

# 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**.

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

## 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

Instructor Name	Course Topic	Section Number	Days and Timeslots	Course Modality
Julie Pal-Agrawal	<i>Becoming and Unbecoming Ourselves on Social Media</i>	A AD CC	MWF 8:00-8:50AM MWF 10:00-10:50AM MWF 12:00-12:50PM	In-Person
Courtney Novosat	<i>Nevertheless Belief Persists: Denialism in Modern America</i>	AB BB	MWF 9:00-9:50AM MWF 11:00-11:50AM	In-Person
Kevin Haworth	<i>The Public Intellectual in a Divided Society</i>	AC	MWF 10:00-10:50AM	In-Person
Alan Kohler	<i>Smart Food: Tackling Global Food Security and Sustainability Problems</i>	B C	MWF 11:00-11:50AM MWF 12:00-12:50PM	In-Person
Janine Carlock	<i>TBD</i>	D J	MWF 1:00-1:50PM MWF 3:00-3:50PM	In-Person
Julia Salehzadeh	<i>Virtue or Violence: Choosing a Response to Conflict</i>	DD EE F	MWF 1:00-1:50PM MWF 2:00-2:50PM MWF 4:00-4:50PM	In-Person
Rebecca Wigginton	<i>Politics and Ideology in the Marvel Cinematic</i>	E LL	MWF 2:00-2:50PM MWF: 11-11:50AM	In-Person
Peter Mayshle	<i>The Rhetoric of Place</i>	GG N	TR 8:00-9:20AM TR 11:00-12:20PM	In-Person
Meg Feller	<i>Are We Simply Monstrous?: Medieval Monstrosity in Mass Culture</i>	HH K O	TR 2:00-3:20PM TR 12:30-1:50PM TR 9:30-10:50AM	In-Person
Megan Heise	<i>Crossing Borders: Forced Migration and Transnationalism</i>	I II JJ	TR 2:00-2:50PM TR 3:30-4:50PM TR 12:30-1:50PM	In-person
Don Holmes	<i>Black Social Justice Rhetoric: Past and Futures</i>	KK MM	MWF 3:00-3:50PM MWF 4:00-4:50PM	In-Person

Barbara George	<b><i>The Environment: What Does it Mean to Address the Environment in the Rust Belt and Beyond?</i></b>	M	MWF 12:00-12:50PM	In-Person
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## 76-101 Section Course Descriptions

### **Becoming and Unbecoming Ourselves on Social Media (*Pal-Agrawal: Sections A, AD, CC*)**

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. Sherry Turkle talks about the potential of leaving behind a solid, unitary identity and exploring more fluid identities online. For scholars like Annette Markham and Hugo Liu, home pages, avatars, chat rooms, blank webpages, etc. are theatrical spaces where users can try out new identities and therefore invest in their own self-making. Conversely, others like Bernie Hogan and Danah Boyd have claimed that online spaces are not free and in fact maintain sensitivities to social indicators like race, class and gender. Instead of a place of fantasy where people play with multiple roles, people use their social media to craft self-images that are flat, safe and unidimensional. Taking this one step further, theorists like Eli Pariser have argued that our identities are becoming products of a variety of coercive and disciplinary online processes. According to him, we are not expressing ourselves through technological tools. Instead, tools like predictive engines, news filters and algorithms shape us and thereby curtail our opportunities online for self-exploration and growth.

This class seeks to understand the vexed relationship between using the Internet as a place of self-creation, while having to assimilate into existing systems of networked and coded identities. We will answer questions like: Can the Internet propagate genuinely new selves, and to what extent are these selfhoods products of the culture at large? How does the technology we use shape our behavior, and how can the constraints of technology be taken up and reworked by individuals in diverse ways? How are our social media presences wishful imaginings while also contributing to an emerging monoculture? 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 in cyberspace can lead to one's self-assimilation and eventual "un-becoming."

### **Nevertheless Belief Persists: Denialism in Modern America (*Novosat: Section AB and BB*)**

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 easily 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 21<sup>st</sup> 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, and conspiracy theories?). Through discussion board posts, informal presentations, and three major writing assignments, students will participate in an ongoing academic conversation about the dynamics and reach of denialism in modern America.

### **The Public Intellectual in a Divided Society (*Haworth: Section AC*)**

What is the role of a public intellectual in a divided society? Artists and intellectuals often try to use their knowledge for the public good—to inform, to advocate, and to argue for change. But do they do so effectively? Are they able to affect public thought about issues like racism, censorship, or gender inequality? What can their examples teach us about connecting academic discourse and public issues? And how does public intellectualism change across time and cultures?

In this section, we will read and explore the work of American public intellectuals such as Ta-Nehisi Coates, Gloria Anzaldúa, Neil deGrasse Tyson, Jedediah Purdy, and Susan Sontag, as well as international artists and thinkers such as Ai Weiwei and Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche. Students will read both academic and popular texts by and about these figures to understand different modes of discourse. We will also analyze and synthesize arguments by and about public intellectuals, to propose and develop an original research question, ultimately leading to a unique contribution on the issues related to intellectualism and the public sphere.

### **Smart Food: Tackling Global Food Security and Sustainability Problems (*Kohler: Sections B and C*)**

Goal 2 of the United Nations' 17 Sustainability Development Goals seeks to “end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”. Indeed, the UN goes on to state that, “As the world population continues to grow, much more effort and innovation will be urgently needed in order to sustainably increase agricultural production, improve the global supply chain, decrease food losses and waste, and ensure that all who are suffering from hunger and malnutrition have access to nutritious food. Many in the international community believe that it is possible to eradicate hunger within the next generation, and are working together to achieve this goal.” Abstractly and in general, the issue of food security and sustainability is familiar. Individually, however, our understanding of this topic, our observations about its place in our society, and our interpretation of its global import are all shaped and colored by our own experiences, our own values, and our own professional and personal goals.

In this course, you will explore a variety of readings related to our global food systems and discussions of the public discourse surrounding issues of food security and sustainability in order to interpret your relationship with and understanding of this topic and make arguments about how to tackle these challenges. Across three major writing assignments, you will (1) investigate and compare the features of various texts in an analysis of written genres, (2) create a research proposal for a project that connects the challenges of global food security with your current major/discipline, and (3) extend this proposal into a formal research paper, all in exploration of the questions: *How do our own experiences and emerging disciplinary interests and expertise influence our understanding*

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*of food insecurity and sustainability? How does our chosen field of study stand to contribute to the global fight for a sustainable and secure food future?*

### **Virtue or Violence: Choosing a Response to Conflict (*Salehzadeh: Sections DD, EE and F*)**

Are virtues such as kindness, honesty, compassion, and a shared sense of responsibility a viable response to conflict? An automatic reply for most people would be, “yes”; however, even a quick news or social media investigation of national and local response to current conflicts suggests that coercion, manipulation, and violence are at least common first reactions. Arguments have been made that specific acts of violence can lessen future acts of violence, perhaps the most extreme being the use of the atomic bomb in World War II. Despite the prevalence of violence as a response to situations, there is ample evidence that people who choose nonviolent, enacted virtue can make a significant difference in social policy and behavior in the public sphere (e.g., Gandhi, King, Mother Teresa, Nightingale, E. Roosevelt, Chief Joseph, Schindler, Parks, Carter, Mandela, Thoreau). This course will explore the efficacy of virtue as a viable, nonviolent response to conflict and the value in considering an alternative to violence and selfish individualism when dealing with conflict and disagreement. We will consider questions about shared responsibility in communities, historical perspectives on virtue in civic life, and the influence of virtue outside social relations in fields such as economics, science, and technology. The class is not about praising virtue per se but about investigating where it is valued and what are its effects on outcomes in different fields while still engaging respectfully with others in our community who believe that violent ways of meeting conflict are more efficacious or perhaps simply inevitable.

Throughout the semester, we will consider texts from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, including rhetoric, philosophy, psychology, technology, and political science. This work will inform research, analysis, and synthesis of current conversations about enacted virtues and give students a starting point to begin their own research proposals. Student writing will culminate in an academic contribution paper that resolves an issue posed by the questions we encounter.

### **Politics and Ideology in the Marvel Cinematic Universe (*Wigginton: Sections E and LL*)**

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.

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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.

### **The Rhetoric of Place (*Mayshe: Sections GG and N*)**

Places “speak” because places have meaning. How places embody and convey their meanings is the subject of this course. Building on theoretical work in cultural studies and postmodern geography, we will consider how ideas about space and place inform rhetoric, literacy, difference, and public memory. How do the spaces and places in which we learn inform and shape how we learn? What are the relationships between space/place and gender, race, social class, sexual orientation, or other categories of social identification or social experience? How does the way we experience built environments, particularly ones fraught with memory, inform the meaning-making that occurs at these sites? In short, this course will explore the question: how is space and place rhetorical? 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 and innovation.

### **Are we simply monstrous?: Monstrosity in Mass Culture (*Feller: Sections HH, K and O*)**

Whether or not you’ve read the epic poem *Beowulf*, you’ve probably encountered its influences in popular culture. From dragons hoarding gold to the strange creatures inhabiting the borders of civilization, these monstrous configurations still haunt our imaginations. Why do these ancient worries continue to reemerge in new forms? And what monsters today speak to the anxieties of our own cultural moment?

This course invites students to interrogate the function of monstrosity in mass media, from monstrous bodies to monstrous rhetoric. Do our stories try to cast the world into a binary of good versus evil? Primitive versus advanced? How do depictions of monster-slaying speak to contemporary attitudes around violence? In this course, we will learn to write analytically, read critically and engage in academic discussions, developing a research question that interrogates monstrosity in the twenty-first century.

In examining monstrous figures, we will foster an appreciation for complexity and uncertainty. Our coursework will allow us to interrogate a number of questions: How does rhetoric dictate distinctions between humans and monsters, between protected animals and ecological pests? What conversations about race, gender, and disability arise through the examination of our culture’s monsters? Who are the heroes and who are the aberrations? And are they ever, in fact, both? Together we will explore how language can be slippery and how our taxonomies erode under pressure.

## **Crossing Borders: Forced Migration and Transnationalism in the 21st Century (Heise: Sections I, II and JJ)**

For some, the COVID-19 pandemic brought into sharp relief the presence of national and regional boundaries, as many of us were unable to travel outside our countries, states, provinces, or territories due to local, regional, and national travel restrictions. For many others, though, the pandemic was not the first time a border held real, tangible significance. As a global society we are currently witnessing record numbers of people experiencing forced migration, including refugees, internally-displaced people, asylum seekers, and others. With this rising need for viable integration and resettlement options has also come increased calls for border walls, travel bans, and refugee admissions caps. In this context, our course will consider the very real, embodied impacts of borders, national and otherwise: What is the role of borders in regulating the flow of bodies and capital around the world? Who determines borders and to what ends? What options are available for those who cross borders, or for those who dwell in between places, what Gloria Anzaldúa, drawing on the Nahuatl word, refers to as *nepantla* spaces? How do we as writers, scholars, and humans in the 21st century cross and/or dwell in borders in our everyday academic, professional, social, and personal lives?

Across languages and locales, our class will work through a comparative genre analysis of writing from *nepantla* spaces and build to a research proposal and argument contribution on a topic of students' choosing related to migration, displacement, language, transnationalism, and/or travel. We will engage with selected texts composed predominantly by transnational, immigrant, and refugee writers, in understanding the role of borders and border crossings in the lives of writers who have come before us, as well as the ways their writing clarifies, muddles, or transgresses borders -- between countries, between languages, between genres.

## **Black Social Justice Rhetoric: Past and Futures (Holmes: Sections KK and MM)**

In her 1980 MLA panel remarks, Audre Lorde noted that her “silences had not protected [her]. Your silence will not protect you.” Lorde’s remarks encourage us to “break the silence” that immobilizes us, challenging what we know and to learn about what we do not as we seek to make our society equitable. Throughout the Black lived experience, Black American speakers and writers have been seeking to “break the silence” that has compelled our society to remain silent in the face of both anti-Black and anti-democratic practices in the United States. The response to these injustices follow in the long tradition of Black literary and rhetorical resistance in the United States. Instead of simply relying on classical rhetoric devices, such as *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*, this course will explore and recognize critiques to dominant ideologies and political and social hegemonies that has traditionally marginalized Black people in our society. Our class on Black rhetorical resistance will explore the myriad rhetorical forms and expressions Black speakers and writers have historically and contemporaneously used to stake their claims to American society.

In this course, students will read both primary and academic documents to gain a deeper understanding of both the African American experience and their collective response to anti-Black racism. Students will also critically assess the Black lived experience, call and response, repetition, and other rhetorical forms of persuasions in Black literature, speeches and essays, musical art forms, and short films and documentaries. To develop skills of critical reading and academic writing,

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students will analyze arguments and genres, synthesize perspectives, write an academic proposal, and contribute to the conversation with a research project in the form of a contribution paper.

### **The Environment: What Does it Mean to Address the Environment in the Rust Belt and Beyond? (*George: Section LL*)**

Often, environmental issues are framed as catastrophic: this might be natural phenomenon that we can feel, see & experience ourselves (flooding, wildfires, rapidly warming temperatures, drought, agricultural concerns etc.), but there are threads of other discourses as well: environmental policy considerations (the intricacies of the Paris Climate agreement or the racial concerns of environmental justice), or the science related to a myriad of environmental concerns about emerging human technologies (the Anthropocene).

Other times, the environment is shared through various mediums as a place of peace, respite, and hope: once industrial towns like Pittsburgh are “greening” one neighborhood at a time, there is a rise in the sharing of environmental phenomena in an effort to protect it – from a sketchbook of a wildflower to a selfie in a National Park on social media.

The readings in this class help us to question our relationship with and understanding of the environment. How is our understanding of the environment mediated through various representations of environmental phenomena? From our own observations about nature, to historical environmental texts, to environmental social media and real time campaigns that create opportunities for public participation, and to formal academic environmental research. How do new technologies complicate our understanding of the environment and what does that mean about ethics surrounding nature? How various science claims complicate policy action surrounding different environmental controversies?

In this course, students will analyze a variety of texts to explore features of different written genres. Students will then synthesize and apply these texts in a research proposal that poses a question on a real-world environmental concern. The proposal then extends into a formal research paper, which students often connect to their future area of study, civic, community or workplace considerations.