First Year Writing Program

Spring 2016

Course Descriptions

General Description of 76-101, Interpretation and Argument 9 units
Gen Ed: Fulfills Category 1: Communicating requirement for H&SS and a designated writing course for other colleges.

Interpretation and Argument (76-101) is a course that serves as a foundation for many reading and writing tasks you’ll experience in college and in your life. The course serves as the First-Year Writing course requirement at Carnegie Mellon University, and it also translates into the First-Year Writing course requirements at many other universities. While we can’t guarantee that in 76-101 you’ll engage in exactly the same kind of reading and writing practices found within your discipline or professional context, we can guarantee that you can (and should!) adapt and use many of the rhetorical strategies and language patterns in other academic and professional communication contexts.

We hope that this course prepares you to think about what a reader needs from you in order to believe your written arguments, as well as how you need to effectively plan and strategize your own reading, research, and writing processes. We want you to build your expertise in analyzing the demands of new academic literacy and communication tasks, and we also want you to work actively toward adapting that expertise for communication tasks beyond this course toward your own discipline and profession.

Our curriculum does not allow our students to write arguments in a vacuum that aren’t accountable to a socially networked group of scholars. We believe that kind of writing is irresponsible and does not allow readers to engage with new positions. The sequence of assignments in the course is based upon the moves that experts make when they are writing their original research—something that we call an Argument Contribution. For someone to contribute an argument, that person needs to first analyze individual arguments and then synthesize multiple arguments into clearly defined perspectives.

Each section of 76-101 is structured by the same objectives and core assignments. There is a core vocabulary and set of heuristics that all sections teach. However, students may find particular issues more interesting or appealing than others—we do encourage students to pursue their interests, but we also ask that they engage any 76-101 course with intellectual curiosity. Due to the limits of our schedule, we are unable to meet each student’s individual preferences for course topics, but we do offer a wide variety to choose from.

*This version of the document was updated on 10/26/2015 and is subject to change.*
Section A  
**David Cerniglia MWF 8:30-9:20**  
*Socialized: Mapping the Social Media Revolution*  
Have you ever noticed that whenever you’re waiting on line nearly everyone seems to be staring into her phone? Or perhaps you haven’t noticed because you were too busy checking Twitter or Instagram. Whether we like it or not, social media has become a part of our daily lives. According to AdWeek, there are more than 2 billion active social media users globally and social media accounts for 28% of all online media consumption. This course will explore how various forms of social media are not only changing the ways in which we interact with those in our community, but asking us to redefine what “community” means. Students will engage with debates about how social media affects us as global citizens and as individuals. We might ask the extent to which Twitter was responsible for the Arab Spring or Tinder for our love lives. Are we shaping the way social media works, or is it shaping us? Over the course of the semester, students will develop their reading and writing skills by learning to closely analyze arguments, synthesize multiple arguments, and eventually contribute their own arguments on how we should define meaningful interaction and community in a world driven by social media.

Section AA  
**Tim Dawson MWF 8:30-9:20**  
*Race, American Identity, and Public Policy*  
How closely linked are ideas about race and ideas about American identity? How should race be addressed in the public policies developed by a nation founded on the principle of equality before the law? Given the election of Barack Obama, recent U.S. Census data revealing that more people are identifying as multiracial, and projections that the U.S. will be a “majority minority” country by 2050, some argue that traditional lines of racial distinction are no longer relevant, with some going so far as to suggest we have entered a postracial era. However, the very idea of postracial and the category of multiracial suggest that ideas about race continue to play an important role in how we think about individual and group identity in America. In this course we will consider various ideas about “race”, how these ideas relate to other ways of thinking about individual and group identity, and how (or whether) public policies should address racial distinctions. In this course students will learn and practice specific strategies for critically analyzing the arguments in academic and popular essays, contemporary news accounts, and documentary film. Students will write three major papers: an academic summary, an academic synthesis of various positions on an issue related to the course topic, and, finally, a paper that proposes the students’ contribution to a discussion about race and otherness in America. In the process of developing these papers, students will learn and practice specific analysis and planning skills for drafting and revising academic arguments, and they will learn and practice specific strategies for analyzing their own written work and the written work of their peers.

Section B  
**David Cerniglia MWF 9:30-10:20**  
*Socialized: Mapping the Social Media Revolution*  
Have you ever noticed that whenever you’re waiting on line nearly everyone seems to be staring into her phone? Or perhaps you haven’t noticed because you were too busy checking Twitter or Instagram. Whether we like it or not, social media has become a part of our daily lives. According to AdWeek, there are more than 2 billion active social media users globally and social media accounts
for 28% of all online media consumption. This course will explore how various forms of social media are not only changing the ways in which we interact with those in our community, but asking us to redefine what “community” means. Students will engage with debates about how social media affects us as global citizens and as individuals. We might ask the extent to which Twitter was responsible for the Arab Spring or Tinder for our love lives. Are we shaping the way social media works, or is it shaping us? Over the course of the semester, students will develop their reading and writing skills by learning to closely analyze arguments, synthesize multiple arguments, and eventually contribute their own arguments on how we should define meaningful interaction and community in a world driven by social media.

Section BB
Rachel Mennies Goodmanson MWF 9:30-10:20
Big Mac, Big Kale: Food Culture in America
Food, necessary to our daily existence, carries as many cultural and rhetorical connotations as it does biological. Why does what we eat—fast food, local food, home-cooked food, meat-based or vegetarian or vegan food—mean so much to society, and become the subject of so much controversy? Why do food traditions endure, and why do fad diets appear? Does it matter to our bodies if we eat organic, local, big-box? How about to our country? More broadly, how do our decisions about what we eat matter, and to whom? Throughout the semester, you will learn advanced practices for understanding, evaluating, and crafting scholarly writing by participating in a variety of in-class activities based on the course readings. These activities and the three core 76-101 writing assignments (argument analysis, synthesis, and contribution) will scaffold you toward becoming clearer academic writers and the creators of convincing arguments around our course issue.

Section C
Tim Dawson MWF 9:30-10:20
Race, American Identity, and Public Policy
How closely linked are ideas about race and ideas about American identity? How should race be addressed in the public policies developed by a nation founded on the principle of equality before the law? Given the election of Barack Obama, recent U.S. Census data revealing that more people are identifying as multiracial, and projections that the U.S. will be a “majority minority” country by 2050, some argue that traditional lines of racial distinction are no longer relevant, with some going so far as to suggest we have entered a postracial era. However, the very idea of postracial and the category of multiracial suggest that ideas about race continue to play an important role in how we think about individual and group identity in America. In this course we will consider various ideas about “race”, how these ideas relate to other ways of thinking about individual and group identity, and how (or whether) public policies should address racial distinctions. In this course students will learn and practice specific strategies for critically analyzing the arguments in academic and popular essays, contemporary news accounts, and documentary film. Students will write three major papers: an academic summary, an academic synthesis of various positions on an issue related to the course topic, and, finally, a paper that proposes the students’ contribution to a discussion about race and otherness in America. In the process of developing these papers, students will learn and practice specific analysis and planning skills for drafting and revising academic arguments, and they will learn and practice specific strategies for analyzing their own written work and the written work of their peers.

Section CC
Calvin Pollak MWF 9:30-10:20
Is Information Power? Transparency, Secrecy, and Democracy
According to journalist Glenn Greenwald, "a society in which people can be monitored at all times
breeds conformity and obedience and submission." Today, government bodies such as the National Security Agency and corporations such as Google are collecting more of our private information than ever before; is US society thus beginning to reflect Greenwald's nightmare vision? Or is bulk data collection actually relatively benign, as officials and supporters of such policies often claim? Since proponents of bulk data collection argue for its benefits to community well-being, should we even consider the potential costs to an individual’s privacy? What about the potential costs to society if whistle-blowers, journalists, and activists find their expression and action increasingly restricted by these policies? To answer these vital contemporary questions, we'll engage with academic, journalistic, and political texts written before and after the disclosures of classified US government documents by former contractor Edward Snowden. Engaging with these questions effectively requires understanding issues of material (economic) and symbolic (linguistic and rhetorical) power in social contexts; thus, students in this course will develop practices of critical academic reading, analysis, and writing. By the end of the semester, students will be able to investigate and interpret arguments according to their material and symbolic characteristics. They will ultimately craft their own informative, critical, and rhetorically effective discourse about privacy, security, and the present-day circumstances of US politics.

Section D
Jacob Goessling MWF 9:30-10:20

The End of Nature

Wildfires and tornadoes, hurricanes and tsunamis: while these natural disasters have traditionally been considered the result of forces beyond human control, a rising number of researchers have questioned whether their increase in frequency and intensity are a result of humanity’s influence on the earth and its climate. If we are in some way responsible for the significant human and financial costs of these disasters, how might we reevaluate our attitudes and beliefs regarding nature? This course will use the threat of a drastically changing climate as a lens through which to explore the relationship between humans, technology, and nature. How do our definitions of nature influence our use of it? How does the promise of technological advancement inform our responses to the threat of climate change? How do we reconcile our ideas of progress with the possibility of a much darker future? To examine these questions, we will be reading a variety of texts (news articles, academic and non-academic essays, fiction, and film) that address the problems of a changing environment from political, economic, and cultural perspectives. We will move from arguments on the policies and beliefs which led to our current situation (including those of Aldo Leopold, Bill McKibben, and Wendell Berry) to current calls for action (such as Thomas Friedman's *Hot, Flat and Crowded*), before finally considering how writers and artists have imagined possible futures (such as in the films *Snowpiercer* and *Wall-E*). Over the course of the semester, we will analyze and synthesize arguments written by experts so that we can make a unique contribution to the overarching question of how we can negotiate the at times conflicting priorities of people, progress, and the environment.

Section DD
Rachel Mennies Goodmanson MWF 10:30-11:20

*Big Mac, Big Kale: Food Culture in America*

Food, necessary to our daily existence, carries as many cultural and rhetorical connotations as it does biological. Why does what we eat—fast food, local food, home-cooked food, meat-based or vegetarian or vegan food—mean so much to society, and become the subject of so much controversy? Why do food traditions endure, and why do fad diets appear? Does it matter to our bodies if we eat organic, local, big-box? How about to our country? More broadly, how do our decisions about what we eat matter, and to whom? Throughout the semester, you will learn advanced practices for understanding, evaluating, and crafting scholarly writing by participating in a variety of in-class activities based on the course readings. These activities and the three core 76-101 writing assignments
Section E
Jamie Smith MWF 10:30-11:20
Never Tickle a Sleeping Dragon: Harry Potter and Popular Culture
In 1997, J.K. Rowling first published Harry Potter and Philosopher’s Stone. Since then, the Harry Potter series has been the most widely sold book franchise to date. It has been translated into 67 languages, made into eight blockbuster films, excessively commercialized and even built into a theme park. With all of this excitement, the main question our 76-101 course will explore is: are the Harry Potter books “good”? Why or why not? What has made Harry Potter so popular in our culture, and is this popularity deserved? We will consider issues related to Harry Potter and education; for instance, how do we reconcile the novels’ current status in popular culture with a more formal literary tradition? Additionally, we will interrogate the economic status of the Harry Potter series: is the formidable franchise merely a money-making game? Or are technological and social media like Pottermore revolutionizing the way we read and consider literary culture? Finally, we will explore how literary critics (both inside and outside of academia) view the novels from an ethical standpoint; namely, are the Harry Potter books harmless entertainment, or do they promote potentially dangerous ideologies for children? In this course, we will look at a collection of articles, excerpts and film that explore these very questions. As a class, we will converse around all of the Harry Potter novels, though students need not have read the series previously. Students will demonstrate their ability to analyze and synthesize the arguments around perspectives on Harry Potter in popular culture. At the end of the course, students will have the opportunity to develop their own contributions to the ongoing discussion regarding Harry Potter’s place in culture, academia, and the marketplace.

Section EE
Ryan Roderick MWF 10:30-11:20
Communicating Across Diversity: We Are What We Speak?
This course is driven by a hotly debated question: What does it mean to be “literate” in a society where languages, dialects, and cultures are diverse? If we realize it or not, we are constantly switching among different languages and/or dialects, when we decide the appropriate ways to text friends, family, or co-workers; when we participate in a dorm room conversation one minute and a classroom discussion the next; or when we encounter seemingly “strange” ways people talk/think/write “somewhere else.” Language diversity can even become controversial, like when so many people reacted with sharp criticism or bold support to a Coca-Cola commercial that represented “America the Beautiful” sung in seven different languages. Given these different ways of communicating, what does it mean to “speak (or write) properly,” to “follow the rules (whose rules?)” or make a language “error”? These issues are even more urgent now, given that there are an increasing number of problems, like global warming, that require people to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries as they work collaboratively in the private, public and government sectors. This section of 76-101 explores the effects that language and cultural diversity has on how people understand themselves, work with each other, and move among diverse communities. We will explore this topic from a variety of perspectives that will challenge notions of “correctness” and complicate our understanding of what it means to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries. There are three major writing assignments that build on each other in a way that will enable you to weigh in on this issue from a robust academic perspective. You will move from analyzing one aspect of the argument, to then putting multiple authors in conversation with each other through a synthesis. Finally, you will enter the ‘conversation’ by developing your own informed and socially responsible position on the issue, forming an argument, and thereby making a contribution to the field.
Section F
Katherine (Kitty) Shropshire MWF 10:30-11:20
Boycotts, Bullets, Bits? Political Resistance and Forms of Protest

“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 historic 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 and civil-rights era arguments regarding the legitimacy of civil disobedience, and consider how contemporary culture may challenge, update, or extend such arguments. Students may pursue inquiry into issues such as the role of violence in resistance, 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 Operation Ferguson, 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 historic and contemporary forms of protest means entering a 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 conversation on political resistance.

Section FF
Lisa Avery MWF 10:30-11:20
Boycotts, Bullets, Bits? Political Resistance and Forms of Protest

“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 historic 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 and civil-rights era arguments regarding the legitimacy of civil disobedience, and consider how contemporary culture may challenge, update, or extend such arguments. Students may pursue inquiry into issues such as the role of violence in resistance, 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 Operation Ferguson, 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 historic and contemporary forms of protest means entering a 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 conversation on political resistance.

Section G
Maria Poznahovska MWF 10:30-11:20
Boycotts, Bullets, Bits? Political Resistance and Forms of Protest

“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 historic 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 and civil-rights era arguments regarding the legitimacy of civil disobedience, and consider how contemporary culture may challenge, update, or extend such arguments. Students may pursue inquiry into issues such as the role of violence in resistance, 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 Operation Ferguson, 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 historic and contemporary forms of protest means entering a 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 conversation on political resistance.

Section GG
JD Ho MWF 11:30-12:20
Boycotts, Bullets, Bits? Political Resistance and Forms of Protest
“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 historic 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 and civil-rights era arguments regarding the legitimacy of civil disobedience, and consider how contemporary culture may challenge, update, or extend such arguments. Students may pursue inquiry into issues such as the role of violence in resistance, 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 Operation Ferguson, 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 historic and contemporary forms of protest means entering a 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 conversation on political resistance.

Section H
Danielle Wetzel MWF 11:30-12:20
Boycotts, Bullets, Bits? Political Resistance and Forms of Protest
“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 historic 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 and civil-rights era arguments regarding the legitimacy of civil disobedience, and consider how contemporary culture may challenge, update, or extend such arguments. Students may pursue inquiry into issues such as the role of violence in resistance, 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 Operation Ferguson, 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 historic and contemporary forms of protest means entering a 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 conversation on political resistance.

Section HH
Ryan Roderick MWF 11:30-12:20
Communicating Across Diversity: We Are What We Speak?
This course is driven by a hotly debated question: What does it mean to be “literate” in a society where languages, dialects, and cultures are diverse? If we realize it or not, we are constantly switching among different languages and/or dialects, when we decide the appropriate ways to text friends, family, or co-workers; when we participate in a dorm room conversation one minute and a classroom
discussion the next; or when we encounter seemingly “strange” ways people talk/think/write “somewhere else.” Language diversity can even become controversial, like when so many people reacted with sharp criticism or bold support to a Coca-Cola commercial that represented “America the Beautiful” sung in seven different languages. Given these different ways of communicating, what does it mean to “speak (or write) properly,” to “follow the rules (whose rules?)” or make a language “error”? These issues are even more urgent now, given that there are an increasing number of problems, like global warming, that require people to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries as they work collaboratively in the private, public and government sectors. This section of 76-101 explores the effects that language and cultural diversity has on how people understand themselves, work with each other, and move among diverse communities. We will explore this topic from a variety of perspectives that will challenge notions of “correctness” and complicate our understanding of what it means to cross linguistic and cultural boundaries. There are three major writing assignments that build on each other in a way that will enable you to weigh in on this issue from a robust academic perspective. You will move from analyzing one aspect of the argument, to then putting multiple authors in conversation with each other through a synthesis. Finally, you will enter the ‘conversation’ by developing your own informed and socially responsible position on the issue, forming an argument, and thereby making a contribution to the field.

Section I
Jamie Smith MWF 11:30-12:20

Never Tickle a Sleeping Dragon: Harry Potter and Popular Culture

In 1997, J.K. Rowling first published Harry Potter and Philosopher’s Stone. Since then, the Harry Potter series has been the most widely sold book franchise to date. It has been translated into 67 languages, made into eight blockbuster films, excessively commercialized and even built into a theme park. With all of this excitement, the main question our 76-101 course will explore is: are the Harry Potter books “good”? Why or why not? What has made Harry Potter so popular in our culture, and is this popularity deserved? We will consider issues related to Harry Potter and education; for instance, how do we reconcile the novels’ current status in popular culture with a more formal literary tradition? Additionally, we will interrogate the economic status of the Harry Potter series: is the formidable franchise merely a money-making game? Or are technological and social media like Pottermore revolutionizing the way we read and consider literary culture? Finally, we will explore how literary critics (both inside and outside of academia) view the novels from an ethical standpoint; namely, are the Harry Potter books harmless entertainment, or do they promote potentially dangerous ideologies for children? In this course, we will look at a collection of articles, excerpts and film that explore these very questions. As a class, we will converse around all of the Harry Potter novels, though students need not have read the series previously. Students will demonstrate their ability to analyze and synthesize the arguments around perspectives on Harry Potter in popular culture. At the end of the course, students will have the opportunity to develop their own contributions to the ongoing discussion regarding Harry Potter’s place in culture, academia, and the marketplace.

Section II
Daniel Dickson-LaPrade MWF 11:30-12:20

Evil in America

In this section of 76-101, students will examine a variety of arguments regarding the nature and causes of evil, as well as how the world’s evils should be remedied. Students will analyze these arguments using a variety of conceptual tools, describe how these varying arguments work against and inform one another, and finally enter the argument themselves in a contribution assignment. In addition to learning what different authors have to say about the nature, causes, and remedies for evil, students will also gain experience with the argumentative strategies which authors use to make opposing positions seem despicable, irrational, and dangerous, and to make their own seem desirable, reasonable, and saintly.
Section J
Aqdas Aftab MWF 11:30-12:20
As we engage in conversations about gender in a global setting like CMU, how do we evaluate our own everyday actions that influence women around the world? As the definition of “feminism” evolves based on other global political changes like the increasing visibility of women politicians, how do we reflect on our gendered positions within a global context? This course will examine the debate around women’s rights and gender justice in a global era. Women’s issues worldwide are becoming more and more visible because of different feminist movements. Recently, many global debates have been taking place regarding the effectiveness of different feminist movements worldwide. While some activists think that human rights need to be understood in a universal framework, others emphasize the importance of localized and culture-specific feminist movements.

Activists and feminist scholars are also in contention regarding which women need most attention—and which speakers are authorized to represent certain women. In this debate about gender activism, scholars discuss how certain political conditions, like the war on terror, may influence the experiences and representations of women. How do different social and political movements influence the dominant representations of non-Western women, such as the stereotype of the veiled Middle Eastern woman? How do women’s issues relate to other social issues like racism and imperialism? In this course we will evaluate different scholarly and journalistic articles that explore the role of social movements centered on women’s empowerment. Although the scholars we will read are united in their purpose to improve women’s lives worldwide, they disagree about the consequences of certain kinds of women’s movements in the context of globalization. By examining this debate between scholars about the most ethical ways to advance women’s rights globally, we will identify how certain writers construct their arguments. Students will analyze one particular argument, synthesize various arguments, and contribute their own perspective on gender activism in relation to other global conditions.

Section JJ
Juliann Reineke MWF 11:30-12:20
What If?: Science Fiction and Society
What is the purpose of science fiction? Is science fiction literary trash, great art, or biting social commentary (or something else)? Through an examination of H. G. Wells’ seminal science fiction novel, The Time Machine, this section of 76-101 will explore how the time travel narrative illustrates the current debates surrounding the value of science fiction. We will read a variety of articles debating the social and academic value of The Time Machine, and we will explore the effects of the time travel narrative in other genres. Students will demonstrate their understanding of arguments by writing an argument analysis of a single author’s perspective on The Time Machine. The synthesis assignment will provide students with the chance to discuss multiple perspectives on science fiction’s impact on scientific developments, other literary genres, and society. In the contribution assignment, students will develop their own argument to contribute to the ongoing discussion regarding science fiction’s place in society and academia.

Section K
Steve Gotzler MWF 12:30-1:20
How Music Works
What would it mean to situate music in its cultural context? What should the role of music be in a capitalist society? In this section of 76-101, current methods and debates in the ‘new musicology’ will be explored as a way of understanding the social and cultural contexts within which music—as artistic representation, as work, and as a cultural commodity—can be interpreted and understood. Doing so will allow us to ask seriously: What is music good for? What should the role of music be in public education and cultural programming? And, how might our interaction with the music as listeners and consumers shape our view of ourselves, and of the world in profound and unexpected ways? In this
course we will reflect on the meaning and uses of music in modern society, by examining various
aspects of popular music over the last 50 years including concert spaces, musical scenes/genres,
record labels, individual artists, and of course the music itself. In addition to these musical sources we
will utilize academic texts, non-fiction articles, and films in our exploration of this topic.

Section KK
Pavithra Tantrigoda MWF 12:30-1:20
Climate Change and Us
Rising temperatures, melting glacial and sea ice, draughts, stronger rainstorms, and warming oceans
have made us increasingly aware of the harmful effects of man-made climate change today. These
changes have led climate scientists to come to a consensus that we have entered a new geological era
called “anthropocene” where humans are having an irreversible impact on the Earth's ecosystems
through the increased use of fossil fuels, machinery, and ecological destruction. There are debates
among climate scientists, states, policy makers, economists, environmental activists, academics and
lawyers as to the extent and nature of these changes in the environment, its current and future effects
on us, and the possible ways of mitigating the negative effects of climate change. In this section of 76-
101, we will examine how climate change is defined and addressed by these various stakeholders. We
will examine critical responses to the issue, ranging from those who are convinced that global
warming is a serious (if not catastrophic) environmental concern and favor aggressive regulatory
interventions to lessen its effects to those who are skeptical of mainstream climate science and oppose
governmental intrusions in the marketplace. We will read a range of academic essays, magazine
articles, interviews and documentary film that address these different views regarding climate change.
We will also analyze and synthesize arguments within these texts and, finally, develop our own
contribution on the politics and discourse of climate change.

Section L
Juliann Reineke MWF 12:30-1:20
What If? : Science Fiction and Society
What is the purpose of science fiction? Is science fiction literary trash, great art, or biting social
commentary (or something else)? Through an examination of H. G. Wells’ seminal science
fiction novel, The Time Machine, this section of 76-101 will explore how the time travel narrative
illustrates the current debates surrounding the value of science fiction. We will read a variety of
articles debating the social and academic value of The Time Machine, and we will explore the
effects of the time travel narrative in other genres. Students will demonstrate their
understanding of arguments by writing an argument analysis of a single author’s perspective on
The Time Machine. The synthesis assignment will provide students with the chance to discuss
multiple perspectives on science fiction’s impact on scientific developments, other literary
genres, and society. In the contribution assignment, students will develop their own argument
to contribute to the ongoing discussion regarding science fiction's place in society and academia.

Section LL
Daniel Dickson-LaPrade MWF 12:30-1:20
Evil in America
In this section of 76-101, students will examine a variety of arguments regarding the nature and causes
of evil, as well as how the world’s evils should be remedied. Students will analyze these arguments
using a variety of conceptual tools, describe how these varying arguments work against and inform
one another, and finally enter the argument themselves in a contribution assignment. In addition to
learning what different authors have to say about the nature, causes, and remedies for evil, students
will also gain experience with the argumentative strategies which authors use to make opposing
positions seem despicable, irrational, and dangerous, and to make their own seem desirable,
reasonable, and saintly.
Section M
Avery Wiscomb MWF 12:30-1:20
The Question Concerning Technology
"Technology is just a tool," Bill Gates has argued; it can be used in good and bad ways. This common belief that technology is neither inherently good or bad—known as "technological instrumentalism"—suggests that human beings control the effects of their technologies. Whether we believe that technology is good, bad, or somewhere in between, however, depends on us first understanding: what is technology doing in our lives? In this course we will examine popular disagreements over how technologies could be altering our relationships to each other and the world. We will pay particular attention to how technologies may or may not determine aspects of our thinking, and to arguments concerning the long-term effects of future technology breakthroughs. Students in this course will interpret and analyze arguments across different genres, and learn to identify main claims and the underlying values and assumptions of those claims. Students will also synthesize competing perspectives, including those radically opposed to the growth of some (or most) technologies, and learn to articulate disagreements between those perspectives. Ultimately, students will advance their own arguments that contribute to ongoing discussions in fields such as human-computer interaction, information science, design, business, computer science, digital literacy studies, and media and communications-technology studies.

Section MM
Maggie Goss MWF 12:30-1:20
What's New in the News? Developments in News Media Journalism
On April 15th, 2013, two pressure cooker bombs exploded during the Boston Marathon in Massachusetts, killing 3 people and injuring an estimated 264 bystanders. Following the attack, a police officer was shot and killed. In a rush to report the story, The New York Post wrongly identified a so-called suspect of the bombing, placing that individual's photos in front-page newspapers. Soon other news outlets followed suit, and controversy arose over the way in which details of the event were reported. Although The Post denied any errors in reporting, their case points to concerns regarding how events should be covered by journalistic news outlets. This event also raises questions about what role news coverage should play in our society and what effect 'real time' investigative reporting has had on the news. How have methods of distribution and gathering information shaped the process of journalistic news coverage? What values are associated with these shifting processes? Should events be reported quickly or accurately? These questions represent issues surrounding credibility, accuracy, ethics, and timeliness in reporting. They are important to consider not only because the majority of Americans hear about current events through news media coverage, but also because concerns surrounding such coverage shape how information is disseminated to the public. In this course, students will develop skills in critical reading and academic writing and apply them to analyze arguments, synthesize perspectives, and finally, contribute their own argument to the conversation about how developments in methods of distribution, gathering and filtering information, and even crowdsourcing have reshaped journalistic news coverage. Additionally, throughout the semester students will bring in examples of news reporting and analyze representations of stories, as well as consider how the authors we read might respond to different forms of reporting.

Section N
Doug Phillips MWF 12:30-1:20
Take Two of These and Call Me in the Morning: Issues of Medicine in Contemporary Society
Ask any doctor why she chose her profession, and you’ll probably hear something like, “To help people.” But you may also hear that the prospect for helping people is more complicated than it sounds; there are ethical, political, economic, moral, and religious concerns that health professionals, legislators, drug makers, and patients negotiate every day. From mandated vaccines to medical futility, drug marketing to conscience clauses, students will investigate a range of recent medical debates as we engage the question: what is the role of medicine in
society? To help answer that question, we will analyze how people define *medicine* and explore its historical codification as a professional practice. We will also interrogate how these definitions and historical categories shape our ideas about the function, funding, and limitation of medicine as a practice. We will draw on and analyze arguments made in public policy proposals, academic journals, and newspapers, and identify major claims and the underlying values of those claims. Additionally, we will synthesize multiple perspectives in order to articulate the fundamental disagreements separating them. By the end of the course, you should be able to make an academic contribution by constructing your own arguments in response to the course topic.

**Section NN**  
**Will Penman** MWF 1:30-2:20  
*Rainbows, Butterflies, and Robots*  
What’s the difference between having a “smart” watch and having a “smart” dog? Robotic technologies today are progressing quickly, and might one day be able to feel pain, rebel, and die (or be happy, free and alive). In this class we explore philosophies of human interaction with animals and the environment (or “rainbows and butterflies”) as analogies for human interaction with emerging robotic technologies. To what extent can we model human treatment of intelligent machines on animals and nature? Or to put it another way, to what extent are computational technologies different from animals and from nature? We explore these questions from a historical perspective, covering a variety of readings on topics such as robot and animal work, emotion, purpose, evolution, rights, and agency. We start by learning reading strategies to delve into authors’ claims. Then we write three essays through the semester, structured in increasing complexity. First is an analysis of a single text. Next is a synthesis paper, in which students draw together disparate arguments around a question of their choosing. Finally, students enter into the conversation with a researched contribution argument of their own about the application of dealing with animals/the environment to the realm of robots. Overall, this section of 76-101 equips students to think deeply about the ethics of robot development and develops space to practice a new set of interpretive and argumentative techniques applicable across disciplines.

**Section O**  
**Matt Nelson** MWF 1:30-2:20  
*Where are you from? Space, Place and Identity*  
"You cannot know who you are without knowing where you are." - Paul Shepard  
"Where are you from" is a common and casual question often asked when we meet someone for the first time. It indicates the way identity and place are inextricably intertwined. We don’t often think about it, but how we come to know and learn about each other and ourselves is often by movement in space and attachment to place. Focusing primarily on the United States – within a global context – the class will focus on the controversies involved in defining space and place and the extent to which these definitions shape individual and collective identity. Some questions concerning this issue we will be addressing are: Why do we create spatial boundaries? What happens when advances in communications and transportation technology disrupt these boundaries? How do our definitions of space and place affect policy issues like citizenship and immigration? We will look at variety of sources including academic articles, news articles, documentaries, music, and fictional texts that grapple with these questions from competing perspectives. Students will address these issues and questions by summarizing, analyzing and synthesizing the different arguments occurring in these texts. Once students have grasped a coherent understanding of the current debates, they will then carve out a space to insert their own contribution into the academic discussion on the relationship between space, place and identity.
Section OO
Alex Helberg MWF 1:30-2:20
Boycotts, Bullets, Bits? Political Resistance and Forms of Protest

“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 historic 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 and civil-rights era arguments regarding the legitimacy of civil disobedience, and consider how contemporary culture may challenge, update, or extend such arguments. Students may pursue inquiry into issues such as the role of violence in resistance, 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 Operation Ferguson, 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 historic and contemporary forms of protest means entering a 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 conversation on political resistance.

Section P
Craig Stamm MWF 1:30-2:20
Video Games and Society

In 2014, a series of events now referred to as Gamergate revealed widespread misogyny throughout the larger male-dominated gaming community. Initially debating the ethics of video game journalists, the conversation became loaded with violent threats and the defamation of female video game developers. While the outcome of Gamergate is still hotly debated in relation to the parties involved, one thing was made clear: video games are no longer a niche interest. With over half of the American population reported to play video games, they now outsell the global box office, making video games a new dominant form of media. The virtual societies of video games enable us to participate in experiences difficult to capture through other means, while also paralleling real world power structures and prejudices. How can we understand video games as tools for social change? How does a post-Gamergate gaming community move forward without abandoning the work of the past? How do we define video games? In terms of goals, interaction, or technology? The goal of this class is to investigate these questions surrounding video games, while also considering issues of race, gender, and sexual orientation in relation to the history of video games. The course requires no previous knowledge of or experience with video games, and some assignments will include playing relevant games that highlight the issues we'll be discussing in our readings. We will read various articles addressing the sociological issues of games, and students will be asked to write their own papers analyzing, critiquing, and synthesizing these perspectives, leading to a final paper where they will craft their own contribution on how we can understand video games as tools for sociological reflection and progress.

Section PP
Matt Lambert MWF 2:30-3:20
Pittsburgh: the Landscape of a City

When we think of Pittsburgh, we often envision the Golden Triangle, an image popularized by countless paintings and photographs of the city. But what might have someone seen if beholding the area 300 years ago? What might they have seen 100 years ago? 50 years ago? What will they see in the future? In this class, we will examine the development of Pittsburgh from a frontier wilderness to a 21st Century technological urban hub. In doing so, we will look at the special obstacles the region’s unique geography and landscape held for the builders of Pittsburgh, the effects of pollution on Pittsburgh’s civic character and residents, and the effects of various urban reform movements in
Pittsburgh of both national and local origins—from the City Beautiful Movement of the late 19th and early 20th century to the more recent redevelopment, urban gardening, and public arts projects in neighborhoods like East Liberty. In looking at the physical, economic, and cultural changes occurring in Pittsburgh over the years, we will hone in on debates over problems concerning urban design in the city. These will include problems associated with social issues like race and class (e.g. debates over public space, gentrification, and controversial civil works projects) as well as those associated with the environment (e.g. “green” building, natural resource extraction, and air pollution). Over the course of the class, we will learn strategies to help us analyze and synthesize the various positions and approaches in these debates and eventually contribute our own argument to one of them. Furthermore, in order to better envision and understand Pittsburgh’s history, we will visit one or two places near CMU (e.g. Schenley Park). There will also be opportunities to go to events and places on and off campus, particularly those that pertain to the various issues and problems we will discuss.

Section Q
Steve Gotzler MWF 2:30-3:20
How Music Works
What would it mean to situate music in its cultural context? What should the role of music be in a capitalist society? In this section of 76-101, current methods and debates in the 'new musicology' will be explored as a way of understanding the social and cultural contexts within which music—as artistic representation, as work, and as a cultural commodity—can be interpreted and understood. Doing so will allow us to ask seriously: What is music good for? What should the role of music be in public education and cultural programming? And, how might our interaction with the music as listeners and consumers shape our view of ourselves, and of the world in profound and unexpected ways? In this course we will reflect on the meaning and uses of music in modern society, by examining various aspects of popular music over the last 50 years including concert spaces, musical scenes/genres, record labels, individual artists, and of course the music itself. In addition to these musical sources we will utilize academic texts, non-fiction articles, and films in our exploration of this topic.

Section QQ
Avery Wiscomb MWF 2:30-3:20
The Question Concerning Technology
"Technology is just a tool," Bill Gates has argued; it can be used in good and bad ways. This common belief that technology is neither inherently good or bad—known as "technological instrumentalism"—suggests that human beings control the effects of their technologies. Whether we believe that technology is good, bad, or somewhere in between, however, depends on us first understanding: what is technology doing in our lives? In this course we will examine popular disagreements over how technologies could be altering our relationships to each other and the world. We will pay particular attention to how technologies may or may not determine aspects of our thinking, and to arguments concerning the long-term effects of future technology breakthroughs. Students in this course will interpret and analyze arguments across different genres, and learn to identify main claims and the underlying values and assumptions of those claims. Students will also synthesize competing perspectives, including those radically opposed to the growth of some (or most) technologies, and learn to articulate disagreements between those perspectives. Ultimately, students will advance their own arguments that contribute to ongoing discussions in fields such as human-computer interaction, information science, design, business, computer science, digital literacy studies, and media and communications-technology studies.
Section R
Ryan Mitchell MWF 2:30-3:20
Doctor Who? Social Justice and Public Health
In 1905, the United States Supreme Court ruled in Jacobson v Massachusetts that states had the authority to enforce mandatory vaccinations when “necessary for public health or safety.” Over the past century, increased public health legislation and policy have fueled the controversy surrounding government-regulated health initiatives. For some, public health policies represent a way to prevent millions of unnecessary deaths and build stronger, healthier communities. Others argue that these policies signal gross intrusions on individual liberties and freedoms. Others still claim that public health policies neglect the unique sociocultural and economic conditions that affect a community’s identity and health practices. This section of 76-101 examines the controversies surrounding public health by tracing the moral, ethical, and sociopolitical implications of public health policies by examining their individual, local, and national implications. Through the critical examination of legislative, popular, and academic texts regarding government-led health initiatives, students will learn and practice the analytical skills necessary for understanding and responsibly contributing to this complex social issue, which affects every one of us. By the time students complete this course, they will be able to analyze the rhetorical structure of multifaceted arguments, synthesize the major perspectives regarding the course topic, and contribute to the on-going academic conversation by researching and analyzing a public health policy of their choosing. Along with acquiring a robust understanding of the course content, students will end the semester with an inventory of strategies for constructing persuasive, authoritative, and reader-friendly prose.

Section RR
Jess Wilton MWF 3:30-4:20
DIY, Makers, and “Indie”: Assessing a (Sub?)-Cultural Phenomenon
Until the recent boom in DIY production and “maker” culture, to “hack” meant to illegally access private networks, and DIY was an anti-capitalist principle of the punk movement. Calling movies, music, and other cultural products “independent” used to mean these products were made by small, non-major studios or labels. But recently, as critic Michael Z. Newman proclaims, “‘indie’ has become a buzzword, a term whose meanings—alternative, hip, edgy, uncompromising—far exceed the literal designation of media products that are made independently of major firms,” and DIY/maker culture is hardly anti-corporate. Indie, hacker, DIY and maker cultures now seems less revolutionary than they once were, but are able to touch many more lives. Has independence run its course? If so, what did it once represent and why has it become what it is today? What was, or is, its social, political, and commercial value? These (and other) questions will serve as the focus for this 76-101 course. We will use academic and popular criticism, film, music, and more to explore Indie and DIY issues. Students will write essays that analyze the arguments and issues surrounding Indie culture, culminating an essay in which they make a contribution to our contemporary knowledge of these cultural trends.

Section S
Matt Nelson MWF 3:30-4:20
Where are you from? Space, Place and Identity
"You cannot know who you are without knowing where you are." - Paul Shepard
"Where are you from" is a common and casual question often asked when we meet someone for the first time. It indicates the way identity and place are inextricably intertwined. We don’t often think about it, but how we come to know and learn about each other and ourselves is often by movement in space and attachment to place. Focusing primarily on the United States – within a global context – the class will focus on the controversies involved in defining space and place and the extent to which these definitions shape individual and collective identity. Some
questions concerning this issue we will be addressing are: Why do we create spatial boundaries? What happens when advances in communications and transportation technology disrupt these boundaries? How do our definitions of space and place affect policy issues like citizenship and immigration? We will look at a variety of sources including academic articles, news articles, documentaries, music, and fictional texts that grapple with these questions from competing perspectives. Students will address these issues and questions by summarizing, analyzing and synthesizing the different arguments occurring in these texts. Once students have grasped a coherent understanding of the current debates, they will then carve out a space to insert their own contribution into the academic discussion on the relationship between space, place and identity.

Section SS
Jess Wilton MWF 4:30-5:20
DIY, Makers, and “Indie”: Assessing a (Sub?)-Cultural Phenomenon
Until the recent boom in DIY production and “maker” culture, to “hack” meant to illegally access private networks, and DIY was an anti-capitalist principle of the punk movement. Calling movies, music, and other cultural products “independent” used to mean these products were made by small, non-major studios or labels. But recently, as critic Michael Z. Newman proclaims, “‘indie’ has become a buzzword, a term whose meanings—alternative, hip, edgy, uncompromising—far exceed the literal designation of media products that are made independently of major firms,” and DIY/maker culture is hardly anti-corporate. Indie, hacker, DIY and maker cultures now seem less revolutionary than they once were, but are able to touch many more lives. Has independence run its course? If so, what did it once represent and why has it become what it is today? What was, or is, its social, political, and commercial value? These (and other) questions will serve as the focus for this 76-101 course. We will use academic and popular criticism, film, music, and more to explore Indie and DIY issues. Students will write essays that analyze the arguments and issues surrounding Indie culture, culminating an essay in which they make a contribution to our contemporary knowledge of these cultural trends.

Section T
Nathan Pensky TR 9:00-10:20
Pop Culture and Social Responsibility
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 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.
Section TT
Bret Vukoder TR 10:30-11:50

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 *A Trip to the Moon*, invoking a sense of wonder and possibility in the audience. Cinema from thereon became many things, offering viewers a spectrum of experiences teetering between reality and fantasy, representation and imagination. Even amidst the rise of television and the Internet, movies today are still a tremendously popular medium. Tickets sales are level, 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 U
Kate Hamilton TR 12:00-1:20

Gender, Media, and the Politics of Representation
In today's Western culture, the media holds considerable power over our collective and individual constructions of gender. In this course, we will examine how gender is represented in the mass media – including advertisements, films, newspapers, blogs, and more. What are the dominant narratives about men, women, and transgendered individuals? Why do these gender narratives matter? And is there room in the mainstream media to challenge these gender narratives? In this section of 76-101, we will read different responses to these challenging questions so that we can learn strategies for summarizing, synthesizing, and analyzing arguments within an academic discourse. We will critically examine works by gender studies, media studies, and masculinity studies theorists, including those of Sut Jhally, Michael Kimmel, and bell hooks. We will examine debates ranging from audience reception to the evolving role of digital technologies in shaping gender discourse. Ultimately, you will become an informed participant in media culture, offering your own written contributions on our course topic.

Section UU
Emily Ferris TR 12:00-1:20

IQ and You
You’ve heard it online, in college guides, and from your teachers back home – Carnegie Mellon students are smart (and you, no doubt, are no exception). But just what does that label mean? Is it based on your grades & test scores, your personality, your chosen field of study? Does it capture all that it took to succeed in high school or what it will take to succeed at this university and beyond? How has “being smart” gotten you to where you are today? This section of 76-101 critically examines the many ways our society defines intelligence, with careful attention paid to the tools we use to measure it and the social consequences of meeting or falling short of the standards we set. We will do so through discussion of a variety of broadly interdisciplinary readings (including selections from the
neuro- and cognitive sciences, education, literacy studies, and disability studies) from both popular and academic sources. These different approaches will allow us to see the affordances and constraints inherent in each of our definitions and consider their implications for education approaches and policy, college admissions, the workplace, and other sites where we are subject to “assessment.” Additionally, we will engage this issue through writing by completing a series of major assignments that will require you to analyze and synthesize existing arguments. These will equip you with the rhetorical skills to join an ongoing academic conversation with an insightful, persuasive, and reader-based contribution of your own that in some way accounts for what’s at stake when these definitions shape how we see our world and, more importantly, each other.

Section V
Bret Vukoder TR 1:30-2:50

*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 at 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 *A Trip to the Moon*, invoking a sense of wonder and possibility in the audience. Cinema from thereon became many things, offering viewers a spectrum of experiences teetering between reality and fantasy, representation and imagination. Even amidst the rise of television and the Internet, movies today are still a tremendously popular medium. Tickets sales are level, 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.