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 novels and films that have reprised her story: James Whale’s films *Frankenstein* and *The Bride of Frankenstein*, H. G. Wells’s *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, Ridley Scott’s *Blade Runner*, and Alex Garland’s *Ex Machina*. 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; we will consider Darwin’s *The Descent of Man*; the pseudo-science of eugenics; and Humphrey Davy’s “Discourse Introductory to a Course of Lectures on Chemistry,” which helped inform Shelley’s conception of science. 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 dynamic structure, and which may engage with arguments made by other scholars
- 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
- to become conversant with the *Frankenstein* story and its retellings; to learn how different versions of the story intersect with one another and with their historical context.

**Required Texts**

1. Books: Available through the NYU Bookstore; you are welcome to obtain these texts another way, but it is essential that your edition of *Frankenstein* be
based on the 1818 text of the novel, not the revision published in 1831. Please ask if you have a question about your editions.


2. Course Packet. Available at the NYU Bookstore.

I have placed the course books and course packet on three-day reserve at Bobst.

3. There will also be some supplementary readings that I will either distribute in class or post to our Classes site.

4. 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).


*Ex Machina*. DVD. Directed by Alex Garland, 2015. Lionsgate.

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 (about 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.

Draft/Revision reflections: for all of the drafts and revisions that you submit (six, in total), you’ll include a reflection on your essay and writing process. There will be specific instructions regarding these reflections with each assignment.

Draft Responses: for a certain number of the papers that we workshop, you’ll complete a worksheet or letter 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—6 p.m. on Friday, September 23  
Final Paper—6 p.m. on Friday, October 7

Assignment 2: An argument that puts into historical context either James Whale’s *Frankenstein* or *Bride of Frankenstein* or H. G. Wells’s *Island of Doctor Moreau*. 1500 words.

Due Dates:  
Draft—6 pm on Friday, October 28  
Final Paper—6 p.m. on Friday, November 11

Assignment 3: An argument about *Blade Runner, Ex Machina*, or “Rachel” that engages with an argument by another scholar. 2000–2200 words.

Due Dates:  
Draft—11.59 pm on Sunday, December 4  
Final Paper—6 pm on Monday, December 21.

*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.

All formal papers must be completed in order for you to pass the course, and they must be submitted within the time frame that I specify.

• 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.

**If you miss more than six classes for any reason, you may not pass the course.**
• 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); 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 smartwatch in class for any purpose, unless otherwise instructed or unless there are significant extenuating circumstances that you’ve discussed with me. This means that you must print out any assignments or papers needed for class on any given day. Please turn off or silence your mobile phone and alerts on your smartwatch.

You are welcome to email me with questions; I read email regularly during weekdays, less frequently at night or on weekends.
Paper 1: 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 passage or brief scene; and it should develop an answer to that question.

Your finished essay should be 1200 words (about four pages, double-spaced), not including the draft/revision reflection. The draft is due at 6 pm on Friday, September 23. The final paper is due at 6 pm on Friday, October 7.

**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.

**Assignment I Schedule**

**Week One**

*Tuesday, September 6*  
  Introductions

*Thursday, September 8*  
  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 a few sentences that articulate a question or problem that these passages raise. (300 words)

**Week Two**

Tuesday, September 13

- reading assignment: *Frankenstein*, vol. 2 + Rousseau, from *A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, 177–86, 192–200
- writing assignment: nothing to hand in, but look for connections between *Frankenstein* and Rousseau’s *Discourse*; in particular, consider whether the Creature represents Rousseau’s Natural Man
- in class: discussion of *Frankenstein*; motives

Thursday, September 15

- reading assignment: *Frankenstein*, vol. 3
- writing assignment: keep taking notes on analytical questions your reading raises
- in class: discussion of *Frankenstein*; developing questions for the paper

**Week Three**

Tuesday, September 20

- reading assignment: Humphrey Davy, “Discourse Introductory to a Course of Lectures on Chemistry”
- writing assignment: Response Paper 1.2: Two options: 1) discuss how Davy’s ideas about science help to answer questions about *Frankenstein* like those you wrote about for your first response paper 2) discuss how Davy’s ideas about science produce new analytical questions about the novel
- in class: discussion of Davy and *Frankenstein*; developing questions for the paper

Thursday, September 22

- reading assignment: Anne Mellor, “Choosing a Text of Frankenstein to Teach”
- writing assignment: write one body paragraph for your paper in which you discuss some evidence from the text of *Frankenstein*
- in class: *Frankenstein*s revisions; work towards paper topics

Friday, September 23

- Due at 6 pm: Draft of Paper 1
- Upload your paper to the Google Drive folder labeled Frankenstein_D1_F16

**Week Four**

draft conferences Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday
Tuesday, September 27
reading assignment: two drafts (TBA)
writing assignment: draft responses for each writer + bring printed copies of both workshop papers to class + bring a printed copy of your own draft to class
in class: draft workshops

Thursday, September 29
reading assignment: two drafts (TBA)
writing assignment: draft responses 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

Week Five

Tuesday, October 4
reading assignment: none
writing assignment: work on revising your paper: it’s important that you make some substantial changes before today’s class
in class: evidence and analysis

Looking ahead:
Friday, October 7
Due at 6 pm: Paper 1 (*final, graded version*)
Upload your paper to the folder labeled Frankenstein_Paper1_F16 under the “Assignments” tab on our NYU Classes site
Paper 2: Make an argument about one of James Whale’s Frankenstein films (Frankenstein or The Bride of Frankenstein) or H. G. Wells’s Island of Doctor Moreau, one of the contextualizing sources that we’ve read together (Stoddard, Davenport, or Darwin), and one contextualizing source that you find on your own.

Your finished essay should be 1500–1800 words, not including the cover letter. The draft is due at 6 pm on Friday, October 28. The final paper is due at 6 pm on Friday, November 11.

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:

— putting your main source into historical context
— doing research
— putting multiple sources 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; chooses relevant sources and puts those 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 evidence that has not been fully analyzed or which is not completely relevant; 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 connecting 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.
Assignment 2 Schedule

Thursday, October 6
reading assignment: watch James Whale’s *Frankenstein* (film)
writing assignment: after watching the film, come up with one significant way that it adheres to Shelley’s novel, and one significant way in which it departs
in class: discussion of *Frankenstein*; analyzing film

Friday, October 7
Due at 6 pm: Paper 1 (*final, graded version*)
Upload your paper to the folder labeled Frankenstein_Paper1_F16 under the “Assignments” tab on our NYU Classes site

Week Six

Tuesday, October 11
reading assignment: watch James Whale’s *Bride of Frankenstein* (film)
writing assignment: *Bride of Frankenstein* (like Whale’s film *Frankenstein*) seems, on the surface, like campy horror. After you’ve watched it, brainstorm some arguments that go against that obvious interpretation.
in class: discussion of *Bride of Frankenstein*; versions of motive

Thursday, October 13
writing assignment: Response Paper 2.1: How do Whale’s Frankenstein films engage with the contemporaneous eugenics movement? (300 words)
in class: discussion of Stoddard and Davenport; working with historical contexts

Week Seven

Tuesday, October 18
reading assignment: H. G. Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, to p. 79
writing assignment: as you read Wells’s novel, think about how it relates to the *Frankenstein* story.
in class: discussion of *Moreau*; the arguable thesis

Thursday, October 20
reading assignment: *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, complete; Charles Darwin, *Voyage of the Beagle*, 209–235
writing assignment: how do Prendick’s responses to the Beast People compare to Darwin’s responses to the Fuegians?
in class: discussion of *Moreau* and *Voyage*

Week Eight

Tuesday, October 25
reading assignment: Darwin, *Descent of Man*, 33–34, 38–66 + read over *Origin of Species* handout
writing assignment: Response 2.2: Discuss how *The Island of Doctor Moreau* engages with Darwin’s writing in *Voyage of the Beagle* or *Descent of Man*. Focus your response on one of these three texts. (300 words)**Special instructions: bring a printed copy of your response paper to class and email me a copy** in class: discussion of *Descent*; work with responses; finding sources

Thursday, October 27
reading assignment: none
writing assignment: brainstorm some possible motives for your paper and bring a list of these to class with you
in class: work with drafts; finding sources redux

Friday, October 28
Due at 6 pm: Draft of Paper 2
Upload your paper to the Google Drive folder labeled Frankenstein_D2_F16

*Week Nine*

draft conferences Tuesday and Thursday

Tuesday, November 1
reading assignment: two drafts (TBA)
writing assignment: two draft response letters + bring your draft to class
in class: draft workshops

Thursday, November 3
reading assignment: three drafts (TBA)
writing assignment: draft response letters + bring your draft to class
in class: draft workshops

Looking ahead
Friday, November 11
Due at 6 p.m.: Paper 2
Upload your paper to the folder labeled Frankenstein_Paper2_F16 under the “Assignments” tab on our NYU Classes site
Paper 3: Make an argument about either *Blade Runner*, *Ex Machina*, or “Rachel” that engages with Lisa Zunshine’s argument about the Frankenstein Complex and that draws on one of the contextualizing sources we’ve read together.

Your finished paper should be 2000–2200 words (six to seven pages), not including the cover letter. A rough draft is due in class on Thursday, December 1. The draft is due at 11:59 pm on Sunday, December 4. The final paper is due at 6 pm on Monday, December 21.

**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
— finding a structure that allows your arguments to develop

**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 and effectively puts those sources into conversation; 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; engage with sources in a cursory or inappropriate way; 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 Reflection:** 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). Your letter should be 200–300 words and appear as the first page of your paper.

_Draft Responses:_ After you read the drafts assigned to you, write a letter for each writer in which you respond to their 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. Your letters should be 200–300 words; please upload them to the appropriate Google drive folders.

_Revision Reflections:_ Write a letter, addressed to me, in which you discuss your revision. Be sure to reflect on your thesis and motive. Your letter should be 200–300 words and appear as the first page of your paper.

Assignment 3 Schedule

_Week 10_

Tuesday, November 8
reading assignment: Lisa Zunshine, _Strange Concepts_ pp. 1–19
writing assignment: at least one major revision to your second paper
in class: revising paper two; discussion of Zunshine

Thursday, November 10
reading assignment: Lisa Zunshine, _Strange Concepts_ pp. 1–19; 51–89
writing assignment: take notes according to active reading handout
in class: discussion of Zunshine

Friday, November 11
Due at 6 pm: Paper 2

_Week Eleven_

Tuesday, November 15
reading assignment: watch Ridley Scott’s _Blade Runner_ (film)
writing assignment: Response 3.1: Use Zunshine’s arguments as a lens for analyzing _Blade Runner_ (300 words)
in class: discussion of _Blade Runner_

Thursday, November 17
reading assignment: RadioLab podcast + Alan Turing, opening pages (433–35 maybe also 442–51?) of “Computing Machinery and Intelligence” + Larissa Lai, “Rachel,” 53–60
writing assignment: two questions to think about: 1. how does _Blade Runner_ respond to twentieth-century developments in the technology of artificial intelligence that you’ve learned about from Turing and the RadioLab podcast? 2. why does Lai retell Rachel's story and how does she revise the film in doing so? in class: wrap up discussion of _Blade Runner_; artificial intelligence

_Week Twelve_
Tuesday, November 22
reading assignment: watch Alex Garland's *Ex Machina*
writing assignment: Response 3.2: Use Zunshine’s arguments as a lens for analyzing *Ex Machina* (300 words) *special instructions*: please bring your response paper to class (laptop okay) and email me a copy.
in class: discussion of *Ex Machina*

Thursday, November 24 • Thanksgiving Break; no class

*Week Thirteen*

Tuesday, November 29
reading assignment: Masahiro Mori, “The Uncanny Valley” + look over your notes from this whole unit so that you'll be ready to do some work towards the paper
writing assignment: think about how *Ex Machina* engages with the history of artificial intelligence that you’ve been learning about (in the reading for today as well as in the contextual materials with *Blade Runner*)
in class: discussion of *Ex Machina* and Mori; work towards Paper 3

Thursday, December 1
reading assignment: none
writing assignment: rough draft of Paper 3 (this can be very rough, but try to get some of your ideas down on paper)
in class: work on drafts

Sunday, December 4
Due at 11.59: Draft of Paper 3
Upload your paper to the Google Drive folder labeled Frankenstein_D3_F16

*Week Fourteen*

draft conferences Thursday and Friday

Tuesday, December 6
reading assignment: three drafts
writing assignment: draft response letters + bring your draft to class
in class: draft workshops

Thursday, December 8
reading assignment: three drafts
writing assignment: draft response letters + bring your draft to class
in class: draft workshops

*Week Fifteen*

Tuesday, December 13
no class (classes meet on a Monday schedule)

Thursday, December 17
reading assignment: none
writing assignment: keep revising + bring your draft to class
in class: course conclusions; looking ahead to the research seminar
Monday, December 21 • due at 6 pm: Paper 3 (*final, graded version*)
Upload your paper to the folder labeled Frankenstein_Paper3_F16 under the “Assignments” tab on our NYU Classes site