

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 can 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 Numbers	Days and Timeslots
Rochel Gasson	<i>Digital Selves and Social Systems: Inquiry through Research and Writing</i>	A AB B	MWF 8:00-5:50AM MWF 9:00-9:50 AM MWF 11-11:50AM
Chad Szalkowki-Ference	<i>AI and Art: Can Machines Tell Our Stories?</i>	AC C D	MWF 10:00AM-10:50AM MWF 12:00-12:50PM MWF 1:00-1:50PM
Julie Pal-Agrawal	<i>Becoming and Unbecoming Ourselves on Social Media</i>	AD	MWF 11:00-11:50AM
Heidi Wright		CC O	MWF 12:00-12:50PM MWF 10:00-10:50AM
Robyn Rowley	<i>(Dis)Ability and American Identity</i>	DD EE	MWF 1:00-1:50PM MWF 2:00-2:50PM
Kat Myers	<i>Social Media and Identity</i>	E J	MWF 2:00-2:50PM MWF 3:00-3:50PM
Seth Strickland	<i>Hunger: The Politics and Philosophy of Pangs</i>	F	MWF 4:00-4:50PM
Elizabeth Dieterich	<i>At Home</i>	FF	MWF 9:00-9:50AM
Julia Salehzadeh	<i>Virtue or Violence: Choosing a Response to Conflict</i>	GG NN	TR 8:00-9:20AM TR 9:30-10:50AM
Peter Mayshle	<i>Sites of Innovation: Past, Present, and Future</i>	HH JJ	TR 9:30-10:50AM TR 12:30-1:50PM
Emma Johnson	<i>Hustle and Grind: Work, Leisure, and the Politics of Productivity</i>	HH	TR 2:00-3:20PM

Tony Luchini	<i>Becoming and Unbecoming Ourselves on Social Media</i>	I II K	TR 2:00-3:20PM TR 3:30-4:50PM TR 12:30-1:50PM
Laura Deluca	<i>Gendered Sovereignty: Queenship and Power in Literature and Culture</i>	KK	MWF 3:00-3:50PM
Janine Carlock	<i>Being Human in the Digital Age</i>	LL M	MWF 11:00-11:50AM MWF 12:00-12:50PM
TBD	<i>TBD</i>	BB MM N	MWF 11:00-11:50AM MWF 4:00-4:50PM TR 11:00-12:20PM

76-101 Section Course Descriptions

Digital Selves and Social Systems: Inquiry through Research and Writing (Gasson: Sections A, AB, B)

In a world increasingly shaped by digital technologies, how do we write about the self, society, and systems of power? This course invites students to critically examine the intersections of identity, technology, and social justice through critical research writing. Drawing on conversations from diverse discourse communities—including those surrounding artificial intelligence (AI), generative AI (GAI), and explainable AI (XAI)—we will explore key concepts such as data colonialism, algorithmic bias, surveillance capitalism, and the ethical dimensions of digital identity and selfhood (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Murgia, 2024). Taking an interdisciplinary and inquiry-driven approach, we will read works from historic and contemporary thinkers like Turkle (1995), Kurzweil (2004), Hogan (2010), and Harari (2024) to investigate how dominant narratives are constructed and maintained, and how to effectively challenge them to gain new insights into the self and technology.

Emphasizing writing as both a process and a method of critical engagement, this course provides space for you to develop clarity, purpose, and voice in an active academic discourse. Shaping understanding of the world and ourselves, we will bring our own experiences and interests into conversation with course materials to synthesize complex ideas and craft compelling arguments on the impacts of digital systems on identity. We will write a range of core academic research genres, including a thesis-driven analysis, a research proposal, and a research article that stems from that proposal. The research and writing skills gained in this course will equip you to move into your field(s) of study to question prevailing narratives and create new lines of inquiry to articulate your role as thoughtful, critical participants in a networked society.

AI and Art: Can Machines Tell Our Stories? (Szalkowski-Ference: Sections AC, C, D)

A man receives a direct message from his dead friend, who has become fully reanimated in the present, ChatGPT-style. Unknown to the judges, an AI-generated submission won a prestigious photography award. These situations come from contemporary literature and the art world, highlighting how artists are integrating algorithms and AI into creative texts. In this course, we will track debates on the ethics and aesthetics of machine learning in the creative arts. Much like scholars at Oxford, who have concluded that “human/[machine learning] complementarity in the arts is a rich and ongoing process,” we will temper enthusiasm by exploring issues such as access, originality, ownership, and the degree to which art exceeds the generation of grammar, syntax, and/or images through algorithms to include a deeper meaning rooted in human consciousness and interaction with others and the world.

Through three major writing assignments that include a proposal and academic paper, we will learn to read critically, synthesize productively, and apply theoretical lenses to texts to participate in an ongoing critical conversation. The emerging critical conversation we will enter centers on ethics, aesthetics, narrative/literary theory, and AI, which itself melds a range of disciplines from computer science to biology. Because the work we will be doing is interdisciplinary, students will be able to gravitate toward areas of the arts that interest them most and draw from research related to the academic disciplines

they are pursuing at CMU, all culminating in an insightful contribution to the conversation taking place at the crossroads of technology and art.

Becoming and Un-Becoming Ourselves on Social Media (Pal-Agrawal: Section AD; Luchini: Sections I, II, K)

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 that 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 while having to assimilate into existing systems of networked and coded identities.

To investigate this potential contradiction, we will study the works of various scholars. Annette Markham and Hugo Liu have described social media as a theatrical space where users can try out new identities and invest in their self-making. Henry Jenkins and Abigail De Kosnik have discussed how 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 various coercive and disciplinary online processes. Eli Pariser argues that predictive engines work first to 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 to embody negative stereotypes of women and minorities.

These and related topics will serve as the focus for this 76-101 course. We will study a variety of genres, such as opinion pieces, academic articles and influencer interviews to craft nuanced arguments on the degrees to which trying to become someone on social media can lead to self-assimilation and eventual “unbecoming.” Our class objectives include synthesizing and evaluating various perspectives, organizing persuasive and well-structured arguments, and communicating these ideas in clear and compelling prose.

Smartphones: Blessing or Curse? (Wright: CC & O)

The smartphone revolution has shifted how we interact with each other and our environment, but at what cost? In this course, we will critically explore how mobile technologies shape the way we relate and communicate in today’s connected society. In examining the broader impacts of mobile technologies across disciplines of design, education, rhetoric, business, and sociology, students will investigate how we use smartphones and how we are used by them.

As smartphones become more centralized to our ways of learning and communicating, it behooves us to become more reflective and critical users; our readings will enable us to evaluate to what extent mobile technology connects users across cultures while contributing to a loss of humanity. In this course, students will compare articles across genres that relate to ways in which smartphones both connect and disconnect their users from each other and our world. We will carve research spaces from emerging areas of inquiry and knowledge gaps, including why mobile social media may make us unsocial, how smartphones contribute to both increases in life satisfaction as well as isolation, and in what ways might we leverage smartphones to teach, learn, and train.

(Dis)Ability and American Identity (Rowley: Sections DD & EE)

At the 2020 Superbowl, deaf woman of color and artist Christine Sun Kim was invited to perform the national anthem and America the Beautiful in American Sign Language alongside singers Demi Lovato and Yolanda Adams. But while her performance was broadcast on the jumbotron in the stadium, it was not part of the live stream of the game, instead cutting to views of the players, and Kim only appeared on television for a few seconds. In the *New York Times*, Kim opined, “Why have a sign language performance that is not accessible to anyone who would like to see it?” The failure of representation captured in this moment is reflective of how we understand and make space for difference and disability: attempts at inclusion and recognition, while well-intentioned, often reveal the lack of understanding and awareness of the experience of the very people they seek to include and speak for. Such misunderstandings are the result of the longer story of American identity, social power, and the co-construction of difference and normalcy, which we will investigate during this course.

As we work to historicize the history of disability in America, we will elaborate, understand, and define concepts of disability and the ways in which they inflect our understanding of American identity. Students will work to build a critical vocabulary of terms and concepts that inform and shape legal texts and public policies, cultural practices, and notions of the citizen. We will use this vocabulary to help us interrogate debates surrounding disability in the domains of education, medical arts, architecture and design, cultural production and more. We will read diverse texts like literature, op-eds, academic writings, supreme court cases and public policies and more to help students analyze arguments and identify features and variations of genre. They will learn to synthesize perspectives, write an academic proposal, and contribute to the conversation with a research project in the form of a contribution paper on the broad topic of (dis)ability and American identity.

Social Media & Identity (Myers: Sections E & J)

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, social media hosts theatrical spaces where users can try out new identities and invest in their 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 multiple roles, people use social media to craft flat, safe, and unidimensional self-images.

This class seeks to understand the vexed relationship between using social media 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 use of social media create and shape genuinely new selves, and to what extent are these selfhoods products of the communities we engage in?”; “How does the technology we use shape our behavior?”; “How are our social media presences wishful imaginings while also contributing to major shifts in culture?”

Our class objectives include synthesizing and evaluating various 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, Ted

Talks etc., to craft nuanced arguments on the degree to which trying to create and maintain an identity on social media can influence our behaviors, communities, and realities.

Food and Hunger: Navigating Rhetoric of Scarcity (Strickland: Section F)

Is hunger a feeling or a physical state? Is it some third thing in complex combination? How does hunger reveal inequality or serve to trace lines of care and power in human society? How do desires and appetite relate to physical hunger? Is hunger a state of being or a lack of food? We'll discuss how hunger and food play an important role in our lives, in our communities, and how we can develop a coherent approach to questions of hunger and how developing such an approach can transform the way we interact with our goals, our communities, and even parts of ourselves. As early as the Middle Ages, poets divided society into 'winners,' that is, producers, and 'wasters,' consumers. In recent years, hunger and complex relationships with food appear in Tommy Pico's poetry, Roxanne Gay's memoirs, and countless films like *Spirited Away* and *The Menu*. The problem isn't distant or hypothetical, either: Pittsburgh has the highest levels of food insecurity among similarly sized cities. Nearly 13% of Pittsburgh residents (and 19% of children) live in food insecurity, which is on par with national rates in the US. In this, one of the most stupendously wealthy countries in the world, why are people still going hungry? In this course, students will begin to answer these questions through a variety of individual and collaborative research projects. Students will analyze texts for their arguments, synthesize their ideas, and hone the academic skills needed to participate in a scholarly conversation. After reading and analyzing a variety of arguments on this issue, students will write a formal research proposal and paper by drawing upon their knowledge from this class and their own disciplines.

At Home (Dieterich: Section FF)

Most of what we learn about history and culture is about events that occur on a grand scale, such as wars, conquests, and election-sweeping events featuring larger-than-life players we'll never meet. But the truth is that the majority of human history has actually happened "offscreen," as it were, in the houses and private lives of everyday people. Stepping back from the grand arc of history, our 76-101 class will focus on the private, domestic spaces of the past and present, engaging with texts and media that examine concepts of domesticity and the physical space of the home. We will reflect on how the notion of "home" can signify safety and security for some, yet it is a dangerous place for others--one that represents forced labor, insecurity, or lack. Together, we'll ask questions like: How does architecture inform our ideas of what happens in the home? Who is responsible for establishing and maintaining the home? Why do people across the U.S. (in cities like Pittsburgh) and other wealthy nations struggle to find shelter and a place to call 'home'? How has recent technology, such as AI, Smart Homes, Zoom, and social media, enhanced, warped, or shattered our concept of what "home" should be?

To dig into these questions and more, we will read a wide array of texts, including historical accounts, academic writing, and op-eds that will complicate concepts of dwelling and domesticity. We will also watch documentaries, consider diverse media depictions of "home," and visit CMU's University Archives and Architecture Archives. Over the course of the semester, students will learn to analyze genres, synthesize perspectives, and make formal and informal written arguments. Students will complete regular, low-stakes journaling and in-class writing as well as dive into library and field research. Students will write a Comparative Genre Analysis and then a formal Research Proposal. Based upon that proposal, students will

produce a Contribution Paper that posits their original ideas and research within the scholarly conversation on the topic of "Home."

Virtue or Violence: Choosing a Response to Conflict (*Salehzadeh: Sections GG & NN*)

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.

The Rhetoric of Space: Places of Learning, Difference, and Public Memory (Mayshle: sections H & JJ)

Places "speak" because places hold meaning. How places embody and convey their meanings is the subject of this course. Building on theoretical work in rhetoric studies and postmodern geography, we will consider how ideas about space and place inform literacy, difference, and public memory. How do the spaces and places where we learn inform and shape how we learn? What are the relationships between space/place and gender, race, social class, sexuality, and 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 practices that occur at these sites? We will investigate a variety of spaces/places, including classrooms, our neighborhoods, walking tours, museums, memorials, and even cyberspace. 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.

Hustle and Grind: Work, Leisure, and the Politics of Productivity (Johnson: Section HH)

From hustle culture and side gigs to burnout and "quiet quitting," contemporary life increasingly feels like a 24/7 performance of productivity. In this course, we will explore how ideas about work, rest, and value are represented across literature, film, and social media. Using these conversations as a foundation, students will develop their own research projects that investigate the shifting meanings of labor, leisure, and fulfillment in a world where time itself has become a commodity. Students will produce a thesis-driven Comparative Genre Analysis, a Research Proposal that argues for a gap in the knowledge about the politics of productivity in order to then write a Contribution paper that adds to the discussion on work and leisure.

Gendered Sovereignty: Queenship and Power in Literature and Culture (Deluca: Section KK)

How do representations of queens shape our understanding of power, gender, and identity across time, and what is at stake in retelling their stories? What narratives of sovereignty, virtue, or scandal get prioritized or silenced in the cultural memory of queenship? This course traces the figure of the queen from antiquity to the present, examining how the figure of the queen has been represented, adapted, and contested across genres from classical epic and Renaissance drama to nineteenth-century portraiture and contemporary television. By examining literary, historical, and visual representations of queens, we will consider how their portrayals reflect changing attitudes toward authority, femininity, and nationhood. Through these questions, we will uncover how narratives of queenship continue to shape contemporary understandings of gender and sovereignty.

Throughout the course, students will develop their skills in genre-based analysis and collaborative discussion, deepening their understanding of how cultural biases influence the politics of representation. As the course progresses, students will identify a unique research gap within these discussions and compose a formal research proposal that articulates the significance of the gap that their research aims to fill. This proposal will serve as the foundation for a final academic paper, in which students craft a well-supported argument about the stakes of representation in popular discourse.

Being Human in the Digital Age (Carlock: Sections LL & M)

"Technology doesn't just do things for us. It does things to us, changing not just what we do but who we are." — Turkle, *"The Documented Life,"* *New York Times*, Dec.15, 2013

In a world increasingly shaped by digital technologies, how do we inquire and write about the self, society, and systems of power? This course invites students to critically examine the intersections of identity, technology, and human systems through critical research writing. Drawing on conversations from diverse discourse communities—including those surrounding the integration of digital technologies in our daily lives—we will explore key concepts such as data colonialism, algorithmic bias, surveillance capitalism, and the ethical dimensions of digital identity and selfhood (Couldry & Mejias, 2019; Murgia, 2024). Taking an interdisciplinary and inquiry-driven approach, we will read works from historic and contemporary thinkers like Sherry Turkle, Kurzweil (2004), Hogan (2010), Acemoglu, and Harari (2024) to investigate how dominant narratives are constructed and maintained, and how to effectively challenge

them to gain new insights into the self and technology.

Emphasizing writing as both a process and a method of critical engagement, this course provides space for you to develop clarity, purpose, and voice in an active academic discourse. Shaping understanding of the world and ourselves, we will bring our own experiences and interests into conversation with course materials to synthesize complex ideas and craft compelling arguments. The research and writing skills gained in this course will equip you for writing an academic research proposal and an article that stems from that proposal. Your engagement with professional academic communication genres will enable you to move into your field(s) of study to question prevailing narratives and create new lines of inquiry to articulate your role as thoughtful, critical participants in a networked society.