Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of the void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself. (Mary Shelley, 1831 Preface to *Frankenstein*)

Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* is not only one of the earliest and most famous works of science fiction, it’s also a story that has been retold many times over. This course focuses on Shelley’s novel and on the novels and films it has inspired: James Whale’s films *Frankenstein* and *The Bride of Frankenstein*, H. G. Wells’s *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, and Ridley Scott’s *Blade Runner*. How do later authors and filmmakers retell Shelley’s story? What appeals to them in her novel? What elements of *Frankenstein* do they retain, what do they alter, and why? Exploring these questions, we will examine how authors from Shelley onwards use the Frankenstein story to engage with contemporary scientific developments; our readings will include Darwin’s *The Descent of Man*; Alan Turing’s “Computing Machinery and Artificial Intelligence”; and lectures by John Abernathy and William Lawrence, two doctors whose early nineteenth-century argument about the source of life may have been Shelley’s original inspiration. Our thematic focus on revision parallels the writing practices we will develop in the course: just as a novel or film may creatively rewrite and respond to an earlier story or scientific idea, so is the academic paper a kind of creative rewriting of and response to another text; just as radical revision enables the novelist or filmmaker to create an original work, so does revising and rewriting one’s own drafts enable the student writer to make an original argument. The course’s assignments aim to help students develop a productive writing practice through short exercises as well as drafts and revisions of three formal papers.

**Course Goals**

- to master the fundamental elements of academic arguments, which advance arguable theses that are propelled by a genuine motive, supported by well-analyzed evidence, and developed through a progressive structure

- to develop a productive writing process, including pre-draft writing, drafting, and revision, as well as giving and receiving feedback

- to gain ease and skill with the exchange of ideas in seminar discussions

**Required Texts**

1. Books: Available through the NYU Bookstore. It’s important that you purchase the edition specified.


These books are also on reserve at the library.

2. There will also be supplementary readings each week. Many of these will be distributed in class; some of them will be on our Classes site. For the latter: go to the Resources link and click on the folder titled Readings, then download the readings.

3. Films: I've put copies on reserve at Bobst, but you may want to consider purchasing your own copy (via Netflix, Amazon, iTunes, etc.) as you'll need to have the films on hand when you write about them.

Please note that there are multiple versions of Blade Runner. Watch the one labeled “The Final Cut” (2007).


Course Requirements

• Process Writing:

—Response Papers: there will be five or six reading responses due over the course of the semester. These should be 300 words (one double-spaced page). For each response, I'll give you a general prompt to reflect on. Bring a printed copy of your response to class on the day that it is due and be ready to hand it in at the end of class.

—Cover Letters: for all of the drafts and revisions that you submit (six, in total), you'll submit a cover letter of about 300 words in which you reflect on your essay and writing process. There will be specific instructions regarding cover letters with each assignment.

—Draft Response Letters: for a certain number of the papers that we workshop, you'll write a draft response letter of about 300 words in which you tell the author what works in their essay, what you find problematic, and how you think they should revise. Again, more specific instructions will be included with each writing assignment.

• Participation: You should arrive punctually and be prepared for class, which means that you've completed the reading and any assignments, and brought with you all necessary materials. You should participate in seminar discussions and other activities, which includes contributing thoughtful comments and questions; engaging with other students as well as the professor; and listening attentively.

• Three formal essays:

Assignment 1: An analysis of a question raised by a passage in Shelley’s Frankenstein. 1200 words.
Due Dates:  
Draft—noon on Sunday, September 21  
Graded Revision—6 p.m. on Friday, October 3

Assignment 2: An argument about the relationship between Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and James Whale’s *Frankenstein* or *The Bride of Frankenstein*. 1500 words.

Due Dates:  
Draft—noon on Sunday, October 19  
Graded Revision—6 p.m. on Friday, October 31

Assignment 3: An argument about *The Island of Doctor Moreau* or *Blade Runner* and that engages with an argument by another scholar. 2000 words.

Due Dates:  
Draft—in class on Tuesday, November 25  
Graded Revision—6 p.m. on Friday, December 12

*Grading*

15%  Paper 1  
20%  Paper 2  
30%  Paper 3  
20%  Process Writing  
15%  Class Participation

*Policies*

- Written Work: Deadlines are important in this class; individual extensions will be granted only in the case of illness, family emergencies, or religious observance. Late revisions will be penalized 1/3 of a grade for each day that they are late. Late drafts may not receive written feedback. Late process writing may not be accepted.

- Attendance: You may miss up to two classes without penalty; more than two absences for reasons other than illness, family emergency, or religious observance will affect your grade; habitual lateness will also affect your grade.

- Academic Integrity: As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website ([http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/integrity.html](http://gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/integrity.html)); we will discuss academic integrity, including responsible source use and collaboration, in class this semester.

- Technology: In order to make it easier for everyone to focus on the collaborative and cooperative work of the seminar, you may not use a laptop, tablet, smartphone, or Google Glass in class for any purpose, unless otherwise instructed. This means that you must print out any assignments or papers (your own or your classmates’) needed for class on any given day. Please turn off or silence your mobile phone.

You are welcome to email me with any questions that arise over the course of the semester; I read email regularly during weekdays, less frequently at night or on weekends.
Assignment 1  
FYWS: Frankenstein and Revisions  

Make an argument about a moment in *Frankenstein* that you find especially strange, surprising, unexpected, or puzzling. Your paper should begin by asking a genuine question about a brief passage or scene; and it should develop an answer to that question. Your finished essay should be 1200 words (about four pages, double-spaced).

**Goals for this assignment:**

— ask a genuine question that serves as a motive for your essay  
— develop an answer to that question  
— smoothly incorporate well-chosen quotations from the novel  
— closely analyze quotations

**Grading Standards:**

a paper in the A-range successfully achieves the goals of the assignment: it asks a real question about the novel; presents an answer to that question; supports its explanation through careful, insightful work with evidence and analysis; is written in a clear style; contains very few errors of spelling, grammar, or punctuation.

a paper in the B-range resembles an A-range paper in some ways, but may be less focused; may establish a functional but unsubstantial motive; may lack evidence in places, or present evidence that is under-analyzed; may contain problems of style or errors of spelling, grammar, and punctuation.

a paper in the C-range resembles a B-range paper in some ways, but may be unfocused; may lack a motive or present a motive that is simplistic or perfunctory; may include very little quoted evidence; may present summary rather than analysis or may misinterpret evidence; may contain errors of expression, spelling, or mechanics that distract from or obscure the meaning.

a paper in the D-range may show signs of beginning to engage with the issues, topics, and sources of the assignment, but lack focus or significant engagement with the sources; D-range papers usually fall short of the page requirement.

Pluses and minuses represent shades of difference.

**Essay #1 Draft Cover Letter:** Each time you hand in a draft or a revision, you'll hand in a cover letter along with it. For the draft of Essay #1, please write a letter, addressed to your readers—that is, to the class at large—in which you answer the following questions and present any other concerns that you have. Think of the letter as an opportunity to ask for the kind of feedback you think you particularly need. Your cover letter should be about 300 words; please note that it is not included in the word count for the assignment.

— What do you see as your motive? (Resist the temptation to quote your essay and instead paraphrase.)  
— What do you see as your main idea or point? (Here, too, rephrase rather than quote.)
— What do you see as the most interesting part of your paper?
— What are the biggest problems you’re having? What do you want your reader to help you with? Rather than asking about style, wording, mechanics, your conclusion, etcetera, go for the big stuff: motive, use of evidence, effectiveness of analysis.

Essay #1 Draft Response: For each of the draft workshops, I’ll ask you to write a certain number of letters. Please take some time to compose these letters and try to make comments that you think will help the writer revise. When you come to class on our workshop days, please bring two printed copy of the letter(s) you’ve been assigned—one is for the writer, one is for me.

Avoid trivial commentary (including focusing your letter on matters of style) and think in larger terms about what this writing really needs. No draft submitted in this course will be in such good shape that it requires just tinkering with tone or vocabulary or grammar. Be a rigorous, incisive editor; offer helpful, reflective commentary—but do so in a tone that is kind and constructive, never harsh or aggressive.

Directions:

As you read and re-read each essay, make notes (marginalia, underlining, question marks, and so on) that help you understand the paper (and maybe give the writer feedback). Then write a letter of 300 words to the author in which you address these questions:

— In your own words, what is this paper about? What is its idea? Bear in mind that as writers, we often don’t recognize the most promising idea in our own drafts! See what you find if you doubt the writer’s stated intentions and look for the real insight elsewhere.
— What are this draft’s strengths?
— What is the writer’s most interesting point?
— Remembering that motive, evidence, and analysis are the priorities for this assignment, give the writer advice about what to focus on in revising.

Essay #1 Revision Cover Letter: Each time you hand in a revision (three times) you’ll hand in a cover letter along with it. In your letter, addressed to me, please answer the following questions and discuss any other concerns you have:

— Reflect on how your motivating question and answer to that question have changed between draft and revision.
— What are you happiest with in this revision?
— What was most challenging in your drafting and revision process? How did you approach those challenges?
— What are you most dissatisfied with in this paper? What would you continue to work on if you had the chance to revise again?
— What do you see as the strongest part of your paper?

Assignment I Schedule

Week One

Tuesday, September 2
Introductions
Thursday, September 4
reading assignment: Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, vol. 1
writing assignment: Response Paper 1.1 From the first volume of *Frankenstein*, choose three scenes or passages about which you want to ask questions—scenes or passages that you find startling or puzzling. These could be passages that don’t fit your preconceptions of the novel (especially if this is your first time reading it), or they could be passages that you find weird or confusing within the context of the book itself. You don’t need to transcribe the passages in full on your reading response, but please note where they appear so that I can find them. For each passage, write down a question or two about what seems strange or confusing in it.
in-class: discussion of *Frankenstein* and reading responses

*Week Two*

Tuesday, September 9
reading assignment: Shelley, *Frankenstein*, vol. 2
writing assignment: nothing to hand in, but continue keeping track of passages in the novel that you want to ask questions about
in class: discussion of *Frankenstein*; motives

Thursday, September 11
reading assignment: *Frankenstein*, vol. 3
writing assignment: none
in class: discussion of *Frankenstein*; developing questions for the paper

*Week Three*

Tuesday, September 16
reading assignment: John Abernathy, “An Enquiry” and “Physiological Lectures” (handout) + William Lawrence, “An Introduction” and “Lectures on Physiology” (handout)
writing assignment: Response Paper 1.2: Choose a passage from the Lawrence–Abernathy debates that you think helps us to answer a question about *Frankenstein*—possibly even one of the questions that you wrote about for Response 1.1. Write a response paper in which you explain this new understanding. Again, you don’t need to transcribe the passage in full, but cite it so that I can locate it.
in class: discussion of Lawrence and Abernathy; evidence and analysis

Thursday, September 18
reading assignment: Anne Mellor, “Choosing a Text of Frankenstein to Teach” (handout)
writing assignment: draft one page of your paper; this could include the introduction, but it could be a page from the body of your paper
in class: *Frankenstein’s* revisions; work on drafts

Sunday, September 21
due by noon: draft of essay 1
please submit this paper to the folder named Draft 1 under “Resources” on our Classes site
**Week Four**

**Tuesday, September 23**
- reading assignment: two drafts (TBA)
- writing assignment: draft response letters for each writer + bring printed copies of both workshop papers to class + bring a printed copy of your draft to class
- in class: draft workshops

**Thursday, September 25**
- reading assignment: two drafts (TBA)
- writing assignment: draft response letters for each writer + bring printed copies of both workshop papers to class + bring a printed copy of your draft to class
- in class: draft workshops

**Thursday, September 25 or Friday, September 26**
- 30-minute draft conference with me; I'll circulate a sign-up in class

Looking ahead:

**Friday, October 3**
- due by 6 p.m.: R1
- please submit this paper to the folder named R1 under “Assignments” on our Classes site
Make an argument about the relationship between Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and either James Whale’s *Frankenstein* or *Bride of Frankenstein*. Focus your paper on one or two scenes, a single character, or a pattern of linked imagery. Your finished essay should be 1500 words.

**Goals of this assignment:**

In writing this essay, you’ll continue to work on the goals of the first paper: developing a strong motive, incorporating specific evidence, and presenting thoughtful analysis. In addition to honing these skills, you’ll also work on:

— writing about two sources so as to put them in conversation with each other
— analyzing film
— formulating a strongly arguable thesis

**Grading Standards:**

a paper in the A-range successfully achieves the goals of the assignment: it establishes a focused topic; advances an interesting, arguable thesis; presents a compelling motive that shows why the thesis is original or worthwhile; employs a logical and progressive structure; analyzes evidence insightfully and in depth; puts its three sources in conversation with each other in an effective manner; employs a clear style, and contains very few mechanical errors.

a paper in the B-range paper resembles an A-range paper in some ways, but may present a thesis that is vague or insufficiently arguable; establish a functional but unsubstantial motive; employ a generally logical but somewhat disorganized, underdeveloped, or static structure; include well-chosen but sometimes unanalyzed and undigested evidence; show difficulty putting its sources in relation; display some problems of style or mechanics.

a paper in the C-range resembles a B-range paper in some ways, but may also feature a confusing or descriptive thesis; provide a simplistic motive or none at all; lack a coherent structure or rely on an overly rigid structure like the five-paragraph essay; fail to present enough evidence, or present evidence that is insufficiently analyzed; drop in sources without properly contextualizing or citing them; contain errors of expression, spelling, or mechanics that distract from or obscure the meaning.

a paper in the D-range may show signs of beginning to engage with the issues, topics, and sources of the assignment, but lack focus or significant engagement with the sources; D-range papers usually fall short of the page requirement.

Pluses and minuses represent shades of difference.

**Draft Cover Letter:** Please write a letter addressed to your readers in which you answer the following questions and present any other concerns that you have;
remember, your letter is an opportunity to ask for the kind of feedback you think you need. Your letter should be about 300 words.

— What do you see as the motive of this paper?
— What is your thesis? (Rephrase rather than quoting yourself.)
— What are the biggest problems you’re having at this point in the writing process?
— When you revise, what is the one big thing about your essay (motive, thesis, structure, and so on) that you want to change? Tell your reader why you are discontented with this aspect of your paper so that they can advise you on how to rework it.

Essay #2 Draft Responses: As with your previous draft response, please think big: what overarching changes does this writing need? Make your marginalia and write a letter (about 300 words) to the writer in which you address these questions:

— What is this essay’s thesis? What is its motive? State these in your own words, paraphrasing the writer—and if the thesis or motive are unclear or absent, be forthright about that.
— Is the thesis arguable?
— What is the writer’s single most interesting point?
— In the cover letter, the writer has asked one or more questions. What answers do you have to offer?

Essay #2 Revision Cover Letter: Write a letter, addressed to me, in which you discuss your revision. Be sure to reflect on the elements of writing we’ve focused on: motive, thesis, analysis.

Assignment 2 Schedule

Week Five

Tuesday, September 30
reading assignment: Anne Mellor, “Choosing a Text of Frankenstein to Teach” (handout)
writing assignment: work on revising your essay for Assignment 1 + bring the latest version of it to class (on laptop ok)
in class: discussion of Mellor; revision strategies

Thursday, October 2
reading assignment: watch James Whale’s Frankenstein (film)
writing assignment: as you watch the film, note two ways it adheres to Shelley’s novel, and two ways it departs
in class: discussion of Frankenstein; analyzing film

Friday, October 3
due at 6 p.m.: R1

Week Six

Tuesday, October 7
reading assignment: watch James Whale’s Bride of Frankenstein (film)
writing assignment: Response Paper 2.1 Choose two scenes or moments from either Frankenstein or The Bride of Frankenstein that you think relate to Shelley's
novel in an especially interesting way. For each, write a paragraph or so analyzing the relationship. (Remember, response papers should be 300 words and you should bring a printed copy to class with you on the day that it’s due.) in class: discussion of *Bride of Frankenstein*; the arguable thesis

Thursday, October 9
reading assignment: Charles Davenport, *Heredity in Relation to Eugenics* and Lothrop Stoddard, *The Revolt Against Civilization* (handout)
writing assignment: as you read Stoddard and Davenport, jot down some notes about how you think Whale’s conception of the Frankenstein story might engage with the ideas they discuss
in class: discussion of Stoddard and Davenport

**Week Seven**

Tuesday, October 14
No class: Fall Break

Thursday, October 16
reading assignment: none
writing assignment: write a couple of pages of your draft and bring them to class with you
in class: work with drafts

EXTRA-CREDIT OPPORTUNITY:
Careers in Science Writing: Science for a General Audience, 6:30–8:00 pm You'll receive extra-credit for attending this event. Anyone who writes me a 200-word email of their impressions will receive double extra-credit, as will anyone who attends the event and participates in the discussion.

Sunday, October 19
Draft 2 due at noon

**Week Eight**

Tuesday, October 21
reading assignment: two drafts (TBA)
writing assignment: two draft response letters + bring your draft to class
in class: draft workshops

Thursday, October 23
reading assignment: three drafts (TBA)
writing assignment: draft response letters (to be assigned) + bring your draft to class
in class: draft workshops

Looking ahead:

Friday, October 31
no trick! due at 6 p.m.: R2
Assignment 3:

Make an argument about *The Island of Doctor Moreau* or *Blade Runner* that challenges, refines, or builds on the argument of another scholar who has written about your chosen source. Your paper should incorporate one source that you find on your own. Your finished paper should be 2000 words (six to seven pages).

Goals of this Assignment:

In writing this paper, you'll continue to develop the skills that were our focus in Assignments 1 and 2. In addition, you'll work on:

— engaging with a theory by a published scholar  
— opening with a strong introduction  
— incorporating a source that you locate through your independent research  
— using orienting so that a reader not familiar with your sources would be able to understand your argument  
— finding a structure that allows your arguments to develop

A note on sources:

You are required both to challenge/refine the argument of a secondary source, and to locate one source on your own. You may choose, as your secondary source, one of the secondary sources that we read together; if you do so, you must find another source, of any type, on your own. Alternatively, you may choose to independently locate a secondary source whose argument you will challenge.

Grading Standards:

a paper in the A-range successfully achieves the goals of the assignment: it establishes a focused topic; advances an interesting, arguable thesis; presents a compelling motive and genuine engagement with another scholar or scholars; employs a logical and progressive structure; analyzes evidence insightfully and in depth; draws from well-chosen sources; employs a clear style, and contains no mechanical errors.

a paper in the B-range resembles an A-range paper in some ways, but may present a thesis that is vague or insufficiently arguable; establish a functional but unsubstantial motive; engage with its secondary source in a static, perfunctory, or otherwise problematic way; employ a generally logical but somewhat disorganized, underdeveloped, or formulaic structure; include well-chosen but sometimes unanalyzed and undigested evidence; display some problems of style or mechanics.

a paper in the C-range resembles a B-range paper in some ways, but may also feature a confusing or descriptive thesis; provide a simplistic motive or none at all; engage with its secondary source very briefly; lack a coherent structure or rely on an overly rigid structure like the five-paragraph essay; fail to present enough evidence, or present evidence that is insufficiently analyzed; contain errors of expression, spelling, or mechanics that distract from or obscure the meaning.

a paper in the D-range may show signs of beginning to engage with the issues, topics, and sources of the assignment, but lacks focus or significant engagement with the sources; D-range papers usually fall short of the page requirement.
Pluses and minuses represent shades of difference.

**Draft Cover Letter:** Write a letter, addressed to your readers, in which you discuss what you think works well in your draft, describe what you consider the problems you’re facing at this stage of the process, and ask your readers the questions you have about the paper. Be sure to address your motive and thesis, and to focus on other key elements of good writing (structure, evidence, analysis, key terms).

**Draft Response Letter:** As you read the draft assigned to you, make your marginal notes, and then write a letter in which you respond to the author’s concerns, discuss what you yourself see as the essay’s strengths and weaknesses (which may not coincide with the author’s opinions), and propose suggestions for revision.

For this week of workshops, you’ll write just one letter in total.

**Revision Cover Letter:** Write a letter, addressed to me, in which you discuss your revision. Be sure to reflect on your thesis and motive.

**Assignment 3 Schedule**

**Week Nine**

Tuesday, October 28
- reading assignment: none
- writing assignment: keep revising your draft + bring the latest version to class
- in-class: work with drafts; productive collaboration

Thursday, October 30
- writing assignment: as you do the reading, reflect on what you think Wells’s novel is saying about Darwin’s theory of evolution
- in class: discussion of Moreau and Origin

Friday, October 31
- 6 p.m.: R2 due

**Week Ten**

Tuesday, November 4
- reading assignment: *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, complete; Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (cp)
- writing assignment: Response 3.1: How does *The Island of Doctor Moreau* engage with the theory of evolution presented by Darwin in *On the Origin of Species and Descent of Man*? Does Wells’s novel accept, resist, question, or build on Darwin’s scientific ideas?
- in class: discussion of Moreau and Descent; work with responses

Thursday, November 6
- reading assignment: Roslynn Haynes, “The Unholy Alliance of Science”
- writing assignment: as you read Haynes’s essay, think about it as you would a draft by one of your classmates. Note a couple of strengths as well as a couple of things that you would tell Haynes to revise if you could.
in class: discussion of Haynes; working with secondary sources

**Week Eleven**

Tuesday, November 11
watch Ridley Scott’s *Blade Runner* (film)
writing assignment: as you watch the film, reflect on how it engages with *Frankenstein* (novel and films)
in class: discussion of *Blade Runner*

Thursday, November 13
+ Alan Turing, “Computing Machinery and Intelligence” + RadioLab podcast
writing assignment: Response 3.2: How does *Blade Runner* respond to twentieth-century developments in the technology of artificial intelligence that you’ve learned about from Turing, Wiener, and the RadioLab podcast?
in class: wrap up discussion of *Blade Runner*; artificial intelligence

**Week Twelve**

Response 3.3 due any day this week: This is more of a pre-draft than a response paper, and it is optional rather than mandatory. If you wish, and feel that this would be helpful, you can submit a draft of your motive and thesis, or possibly a draft of your introduction.

Tuesday, November 18
reading assignment: Joe Abbott, “The Monster Reconsidered”
writing assignment: as you did when you read Haynes’s essay, think about Abbott’s article like a workshop draft, noting a couple of strengths and a couple of things he could improve through revision
+ bring to class all of your notes and responses thus far
in class: discussion of Abbott; essay topic brainstorming

Thursday, November 20
reading assignment: none
writing assignment: imagine three or four “dream sources” for your emerging topic
in class: library visit

**Week Thirteen**

Tuesday, November 25
reading assignment: none
writing assignment: D3 due in class; please submit your essay to the D3 folder under Resources and bring a printed copy to class
in class: work with drafts

Thursday, November 27
NO CLASS • HAPPY THANKSGIVING

**Week Fourteen**

Tuesday, December 2
reading assignment: three drafts
writing assignment: draft response letters + bring your draft to class
in class: draft workshops

Thursday, December 4
reading assignment: three drafts
writing assignment: draft response letters + bring your draft to class
in class: draft workshops

Week Fifteen

Tuesday, December 9
reading assignment: none
writing assignment: keep revising + bring your draft to class
in class: revision strategies—your Writing Seminar toolkit

Thursday, December 11
reading assignment: none
writing assignment: keep revising + bring your draft to class
in class: course conclusions

Friday, December 12
due at 6 p.m.: R3