ENGL 212: Topics in Critical Writing
Technology and the Human Future: Creativity, Ethics, and Transformation
Spring 2025 – Online
Monday, May 12—Saturday, June 28

Professor: Dr. Kim Lacey (please, call me Kim!)
Pronouns: she/her/hers
In-person office: Tuesdays 10:00-11:30 a.m.
If this doesn't work for you and you'd like to have an online meeting, we can figure out a good time!
E-mail: krlacey@svsu.edu
Office: Z 231B
Office phone: 989-964-2016

Considerations before we begin this course
- This is a 16-week course crammed into 7 weeks. <u>There will be a lot of work. It is not a shortened or abbreviated course!</u>
- ENGL 212 is a Category 10 course, meaning <u>you will be writing a lot</u>.
- This is an asynchronous course, meaning we will not be "meeting" for a virtual lecture nor will be meeting in person. You are responsible for completing each week's module on time.
- Please read the course calendar, which is at the end of the syllabus, carefully. Note that some assignments are due at different times throughout the week, but all are due by 11:59 p.m. EST. If you are living in a different time zone, please make sure you take careful note of this requirement. No late assignments will be accepted. If you know there's a conflict, submit your work early.

Very important
Ask yourself this question: "What will happen to my participation in this course if my computer goes down?" If the answer is "I am doomed," then you should withdraw and register for a different section another time. You need to have backup technology plans, because a "down" computer will not excuse you from the work in this course. Please use a cloud-based storage system (such as Dropbox, Google Docs, or OneDrive) to save your work and have access to it in multiple locations. Please also download the Canvas app on your phone.

Course description:
This course explores the dynamic relationship between technology and society, focusing on how emerging innovations reshape our identities, creativity, and ethical responsibilities. Through speculative storytelling, debates, creative projects, and critical analysis, students will examine the promises and perils of AI, automation, and body augmentation. From imagining the world in 2050 to debating the ethical boundaries of technological progress, this course encourages students to think critically, engage creatively, and envision futures that balance innovation with humanity.

Course questions:
1. How do technological advancements shape, challenge, and redefine what it means to be human?
2. What ethical principles should guide the development and implementation of transformative technologies?

3. How does the integration of AI and automation into society influence creativity, labor, and power dynamics?
4. How can speculative thinking about technology help us prepare for and shape the future?

Technology requirements

- Canvas: To have success in this class, you are expected to access and use Canvas regularly.
- Cloud storage: You should also have access to a cloud-based storage system (as noted above). I really like Dropbox, but you might be partial to Google Docs. It's completely your decision, so find one you like and can access easily. SVSU students have free access to Microsoft OneDrive, which is another great service. If you don't use one of these services already, please start this semester.
- GenAI: You must have access to some GenAI such as ChatGPT, Claude, Perplexity, Gemini, or one of the many others available. You don't have to pay for service; a free account will be enough.
- Video creation: You must have access to a means of creating and posting a video. This could simply be recording a video on your phone, tablet, or computer. You do not need extra software or editing know-how. You'll see in my weekly videos that I'm fairly laidback when it comes to recording videos. Please feel free to do the same.
- Email: Please check your SVSU email regularly. I'd recommend at least once a day. You will receive notifications about grades, paper feedback, and other course communication via email.
- Chat, Teams, Conferences: All of these can be used for Office Hours. If you'd like to "meet" we can do so in any of these "places."
- Canvas app: Please make sure you download the Canvas app on your phone or tablet (if you use one). This will save you time and allow you to complete class work if you have a free minute here-or-there. Lots of students like to use the app for online courses because they can watch videos or post to the discussion boards on the go.
- You also need to have access to Netflix. Consider it a course text.

Class procedures

This course is divided into modules. You are expected to complete the activities in each module by the due dates. While all the modules are available "on demand," the modules are **NOT** self-paced—that is, each week has different activities that must be completed in that week (i.e., discussion posts). You must complete all the activities in each module to earn credit. Just as you would in a face-to-face class, you are expected to be active and participate in discussion with your classmates. Failure to do so will result in a lower grade. In rare cases, depending on the course needs, I might cancel an assignment. If you complete an assignment and it is ultimately canceled, you do not receive extra credit for completing it.

Participation in this course is asynchronous, meaning you are not expected to be online at the same time as the professor or as your peers. Each week, all instructions and assignments, along with a description of the week's activities, are made available to you in the "Modules" tab.

If you need help with Canvas, please refer to the extensive library of Canvas how-to videos and help pages: http://guides.instructure.com/

Participation

For this class, I strongly suggest you log on at least once a day, if for no other reason than just to keep up with what is going on in the course. I also want to reinforce that you should try to check the course at least one weekend day, even if you have completed the requirements for the week.

Similar to face-to-face courses, attendance does not equal participation. Merely logging in does not mean that you are participating in class. Although I do not take attendance in this course, you are required to demonstrate professionalism towards the other members of our learning community.

Tone

The objective of our discussions will be collaborative rather than combative. Remember that even an innocent remark in the online environment can be easily misconstrued. Some suggestions to avoid misunderstandings are to carefully proofread your responses and to remember that humor online is sometimes difficult to carry off. Sarcasm is particularly difficult to get across in written form, so be careful. Disrespect will not be tolerated.

Required texts to access:

Texts and Media:

- *R.U.R.* by Karel Čapek
- *They Say/I Say*, 6th edition, by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein
- Films: *Her*, *AlphaGo*, *The Social Dilemma*
- *Black Mirror* Episodes: "Rachel, Jack, and Ashley, Too," "Nosedive," "Be Right Back"

Required technology to access:

- ChatGPT (3.5 or 4.0): https://chat.openai.com/auth/login
- Claude: https://claude.ai/login
- Gemini: https://gemini.google.com/
- Dungeon AI
- Various AI-generated art sites
- Canvas
- Other tools as they are released and/or we deem interesting.

Assignments

All work must be submitted on Canvas by 11:59 p.m. EST on the specified due date!

Project	Due Date	Percentage of Final Grade
Writing Journal		**24%**
Reading and viewing journal	Almost weekly (sometimes twice weekly): see course calendar for dates	4% each
They Say/I Say work		**9%**
Week 1: Complete exercise 2, chapter 1 on pages 29-30	Monday, May 19	3% each
Week 2: Complete exercise 3, chapter 4 on page 73	Monday, May 26	
Week 3: TS/IS: Complete exercise 2, chapter 6 on page 96	Monday, June 2	
Pick a Side!		**14%**
Part 1: Research Summary	Monday, May 26	4%
Part 2: Persuasive Brief	Monday, May 26	6%
Part 3: Peer Commentary	Monday, June 2	4%
AI Dungeon project		**15%**

Mid-week check-in: 5 turns	Thursday, May 29	3%
Part 1: Story Transcript	Monday, June 2	6%
Part 2: Reflection with Research	Monday, June 9	6%
AI Art and Gallery		**17%**
Part 1: AI Art Creation and Analysis	Monday, June 16	6%
Part 2: Artist's Statement	Monday, June 16	5%
Part 3: Gallery Exhibit	Week of June 17	2%
Part 4: Gallery Exhibit Reflection	Monday, June 23	4%
Speculative Scenario for 2050		**21%**
Mid-week check-in: 100 word "story seed" and outline of 2 ethical tensions	Thursday, June 19	3%
Part 1: Research Summary	Monday, June 23	5%
Part 2: Speculative Scenario	Monday, June 23	6%
Part 3: Speculative Scenario Symposium Video Presentation	Saturday, June 28	7%

Grading scale
↑95%: A
↑90%: A-
↑87%: B+
↑83%: B
↑80%: B-
↑77%: C+
↑73%: C
↑60%: D
  0%: F

All grades will be posted on Canvas.

Artificial Intelligence Policy
My goals for all of us will be to learn how AI tools can strengthen our writing when used responsibly. You are required to note and cite any place where you use AI. Failure to indicate this will result in a lower grade.

A note on the grading scale
SVSU does not assign C-, D+, D- grades. Anything below a 73% will result in a D. Anything below a 60% will result in an F.

A note about extra credit and extensions
I do not give extra credit or extensions. Please complete all assignments to the best of your capabilities on time. However, I'm not a robot. If there are extenuating circumstances, please talk to me.

Late work is unacceptable
Please ensure that your work is submitted on time. The deadlines are clearly marked on all assignments and on the syllabus. Please note the majority of your writing will come from in-class work. If you arrive late and we have already completed an activity, you cannot receive credit for the activity. If you are absent and you miss in-class activities, you cannot receive credit for the activity. If you know a due date

conflicts with something outside of class, plan ahead and submit your assignment early. I will send a confirmation e-mail by 9 a.m. the next morning. If you do not receive a confirmation e-mail, I did not receive your paper.

Technology policies
You should be actively using some sort of cloud storage in which you can store and access your work from multiple locations. I recommend Dropbox or Google Drive. Additionally, as SVSU students, you have access to Microsoft One Drive. Not having access to your work is not an excuse for late work. Be prepared for all possibilities.

Accessibility and Non-Discrimination Clause
Students who need accommodation are encouraged to meet with the instructor or contact the SVSU Office of Accessibility Resources and Accommodations (phone: 989-964-4168). SVSU does not discriminate based on race, religion, color, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, physical impairment, disability, or veteran status in the provision of education, employment, and other services.

A note about self-care
I am conscious of your educational experiences over the last several years, and if there is any way I can support you in our learning environment, please let me know. I'm here to help!

A note about myself:
In September, I was diagnosed with Bell's palsy, which is facial paralysis. Half of my face is immobile causing my speech to be frequently slurred, my eye unable to blink, some hearing loss, and frequent pain and fatigue. There might be moments in where I need to take breaks to rest my face. It shouldn't interfere with our learning environment, but I want to give you a heads up! (Plus, you'll probably notice my paralysis and I wanted to get ahead of it!)

Academic Integrity Policy
According to the *SVSU Student Handbook*, "Academic integrity is undermined whenever one is dishonest in the pursuit of knowledge. Dishonesty takes many forms, including cheating, plagiarism, and other activities for undermining the educational process and will be reported to the Academic Conduct Board for further sanctions. Forms of plagiarism include directly transcribing (copying) without quotation and attribution, summarizing without attribution, paraphrasing or patchwork paraphrasing without attribution, patching electronic materials (including pictures, graphs, and/or charts) without attribution. I reserve the right to use Turn It In. In ENGL 212, deliberate plagiarism or cheating in any form will result in the grade of zero (0) for the entire assignment.

The full Academic Integrity Policy can be found here:
http://www.svsu.edu/studentconductprograms/policies/academicintegritypolicy/

Even though we are using AI regularly this semester, please note that passing off anything written by AI as your own writing is considered plagiarism. To avoid this scenario, you need to indicate what is your writing and what is produced by AI.

Writing Center Information
One of the many advantages of this University is the Writing Center. You are strongly encouraged to meet with a tutor to discuss your writing.
Monday & Wednesday: 11 am-4 pm

<div align="center">**Course Calendar**</div>

Important notes:

- This schedule is subject to change. If changes are made, you will be notified via e-mail.
- Make sure you read through and complete the entire module for each week. The "module work" listed below is simply a checklist of weekly requirements. Each part of the module has very specific directions.
- Do not rely on the "to-do" list on Canvas. Some assignments might not appear there. It is your responsibility to consider the deadlines.
- Abbreviations: They Say/I Say = TS/IS

Phase 1: The Power of Algorithms and Data **Major project: Pick a side!**
Week 1: Monday, May 12—Monday, May 19 **Weekly theme: Algorithms & Everyday Life** 1.1 Welcome to ENGL 212! 1.2 Weekly update video #1 1.3 Introduce yourself 　　Discussion post 1.4 Weekly reading 　　TS/IS: Ch. 1, "'They Say': Starting with What Others are Saying" 　　Infographic: Technopanics (on Canvas) 1.5 Weekly viewing 　　Assignment video: Pick a side! 　　Assignment video: Video/reading club 　　On Netflix: *The Social Dilemma* 1.6 Mid-week check-in 　　n/a 1.7 Journal 　　"Video club" responses 1.8 Also due by the end of the week 　　TS/IS: Complete exercise 2, chapter 1 on pages 29-30
Week 2: Tuesday, May 20—Monday, May 26 **Weekly theme: Ethical considerations** 2.1 Weekly update video #2 2.2 Weekly reading 　　TS/IS: Ch. 4: "'Yes/No/Ok, But': Three Ways to Respond" 2.3 Weekly viewing 　　n/a 2.4 Mid-week check-in 　　n/a 2.5 Journal 　　n/a 2.6 Also due by the end of the week 　　Part 1: Research summary 　　Part 2: Persuasive brief 　　TS/IS: Complete exercise 3, chapter 4 on page 73

Phase 2: Technology and Human Relationships
Major project: AI Dungeon interactive writing and reflection

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Week 3: Tuesday, May 27—Monday, June 2
Weekly theme: AI and Human Emotion

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3.1 Weekly update video #3

3.2 Weekly reading
    TS/IS: Ch. 6: "'Skeptics May Object': Planting a Naysayer in Your Text"

3.3 Weekly viewing
    Assignment video: AI Dungeon interactive writing and reflection
    On Netflix: *Black Mirror*, Season 3, Episode 1, "Nosedive"
    Two classmates' persuasive briefs

3.4 Mid-week check-in
    First 5 turns from AI Dungeon

3.5 Journal
    Video Club entry

3.6 Also due by the end of the week
    Part 3: Peer commentary for Pick a Side
    Part 1: AI Dungeon 20-turn transcript
    TS/IS: Complete exercise 2, chapter 6 on page 96

Phase 3: Machines That Think
Major project: AI art creation and gallery exhibit

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Week 4: Tuesday, June 3—Monday, June 9
Weekly theme: AI as Companion

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4.1 Weekly update video #4

4.2 Weekly reading
    Replika articles (on Canvas)

4.3 Weekly viewing
    Assignment video: AI art creation and gallery exhibit
    On Netflix: *Black Mirror*, Season 2, Episode 1, "Be Right Back"

4.4 Mid-week check-in
    Practice round with AI art tools (ungraded)

4.5 Journal
    Video Club entry

4.6 Also due by the end of the week
    Part 2: AI Dungeon, Reflection with research

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Week 5: Tuesday, June 10—Monday, June 16
Weekly theme: Computational creativity

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5.1 Weekly update video #5

5.2 Weekly reading
    TS/IS: Ch. 13, "'I Take Your Point': Entering Class Discussions"
    Wikipedia entry on AI Art: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artificial_intelligence_art

5.3 Weekly viewing
    On YouTube:
    AlphaGo: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXuK6gekU1Y

"AI Art: How artists are using and confronting machine learning | How to See Like a Machine":
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G2XdZIC3AM8

5.4 Mid-week check-in

n/a

5.5 Journal

Film Club: entry

5.6 Also due by the end of the week

Part 1: AI art creation and analysis

Part 2: Artist statement

Part 3: Gallery exhibit viewing

Phase 4: Imagining Futures
Major project: Speculative scenario for 2050 and symposium

Week 6: Tuesday, June 17—Monday, June 23
Weekly theme: Robots!

6.1 Weekly update video #6

6.2 Weekly reading

Rosom's Universal Robots

6.3 Weekly viewing

Assignment video: Speculative scenario for 2050 and symposium

On Netflix: *Black Mirror*, Season 5, Episode 3, "Rachel, Jack, and Ashley Too"

6.4 Mid-week check-in

100 word "story seed" and outline of 2 ethical tensions

6.5 Journal

Video Club entry

Reading Club entry

6.6 Also due by the end of the week

Part 4: Gallery Reflection

Part 1: Speculative Futures: Research Summary

Week 7: Tuesday, June 24—Saturday, June 28
Weekly theme: The Future

7.1 Weekly update video #7

7.2 Weekly reading

TS/IS: Ch. 7, "'In My Experience': Using Personal Stories to Energize Your Argument"

7.3 Weekly viewing

n/a

7.4 Mid-week check-in

Course evaluations

7.5 Journal

n/a

7.6 Also due by the end of the week

Part 2: Speculative Futures: Narrative

Part 3: Speculative Futures: Symposium presentation

7.7 Bye and thank you!