

SCLA 102
Transformative Texts: Critical Thinking & Communication II:
Modern World

Course Theme: Artificial Intelligence in the loop: Humans in charge

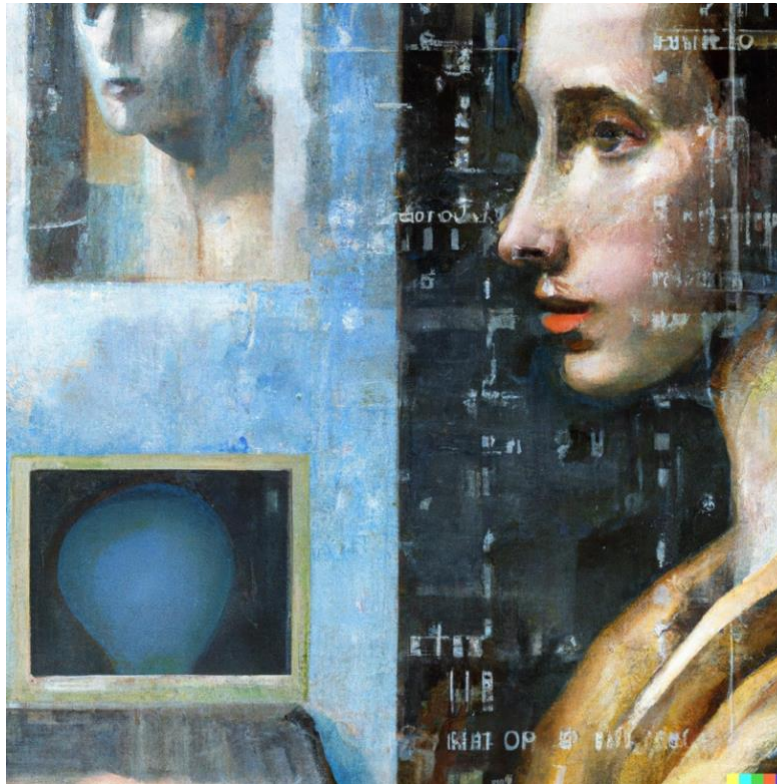


Image co-selected by Yan Cong and OpenAI DALLÉ-2, with the prompt: A Johannes Vermeer style painting of artificial intelligence and human intelligence

Spring 2023

Tu/Th - 10:30-11:45am - FRNY 1043

Instructor: Dr. Yan Cong | Email: cong4@purdue.edu | Office Hours: Wednesday 3:00-4:00pm and by appointment | Office: Stanley Coutler (SC) room G015

Course Description

SCLA 102 is based on the fundamental premise that great texts, including novels, plays, speeches, essays, or poetry as well as film and digital media, inform and inspire students, encourage their creative and imaginative capacities, help them see the world from different perspectives, and broaden their worldviews. Students will examine a series of texts, seeking to understand the contexts in which these texts were produced as well as what they mean to us today. What do our readings tell us about the pains and pleasures of being human, the use and abuse of power, and our relationship with nature and our communities? How do they advance our self-understanding? How do they increase our understanding of other people and their perspectives?

SCLA 102 fulfills the Oral Communication requirement in the University's Core Curriculum. It is dedicated to developing our students' ability to convey information through oral presentations, advancing their understanding of the importance of rhetorical situations and choices; analyzing and constructing presentations for different audiences; gathering and evaluating sources for presentations, and using visual aids effectively.

SCLA 102 fulfills 3 credit hours of the 15-credit hour Cornerstone certificate program. Purdue's nationally recognized Cornerstone program shares the wisdom and vision of the Liberal Arts with all Purdue students, enhancing their foundational knowledge while deepening their ability to see unity across disciplines, appreciate ambiguity, and love learning. Cornerstone seeks to develop engaged Purdue graduates who can respond creatively and flexibly to the challenges of a diverse world.

Course Theme: Our theme for the course will be "AI in the loop: Humans in charge." The goal of this course is to provide a platform where we can think about technology, AI, and humans – what kind of creatures are we as humans? What is our role in this modern world? What is our relationship with AI? We hope to address these questions by examining how the human characters in our readings undergo personal transformations, reflecting on their connections with non-human creatures and machines, and how it may apply to the world around us.

Course Learning Outcomes

Oral Communication

By the end of the semester, students will:

1. Demonstrate effective, professional delivery, designing and adapting appropriate verbal appeals through vocal intonation and non-verbal cues.
2. Distinguish and apply appropriate informative, persuasive, explanatory, interrogatory and argumentative strategies and techniques in the discussions and in formal presentations.
3. Organize presentations with effective supporting materials.
4. Locate and evaluate effective sources of information.

- Engage critically with transformative texts, drawing on multiple perspectives, including the individual, the historical, and the contemporary.

Required texts

This course will use a combination of class-wide texts and online videos. Students must purchase or obtain texts 1-5 through library.

- Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1962). *Goethe's Faust*. Anchor: 5th or later Edition.
- Mary Shelley (2020). *Frankenstein*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Ralph Waldo Emerson (2018). *Self-Reliance*. Martino Fine Books.
- K Allado-McDowel (2021). *Pharmako-AI*. Ignota Books.
- Brian Christian (2020). *The Alignment Problem: Machine Learning and Human Values*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Materials provided by the professor:

- Alex Garland (2014). *Ex Machina*. Film.
- Spike Jonze (2013). *Her*. Film

Assignments and Composition of Grade:

Assignment	Points available (percentage of grade)	Due
Discussion and Attendance	350 pts. (35%)	Class participation is graded for each week for 10 weeks (The weeks with Speech 1,2,3, Final Speech, and Spring break are excluded).
Speech 1	100 pts. (10%)	01/16 or 01/18
Speech 2	150 pts. (15%)	02/13 or 02/15
Speech 3	150 pts. (15%)	03/28 or 04/02
Final Speech	250 pts. (25%)	04/16, 04/18, 04/23, or 04/25
Optional Extra Credit	Up to 50 pts. (up to 5%)	Due 04/01 or 04/25 depending on the option

Grading scale

A+ 100-99%	B+ 89-88%	C+ 79-78%	D+ 69-68%	F 59% and below
A 98-93%	B 87-83%	C 77-73%	D 67-63%	
A- 92-90 %	B- 82-80%	C- 72-70%	D- 62-60%	

Assignment breakdown

Discussion and attendance: Participation is worth 35 points per week and totals are updated at the end of each week. Scores are based on active engagement in the class, including responding to large group questions, participating in small group discussions, and other class activities. I expect each student to read the day's reading assignment, bring physical copies of the assigned readings to class, and be prepared to contribute ideas on the issues discussed. Other factors, such as absences, persistent lateness to class, disruptive behavior, or unauthorized use of technology during class can negatively impact this portion of the grade. Participation is worth a total of 350 points.

Speech 1: Icebreaker narrative speech. The first speech you will give this semester allows you to focus on a journey in your life. For example, most of you have left your hometown (and some of you, your country of birth) to come to Purdue. What lessons did you learn on that journey (e.g., moving from a large city where life was fast-paced to a slower pace in a medium-sized Midwestern town)? How did modern technology help or harm your adjustment? Most of the presentation should be devoted to the lessons you learned. Each student's presentation needs to be 3-5 minutes in length.

Speech 2: This speech is a descriptive speech. There will be 6 groups. 5 students as a group give a group presentation. We will have finished reading *Faust*, *Frankenstein*, and *Self-reliance* at this point. Your task is to describe your favorite part of these three texts as a group, and compare them to something you love, which can be a novel, film, piece of music, streaming series, computer game, or work of art that intrigues you. The presentation must be 15-20 minutes in length. Your group can include film clips, music, or other images in your presentation. No more than 3 minutes of the 15-20 minutes allotted for this presentation can include film clips or music. The time spent showing or playing these clips will be included in the overall time of your presentation. The presentation must include a discussion of the artist. It must also include a description of the main themes of the work that you love, and importantly how it relates to the texts we have read. Most of the presentation must be devoted to a discussion of these work's themes.

Speech 3: This assignment is a persuasive speech. There will be 6 groups. 5 students as a group give a group presentation. In keeping with the course theme, your group will use one of the texts you have read this semester and unpack it in a way that allows you to take one side of an argument. For example, one issue that spills out of a discussion of *The Alignment Problem* is the issue of AI ethics. Should the government (state or federal government) play a role in regulating AI usage? The presentation must be 15-20 minutes in length.

Final Speech: For this 5-minute presentation, students will have two options. First, students can make a pitch for a new technology that you need to “sell” the class on as if we are investors or other authorities with the power to make your idea a reality. Second, students can choose to deliver a persuasive argument on a position about which they feel strongly, usually related to a change they would like to see in AI development.

Optional Extra Credit: There are two opportunities for extra credit in this course. Students may select **one** of these options.

- First, students may submit to the Spring Cornerstone Contest. Details on the Spring Cornerstone Contest can be found on the flyer included on the last page of this syllabus.
- Second, students can attend a performance by Purdue Theatre and give a short speech connecting the performance to our class material or theme. The extra credit speech should be 2 minutes in length.

The short extra credit speech associated with these performances is **due in class by April 25**. In addition, students must also upload to Brightspace an image of their ticket and an image of their attendance at the performance.

Brightspace: This semester we will use Brightspace to house important and supplementary information, post grades, and carry out other necessary class functions. *Please be sure to check it regularly.*

Policies and Resources

Attendance: *Attendance at all class meetings is mandatory.* Since active and consistent participation is central to success in a discussion-based course, students should **attend every class**. If a student has a compelling reason to be absent (examples include severe illness, a death in the family, jury duty, military service and so forth), they should contact me in advance of class. It is the student’s responsibility to make up any missed work. ***Unexcused absences will negatively impact the student’s grade. Starting with the third unexcused absence, a student will lose half a letter grade (5%, or 50 points) for each missed class.***

Technology Policy: During class time, *all electronic devices such as phones and laptops should be turned off and put away to avoid distractions.* Use of these devices may result in deductions from the participation grade for the day.

Chatbot Use Policy: Chatbot use is forbidden. Submitting AI-generated writing or research as your own is academic dishonesty and carries the same penalties as [plagiarism](#). If any portion of your assignment was generated by a chatbot, you are in violation of the academic integrity expectations of this course and the university. Your case will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for further review of your status at this University.

Email etiquette policy: All writing is important. Please avoid discourteous emails. Students must use proper email etiquette. An email must begin with a salutation such as “Dear Professor Cong” and end with a proper closing, such as “Sincerely,” or “Yours.”.

Academic Integrity: Please familiarize yourself with Purdue's standards for academic integrity (<https://www.purdue.edu/odos/osrr/academic-integrity/index.html>) and the school Honor Pledge (<https://www.purdue.edu/provost/teachinglearning/honor-pledge.html>). I take all possible incidents of academic misconduct very seriously and will refer them to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities (OSRR) for review at the university level. **Any violation of course policies as it relates to academic integrity will result minimally in a failing or zero grade for that particular assignment, and may result in a failing grade for the course.** In addition, all incidents of academic misconduct will be forwarded to OSRR, where university penalties, including removal from the university, may be considered. Academic integrity is one of the highest values that Purdue University holds. Individuals are encouraged to alert university officials to potential breaches of this value by either emailing integrity@purdue.edu or by calling 765-494-8778. While information may be submitted anonymously, the more information submitted the greater the opportunity for the university to investigate the concern. More details are available on our Brightspace table of contents, under University Policies.

Writing Center: For additional assistance with writing, I strongly recommend Purdue University's writing center (<https://owl.purdue.edu>). You are also welcome to meet with me!

Accessibility: Purdue University strives to make learning experiences accessible to all participants. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, you are welcome to let me know so that we can discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at: drc@purdue.edu or by phone at 765-494-1247.

Mental Health/Wellness Resources: If you find yourself beginning to feel some stress, anxiety and/or feeling slightly overwhelmed, try [WellTrack](#). Sign in and find information and tools at your fingertips, available to you at any time.

For other resources, please contact or see the [Office of the Dean of Students](#). Call 765-494-1747. Hours of operation are M-F, 8 am-5 pm.

Free one-on-one virtual or in-person sessions with a [Purdue Wellness Coach at RecWell](#) can help you navigate through barriers and challenges toward your goals throughout the semester. Sign up is completely free and can be done on BoilerConnect.

If you are struggling and need mental health services, Purdue University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of mental health support, services are available. For help, such individuals should contact [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) at 765-494-6995 during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or by going to the CAPS office on the second floor of the Purdue University Student Health Center (PUSH) during business hours. The [CAPS website](#) also offers resources specific to situations such as COVID-19.

Basic Security Needs: Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. There is no appointment needed and Student Support Services is available to serve students 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Considering the significant disruptions caused by the current global crisis as it related to COVID-19, students may submit requests for emergency assistance from the [Critical Needs Fund](#).

Nondiscrimination Policy: A hyperlink to Purdue's full Nondiscrimination Policy Statement is included on our Brightspace course under University Policies. You may also use the following link for the full statement: https://www.purdue.edu/purdue/ea_eou_statement.php.

Protect Purdue Guidelines: Students are expected to comply with all University COVID-19 guidelines. Please consult the following website for up-to-date guidelines: <https://protect.purdue.edu/policies/>. If you must miss class at any point in time during the semester due to quarantine or isolation, please reach out to me via email so that we can communicate about how you can maintain your academic progress. We will make arrangements based on your particular situation. In addition, any student who has substantial reason to believe that another person is threatening the safety of others by not complying with Protect Purdue protocols is encouraged to report the behavior to and discuss the next steps with their instructor. Students also have the option of reporting the behavior to the [Office of the Student Rights and Responsibilities](#). See also [Purdue University Bill of Student Rights](#) and the Violent Behavior Policy under University Resources in Brightspace.

Emergency Preparation: In the event of a major campus emergency, course requirements, deadlines and grading percentages are subject to changes that may be necessitated by a revised semester calendar or other circumstances beyond the instructor's control. Relevant changes to this course will be posted onto the course website or can be obtained by contacting the instructor via email. *You are expected to read your @purdue.edu email on a frequent basis.*

Syllabus Revisions: If any amendments or changes to the course schedule or other elements of this syllabus are necessary, I will distribute a revised copy of the syllabus over email and Brightspace.

Course Schedule

Week	Date	Topic	Assignment
1	9 Jan.	Introduction and Syllabus overview	
	11 Jan.	Introduction and Syllabus overview	
2	16 Jan.	Speech 1	Half of class will deliver their icebreaker speech
	18 Jan.	Speech 1	Half of class will deliver their icebreaker speech
3	23 Jan.	<i>Faust</i> - Ethical Dilemmas, introduction (up to pp. 56)	
	25 Jan.	<i>Faust</i> - Power and Ambition, <i>Prologue in Heaven</i> and the first scene <i>Night</i> (up to pp. 123)	
4	30 Jan.	<i>Frankenstein</i> - Letters – Chapter 5 (pp. 5-36)	
	1 Feb.	<i>Frankenstein</i> - Chapters 6 – 12 (pp. 37-71)	
5	6 Feb.	Self-reliance - Part 1, up to pp. 65	
	8 Feb.	Self-reliance - Part 2, up to pp. 91	

6	13 Feb.	Speech 2	Group #1,2,3 will deliver their speech
	15 Feb.	Speech 2	Group #4,5,6 will deliver their speech
7	20 Feb.	<i>Pharmako-AI</i> , pp. 41-47, 67-74, 75-84	
	22 Feb.	<i>Pharmako-AI</i> , pp. 85-92, 107-117, 119-130	
8	27 Feb.	<i>Pharmako-AI</i> , Introduction, Notes on composition	
	29 Feb.	<i>Ex Machina</i>	
9	5 Mar.	<i>Ex Machina</i> - Discussion	
	7 Mar.	The alignment problem, Representation pp. 17-50	
10	12 Mar.	Spring Break	
	14 Mar.	Spring Break	
11	19 Mar.	The alignment problem, Fairness pp. 51-81	
	21 Mar.	The alignment problem, Transparency pp. 82-117	
12	26 Mar.	Debate: AI in the loop, Humans in charge	
	28 Mar.	Speech 3	Group #1,2,3 will deliver their speech

13	2 April.	Speech 3	Group #4,5,6 will deliver their speech
	4 April.	<i>Her</i>	
14	9 April.	<i>Her</i> - Discussion; Section overview	
	11 April.	No Class	Out of class work time on Final speech
15	16 April.	Final speech	In-class presentations
	18 April.	Final speech	In-class presentations
16	23 April.	Final speech	In-class presentations
	25 April.	Final speech	In-class presentations, including students who choose extra credit option 2

Speech 3 Presentation Assignment

Description:

This assignment is a persuasive speech. There will be 6 groups. 5 students as a group gives a group presentation. In keeping with the course theme, your group will use one of the texts you have read this semester and unpack it in a way that allows you to take one side in an argument. For example, one issue that spills out of a discussion of The Alignment Problem is the issue of AI ethics. Should the government (state or federal) play a role in regulating AI usage?

Point value:

This speech is worth 150 points.

Duration:

The group presentation should be approximately 15-20 minutes in length.

Question/Answer:

There will be brief question and answer periods after each presentation. Part of the art of public speaking is not only delivering prepared remarks but being able to react well to questions from an audience.

Assessment:

The rubric for this speech and all the other speech (Speech 1 and 2) is included on the second to last page of the syllabus.

Final Speech Presentation Assignment

Description: As their final speech assignment, students will deliver a persuasive presentation. There are two options for this presentation.

- Option 1: Entrepreneurial presentation. If a student selects this option, they will attempt to persuade the audience to invest in their idea for a new technology. For example, it can be a new APP that uses AI to tracking mental health, or a robot that can simulate your favorite singers' voice, and so on.
- Option 2: Position presentation. With this option, students have the opportunity to present their position on an issue they care about in the development AI, with the intention to sway the audience to their point of view. Past examples of position presentations have dealt with such issues as transparency, AI ethics, AI for social science, and so on.

In both cases, it is a good idea to consider your audience as interested in but skeptical toward the presentation that you will make. It is the job of the speaker to win them over. A portion of class time on April 9th will be devoted to working on this presentation. At that time, students should be prepared to share their topics with the professor.

Point value: This presentation is worth 250 points.

Sources: For both topics, students should be prepared to cite outside sources in support of their presentation. *Students must turn in an annotated bibliography of their sources in APA format.* (3-4 sources is a good estimation of the number you should consult.) We will discuss the use of sources in class.

Duration: The presentation should be approximately five minutes in length.

Question/Answer:

There will be brief question and answer periods after each presentation. Part of the art of public speaking is not only delivering prepared remarks but being able to react well to questions from an audience.

Assessment: The rubric for this speech is included on the second to last page of the syllabus.

SCLA Oral Presentation Rubric

	Poor	Average	Good	Excellent
Introduction				
How well did the beginning grab the audience's attention?	0-1	2-5	6-7	8-9
How effectively did the speaker introduce the topic?	0-1	2-5	6-7	8-9
Body				
How effectively did the presentation flow? Was the body well organized?	0-1	2-5	6-7	8-9
How well did the presentation utilize credible supportive evidence? Were there sufficient details (explanations, examples, illustrations, etc.) to support the principal ideas of the presentation?	0-1	2-5	6-7	8-9
Was the central message clear? Was there a clear main point/thesis/"take away" that was easy to identify?	0-1	2-5	6-7	8-9
Conclusion				
How well did the speaker bring the presentation to an end?	0-1	2-5	6-7	8-9
Delivery				
How effective was the speaker's eye contact?	0-1	2-5	6-7	8-9
How effective was the physical delivery? (posture, gestures, distracting movements, movement)	0-1	2-5	6-7	8-9
How effective was the verbal delivery? (tone, rate, volume, vocal fillers)	0-1	2-5	6-7	8-9
How well did the speaker use language (vocabulary, terminology if applicable, sentence structure)? Was the language appropriate for the audience and did it support the effectiveness of the presentation?	0-1	2-5	6-7	8-9
Additional criteria:				
How well did the student participate in other students' presentations? (Asking questions, respectful and consistent attention, etc.)	0-1	2-5	6-7	8-9

Guidelines for 101 and 102 were created by Melinda S. Zook, Germaine Seelye Oesterle Professor of History, and Director, Cornerstone Integrated Liberal Arts, Purdue University (updated, 7/6/23)

Cornerstone Spring 2024 Contest

“Place”



This Spring our contest theme is Place. In the stories we read, as in our lives, place makes a difference. In Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, Athens is a place of law and order, while the woods are filled with enchantment, wonder, and love. Euripides’s *The Medea* is set in front of Jason and Medea’s house: ironically, a place that once sheltered the family is now the setting for mutually assured destruction. What does place mean in the stories you are reading this Spring? What does the University at Ingolstadt or the Swiss Alps mean to Victor Frankenstein, Walden Pond to Thoreau, or the river to Siddhartha? And what does place mean to you? What do the places like where we are from or the places we visit have to do with our sense of self? What do our homes, our schools, a city, or a meadow, mean to us? What feelings, sense of belonging, familiarity, or strangeness do they evoke in us?

Eligibility: Any student currently enrolled in SCLA 101 or 102

Criteria: artwork, essays, short fiction, videos, and poetry inspired by Transformative Texts. A committee composed of Cornerstone faculty will judge submissions based on originality and creativity.

Prizes: Amazon Gift Cards. First Place: \$95; Second place: \$65; 3 honorary mentions: \$35. Winners will automatically be nominated for publication in *The Cornerstone Review*.

Timeline: Submission deadline: **April 1st, 2024**. Please send your submissions to cornerstonecontest@outlook.com. All files must be labeled with your last name. In your entry, please list your full name and your professor’s name. Winners announced: **April 17th, 2024**.