

Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives*
IDH2930 – (Un)common Read: #26283
Monday, 6:15 P.M. to 7:05 P.M.
Anderson Hall, Room 0019

Instructor: Juliana Mucci
Office Hours: T/R 2:00 P.M. – 3:30 P.M. (or by appt.)
To Schedule: [Calendly Link](#)

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Term: Spring 2025

Course Description

This course explores the themes of gender roles, identity, and the politics of technology as explored in Ira Levin's novel, *The Stepford Wives*, a foundational text in feminist literature that critically examines the intersection of feminism and technology. Students will analyze the portrayal of suburban life in the 1960s/70s, focusing on how the novel critiques the idealized roles of women and the implications of conformity and autonomy in a rapidly changing technological landscape. Key topics include the construction of femininity and masculinity, the impact of artificiality on human relationships, how technology can both liberate and oppress, environmentalism, pharmaceuticals and psychiatry, the preservation of youth, and the pursuit of beauty. The course will also explore how the novel balances feminist satire and horror. In doing so, we will aim to answer questions such as: Where can we draw the line between satire and real life, or perhaps better stated, the horrors of real life? Can we find horror in the mundane, or is the mundane, at times, horrific itself? Is it better to be robotic in our day-to-day life or to be, as one character exclaims, “rushed, sloppy, irritated, and alive?”

Through classroom discussion, students will engage with the text and foster a deeper understanding of its relevance in today's societal landscape.

Required Text

Levin, Ira. *The Stepford Wives*. William Morrow & Company, 2002.

The cover of the version of the novel that we'll be using can be found below:



The ISBN is 0060080841 and the ISBN13 is 9780060080846. The novel is available for purchase through websites such as Amazon and ThriftBooks for a relatively low cost (especially if you purchase a used copy). Students can also purchase the novel at Gainesville's local

bookstore, [The Lynx](#). If you purchase a copy from them, they'll provide a 10% discount on the purchase. All you must do is say you're buying the book for this honors class! The novel is also available to borrow through UF Library West and the Alachua County Library District. In the course schedule below, the novel is referred to as "TSW."

In addition to the required text, all secondary readings and materials will be available through Canvas. These readings and materials are all *optional*. As we progress through the novel, we will encounter and discuss a variety of topics that are listed in the course description above. The secondary readings and materials serve as additional resources on these topics. If you find yourself becoming interested in delving deeper into any of these topics, the secondary readings and materials are at your disposal.

Assignments and Evaluation

Attendance (10%)

As is noted below, participation in class discussions is an integral part of this course that can only occur if students are present and engaged in class.

Participation in Class Discussion (60%)

Participation in class discussions constitutes the bulk of students' grades. The goal of this course is to allow students to engage with the material that they have read openly, creatively, and critically. This means that any niche observation, fan theory, favorite line or passage, criticism, or curiosity is welcome. That being said, my expectation is for students to not only come to class prepared to discuss the assigned reading each week, but to also display that they have thought deeply about it.

A New Spin on the Story: Modernizing the Stepford Wives (30%)

There are several movie and TV adaptations of Ira Levin's *The Stepford Wives*. These adaptations have altered aspects of the story in different ways, such as the ending, but most importantly, the role of women changes in each successive adaptation. For this final assignment, imagine that you are in charge of developing the newest adaptation. After reading the novel, describe what you think a modern adaptation of the story would look like. What would you change about Levin's message, and what would you keep the same? Would you, like Levin, balance satire and horror, or would you lean into utilizing one element over the other? Students are welcomed and encouraged to be as creative as possible!

Grading Policies

A minimum grade of B (83) is required to earn Academic points towards your Honors Completion Requirements. (Exception: Honors Quest I and II sections require a C). Once you have earned your final grade in this course, please upload the course information and final grade from your Unofficial Transcript into your Honors Canvas Cohort: Honors Completion module to earn Honors Milestone / Completion credit.

Furthermore, this course will follow UF's grading policy, which can be found [here](#). The following cutoffs will be used for grades:

93.0 – 100% (A)	83.0 – 86.9% (B)	73.0 – 76.9% (C)	63.0 – 66.9% (D)
90.0 – 92.9% (A-)	80.0 – 82.9% (B-)	70.0 – 72.9% (C-)	60.0 – 62.9% (D+)
87.0 – 89.9% (B+)	77.0 – 79.9% (C+)	67.0 – 69.9% (D+)	<60% (F)

Requirements for class attendance and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found [here](#).

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback professionally and respectfully is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens and can complete evaluations through the email that they will receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Resources

Accommodations

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, you will receive an accommodation letter to share with me. If you need accommodation, please follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Health & Wellness Resources

If you or someone you know is struggling with any crisis including, but not limited to, gender, sexual, racial, or domestic violence, there are many community and University of Florida resources available. Some of these include:

- U Matter, We Care: 352-392-1575, umatter@ufl.edu
- RESPECT – UF Division of Student Affairs: respect.ufsa@ufl.edu
- Counseling and Wellness Center: 352-392-1575, counseling@ufl.edu (available 24/7)
- Alachua County Crisis Center's Crisis Line: 352-264-6789
- Student Health Care Center: 352-392-1161, shcc@ufl.edu
- Multicultural & Diversity Affairs: 352-392-1217, multicultural@ufl.edu
- UFPD Office of Victim Services: 352-392-1111, police@ufl.edu
- UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: 352-733-0111

Honors Program Contact Information

Information on how to contact the Honors Program or how to schedule an advising appointment can be found below:

- Honors Program: 201 Walker Hall, 352-392-1519
- To ask a quick question of an Honors advisor: advisor@honors.ufl.edu
- To book an Honors advising appointment, schedule via Microsoft Bookings: <https://bit.ly/ufhonorsadvising>.

Academic Integrity

Every University of Florida student is subject to the following [Honor Pledge](#):

We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Student Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by Students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

Most obviously, this means cheating on exams and plagiarism on written work is unacceptable. Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to submitting entire written work or portions of written work written by others and/or artificial intelligence (e.g. Bing, Bard, Llama, ChatGPT, etc.), copying text without quotations and proper citation, or paraphrasing text without proper citation. In addition to harming your professional career, and especially your grade, academic dishonesty will ultimately destroy your ability to learn from this class.

In other words, *you* must be the one producing all written assignments (not AI), and you must appropriately reference all source material, including the assigned texts. If you do not do this, you are committing academic dishonesty, which is the grounds for a failing grade. Honor code violations often occur when students feel rushed and overwhelmed. If this happens, do not panic, and instead reach out to me so we can address the situation together. It is far better to take a late penalty than to commit academic dishonesty.

In-Class Recording

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures; however, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Please note that this means that any in-class discussions cannot be recorded. Students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. More information about in-class recording can be found [here](#).

If You Enjoyed *The Stepford Wives* ...

You may also enjoy the following media:

Fiction:

- *A Southern Book Club's Guide to Slaying Vampires* by Grady Hendrix
- *Rosemary's Baby* by Ira Levin

- *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood (also a TV show)
- *The Neapolitan Novels (Quartet)* by Elena Ferrante

Television & Film:

- *Desperate Housewives*
- *Get Out*
- *Mad Men*

Non-Fiction/Academic Press:

- *A Cyborg Manifesto* by Donna Haraway
- *More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave* by Ruth Schwartz Cowan
- *Prozac on the Couch: Prescribing Gender in the Era of Wonder Drugs* by Jonathan Michel Metzl

Schedule

Week	Primary Reading	<i>Optional</i> Secondary Reading or Viewing
Week 1 January 13	Course Introduction, No Reading	
Week 2 January 20	** NO CLASS, MLK DAY **	
Week 3 January 27	<i>TSW</i> : Ch. 1 pp. 1 – 10 Ends with: “...and went into the house.”	Ch. 1 & 7 of Cowan’s <i>More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave</i>
Week 4 February 3	<i>TSW</i> : Ch. 1 pp. 10 – 24 Ends with: “...Joanna thought.”	The National Women’s History Museum’s online exhibit about Second Wave Feminism The National Organization for Women’s 1966 Statement of Purpose - NOW’s 1966-1976 Highlights
Week 5 February 10	<i>TSW</i> : Ch. 1 pp. 25 – 32 Ends with: “...baths and alcohol rubs.”	Introduction & Ch. 1 of Fermaglich and Fine’s <i>The Feminine Mystique: Annotated Text, Contexts, Scholarship</i>
Week 6 February 17	<i>TSW</i> : Ch. 1 pp. 32 – 44 Ends with: “...drank more of it.”	Ch. 10 & 14 of Fermaglich and Fine’s <i>The Feminine Mystique: Annotated Text, Contexts, Scholarship</i>
Week 7 February 24	<i>TSW</i> : Ch. 1 pp. 44 – 55 Ends with: “...Walter said.”	

<p>Week 8 March 3</p>	<p><i>TSW</i>: Ch. 1 pp. 55 – 65</p> <p>Ends with: “...Talker. Talking. Talks.”</p>	
<p>Week 9 March 10</p>	<p><i>TSW</i>: Ch. 2 pp. 66 – 78</p> <p>Ends with: “...need one after today.”</p>	<p>Ch. 1 of Hooks’s <i>Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center</i></p>
<p>Week 10 March 17</p>	<p>** NO CLASS, SPRING BREAK **</p>	
<p>Week 11 March 24</p>	<p><i>TSW</i>: Ch. 2 pp. 78 – 88</p> <p>Ends with: “...market-pack of meat.”</p>	
<p>Week 12 March 31</p>	<p><i>TSW</i>: Ch. 2 pp. 88 – 95</p> <p>Ends with: “...shook it and went out.”</p>	<p>View the folder of pharmaceutical ads from the 1950s, 60s, and 70s on Canvas.</p> <p>Ch. 3-4 of Metzl’s <i>Prozac on the Couch</i></p>
<p>Week 13 April 7</p>	<p><i>TSW</i>: Ch. 2 pp. 95 – 103</p> <p>Ends with: “...and up the hill.”</p>	<p>Ch. 1 of Putnam’s <i>Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Putnam’s interview in the New York Times (July 13, 2024)
<p>Week 14 April 14</p>	<p><i>TSW</i>: Ch. 2 pp. 103 – 118</p> <p>Ends with: “...Frank called after him.”</p>	<p>Watch these videos of attractions at Walt Disney World (Florida, USA):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walt Disney’s Carousel of Progress - The Hall of Presidents
<p>Week 15 April 21</p>	<p>Course Conclusion, <i>TSW</i>: Ch. 3</p>	<p><i>NYT</i> Article from 1975, “Feminists Recoil At Film Designed To Relate to Them”</p>