

*Panel on Cyborg Film theory*

Presenter Jarod Lewchuck, Theatre major

Mentored by Dr. Lisa Crafton

In the Fall, I took an English class that ended up being one of my favorite classes I have taken here at UWG. Dr. Crafton's Film As Lit: Becoming Cyborg class was a fresh experience especially within my time as an English minor because almost all of our primary texts were films instead of books. I am a big fan of dissecting movies/TV shows and had a blast doing so in this class. Over the course of the semester, we studied an episode of Black Mirror, Whale's Bride of Frankenstein, Blade Runner, Terminator 2, and several other films that depict cyborg theory in various ways. However, the film that I was most drawn to was Alex Garland's 2015 release Ex Machina. I loved the story it told and all of the symbolism and deeper meanings behind each character's story. For this reason, I chose to write my final paper for this ENGL 4109 class about Ex Machina; this paper helped me finish with an A in the class and has now been selected by Dr. Lisa Crafton to be a part of her faculty-nominated panel.

My paper is about othered groups reclaiming their power in society and how Ava, the primary cyborg in Ex Machina, represents that reclamation. In my essay, I discuss the idea of Ava's transhumanism and the way that she (and all other cyborgs in the film) are mistreated and how this serves as an allegory for the systemic issues of racism, homophobia, misogyny, and more in society. To take a further look at this dynamic and how Ava ultimately shifts the power into her favor throughout the film, I look not only into the relationships Ava has with human figures but also that the humans have with one another, that Ava has with her fellow cyborg Kyoko, and that Kyoko has with the human figures of the film. All of these relationships and how they connect serve a critical purpose in formulating the argument that Ava (and Kyoko) as cyborgs serve as a metaphor for historically marginalized groups and the hardships they face. Viewing the cyborgs in Ex Machina as symbolic of othered figures in society is crucial for gaining more understanding of how to be a better ally and member of the human race to these marginalized groups as the shift to a more tolerant world continues.