will be accepted more than one week after the due date. In this course, writing assignments will be followed by a “peer review” in which you will look at some of your classmates’ papers. Failure to hand in a paper on time will be very disruptive to this process (and will, of course, also negatively affect your grade).

**Special Needs and Disabilities** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Learning Commons at 332-2898.

**Collaboration, Plagiarism, and the Honor Code.** You are encouraged to periodically review the specifics of the Honor Code as stated in the College Catalogue and elsewhere.
No collaboration with others is permitted unless specifically provided for as part of the assignment. All assignments must consist of your own, original work. Whenever specific phrases and sentences or, more generally, non-trivial ideas from outside sources are used, they must be clearly and unambiguously identified. Taking someone else’s ideas and simply paraphrasing them is not enough to avoid charges of plagiarism — you must cite the sources of ideas other than your own.

Rough Schedule

We will schedule several movies during the semester; titles, dates, and times will be announced later. (I may be able to provide free pizza)!

There are several major sections of the course:

- Introductory (about the course; about getting adjusted; about college life in general; sample readings and discussion) (1 week)
- Early myths of “artificial people” — Pygmalion, Talos, etc. (1 week)
- History of automata up to the 19th century — material in Wood’s book and other sources (2 weeks)
- Frankenstein (2 weeks) (evening movie)
- Film treatments: Metropolis, Der Golem (2 weeks) (evening movies)
- Connections (dance: Coppelia, politics: “Cyborg Citizen,” literary theory: postmodernism and simulation, more) (2 weeks)
- More modern conceptions: Turing’s test, AI, robotics research, etc. (2 weeks)

In addition, several weeks will be devoted to student oral presentations. There will be regular assignments that make use of the writing and speaking books.

A typical week will consist of:

- one day devoted to (student-led) discussions of the ideas in the readings
- one day devoted to topics in writing, research, oral presentation, etc.
- one day devoted to miscellaneous topics — advising, campus services, study skills, etc.

Most days will have reading assignments; these will be posted on the course Web page a week in advance.