Writing Assignment #2
Cyborgs and Difference

At every turn, our consideration of cyborgs and cybernetics has engaged the concepts of opposition and difference. First, we considered the philosophically opposed views of Jean-Francois Lyotard and Donna Haraway, whose analyses of cybernetics and AI have everything to do with difference and its ethical dimension. Subsequently, we considered the loaded technological opposition addressed by Claudia Springer between the industrial and cybernetic – concepts which are themselves perhaps aligned with the culturally opposed concepts of masculinity and femininity. Add to this, two films that engage not only the presumed difference between man and cyborg, but which also, and perhaps more interestingly, stage dramatic showdowns (i.e. theatrical oppositions) between two inhuman “characters.” -- be they ED 209 and ROBOCOP or the T-101 and the T-1000.

In a paper of 2-4 pages that concentrates on precisely these inhuman showdowns, write a careful visual analysis in which think through two things: a) the relevance of these scenes to other oppositions considered in class and mentioned above, and b) the implications of these scenes for your reading of each film as a whole. As important as specific (even frame by frame) analyses of these scenes is your ability to make specific reference to your readings. Indeed, it is in this respect that this paper departs from and builds upon the skills required for your first.

Additional thoughts:

As you know, Mark Dery has written in some detail about the showdown in T2. In your papers you are welcome to draw on his insights, but please do not let his analysis substitute for your own. In fact, after some reflection, you may find that your views do not entirely align.

The challenge of this paper is organization and concision. That is, the hard intellectual work of the paper will be matched by the work of expression. Although this advice does not always apply, in this particular case, I would suggest a rough outline, so that when you set out to write you have a clear sense of how much you’re trying to accomplish in the allotted space.

For your convenience, as of Monday, copies of each film will be “on reserve” in VR on the second floor of the LDSOA. In addition, the media center in the main library (located on the 7th floor) has each of these films available for review on premises.