

GHOSTS IN THE SHELL: THE LITERATURE AND MEDIA OF TRANSHUMANISM

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TUESDAYS, 4:00–6:45



Tyrell: Would you... like to be upgraded?

Batty: I had in mind something a little more radical. (*Blade Runner*)

The concept of human beings utilizing technology to enhance their own abilities is intrinsic to much of our culture. Items as simple as eye glasses or hammers are extensions of our bodies, modifying our capabilities and allowing us to accomplish new feats. However, the prospect of infusing the body with elements that blur the line between human and inhuman, male or female, “alive” or “dead,” has become an increasingly prevalent theme in modern literature and philosophy. More and more, we find authors, directors, artists, and others questioning where the boundaries are in going beyond the limits of the human, to become transhuman—or even *posthuman*.

This class attempts to address the growing corpus of works that address the concept of transhumanism. We will watch, read, and engage with American cyberpunk, Japanese *anime*, Russian dystopian fiction, the field of “bioart,” the body as technological canvas, and a number of other possibilities. The first half of the course is driven by the study of existing texts and theory, culminating in an extended analysis paper. The second half combines further reading with a greater emphasis on *creating* original works engaging these themes. If you’re at all interested in exploring the edges of human identity through a series of imagined futures, this may be the class for you.