# ENGL 1102: Technocritters



Cows from Mojang's game *Minecraft*

Section J8 | 10:05-10:55am MWF | Skiles 317
Section G3 | 12:05-12:55pm MWF | Skiles 168
Section P5 | 1:05-1:55pm MWF | Skiles 168

Instructor: Dr. Christina M. Colvin | Contact: christina.m.colvin@gatech.edu
Office: Skiles 304 | Office Hours: MWF 11:00am-noon and by appointment

Course Website: www.ColvinCourses.com | Course Twitter Handle: @ENGL1102TechnoC

**Course Description**

"[I]t seems reasonable...that nature should produce its own automata, much more splendid than artificial ones. These natural automata are the animals." -René Descartes, 1649

"What a pity and what a poverty of spirit, to assert that beasts are machines deprived of knowledge and sentiment, which affect all their operations in the same manner, which learn nothing, never improve..." -Voltaire, 1824

How does technology impact how humans interact with, represent, and understand nonhuman animals? How do animals and our relationships with them affect the design and purposes of technology? This course will engage these and related questions by exploring a range of fictional and nonfictional texts that depict the relationship between animals and technology in contemporary culture. With the theme of "technocritters" as a thematic guide to our literary and rhetorical analyses, we will practice how to structure and support arguments, engage in inquiry-driven research, produce meaning through situation-appropriate language, genre, and design choices, and critically reflect on our rhetorical strategies and the strategies of others.

This course will train you to identify, employ, and synthesize the principles of written, oral, visual, electronic, and nonverbal (WOVEN) communication through informal and formal writing assignments, collaborative work, in-class discussion, exercises, and presentations, as well as the use of a variety of digital tools.

**Course Outcomes**

Using the learning outcomes established by the University System of Georgia Board of Regents and the Council of Writing Program Administrators, Georgia Tech's Writing and Communication Program (WCP) has established learning outcomes and expectations for English 1102, which you can review here. Go to the site and read the policies; you are responsible for knowing and adhering to them.

In addition to the course goals for all WCP courses (above), in this course, you will also *identify and describe* several ways digital and industrial technologies have affected how humans understand, represent, and interact with nonhuman animals.

**WCP Common Policies**

Review the WCP Common Policies here. You are responsible for reading, knowing, and adhering to these policies. By signing the syllabus agreement at the conclusion of this document, you verify that you have read and understand both this syllabus and the WCP Common Policies.

**Required Materials**

1. *We3* by Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely

2. *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood

3. *WOVENText*, edited by Amy Braziller, Elizabeth Kleinfeld, and the Georgia Tech Writing and Communication Program; this is the official textbook for Georgia Tech's first-year Writing and Communication Program and is available for purchase as a RedShelf eBook

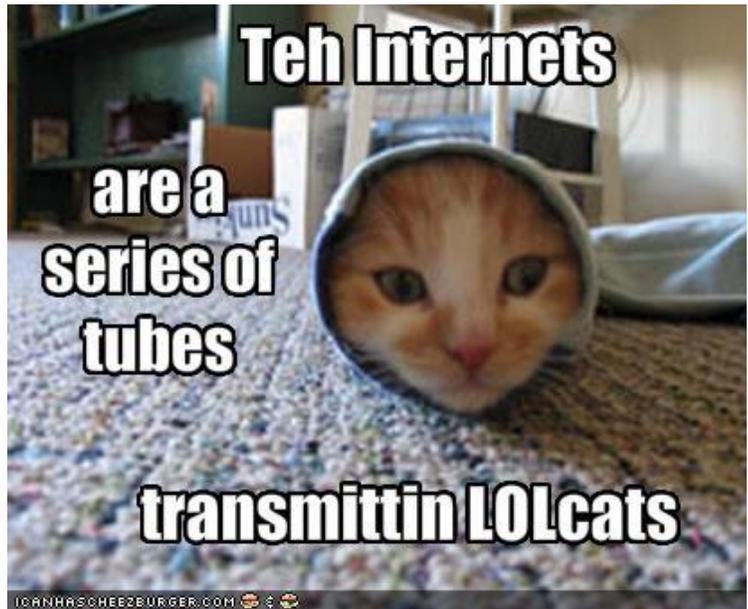4. One Steam-based PC game ranging from $1.00 to $15.00 in cost



Image source: http://icanhas.cheezburger.com

5. Laptop computer with access to internet-based tools, brought to class daily

Additional required texts will be made available through our course website, Course Reserves, or T-Square.

**Final Grade Scale**

90-100………….…..A
80-89……………….B
70-79……………..…C
60-69………….……D
Below 60………....F

**Project Grade Weights**

Common First Week Video 1%
Twitter Responses 14%
Project I: Video Essay 15%
Project II: Book Cover 20%
Project III: Resources for Reading *Oryx and Crake* 25%
Class Participation 10%
Reflective Portfolio 15%

**Overview of Graded Components**

*Common First Week Video (1%)*

Review the syllabus for the class and "Critical Concept Three: Communication is Multimodal" in *WOVENText* Chapter 2 (pp. 37-42). Create a video (60-90 seconds) in which you articulate a challenge relating to one of the modes—written, oral, visual, electronic, or nonverbal communication—that you'll be engaging with in class projects this semester. What challenges do you expect to face in relation to this particular mode (use specific examples from your past experience)? How might you overcome these challenges (again using examples from your past experience)?

Your project should comply with all the specifications on the assignment sheet available via our course website. Upload completed videos to YouTube; then, post a link to the YouTube video on T-Square.

*Twitter Responses (14%)*

Each student will maintain an individual Twitter account and tweet regularly at the class Twitter handle, @ENGL1102TechnoC, in response to the course readings. If you already have a Twitter account, you are welcome to use it for the purposes of the course if you feel comfortable maintaining personal and official class tweets via the same account. If you do not have a Twitter account, create one. If your Twitter account does not include your real name, email me your handle by the deadline listed on the course schedule.

Tweeting will allow you to develop your ability to articulate succinct, focused questions and claims about course texts; you can then build on these questions and claims in future projects and during class discussion. Tweets should not summarize readings; they should raise a discussion question or make a claim.

The audience for your tweets will be public. Anticipate that your tweets will be read by me and your peers: I will often draw on your tweets to generate class discussion, so be prepared to elaborate on the content and ideas brought up in your tweets during class. Tweeting also enables you to engage and explore the readings, topics, and writing and communication strategies brought up during class more thoroughly than our class exercises and discussion allow. Tweets should follow the Georgia Tech codes of conduct.

Tweet in response to readings from each day of the week; you should produce *at least* five outside-of-class tweets per week. Your Twitter Responses grade will suffer if you only tweet one day a week or only in response to one reading per week. By the end of the semester, you should have directed *at least* forty thoughtful and relevant tweets to the course handle. You are not required to tweet on a week with an asterisk next to it on the schedule. When relevant, I will also ask that you tweet during class; tweets produced during class do not substitute for the minimum number of tweets you should produce outside of class every week.

How do you know when you have posted enough outside-of-class tweets for the week? Answering "yes" to each of these questions for most weeks (at least eight) during the semester would constitute excellent work in the Twitter Responses graded category.

- Did I tweet a discussion question or claim about Monday's reading?
- Did I tweet a discussion question or claim about Wednesday's reading?
- Did I tweet a discussion question or claim about Friday's reading?
- Did I respond to classmates to engage in a discussion, share sources, or to help brainstorm ideas?

Tweets are assessed on a pass/fail basis. Passing outside-of-class tweets will be retweeted by the course Twitter handle. You must tweet at the course handle for your tweet to be considered for credit.

*Communication competencies emphasized*: Written; Visual; Electronic
(Assignment adapted from the work of Marion L. Brittain Fellows Rebekah Fitzsimmons and Kate Holterhoff)

Cows in a GEA DairyProQ Rotary Parlor. Image source: http://www.gea.com/en/products/DairyProQ.jsp

### Project I: Video Essay (15%)

In groups of 4-5 students each, use the genre of the video essay to analyze the way a video game represents the use, function, behavior, and/or appearance of an animal or animals. According to the UW-Madison DesignLab, video essays "use audiovisual materials to research and explore topics in an objective, subjective, or even poetic manner. Like written essays, video essays may contain an introduction, argument, supporting evidence, and conclusion. The simultaneity of sound, visual, text, and voice and the rhythms of editing and juxtaposition can create complex patterns of meaning and association."

Your project will consist of five components: Topic Declaration, Script Draft, Video Essay, In-class Presentation, and Reflection. Completed Video Essays should be between 5-8 minutes in length.

The goal of this project is for your group to use direct evidence in the form of close, rhetorical analyses of moments from the game to support an argument about how a video game represents animals.

The rhetorical purpose of your video essay should be to persuade an interested, public audience unfamiliar with your chosen game of the validity and significance of your argument.

Your project should comply with all the specifications on the assignment sheet available on our course website. Upload completed videos to YouTube; then, post a link to the YouTube video on T-Square.

*Communication competencies emphasized*: Written; Oral; Visual; Electronic; Nonverbal

### Project II: Book Cover (20%)

For this project, choose one short story or poem we've read in the course and design a book cover as if the story or poem were to be published as a standalone book. Consider how images, color, font, texture, and medium can make an argument about your chosen text.

Your book cover will be accompanied by a 500-700 word artist's statement. In the statement, describe and defend the choices that you made in the design of your book cover. That is, explain why you made the design decisions you did, how they advanced the argument you wanted to make about the text, and what rhetorical appeals you intended for your cover to make to your audience.

This project will consist of four components: Artist's Statement Draft, Book Cover, Revised Artist's Statement, and Reflection. Your project should comply with all the specifications on the assignment sheet available via our course website.

*Communication competencies emphasized*: Written; Visual

### Project III: Resources for Reading Oryx and Crake *(25%)*

For this project, work in groups of 4-5 to develop a digital resource to be used by fellow readers of Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*. Your group's resource should demonstrate your ability to analyze the text and attend to specific details. It should also reflect your group's own interest in the novel. Your project's chief purpose should be to help other readers "make sense" of an aspect of the novel that requires critical interpretation and research.

In addition to your resource, your group will also compose a 500-1000 word rationale that describes and defends your group's choices in the construction of your resource.

This project will consist of five components: Topic and Medium Declaration, Rationale Draft, Digital Resource, In-class Presentation, and Reflection. Your project should comply with all the specifications on the assignment sheet available via our course website.

*Communication competencies emphasized*: Written; Oral; Visual; Electronic; Nonverbal

### Class Participation *(10%)*

The success of this course depends on your active, engaged class participation. You are required to have completed all of the assigned readings prior to the beginning of the class session; you are also required to have the text we are discussing open to the proper page (digital and/or physical) during class.

You will participate in many in-class activities including peer review sessions, writing workshops, and group collaborations. These activities, in addition to your regular contributions to discussion (I expect, at minimum, at least two substantive contributions to class discussion every week), will be factored into your class participation grade.

You are expected to attend all class sessions. You are, however, permitted four absences without penalty. If you exceed four absences from class, your overall, final grade for the course will drop by 1/3 of a letter (i.e., a final grade of a "B" will become a "B-"). Your grade will continue to drop 1/3 of a letter for every additional absence thereafter. Missing eight or more classes will result in an "F." I take attendance every day.

If you miss a class session, you are responsible for finding out what the class covered in your absence. You should first contact a classmate for this information; only after having consulted with a classmate (or two) should you get in touch with me for additional clarification, if needed. I will not respond to generalized, "So what did I miss?" inquiries or requests for summaries of class content.

You are expected to come to class on time. Every three late arrivals to class will count as an absence. In short, three tardies equal one absence. Such an absence will count towards your total number of missed classes.

*Communication competencies emphasized*: Written; Oral; Nonverbal

### Reflective Portfolio *(15%)*

In lieu of a final exam, ENGL 1102 students complete a final multimodal portfolio that is due during your section's scheduled final exam time (see http://www.registrar.gatech.edu/students/exams.php for the final exam schedule).

The portfolio will include a substantial reflective essay, brief introductions to each artifact, and selected examples of your WOVEN work products. You will develop your portfolio throughout the semester and work on finalizing it at the end of the semester. You will design your Reflective Portfolio to persuade WCP professors that you have met the stated outcomes of the course. Your project should comply with all the specifications on the assignment sheet available via our course website.

The multimodal reflective portfolio is produced in an open-source portfolio platform called Mahara; you can access the GT instance of Mahara using your GT login credentials at http://mahara.gatech.edu.

*Communication competencies emphasized*: Written; Visual; Electronic

**Assessment and Feedback**

The WCP common assessment rubric is a guide to how your work for the course will be assessed and will help you understand where your work can improve. We will reference the assessment rubric frequently throughout the course and discuss the ways it can support the completion and revision of your projects.

You are welcome to see me during office hours to discuss strategies for improving your work. Additionally, I will provide feedback for each of your major projects; this feedback will reference the assessment rubric. In addition, you should keep track of your own grade in the course. If you have trouble doing so, please email me to clarify your current standing in the class.

When I return a graded assignment to you, I request that you read my comments about your work carefully and wait 24 hours before coming to speak with me about your grade. I have found that this approach results in more productive discussions about graded work.

**Contact/Communication**

Email is the best way to contact me if you have questions or concerns. Generally, I will respond to all student email within 24 hours (although on weekends and holidays, it may take a little longer). Likewise, I may need to contact you by email. You are responsible for checking your campus-based email account at least once every 24 hours.

**Late Work**

All projects and assignments must be turned in on the date and time indicated. Late submission of a major project will reduce the highest achievable grade of that project by 1/3 of a letter (i.e., a "B" project will become a "B-"). The project's grade will continue to drop 1/3 of a letter for every additional 24-hour period the assignment is not submitted in full.

**Electronics**

Since we are composing multimodally throughout the course, you are expected to bring to class and operate laptops, tablets, and smartphones. I encourage you to develop best practices for negotiating among virtual communities and the real time of the classroom. What choices can you make to remain attentive to your peers and me, while at the same time engaging with digital resources for appropriate class use?

**Public Nature of the Course**

Consider most work for this class to be "public." Part of becoming an effective writer and communicator is learning to appreciate the ideas and feedback of others. In this course, our purpose is to come together as a community. Avoid topics that you wish to keep private or that you feel so strongly about that you are unwilling to listen to the perspectives of others. You have the option of not associating your full and/or real name with the public work you produce. Your grades will not be made public.

**Resources for Students**

*Communication Center.* The peer and professional tutors at the Georgia Tech Communication Center are trained to help you brainstorm, plan, and execute your multimodal projects. I encourage you to take advantage of this excellent resource. The Communication Center is located in Clough Commons 447, and you can find information about it on the web here.

*Academic Misconduct.* I take plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct seriously. Should I suspect that you engage in academic misconduct in this course, I will refer the case to Georgia Tech's Office of Student Integrity. You can find their website here: http://osi.gatech.edu/

You should also become familiar with Tech's Academic Honor Code (http://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-affairs/academic-honor-code) as well as the OSI's Academic Misconduct Process (http://osi.gatech.edu/content/academic-misconduct-process).

**Schedule of Classes, Readings, and Assignments**

*Schedule Changes.* Please be aware that this schedule is tentative and may change as the course progresses.

**Week One, January 9-13**
MON. *In class*: Introductions; syllabus review

WED. *Read*: The syllabus for ENGL 1102: Technocritters
*In class*: Syllabus Q&A; introduction to WOVEN communication
*Due today*: Signed syllabus form

FRI: *Read*: "Critical Concept Three: Communication Is Multimodal" in *WOVENText* Chapter 2 (pp. 37-42)
*In class*: Peer review
*Due today*: 1) Tweet at the class handle, @ENGL1102TechnoC, and briefly (1-2 tweets) introduce yourself to the class/the Twitterverse
2) Email me your Twitter handle if your account does not use your name
3) Follow the class Twitter account, @ENGL1102TechnoC
4) Bring a complete, digital draft of your CFWV script to class

**Week Two, January 16-20**
MON. No class; Martin Luther King, Jr. national holiday

WED. *Read:* "How Cats Evolved to Win the Internet" by Abigail Tucker and "How Cats Became Rulers of the Interwebs" by Margaret Rhodes
*Due today*: Common First Week Video

FRI. *Read:* "That Cute Whale You Clicked On? It's Doomed" by Amanda Hess
*In class:* Memes and multimodality

**Week Three, January 23-27**
MON. *Read*: "Taming the Monster: Violence, Spectacle, and the Virtual Animal" by Gary Walsh

WED. *Read*: "The Video Essay as Art: 11 Ways of Making a Video Essay" by Conor Bateman and "How-To: Video Essays" by Greer Fyfe and Miriam Ross

FRI. *Read:* Prior to class, spend time playing the following free games:
- WolfQuest: <http://www.wolfquest.org/>
- AlpacaRun: <http://heylookatmygames.com/alpacarun/>
- Deer Hunter 3D <http://www.unityplay.me/chrome/deer_hunter/deer_hunter.html>
- Pets Fun House: <http://www.doublegames.com/play/pets-fun-house.html>

Plan to play these games well in advance of class. You may find that you need technical assistance getting the games to play on a campus computer or your personal laptop and need to stop by the library for guidance.

**Week Four, January 30-February 3\***
MON. *Read:* "Quoting and Using Textual Evidence" handout and "Integrating Quotes MLA" handout
*Due today*: Project I: Topic Declaration

WED. *In class*: Group meetings and peer review
*Due today*: Project I: Script Draft

FRI. *In class*: Group meetings and peer review

**Week Five, February 6-10**
MON. *In class:* Project I: In-class Presentations
*Due today*: Project I: Video Essay

WED. *In class:* Project I: In-class Presentations

FRI. *Read:* "With Farm Robotics, the Cows Decide When It's Milking Time" by Jesse McKinley and explore the U. of Waterloo's Critical Media Lab Project "TeatTweet" <http://criticalmedia.uwaterloo.ca/teattweet/>
*Due today:* Project I: Reflection

**Week Six, February 13-17**
MON. *Read:* "Remote Control" by Walter Kateley

WED. *Read*: "The Feline Light and Power Company is Organized" by Jacque Morgan and "Author/Artist's Statements" in *WOVENText* (pp. 503-516)

FRI. *Read:* "Mazes" by Ursula Le Guin

**Week Seven, February 20-24**
MON. *Read:* "ham" by Larissa Lai

WED. *Read: We3* by Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely (first half)

FRI. TBA

**Week Eight, February 27-March 3\***
MON. *Read: We3* by Grant Morrison and Frank Quitely (second half)
*Due today:* Project II: Artist's Statement Draft

WED. *Read*: Peer's project

*In class*: Workshop/peer review

FRI. *In class:* Live tweeting
*Due today:* Project II: Book Cover, Revised Artist's Statement, and Reflection

**Week Nine, March 6-10**
MON. *Read: Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood, pp. 3-43

WED. *Read:* Atwood, pp. 44-87

FRI. *Read: WOVENText* "Commit to a Single Viable Topic: What Are You Most Curious About?" and "Form a Working Research Question--and Refine as You Go" (pp. 620-625)
*In class*: Meet in the library, location TBA

**Week Ten, March 13-17**
MON. *Read:* Atwood, pp. 88-126

WED. *Read:* Atwood, pp. 127-169 and *Frankenstein's Cat: Cuddling Up to Biotech's Brave New Beasts* by Emily Anthes (excerpt)

FRI. *Read:* Atwood, pp. 170-213

**Week Eleven, March 20-24***
No class; Spring Break

**Week Twelve, March 27-31**
MON. *Read:* Atwood, pp. 214-261

WED. *Read:* Atwood, pp. 265-301
*Due today*: Project III: Topic and Medium Declaration

FRI. *Read:* Atwood, pp. 302-349

**Week Thirteen, April 3-7**
MON. *Read:* Atwood, pp. 350-end

WED. *In class*: Group meetings and peer review
*Due today*: Project III: Rationale Draft

FRI. *In class*: Group meetings and peer review

**Week Fourteen, April 10-14***
MON. *In class:* Project III: In-class Presentations
*Due today:* Project III: Digital Resource

WED. *In class:* Project III: In-class Presentations

FRI. *Read:* Reflective Portfolio instructions
*In class:* Reflective Portfolio discussion and preparations
*Due today:* Project III: Reflection

**Week Fifteen, April 17-21\***
MON. *In class*: Reflective Portfolio drafting and revision

WED. *In class*: Reflective Portfolio drafting and revision

FRI. *In class*: Reflective Portfolio drafting and revision

**Week Sixteen, April 24\***
MON: *In class*: Closing remarks; course evaluations

**The week of final exams**: *the Reflective Portfolio is due* during your section's scheduled final exam.

**STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING**
**PLEASE READ, SIGN, AND RETURN THESE STATEMENTS TO DR. COLVIN.**

I affirm that I have read the entire syllabus and Common Policies site for ENGL 1102 and understand the information and the responsibilities specified.

_____
print full name

_____
legible signature

_____
Date

DIRECTIONS: Read carefully and check all that apply.
☐   I give my instructor, Christina M. Colvin, permission to use copies of the work I do for this course, ENGL 1102, as examples in presentations and in print and electronic publications.
☐   I do not want my work used as examples in any situations.

If you give permission for your work to be used, please indicate how you want to be acknowledged:
☐   Please acknowledge me by my full name.
☐   Please use my work, but do not acknowledge me by name.

The following information enables me to contact you if your work is used.

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