

21W.730:02, Imagining the Future,  
 Fall 2007  
 Rebecca Faery  
 Thursday, October 25

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### ESSAY III SEQUENCE

**Proposal due in class Tuesday, October 30**  
**First version due (and posted on the Stellar website)**  
**on Monday, November 12**  
**Revision due Monday, November 26**

It is time for you to begin work on your most extended piece of writing of the semester (around 7-10 pages), an essay for which you will thoroughly investigate an issue in the contemporary world which we have encountered in the futuristic fictions we have read this semester.

The reading we are doing invites engagement with the world and effort to prevent its becoming more and more like the dystopic societies the texts present. Thus, for this assignment, the invitation is open to you to do some engaged scholarship for this assignment—to volunteer some of your time and effort with and for organizations that address some of the issues we have talked about in response to the reading: environmental crises, privacy issues, censorship, militarization of global differences and conflicts, government surveillance, colonialism and post-colonial societies, rape awareness and prevention, domestic violence, issues of race and class, and many others. Camilla Shannon from the Public Service Center here at MIT will be glad to help you find a placement with an organization that addresses your interests, and you are also welcome to find your own project with an organization of your choice or to develop your own public service project, alone or with others from the class. Your work on this assignment may be to do some actual writing **for** the organization of your choice, or to write **about** your experience in the context of our reading and discussion and the research you will do into the issue. If you actually do some writing for an organization, you will submit a copy of that writing to me, along with a narrative of your experience, again in the context of our reading and discussion.

If you decide not to choose the public service option for your assignment, you will do an extensive investigation of an issue of your choice from the reading, connecting it explicitly with elements of contemporary society that illustrate or resonate with the issue you've chosen. I especially encourage you to choose something that is underway here at MIT—bioengineering and biotechnologies, media issues, privacy protection, robotics or cyborg cultures, environmental initiatives, whatever ignites your interest and curiosity. Your investigation can take many forms: you may include personal experience or observation, library or online research, interviews, visits to relevant places, information gathered from newspapers, magazines, advertising, films, television. I will be happy to confer with you about your plans—the planning stage will be crucial to the success of your project, so I urge you to spend ample time on this phase.

**Your proposal, due in class October 30, must include not only a description of your proposed essay, but also an *annotated bibliography* of the sources you plan to use to provide you with material for the essay.** You will not be limited to the sources you include in your proposal—that is, you may add other sources that turn up as your work on the essay continues, and likewise, you may abandon a source if, as you write, it proves no longer useful to you. The required annotation will

insure that you have not only generated a list of sources, but have familiarized yourself with them (i.e., *read them*).

Your work on the topic you choose will provide the material for your formal oral presentation to the class. (Presentations are scheduled for November 27 and 29.) Having researched and written your essay will give you the authority you need to make an effective presentation.

I encourage you to take advantage of opportunities to talk with me as you go along in your work for this next assignment. And I'm very much looking forward to reading the essay chronicling your experiences, convictions, and investigations.