

Literature and Science
Prague 2018: An Anatomy of the World

ENGLIT 0612
CLS 00000

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Study Abroad, Summer 2018
Prague, Czech Republic

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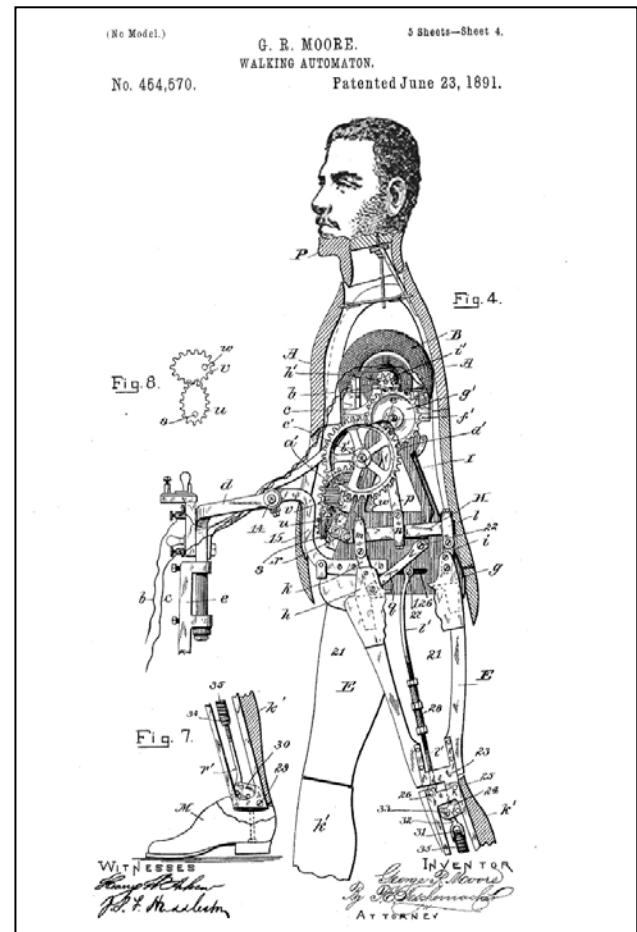
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Office hours by appointment

Course Overview

"I am the passenger, I stay under glass
I look through my window so bright
I see the stars come out tonight
I see the bright and hollow sky
Over the city's ripped back sides
And everything looks good tonight."
— Iggy Pop, "The Passenger"

— Iggy Pop, "The Passenger"



A 19th-century automaton

There are several versions of this course, alike in some ways and different in others. Students who take Literature and Science in Pittsburgh have a unit on Darwinism and 19th-century natural science that we have no time for in our course. Students in the fall 2017 version of the course experienced human dissection in a cadaver lab. Our course, the Prague course, has a meditation on the religious/sacramental body that evolves into a reflection on the anatomical/surgical body and finally to the “human mechanism” that is specific to where we are. The historical development of the Pittsburgh course is more patient, but our course is much more specifically located in the history of a particular place, a region, a set of political concerns. It sometimes vexes me who is getting the better part of the deal. There is one element that we ought to consider: *We are in Prague.*

This course will be a critical reflection on the social history of science, on the ways in which the human imagination has responded to ideas about what it is to be human that have emerged from the sciences. The objects of our study will be literary and artistic. Because of our setting here in Prague, this will be a multimedia course, incorporating written texts, visual images, and a number of relevant films (including the work of Czech filmmaker Jan Švankmajer). In the home of real Franz Kafka and the semi-mythical Johann Faust, in the city where the surrealist playwright Karel Čapek coined the “robot,” we will encounter humans saintly, sinful, and synthetic. Animals, too.

This is a short, intensive study abroad. We are asking you to be invested in working reasonably hard while enjoying the opportunity to live abroad in a fascinating place. I hope that we can do this in a spirit of

community and mutual encouragement. In arranging our classroom and written work, I have placed a strong emphasis on that which is meaningful. There will be a variety of assignments, none of them very difficult. There will be a critical assignment on one of the major texts. There will be a Commonplace Book, intended as a sort of thinking person's travel journal, with three short entries each week. One will be a critical reflection on a reading/viewing of your choosing. One will be a reflection on some aspect of the city of Prague, be it historical, artistic, or personal. The third will be a wildcard: something you have discovered that is relevant to our work, but will be a surprise to the rest of us. Our first assignment will ask that, in some way, you explore the spirit of this city, channeling the "culture shock" and strangeness of the place to produce a short essay, poem, or other work (all media are welcome as long as there is a written component). Unlike the usual disposable university assignment, I would like all of these to be things that will retain value for you years or decades from now. I could not be more excited to collaborate with you on this project.

Class Policies

Required Texts

To be purchased:

Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

All other readings and media can be found on the USB drive and on our CourseWeb.

All readings are required and should be completed by the class meeting in which the selection will be discussed. In many instances, I have provided an e-text version of a course text (for example, Karel Čapek's *RUR*). E-text readings are required and should be read in a timely fashion and a hardcopy or readable e-text to the appropriate class.

Grading

Class participation and attendance	30%
Two written assignments	35%
Commonplace Book	35%

Evaluation is comparative, based on the spectrum of performance of this class (not some absolute standard existing in my head and perhaps nowhere else). Assignments will be evaluated on the quality of their theses, the skill with which evidence is marshalled and interpreted, general cleverness, technical and grammatical correctness. Assignments will be graded on the university letter-grade, numerical-equivalent system. The Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences sets forth the following interpretation of the letter-grade system:

A+, A	4.00	Superior	C	2.00	Adequate
A-	3.75		C-	1.75	
B+	3.25		D+	1.25	
B	3.00	Meritorious	D	1.00	Minimal
B-	2.75		D-	0.75	
C+	2.25		F	0.0	Failure

I believe in the full range of grades, and it should be said that I tend to give more "A"s than "D"s or "F"s, more "B"s than "C"s. Historically, in a class of 35 students, I would expect that 7 to 9 students would earn grades in the "A" range, more than twice that many would earn grades in the

“B” range, and the remainder would fall into the range between “C” and failure (I was forced to give one failing grade in my Comedy course last year, for instance). No student who attends the class and completes all work needs to fear failure, *and a student who is struggling but willing to put in the appropriate effort can count on my help, support, and understanding*. I can tell you that students who earn better grades tend to be those who attend regularly, who complete the assignments, even when circumstances make this very difficult, who participate in class discussion and do real work in their written assignments.

A Note on Academic Dishonesty

Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, from the February 1974 Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom reported to the Senate Council, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz or exam will be imposed. Please consult our CourseWeb documents section for a more complete discussion of university plagiarism policy.

Proposed Course Schedule

Broad outline of student preparation responsibilities by week (note that each week, there is one large or several small readings, and one film):

Week one: Read Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus* (pdf) and view Jan Svankmajer, *Faust* (media file on USB stick). Artistic image from religious to medical.

Week two: Read Charles Dickens, “Mr. Wegg Looks After Himself,” Anthony Anemone, “The Monsters of Peter the Great,” Jane Perlez, “The Art, Science, and Lechery of Rudolph II,” David M. Mazierski, “The Cabinet of Frederick Ruysch and The Kunstkamera of Peter the Great. (pdf files on USB stick/CourseWeb). More on medical and artistic representation. View “Time Team Special: Secrets of the Body Snatchers,” “Experiments in the Revival of Organisms,” Deerhunter, “Revival,” and *Heart of a Dog* (media files on memory stick)

Week three: Read Bruno Schulz, “Tailors Dummies,” Franz Kafka, “In the Penal Colony,” Karel Čapek, *R.U.R.: Rossum’s Universal Robots* (pdf files on flash drive, CourseWeb); view Ridley Scott, “Introducing the David-8 Android,” Steven Soderbergh, *Kafka*, (media files on memory stick).

Week four: Read Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (purchased paperback). View Tatsuyuki Tanaka, *Toujin Kit* (media file on USB drive).

Schedule Detail:

Monday, July 9 (short class): Course introduction, *Ex Machina* excerpt.

Tuesday, July 10 (short class): Religious and artistic images, historical periods, the Michelangelo St. Anthony.

Wednesday, July 11: Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*

Thursday, July 12: Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, continued, Jan Svankmajer, *Faust*

Friday, July 13: Jan Svankmajer, *Faust*, continued. Discoveries report-back. Assign *Idea of the City* essay.

Sunday, July 15: excursion to Český Krumlov.

Monday, July 16: Activities in and return from Český Krumlov.

Tuesday, July 17: Religious and medical images (gendered anatomies), *Memento Mori*, *Tableau Vivant*, Anatomical Waxes, Ruysch's specimens and collection. Discuss Anthony Anemone, "The Monsters of Peter the Great," Jane Perlez, "The Art, Science, and Lechery of Rudolph II," David M. Mazierski, "The Cabinet of Frederick Ruysch and the Kunstkamera of Peter the Great."

Wednesday, July 18 (short class): Discuss "Time Team Special: Secrets of the Body Snatchers," Charles Dickens, "Mr. Wegg Looks After Himself."

Thursday, July 19: Excursion to Kutna Hora.

Friday, July 20: Discuss "Experiments in the Revival of Organisms," Deerhunter, "Revival," and *Heart of a Dog* (media files on memory stick). Discoveries report-back.

Monday, July 23: Discuss Franz Kafka, "In the Penal Colony," Bruno Schulz, "Tailors Dummies," Bruno Schultz drawings, Hans Bellmer and his dolls. *Idea of the City* essay due.

Tuesday, July 24 (short class): *Street of the Crocodiles*, *Ex Machina*, and the Uncanny.

Wednesday, July 25 (short class): Descartes, *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, and the David-8 Android.

Thursday, July 26: Discuss *R.U.R.: Rossum's Universal Robots* (pdf files on flash drive, CourseWeb).

Friday, July 27: Discuss Steven Soderbergh, *Kafka* (media file on memory stick).

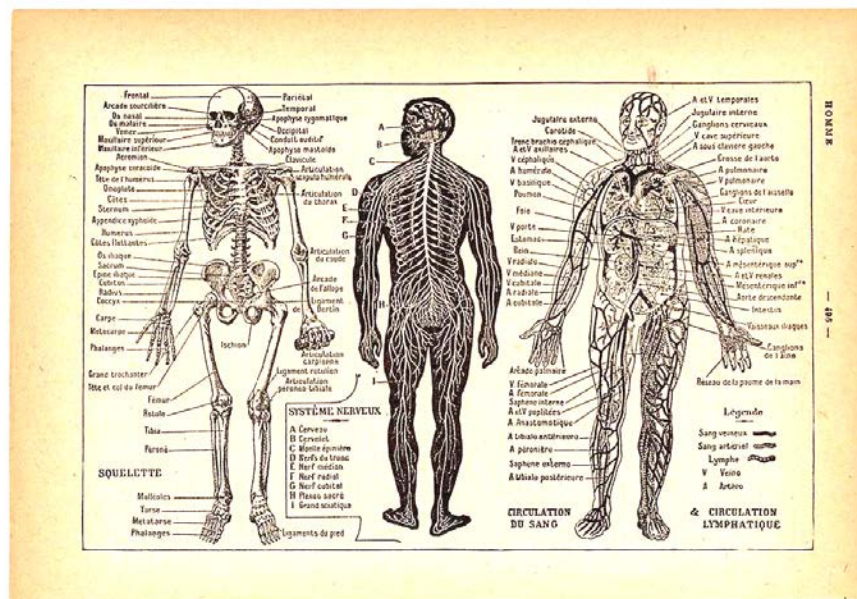
Weekend of July 29: Watch *The Seven Dwarfs of Auschwitz* (media file on memory stick). Excursion to Terezin.

Monday, August 30: Coffee klatch and final essay workshop. Some discussion of *The Seven Dwarfs of Auschwitz*, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Tuesday, August 31: Final essay due. Discuss Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Wednesday, August 1 (short class): Discuss Philip K. Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Possibly discuss Tatsuyuki Tanaka, *Toujin Kit*.

Thursday, August 2: last class, wrap up.



Polonius quotes Hamlet,
"To the celestial, and my soul's
idol, the most beautified Ophelia."

This contains a reference to
medieval Christian modes of
piety done to images.



The image serves not only as a focus, but as a kind of
transmitter, communicating this act of the faithful
to its heavenly object.

This is signaled in part by Hamlet's error: he says "beautified"
when he means "beatified" or "blessed," a step in the process
of sainthood. Unfortunately for Hamlet, educated, like
Martin Luther, in Wittenberg, the process has been broken.
The holy image, like the made-up face of the "painted" woman,
is "beautified," an artifice, simply an appearance. For this
reason, Protestant iconoclasts destroyed "idolatrous" religious
images all over Europe. The act that should be a blessed
communication between souls has run aground on what
can now be understood only as the crass matter of wood,
paint, and gold leaf.