Pathway 2: Take A Full-Semester Course

Instead of taking two half-semester mini courses, students may choose to take the full-semester course, **76-101: Interpretation and Argument**.

A second full-semester course option is **76-102: Advanced First-Year Writing**. Students may only enroll in 76-102 if they submitted an application and have been admitted.

Please continue reading to learn about the specific course topics, schedules, and faculty information for each of the 76-101 and 76-102 courses being offered in Fall 2020.

Full-Semester Course Schedules and Descriptions

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76-101 At A Glance

76-101, Interpretation and Argument, is a foundational, inquiry-driven writing course that introduces students to a variety of strategies for making compositional decisions in writing and communication. Within the course, students learn genre-based skills applicable to a variety of different fields. Students use a comparative genre analysis method to learn how to use models to take on new writing tasks, including an academic research proposal and a research article that contributes to an ongoing academic conversation. Faculty who teach 76-101 typically select texts—ranging from scholarly texts, journalism, and film—about an issue so that students can identify interesting questions for their own research projects. Students should expect explicit, research-based instruction, practice, and reflection to build knowledge in controlling their writing processes and writing clear, well-supported, reader-oriented arguments. Because the course emphasizes the real stakes of communicating with readers and listeners, students share with their peers both low- and high-stakes written work within an interactive and collaborative classroom environment.
# 76-101 Course Topics and Schedule

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor Name</th>
<th>Course Topic</th>
<th>Section Numbers</th>
<th>Days and Timeslots*</th>
<th>Course Modality</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Julie Pal-Agrawal</td>
<td>Becoming and Un-Becoming Ourselves on Social Media</td>
<td>A, AA, DD</td>
<td>A: 8:00-8:50 AM AA: 9:20-10:10 AM DD: 1:20-2:10 PM</td>
<td>In-Person + Remote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew Gordon</td>
<td>Boycotts, Bullets, Bits: Political Resistance and Forms of Protest</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>MWF 10:40-11:30 AM</td>
<td>In-Person + Remote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca Wigginton</td>
<td>The Politics of the Marvel Cinematic Universe</td>
<td>BB, CC</td>
<td>BB: MWF 10:40-11:30 AM CC: MWF 12:00-12:50 PM</td>
<td>Remote Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtney Novosat</td>
<td>Nevertheless Belief Persists: Denialism in Modern America</td>
<td>C, H</td>
<td>C: MWF 12:00-12:50 H: MWF 5:20-6:10</td>
<td>Remote Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Kravetz</td>
<td>Crafts Movements</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>MWF 1:20-2:10 PM</td>
<td>Remote Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Mayshle</td>
<td>Sites of Innovation: Past, Present, and Future</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>MWF 2:40-3:30 PM</td>
<td>Remote Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitty Shropshire</td>
<td>CONSPIRACY! Power and Paranoia in American Culture</td>
<td>G</td>
<td>MWF 4:00-4:50 PM</td>
<td>Remote Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craig Stamm</td>
<td>The Culture of Video Games</td>
<td>HH, I</td>
<td>HH: MWF 5:20-6:10 PM I: MWF 6:40-7:30 PM</td>
<td>Remote Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calvin Pollak</td>
<td>Is Information Power? Transparency, Secrecy, and Democracy</td>
<td>J</td>
<td>TR 8:00-9:20 AM</td>
<td>Remote Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colby Gillette</td>
<td>Dreaming in the 21st Century</td>
<td>JJ</td>
<td>TR 9:50-11:10 AM</td>
<td>In-Person + Remote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan Pensky</td>
<td>Pop Culture and Social Responsibility</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>TR 9:50-11:10 AM</td>
<td>Remote Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven Gotzler</td>
<td>Work Stories: From Industrial Revolution to Automated Future</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>TR 1:30-2:50 PM</td>
<td>Remote Only</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natalie Suzelis</td>
<td><em>What is Intersectional Feminism? Race, Class, and Gender in Literature and Culture</em></td>
<td>MM</td>
<td>TR 3:20-4:40 PM</td>
<td>Remote Only</td>
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*Note: Course times may change. Please revisit this document and SIO regularly for updates.*
### Becoming and Un-Becoming Ourselves on Social Media (Pal-Agrawal)

Social media has become a play space for exploring new identities. Users have reveled in the opportunity to play a seemingly endless array of roles on multiple stages for global audiences. Conversely, others have claimed our opportunities to explore our identities on social media are narrowing, as we are increasingly subjected to more forms of power, regulation, and control. This class seeks to understand the vexed relationship between using the Internet as a place of self-creation and having to assimilate into existing systems of networked and coded identities.

To investigate this potential contradiction, we will study the works of a variety of scholars. Annette Markham and Hugo Liu have described social media as a theatrical space where users can try out new identities and therefore invest in their own self-making. Henry Jenkins and Abigail De Kosnik have discussed the ways that participation in online communities has led to both individual empowerment and meaningful moments of societal change. In sharp relief, others have argued that our identities are becoming products of a variety of coercive and disciplinary online processes. Eli Pariser argues that predictive engines work to first create theories of who we are and then control the information we see, thereby hindering opportunities for self-exploration and growth. Lisa Nakamura has found that online games and chat rooms often force players into embodying existing negative stereotypes of women and minorities.

These and other related topics will serve as the focus for this 76-101 course. Our class objectives include synthesizing and evaluating a variety of perspectives, organizing persuasive and well-structured arguments, and communicating these ideas in clear and effective prose. We will study a variety of genres such as opinion pieces, academic articles, clips from TV series like *Black Mirror*, etc., to craft nuanced arguments on the degrees to which trying to become someone on social media can lead to one’s self-assimilation and eventual “un-becoming.”

### Boycotts, Bullets, Bits: Political Resistance and Forms of Protest (Gordon)

“Disobedience,” according to Henry David Thoreau, “is the true foundation of liberty.” If we assume Thoreau is right that political resistance is necessary to preserve political freedom, then it raises the question: protest how? With marches? With armed resistance? With digital tools like Low Orbital Ion Cannons? This course engages with historical and contemporary questions about the legitimacy, value, and efficacy of different forms of political dissent and resistance and their role in political systems. We analyze political theories regarding civil disobedience and freedom of speech, and consider how protest in specific contexts may challenge, update, or extend those arguments. Students may pursue inquiry into issues such as the value of different expressions of dissent, the legitimacy of hacktivism, and the value of digital media for social movements. In an era marked by patterns of resistance that range from the Arab Spring, to #occupy, to Black Lives Matter, addressing these questions helps us reflect on both our own cultural and political histories as well as our roles as global citizens. Interrogating the value of historical and contemporary forms of protest means entering a conversation; in this course, you
will develop analytical skills to identify features—some more flexible and some less flexible—within different academic genres. You will then use those skills to engage in academic inquiry, from research proposal to the research article or contribution essay that adds to the conversation about political resistance.

**The Politics of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (Wigginton)**

Since the success of Iron Man in 2008, the Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) has expanded to include 23 films, including 2019’s *Avengers: Endgame*, the highest-grossing film of all time. This extensive commercial success has spawned media discussion of the artistic and generic merits of the films, but also varied and rich scholarly and popular debate on the films’ relationships to such ideological issues as democracy, surveillance, heroism and authoritarianism, and representations of racial minorities and gender. Building on theoretical work in rhetoric, pop culture studies, and political science, we will examine the role of the superhero film in contemporary society. Why are Marvel films so popular, and what does this popularity say about 21st century America? What is the relationship between pop culture and cultural values and ideals, especially those that are politically or intellectually driven? Students are not required to have any prior knowledge or experience in this area, although the course assignments will include some film watching outside of class in order to highlight and deepen topics from the readings.

As we read both academic and popular press articles addressing these issues in and around the MCU, students will develop skills in the fundamental practices of critical reading and academic writing, and apply them to completing assignments in which they will analyze arguments, synthesize perspectives on central problems, write an academic research proposal based upon those syntheses, and finally contribute their own research-based arguments to the debates surrounding the place the MCU holds in the current cultural imagination.

**Nevertheless Belief Persists: Denialism in Modern America (Novosat)**

In *Proper Studies* (1927) acclaimed novelist and philosopher Aldous Huxley writes “facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored.” Though we might easily understand how Huxley’s truism accounts for scientific facts such as the speed of light or the boiling point of water, we might wonder about the fate of oft-ignored facts like climate change, the certainty that systemic racism persists in the 21st century, or the research verifying that wearing masks reduces the risk of contracting COVID-19. In a historical moment rife with dog-whistle terms like “alternative facts” or “fake news” and specious arguments that ignore evidence, scholars from a range of disciplines have begun to study why we tend to flee from facts that contradict our beliefs and to theorize about how deniers might better negotiate uncomfortable truths and recover fact.

Drawing on debates in cognitive psychology, racial and cultural studies, and contemporary political discourse, this course centrally asks: why are appeals to beliefs that ignore evidence so compelling in an age we like to believe is driven by fact? As we explore this overarching question, we will necessarily engage with arguments of definition (What constitutes a fact?; What makes an argument un/ethical?), of causality (How are so many of us compelled by
rhetorics of fear or anger or tribalism?; Has the false dichotomy between reason and emotion become a self-fulfilling prophecy?), and of value (How are we, as a society, adversely affected by cultural narratives tainted by half-truths, lies, or conspiracy theories?). Through discussion board posts, informal presentations, and three major writing assignments students will participate in an ongoing academic conversation about the role tribalism, power, and privilege play in the dynamics and reach of denialism in modern America.

Crafts Movements (Kravetz)

The word “technology” derives from a Greek word, techne, for craft, in the sense of “skill.” Our understanding of crafts as handmade comes from the nineteenth century, when, in response to industrialization, strong voices championed the handcrafted over the machine-made as a cure for social ills. This class will first establish the foundations and stakes of our contemporary concept of craft by reading primary texts from this earlier era. We will then read a set of academic essays on topics related to craft in art and science in order to examine—and eventually practice—their scholarly methods. These readings will bring us into the present day, where we can look for craft not only in Pittsburgh’s pervasive do-it-yourself culture, with its commitment to the original, specially made item, but also in the laboratories and workshops of CMU. After developing particular academic genre knowledge, and exploring various methods and compositional structures, you will develop and pursue your own research question on historical or contemporary craft that leads to both a research proposal and an original research-based argument. Since, as we will find, the concept of craft is relevant to nearly any kind of work, you will be free to consider it within your chosen context.

Sites of Innovation: Past, Present, and Future (Mayshle)

If Carnegie Mellon represents innovation, how does the university convey it? This introductory writing course looks at the rhetoric/s of innovation and asks, how is innovation conceived, perceived, and lived in Carnegie Mellon? Drawing on work in rhetoric and discourse studies and postmodern geography, students shall examine how Carnegie Mellon represents, embodies, and communicates innovation in various sites around campus: “past” sites could include memorials to Mao Yisheng, Judith Resnik, the Randy Pausch bridge, the CMU@50: For the Founders celebration, and the like; “present” sites could include the places and practices of their own majors/disciplines/schools, multiple changing exhibits across campus, invited campus speakers, university events, and the like; “future” sites could include newly created spaces such as the Gates and Hillman Centers, the Tepper Quad, the $20M Classroom and Learning Spaces Project, and the like. And because this is a foundational writing course, you will practice what it means to write for, within, and beyond the academy, as you develop skills in critical reading and academic writing and apply them to analyze arguments, synthesize various perspectives on central problems, and finally contribute your own argument to the conversation on rhetorical space.

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CONSPIRACY! Power and Paranoia in American Culture (Shropshire)

Who killed JFK? Is NASA hiding evidence that the Earth is actually flat? Is the Queen of England a shape-shifting reptilian from the Alpha Draconis star system? And more importantly, how can we know for sure? Despite unflattering representations of conspiracy theorists as paranoid fanatics who exist on the fringes of society, recent research suggests that at least half of all Americans believe in at least one conspiracy theory. If this is true, what are the implications for contemporary American culture and politics? Should we understand conspiracism as a threat to the intellectual health of the nation, or as a type of radical skepticism and free thought? Does conspiracism depress political engagement or invigorate it in new ways?

Guided by these questions, this section of 76-101 will examine the relationship between the “stigmatized knowledge” of conspiracists and the kinds of “institutional knowledge” produced at universities. Not only will we question how we know what we know, we will also consider the broader social, political, and ethical implications of different forms of knowledge-making. Readings will be drawn from fields including political science, sociology, cultural studies, and—of course—from conspiracy theorists themselves. Students in this course will develop critical reading, writing, and media literacy skills while learning the foundations of academic authorship. Ultimately, each student will learn about academic genre features, write an academic research proposal, and produce an original research paper that synthesizes scholarly perspectives and contributes an original perspective on a conspiracy theory of the student’s choosing.

The Culture of Video Games (Stamm)

This course focuses on arguments related to the social impact of video games in contemporary culture. Video games have been an influential force of entertainment for decades, but in the past decade have reached a new peak of mainstream appeal. Emphasizing issues around identity politics, the course discusses issues of representation and identification in video games from the past and present, while also looking at how video games have evolved and developed their own unique and complex culture. Students are asked to write papers analyzing an argument about video games, writing a proposal describing a potential topic for a final paper and a plan of research, and then finally contributing their own argument to a discussion about video games and their social impact.

Dreaming in the 21st Century (Gillette)

Around ten percent of our lives are spent dreaming, a state which is as likely to produce great scientific discoveries and artistic inspiration as the everyday bafflement we all feel upon waking and remembering a particularly strange dream. Since Freud’s pronouncement that dreams are “the royal road to the unconscious,” dreams have been a subject of renewed interest in Western culture; this abiding interest has led to dreams becoming an area of study within the fields of psychology, neuroscience and anthropology. In this course we will examine some of the significant contributions to the field of dream research and deepen our understanding of how this...
research has impacted the human sciences and our broader culture. Throughout the course we will attempt to answer the basic question, What is Dreaming?, by studying some of the major theories of dreams, investigating some common quantitative approaches such as content analysis, and examining recent research on the neurological, biochemical basis of dreaming. The varying answers to this question will allow us to see how dream studies can present new perspectives on issues such as the nature of cognition, cultural reality, and the human experience. Assignments will include a comparative genre analysis, research proposal, and research paper.

**Is Information Power? Transparency, Secrecy, and Democracy (Pollak)**

According to journalist Glenn Greenwald, “a society in which people can be monitored at all times breeds conformity and obedience and submission.” Today, private data is collected on unprecedented scales by government and corporate institutions like the National Security Agency (NSA) and Google. Is Greenwald's nightmare vision thus our current reality? Or is data collection benign, even beneficial, as tech CEOs often claim? Should we even consider costs to individuals' privacy if surveillance databases help leaders break up terror plots and prevent election interference – and help companies serve us better content? Hasn’t our society always involved surveillance of people marginalized by race, gender, and/or class? To what extent does mass surveillance deepen these societal inequities, and make it even more difficult for ordinary people to challenge them?

To answer questions like these, we'll engage with academic, journalistic, and political texts written before and after the 2013 Snowden leaks of classified NSA documents. We'll also examine more recent controversies around surveillance technologies and practices like predictive policing, facial recognition, and more. Engaging with these topics effectively requires understanding how material (economic) and symbolic (linguistic and rhetorical) power operate in social contexts; thus, students in this course will develop practices of critical reading, analysis, and writing. By the end of the semester, students will be able to break down and interpret public arguments according to their material and symbolic characteristics, and craft rigorous, well-researched writing about the present-day circumstances of personal privacy and state power.

**Pop Culture and Social Responsibility (Pensky)**

In this section of 76-101, students will analyze their involvement in and engagement with pop culture. To focus on the ethics of this cultural engagement, we will discuss several models of social responsibility, and apply these models to our own participation with pop culture. Our goal will be to question how ethics and social responsibility intersect with pop culture. Social issues now weigh more heavily on mainstream pop cultural artifacts than ever before. The discussion of online fandom communities and their social justice concerns, for example, play a large part in this cultural shift. We will attempt to make sense of this shift by reading and analyzing a series of ethical arguments on the subject of pop culture consumption. Through these readings, we will address questions such as these: Am I personally responsible for the culture of violence in professional sports, and if so, how? Do I contribute to Western culture's obsession with unrealistic standards of beauty for women? Can I watch a Woody Allen movie or a Bill Cosby

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comedy special and still be a good person? For our purposes, interrogating our engagement in pop culture means entering an academic conversation. In this course, you will develop skills in critical reading and academic writing and apply them to analyze arguments, synthesize perspectives on central problems, and finally contribute your own argument to the ongoing conversation on the ethical dilemmas related to consuming pop culture.

**Work Stories: From Industrial Revolution to Automated Future (Gotzler)**

This class explores work and the “stories” we tell about it. What is work? What counts as work and what doesn’t? How has work figured in the popular imagination, and how have these imaginings shaped our visions of the future? How does our lived experience of work inform how we understand ourselves and others, as well as our place in society? In other words, to quote the Carnegie Mellon motto, why is it that our hearts are so “in the work”?

To address these questions, we will investigate the story of modern work as a uniquely important site of personal investment and social experience throughout history. In doing so, we will utilize a range of sources drawn from literature, philosophy, science and technology studies (STS), documentary, journalism, and contemporary film. First, students will be introduced to classical accounts of work from antiquity to the industrial revolution (Hesiod, Smith, Marx and Engels, Weber), before examining various interventions in comparative work studies that move beyond these frames, including brainwork and mental labor (Mills, Ross), slavery and mass incarceration (Wang, Davis), global care-work and the politics of housework (Rivas, Ferguson, Komlosy), and theories of the “work” of art (Benjamin), as well as recent writing on A.I. and the specter of a fully automated post-work future (Kolbert, Srnicek and Williams). Along the way, we will also trace these various non-fictional accounts of work as they permeate our cultural lives as well—looking to representations of life and work in the 19th century industrial novel (Dickens, Gaskell), documentary film (American Factory), television (Workaholics), and contemporary cinema (Sorry to Bother You, Roma, Parasite).

Over the course of the semester, students will analyze and synthesize arguments written by experts, interpret literary and cultural texts, and ultimately develop an original contribution to conversations about work and how we understand its role in our lives.

**Hoaxes, Fakes, and Con-Artists (Adcox)**

In 1835, the New York Sun reported that life had been discovered on the moon: men with bat wings, moon-bison, and a species of large, bipedal beaver. Sales of the Sun soared. In 1938, radio reports of a Martian invasion caused panic throughout the country—a (perhaps unintentional) hoax that helped establish Orson Welles as one of the greatest dramatists of the twentieth century. In 2009, people watched breathlessly as authorities tracked a homemade weather balloon, supposedly carrying a scared six-year-old boy (who later told reporters that his parents had staged the whole thing to get on TV). That same year, Bernie Madoff pled guilty to operating the largest pyramid scam in history.

Though the hoaxer is by no means a character restricted to the United States, the U.S. has always

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had a particular affinity (and, arguably, has been a particularly good breeding-ground) for what showman P.T. Barnum referred to as “humbug.” In this class we will explore hoaxers and con-artists as they have appeared in popular culture, literature, and real life, investigating how these characters, real and fictitious, exert such fascination over both victims and audiences. Why are we attracted to stories about con-artists? Why do we often find them more sympathetic, and even more heroic, than other sorts of criminal? And what does this attraction tell us about ourselves and the society around us?

Over the course of the semester you will engage analytically with a variety of sources, including theoretical texts such as David Shields’s *Reality Hunger* and Kevin Young’s *Bunk*, longform journalism such as Maria Konnikova’s *The Confidence Game*, literary representations of con-artists, and hoax memoirs by James Frey and Margaret Seltzer. You will summarize and respond to arguments about the nature and meaning of hoaxes, and propose and develop an original research question which you will use to write your own, research-based essay contributing to the course’s conversation.

**What is Intersectional Feminism? Race, Class, and Gender in Literature and Culture (Suzelis)**

In 1974, The Combahee River Collective published "A Black Feminist Statement," a manifesto that claimed all major systems of racial, sexual, and classed oppression were interlocking. Seven years later, Angela Davis showed how the women’s liberation movement had often been hampered by classed and raced biases in her book, *Women, Race, and Class*. Eight years after that, Kimberlé Crenshaw published an academic paper that described how gender, race, and class tend to “intersect” in the legal system. Today, the idea of “intersectional” feminist analysis has caught fire in mainstream media, politics, and popular discourse. But what, exactly, does "intersectional feminism" mean? While Crenshaw’s paper has changed the very language of feminism in popular discourse, Davis has shown how feminism must approach historical racism, the prison system, and police brutality.

Today, intersections of gender, race, and class remain hotly contested across academic discourses, politics, and popular culture. From Beyoncé’s 2016 album, *Lemonade*, to the film *Stay Woke: The Black Lives Matter Movement*, it is clear that we cannot analyze representations of either gender, race, or class in a vacuum. To better understand the stakes of "intersectionality," this class will apply various intersectional lenses to a wide range of media, from commercialized popular culture to poems, short stories, and film. As the class progresses, students will unpack and attempt to define contested terms like feminism, sexism, racism, and the politics of location, paying particular attention to how their representations in various media can speak back to, enhance, and interrogate such lenses. Students will then map out debates of intersectional feminism between feminists, poets, directors, musicians, and writers, ultimately contributing to these conversations with their own analysis of a literary or cultural work.
76-102 Course Description and Schedule

Advanced First-Year Writing courses are designed for students who have demonstrated an understanding of academic writing that most incoming freshmen have not. Because of the students' level of preparedness, the Writing & Communication Program provides intensive, advanced courses for students to work closely with senior faculty within the English department. Advanced courses assume that students have established strong reading and synthesizing skills, as well as a demonstrated interest in writing and communication, prior to entering Carnegie Mellon. The course topics shift each semester. Students enroll by application only.

For Fall 2020, we are offering only one section of 76-102. Please see schedule and description information below.

Brave New Worlds: Speculative Fiction
76-102 B: MWF 10:40-11:30 AM
(*Note: Course times may change. Please revisit this document and SIO regularly for updates.)
Professor: Jamie Smith
Modality: In-Person + Remote

In this tumultuous 2020, as we grapple with a pandemic, confront systemic injustice, and face another Presidential election in the U.S., we are all asking: what does it mean to live in and create a new world? In this advanced section of First-Year Writing, students will explore how fiction writers have imagined new worlds via “speculative” genres (namely, fantasy, sci-fi, and dystopian). We will learn what it means for a text to be considered “speculative” fiction and observe how these modes have fluctuated in Western literature. We will additionally analyze fiction and arguments about literature and culture, explore and adopt literary lenses, and finally propose our own arguments and contribute to ongoing academic discussions about speculative fiction.

Authors in this class may include Margaret Atwood, Octavia Butler, and even Shakespeare, along with writers of secondary criticism and theoretical lenses like intersectional feminism, digital humanities, and postcolonial studies. As we learn to write effectively in an academic and professional setting, we will consider how these vibrant texts engage with important issues of their (and our) time, like gender, race, revolution, sexuality, nationality and religion. Instructor lectures will introduce other cultural and historical materials like visual arts, periodicals, music, film, and letters in order to enhance students’ contextual knowledge and skills for writing about speculative literature within particular moments and over time.