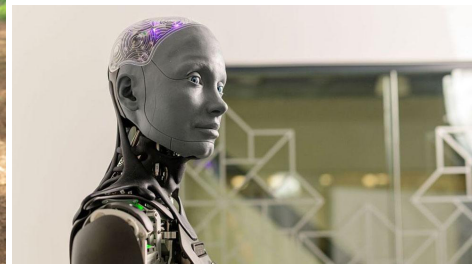


Technology and Human Values
REL 4173-U01 (18235)
Spring 2026

Professor Whitney A. Bauman
MWF: 12:00-12:50
SIPA 1: 335



MIT's "cyborg plant" (left); "Gus" from Sweet Tooth (center); National Robotarium's Ameca (right)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Though many call our current era "The Anthropocene," we now know more than ever how much we are entangled with one another; with other plants, animals and minerals on the planet; and with technologies. All of these entities co-create us and help to shape our futures. As we face the growing threats resulting from climate change and the challenges of the globalization of neo-liberal capitalist values, what futures might we be able to hope for? What role does technology play in thinking about the future of our planet? Somewhere between "luddite thinking" (anti-technology) and "positivistic" thinking (technology will save us) lies the huge grey area surrounding most technological developments. Both a rejection of technology as "unnatural" and an embrace of technology as "improving upon nature" separate humans from the rest of the natural world as if we are somehow "exceptional" to the rest of the natural world. This course will examine the nature-human-technology relationship as a continuum rather than as somehow distinct entities in relationship to one another. In examining the grey areas between nature-human-technology, it is important to look not only at the environmental and social-justice issues surrounding technology, but also at how technologies shape our very humanity, our meaning-making practices, our value-systems, and our imaginations. In other words, how are technologies shaping human and planetary becoming? We will examine techno-spiritual visions for the future of humanity (or post-humanity) and the planet (or post planet) from various theoretical/philosophical/religious perspectives including: secular humanism, transhumanism, religious naturalism, religious nationalism, afro-futurism, feminism, and posthumanism.