

Department of English

Summer 2019

Updated April 18, 2019

Information subject to change

SUMMER 1 (May 20 – June 27; Exams June 28)

76-101 *Interpretation & Argument*

Section: **S**
Instructor: **Bret Vukoder**
Meetings: **MWF 12:00—2:20 p.m.** **OR**
Units: **9.0**
Prerequisite: **none**
Open to: **First-year students**

Section: **T**
Instructor: **Craig Stamm**
Meetings: **MTWRF 1:30—2:50 p.m.**
Units: **9.0**
Prerequisite: **none**
Open to: **First-year students**

Section S Course Description:

A Seat in the Dark: Why Do We Watch Movies?

As the story goes, when the French film pioneers Auguste and Louis Lumière premiered their brief 1895 film “The Arrival of a Train a La Ciotat Station,” the crowd of spectators jumped up from their seats in a fit of fear, believing the train was charging directly towards them. They were certain it was real. Seven years later, another Frenchman George Méliès’ debuted the whimsical and bizarre tale of A Trip to the Moon, invoking a sense of wonder and possibility in the audience. The mythologies of cinema subsequently coalesced around this fundamental binary of reality and fantasy, representation and imagination. As we will come to see, the story of the movies—inextricably connected to the people who watch them—is far more complicated.

Even amidst the rise of television and the Internet, movies today are still a tremendously popular medium. Tickets sales have remained fairly steady in the last twenty years, and viewers now have instantaneous access to a seemingly endless library of films via Netflix, Amazon, or On-Demand. Prolific and pervasive, movies have become such a staple of modern culture that we rarely step back and ask why we watch them. In what ways can cinema tell us who we are or what we should be? Is it possible to express ourselves from a seat in the theater? Can cinema make or reinforce communities? To what extent can movies enlighten or trivialize? Why do they entertain us?

These and other questions will serve as the focus for this 76-101 course. In exploring the connection between the spectator and cinema, we will learn and apply analytical methods for engaging academic and popular criticism, feature-length films and clips, other primary artifacts, and more. Students will write essays that analyze arguments and synthesize perspectives surrounding this topic, culminating to a final essay in which they make a contribution to our contemporary knowledge that will in part answer the question of why we watch movies.

Section T Course Description:**Video Games in Contemporary Culture**

This course focuses on arguments related to the social impact of video games in contemporary culture. The course uses Gamergate, a controversy in gaming culture about the role of women in both the industry and fan culture, to identify a crisis in gaming culture in 2014. 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 gaming culture has evolved and developed since Gamergate. Students are asked to write papers analyzing an argument about video games, synthesizing multiple perspectives on a gaming-related issue, and then finally contributing their own argument to a discussion about video games and their social impact.

76-221 *Books You Should Have Read by Now: African-American Classics***Section:** S**Instructor:** Richard Purcell**Meetings:** MTWRF 10:30-11:50 a.m.**Units:** 9.0**Prerequisite:** none**Open to:** Undergraduates

This course will be a survey of the most canonical and important African-American literary works from the nineteenth slave narratives of Fredrick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs to more contemporary works by Toni Morrison and Ta-Nehisi Coates. We will investigate how black authors use literature and other mediums of expression for social, political and self-presentation. We will cover a broad range of genres from memoir and literary fiction to poetry and non-fiction. Along with genre, the course will focus in on key literary periods and movements like the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement. Along with these more conventional ways of accounting for literary history we will look at the way that powerful changes in American cultural and political life shape the reception, aesthetics and context of black writing. Some of the authors covered in this course include: Fredrick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larson, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, Ta-Nehisi Coates and Zinzi Clemmons to name a few.

76-234 *Media: Past, Present, and Future***Section:** S**Instructor:** Kathy Newman**Meetings:** MWF 9:00—11:00 a.m.**Units:** 9.0**Prerequisite:** 76-101, 76-102, (76-106 & 76-107), (76-106 & 76-108), or (76-107 & 76-108)**Open to:** Undergraduates

In the late 1700s moral crusaders were worried about the latest media scandal: the surge in women reading novels. As one observer complained, "Women, of every age, of every condition...retain a taste for novels. I find [novels]...in the work-bag of the seamstress, in the hands of the lady who lounges on the sofa, the mistresses of nobles, the mistresses of snuff-shops, the belles who read them in town, and the chits who spell them in the country." While today we might be genuinely concerned about texting while driving, or the depression associated with high levels of Facebook use, in this class we won't judge so much as we will analyze. We will look at what historical media trends have in common with, and how they are different from, the media trends of today. We will read about the print revolution, the electronic media revolution, the current digital revolution, and we will also try to peer into the future. Importantly, we will take a literary and cultural studies approach to this material.

We will ask, specifically, what can the Humanities teach us about media revolutions over time? How is narrative, or storytelling, central to each media revolution?

76-270 *Writing for the Professions*

Section: **S**

Instructor: **Andrew Gordon**

Meetings: **MTWRF 12:00—1:20 p.m.**

Units: **9.0**

Prerequisite: **76-101, 76-102, (76-106 & 76-107), (76-106 & 76-108), or (76-107 & 76-108)**

Open to: **Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors**

Professional and technical documents are integrated into the activities that they support. People use professional and technical documents for many different activities, such as choosing health plans, refinishing furniture, creating websites, operating nuclear reactors, and learning chemistry. People also use these documents in diverse settings, such as on the phone, in a cab, in business class, and in the desert. People use these documents in leisurely comfort and under severe time constraints. A professional and technical writer's main goal—and challenge—is to create a document that the target audience can read and use easily. In this course, you will gain experience in developing the writing and other communication skills you will be expected to have as you transition from student to professional. You will learn to analyze the audience, purpose, context, and genre of specific communication problems, to transform that analysis into a plan for creating a usable document that communicates your message effectively, and to develop a rhetorical approach to writing professional and technical documents.

SUMMER 2 (July 1 – August 8; Exams August 9)

76-101 *Interpretation & Argument*

Section: **U (CMU students); E (Pre-College)**

Instructor: **Robert Calton**

Meetings: **MWF 12:00—2:20 p.m.**

Units: **9.0**

Prerequisite: **none**

Open to: **Section U: CMU First-Years;
Section E: Pre-College Program**

Sections U/E Course Description:

The course will focus on questions that explore to what extents mobile technology simultaneously connects users across cultures while contributing to a loss of humanity. 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. By the end of the course, students will be able to confidently enter into the argument of how we might more meaningfully bring smartphones out of our pockets and into our world. Students will compose a research proposal and follow-up on it to produce an academic article and present it in an "classroom conference."

76-221 ***Books You Should Have Read by Now: Contemporary Classics*****Section:** U (CMU students); E (Pre-College)**Instructor:** Steve Gotzler**Meetings:** MWF 9:00—11:20 a.m.**Units:** 9.0**Prerequisite:** 76-101, 76-102, (76-106 & 76-107), (76-106 & 76-108), or (76-107 & 76-108)**Open to:** **Section U: CMU Undergraduates; Section E: Pre-College Program**

In this course, students will engage with several notable works of literature published since the turn of the 21st century. As we read, we will consider: what is the role of the “literary canon,” and how does it relate to questions of representation and cultural politics? Why have so many of these texts been earmarked for canonization? In what ways do these diverse texts capture something important about our contemporary moment, and to what extent is it possible to generalize, critically, about the contemporary drift of popular and literary fiction?

Since 2000, the contemporary novel has continued to explore multicultural and transnational identity and experience, probed the roots of discontent with neoliberalism through historical fictions set during the late 20th century, and confronted new stark realities of technological change and ecological disaster. Contemporary fiction has also seen a flowering of stylistic combinations as several best-sellers have draw on strands of “genre” fiction (e.g. horror and sci-fi) in service of catastrophic visions of dystopia and apocalypse, while others have tendered new experimental forays into the “literary” that blur the lines between fictional narrative and essayistic reflection, personal memoir and literary theory

Authors read in the course may include: Zadie Smith, Tom McCarthy, Colson Whitehead, Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Junot Diaz, Rachel Kushner, Tao Lin, Richard Powers and Maggie Nelson.

76-239 ***Introduction to Film & Media Studies*****Section:** U (CMU students); E (Pre-College)**Instructor:** David Shumway**Meetings:** MWF 9:00—11:20 a.m.**Units:** 9.0**Prerequisite:** none**Open to:** **Section U: CMU Undergraduates; Section E: Pre-College Program**

This course is an introduction to the technology, history, aesthetics, semiotics, and ideology of film. Its focus will be on narrative fiction film, though we will cover avant-garde and documentary film as well. The course will survey the various techniques by which films are made, cover many of more significant movements in film history, and introduce you to some of the most important works of cinema. Throughout the course, we will be concerned with the ideologies present in the films we see, especially those concerning gender and class. In general, our approach will be to draw connections between the films and the larger culture.