# Brief Course Outline

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| **Course Title:** | **Nature and Technology** |
| **Course Number and Section:** | GGB    3001G 550 |
| **Instructor Name(s):** | Dr. Peter Sabo |
| **Instructor Email(s):** | psabo2@uwo.ca |

Disclaimer: Information in the brief course outline is subject to change. The syllabus posted on OWL is the official and authoritative source of information for the course.

## Course Description:

In this course, we will explore the relationship between nature and technology through influential and thought-provoking books. Our starting point is the Epic of Gilgamesh, largely considered the first literary masterpiece of the ancient world. A central theme of the Epic of Gilgamesh is how civilization is created and thus how it differs from the state of nature. Our next work, the Greek tragedy Prometheus Bound famously imagines technology to be divinely imparted (and not the result of human invention) and thus speaks to the idea that technology is something that humans do not quite control. Indeed, there is a central paradox to all technology that we will discuss throughout this course: technology is supposedly created for the purposes of human control, and yet it also ends up controlling us in ways that we cannot foresee. The monster in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein expresses precisely this tension in the blunt assertion to Victor Frankenstein: "You are my creator, but I am your master." Sigmund Freud's Civilization and Its Discontents focuses on this dilemma from a different perspective, as Freud argues that civilization is a product of human neuroses and examines the complex interplay between individual pleasure and the technologies we create. The last work which we will read in this course is Philip K. Dick's Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep in which the central theme is the relation between humans (and animals) and artificial intelligence.

## Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will gain abilities in reading and critical thinking about the relationship between nature and technology.

2. Students will become familiar with a selection of influential literature on the relationship between the natural world and technology.

3. Students will gain the ability to analyze ideas and situations, make considered decisions and form coherent, reasoned and fact-based judgements.

4. Students will further their skills in writing, group work, and presentations.

5. This course will prepare students for further courses in Global Great Books.

## Textbooks and Course Materials:

Required Readings:
• You are required to purchase a copy of books listed below. Moreover, you should buy the exact version I have listed, so that we can follow along together as a class.

• The total cost of book purchases for this course is $68.60 (if you buy all the books from the bookstore).
• Additional required readings will either be printed for you or found on our OWL course website.
• Here is the bookstore link for the course: https://bookstore.uwo.ca/textbook-search?campus=HC&term=W2024B&courses%5B0%5D=550_HC/GGB3001G

1. George, Andrew. The Epic of Gilgamesh. Penguin, 1999.
(ISBN: 978-0-140-44919-8)

2. Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft. Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus. Oxford, 2008.
(ISBN: 978-0-19-953716-7)

3. Freud, Sigmund. Civilization and Its Discontents. Translated by David McLintock, Penguin, 2002.
(ISBN: 978-0-141-01899-7)

4. Philip K. Dick. Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep. Del Rey, 1968.
(ISBN: 978-0-345-40447-3)

## Methods Of Evaluation:

| Assignment | Due Date mm/dd/yy | Weight - % |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Preparation and Participation | | 10% |
| Homework | | 10% |
| 2 Quizzes | | 15% |
| 2 Writing Assignments | | 40% |
| Final Exam | | 25% |

In solidarity with the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Chonnonton peoples on whose traditional treaty and unceded territories this course is shared.

Friday, January 24, 2025