

Summer Reading for Senior Composition

The novel: Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep

Author: Phillip K. Dick

Overview: this is among the most famous science fiction books ever written. Merely a novelist with a cult following in his own day, Dick has become one of the most important visionaries the country has ever produced.

Assignment: read the novel

Assessment: quote test (I give you various quotes from the book and you write a few sentences identifying the significance of the quote within the context of the novel...you might explain how it's connected to the plot or how it characterized a character.)

The book is the basis for the film Bladrunner, which I encourage you to watch, but it's very very different from the film. So you can't just watch the movie.

Big Ideas: you can think about these as you read

Is it possible to build a machine that would be conscious of itself?

Is it possible to build a machine that would be "almost human?"

Is it possible or even desirable to manipulate ones own consciousness through a console as the characters do?

What is empathy? Are humans capable of empathy?

How do we know what is real? How has various technology begun to blur the distinction between the real and unreal? Could video and digital technology become so real that players could no longer distinguish when they were in a game and when they were in reality?

How do corporations control human minds?

Many sci-fi writers posit a future that looks terrifying and grim. Given various trends, is there a chance for civilization to flourish without creating dystopias?

Part of the point of dystopia sci-fi is to help us think about our own society. Dick write the book over 40 years ago. In what ways has his vision been realized?

