For my Foundation Topic, I have chosen to discuss the prevalence in our world today of real verses digital. Specifically, I am hoping to discuss the presence of technology such as VR, AR, AI, CGI, etc. since many tech companies are choosing to adapt some form of these technological advancements, incorporating them into new products being presented to the public. These advancements showcase the amazing strides being made today by people, simply playing around with technology until a breakthrough is made. This also leads into the realm of the Uncanny Valley, or when unrealistic things become real (the creepy point that sits between reality and fantasy) which typically is seen as problematic and troubling for most. I was interested in discussing this topic, seeing that this kind of technology is in everyone’s lives daily, whether it be through social media, school, or simply the things we watch or play (videos games, phone games, etc.) I would like to showcase just how often people unknowingly encounter this kind of technology, and how amazing our society has become with blurring the lines between reality and fantasy.

One current news article I had found that discusses this topic was a CNN article titled: *Pixel perfect: These modeling companies don’t hire real people*. The article
discusses the creation of computer-generated models, looking almost too real to not be actual people. This new viral sensation began sweeping social media in the past couple of years, seeming to spur from the Instagram star Lil Miquela, a virtual person that had appeared in 2016, later posting a caption stating that she was not human. Brenn and Shudu are other names of computer-generated models being used to promote brands and represent agencies, giving the companies exactly what they want, the exact looks that they strive for. These models are being created in a variety of images, “all shapes, sizes, and ethnicities” even different breeds, as seen through the creation of an alien looking model named Galaxia (Yurieff 2018). “The agents ‘representing’ these models say their work creates new opportunities for branding and advertising while giving clients greater control over their images” (Yurieff 2018).

This topic is very interesting to me because of its relevancy to our lecture and just overall the growth in technological advances in our society today. I knew that the development of technology in this realm (AIs, AR, CGI, etc.) was becoming more prevalent, but I had no idea just how advanced it was becoming as well.

For me, I could never truly see myself in this realm of study, simply because it is not my occupational interest. Though the topic is a very interesting one, I enjoy more indulging in people’s discoveries and inventions in the realm, rather than investing my own time into advancing it myself. I love the excitement but also, strangely, the creepiness in how technology is slowly merging itself into humanity.

However, this type of technology could also pose as a danger in our world, especially with how influenced people are with the news and social media. Another
article I had found titled The ‘Deep Fake’ Threat, discusses the issues with face swapping apps, and how it can be used for anything from revenge porn to fueling political fires. Deep fakes as of now are not very common in terms of their appearances in mainstream media, however some countries have seen its influence, “notably in Belgium, where a socialist party in May doctored a video of President Trump in an effort to ‘start a public debate’ about climate change” (Nelson 2019).

I was really interested in this topic due to it being so unknowingly powerful, if used by the wrong people. With the tech we have now, at least that is openly usable by the common public, we do not have the extreme capability to make something so insanely believable, however in the future; I believe it’ll be nearly impossible to distinguish what is real and what is not. The amount of destruction this could cause to reputations, whether it be the common man or a strong political powerhouse, is mindboggling and frightening to say the least.

Overall, the topic of digital v. reality is something that is coming up more frequently with the advancements of technology over time. I believe that people must become more aware and educated to be more wary of distinguishing the differences, in order to not fall victim to the imitations of the world.

References:
