SCAR 2ER3: RELIGION, BODY AND THE MACHINE
Term: Fall 2022

Instructor: T. Kroeker   **Office:** UH 117
Email: kroekert@mcmaster.ca   **Office Hours:** by appointment
Lecture: Tuesday & Thursday 11:30-
12:20 in MDCL 1010

TA: Irfan Asghar (asghari@mcmaster.ca)   **Office**: UH B120 (Thurs 12:30-1:20)

Course Description

Religious conceptions of embodiment are related to a range of ethical issues in technology, health, and the meaning of life: sexuality, food and the culture of eating, bioengineering and eugenics, designer babies, artificial intelligence, and end of life. This course inquires about the religious ethics of embodiment and disembodiment in various technological and cultural contexts of contemporary life. This term we will examine the religious roots underlying technological progressivism and transhumanism (the view that machines are the next stage in evolutionary development), as well as religious critiques of those movements in relation to the above ethical issues.

Required Materials and Texts (selected; see detailed schedule below)

Wendell Berry, *Remembering*
      Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community
Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines*
Lee Maracle, Downstream, reimagining water
Mark O'Connell, *To Be a Machine*
Kathleen Vermette, *River Woman*
Richard Wagamese, *Medicine Walk*
**course materials will be made available on Avenue to Learn.

Course Evaluation (assignment details to follow on A2L)

Assignment #1: short term essay analyzing and comparing two authors in weeks 2-5 (**ca 1000 words:** 30%). **Due: October 17**

Assignment # 2: short term essay analyzing and comparing two authors in weeks 7-13 (ca 1000 words: 30%). **Due: December 8**

Final assignment: Rumination on course materials of your choice on a topic of your choice related to the course theme (ca 1200-1500 words: 40%). **Due: December 19**

<u>Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings</u>

Week 1: Sept 6 & 8: Intro and Orientation

Week 2 (Sept 13 & 15): Origin Stories
  Readings: O'Connell, *To Be a Machine*, 1-69

  Samuel Butler, "Darwin Among the Machines"

  Genesis 1-11

Week 3 (Sept. 20 & 22): Erotic and Spiritual Machines
  Watch "Rise of the Sex Robots"

  Read: Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines* (pp. 1-65)

Week 4 (Sept. 27 & 29): The Anthropocene in film (film links in A2L)
  Watch "Manufactured Landscapes," film by Jennifer Baichwal

  Or "Watermark," film by Jennifer Baichwal & Edward Burtynsky

Week 5 (Oct. 4 & 6): The Transhuman Future? (Anthropocene continued)
  Selections from Kurzweil (101-156) or O'Connell (70-103, 160-193)

Week 6 (Oct. 10-16):
  Mid-term break, **no classes**

Week 7 (Oct. 18 & 20): Embodiment, Indigenous poetics
  Kathleen Vermette, *River Woman* (selections)

  Lee Maracle, "Water"

Week 8 (Oct. 25 & 27): Bodies, Technology & Poetry
  Read Heidegger, ". . . Poetically Man Dwells . . ." in *Poetry, Language, Thought*

  OR Wendell Berry, "Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community" (title essay)

  NB: prof is away this week, no in class sessions

Week 9 (Nov. 1 & 3): Poetics and why they matter
        Mary Oliver, "The River" & "At the River Clarion"

Week 10 (Nov. 8 & 10): Erotics and Politics
        Wendell Berry, *Remembering*, chps 1-4

Week 11 (Nov. 15 & 17): Sexuality, Animality, Sociality
        Wendell Berry, *Remembering*, chps 5-7

Week 12 (Nov. 22 & 24): Sexuality, Animality, Mortality

        Richard Wagamese, *Medicine Walk*

Week 13 (Nov. 29 & Dec. 1): End of Life
         Wagamese, *Medicine Walk*

Week 14 (Dec. 6 & 8): Wrap-up and Review

Course Policies

Submission of Assignments
All assignments will be uploaded on or before the due date on the A2L dropbox

Grades
Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

MARK	GRADE
90-100	A+
85-89	A
80-84	A-
77-79	B+
73-76	B
70-72	B-
67-69	C+
63-66	C
60-62	C-
57-59	D+
53-56	D
50-52	D-
0-49	F

Late Assignments
Late assignments will be penalized 2% per day. Students needing accommodations should consult the professor in advance of the deadline, since only the professor may grant exceptions or accommodations. If you use MSAF it is YOUR responsibility to contact the professor immediately to discuss accommodations—these are not automatic.

Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

University Policies

Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. **It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.**

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/), located at [https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures- guidelines/](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/)

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:
- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via an online learning platform (e.g. A2L, etc.) using plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish their work to be submitted through the plagiarism detection software must inform the Instructor before the assignment is due. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to the plagiarism detection software. **All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld** (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more details about McMaster's use of Turnitin.com please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity.](www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity)

Courses with an On-line Element

Some courses may use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

Online Proctoring

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lock/restrict their browser or other applications/software during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the test/exam begins.

Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the *Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities* (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, **whether in person or online**.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or sas@mcmaster.ca to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's *Academic Accommodation of Students*

with Disabilities policy.

Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work

[McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)](): In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the [RISO]() policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office ***normally within 10 working days*** of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation <u>or</u> to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.