Reshaping Humanity: The Fate of Intelligence, Feelings, and Autonomy in the Digital Age
Honors 2050
(3 Credit Social Science Gen Ed)

Prof. Luke Fernandez
Office Hours: 11:30-12:30 M/W
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Course Description:

Marshall McLuhan is reputed to have once observed: "We shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us." In this course, we examine the fraught relationship humans have with technology -- specifically digital technology. How are we shaping digital media and in turn is it reshaping us? We will examine how this question has been answered by social scientists, fiction writers, and film-makers. Topics include the plausibility of technological determinism, autonomy, human limits, and the transformation of feelings and cognition.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will describe how individuals and groups influence and are influenced by social contexts, institutions, physical environments and/or global process.

Students will apply basic social science concepts, theories, and/or methods to a particular issue and identify factors that influence change.

Students will identify an argument about a social phenomenon and understand alternative explanations.

Students will practice clear and compelling written and/or creative expression

Required Texts:

Brian Christian, The Most Human Human
Yuval Harari, Homo Deus

and additional readings on Canvas
Optional Texts:

Nicholas Carr, The Glass Cage  
Mary Shelly, Frankenstein  
Ian McEwan, Machines Like Me

Assignments:

Two Analytical Essays-25% each (50%)  
Lead Class Discussion-25%  
Class Participation and Reading Questions-25%

Attendance Policy:

Students must attend class regularly and are responsible for all material covered in the course. Attendance will be taken at the start of each class, and a student's overall grade will drop one point starting with the fifth absence and will drop an additional point with each subsequent absence.

Late Work:

Students must take tests and quizzes on the days they are scheduled. Late work will not be accepted unless the student has made special arrangements with the instructor before the due date. Other accommodations will be made only in the case of extraordinary circumstances.

Electronic Devices:

*Turn cell phones off in class. No texting and no talking on phones.* You may bring a laptop to class, but only to take notes.

Cheating and Plagiarism:

Cheating and plagiarism are unacceptable. Students who cheat or plagiarize will receive an F for the assignment and may receive an F as a final grade. A report of the offense will be submitted to the Office of the Dean of Students.

Accommodations:

Any student requiring accommodations or services due to a disability must contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) in room 181 of the Student Service Center. SSD can arrange to provide course materials, including this syllabus, in alternative formats if necessary.
In the event of an emergency such as a snowstorm, we will use Canvas to augment or replace class sessions.

**Schedule of Discussions and Readings:**

View in Canvas.