

# Applying fictitious AI to the real world

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LSU Ph.D. candidate Zita Hüsing is examining how AI plays a part in American labor and capitalism, and its impact on disability, race and gender. Credit: LSU

Seeing a world increasing its reliance on artificial intelligence, or AI, LSU Ph.D. candidate Zita Hüsing decided to take a closer look at AI through fiction. Using the fictional androids seen in the movie "Blade Runner," Hüsing is examining how AI plays a part in American labor

and capitalism, and its impact on disability, race and gender. Hüsing, who is originally from Stuttgart, Germany, is in her fourth year in the English Ph.D. program.

"My research and teaching areas are primarily 20th and 21st century American literature and science fiction studies while also engaging in African American studies, disability studies, and women and [gender studies](#)," Hüsing said.

She shares more insight into her research, and its implications on the world around us.

## **What is the gap that your analysis is trying to fill?**

My project investigates new, interdisciplinary theoretical conceptions of the human and non-human digital technologies. As such, my research fills a critical gap: it utilizes the study of narrative to theorize the ways AI can change the conditions of [labor](#) and the ways labor contours experience of race, gender, class and disability. The last several years have pointed to the complicated roles artificial intelligence plays in economic and political landscapes, and this project explores how a particular fictional franchise might offer a framework for making AI and human labor compatible and sustainable.

## **What are you researching?**

My current research project asks: in an era of increasing reliance on [artificial intelligence](#), how can fictional androids help redefine disability, race and gender in the context of American labor? My project considers how the figure of the android reveals alternative labor practices for the Algoricene (the age of algorithms). By discussing the fictional works of Philip K. Dick's "Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?" (1968) and its

adaptations "Blade Runner" (1982) and "Blade Runner 2049" (2016), I demonstrate how the android posits opportunities for human-machine collaborations in our futures. I am interested in using these fictional texts since the "Blade Runner" works link the question of what it means to be human to specific fictional moments of capitalist exploitation—that is, moments of dehumanization. Through a critical literary lens, I specifically interrogate how "Blade Runner" makes an argument for what it means to be human by unpacking its associations to systems of corporate capitalist exploitation of laborers, disenfranchisement and dehumanization.

## **What are you learning from this work so far?**

Engaging with the figure of the [android](#) is highly valuable. Foremost, I argue that androids represent class issues and call for a recognition of real-world current conditions of exploited laborers in the U.S. and the world, while I also point out parallels between disenfranchised humans and androids. Overall, androids provide an occasion to comment on capitalist trends that intensify human inequality and labor exploitation.

## **What kind of impact does the representation of AI and machine learning have on things like labor conditions, race, gender, class, disability?**

Investigating the "Blade Runner" texts invites us to think about our current engagement with AI and machine learning technologies and their ethical aspects. "Blade Runner" invites us through allegories to confront real-world problematics that results from the monopolizing of AI technologies and their implementation into our daily lives. Ironically, the androids in many "Blade Runner" texts appear more human than the humans themselves. Sometimes they demonstrate a sense of cooperation and a vision of equitable futures that the humans do not. The

representations of the androids not only invite us to re-evaluate the use of digital technologies to create more equitable futures, but they also open up questions on the opportunities of AI in improving labor conditions as well as race, gender, class and disability inequalities.

## **What kind of implications does this have for the community?**

In my research, I unpack how the politics of continued dispossession and discrimination result in an ever-widening gap of inequality, while also sharing ideas for resistance and activism with the community. I seek to encourage broader and more robust conversations on more equitable digital futures within the academic humanities community. While considering issues of race and class, I want to continue establishing connections between literary works and real-world race, gender and disability inequalities and share these insights with the LSU community.

I am encouraging the LSU community to consider how a literary analysis of the timeless "Blade Runner" franchise matters to re-think dimensions of human experience in terms of race, class, gender and disability in an increasingly digital world. Today, the "Blade Runner" franchise remains relevant due its critique of large techno-conglomerates, which makes us think about the ever-growing influence and power of global corporates such as Meta, Google and Apple. While considering issues of [race](#), class, [gender](#) and ableism, I want to establish further connections between literary and new media works that make inequalities visible. Sharing ideas for creating more equitable futures while critically engaging with digital worlds and technologies are key to create new conversations that work towards equitable futures.

Provided by Louisiana State University

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