

# MEANING ACROSS THE MILLENNIA

Is it possible to convey messages that remain comprehensible after immense time, in the face of inevitable cultural shifts and physical decay? In this course, students will come to terms with the technical and philosophical aspects to this problem while working on group projects to propose solutions to the preservation of memory. Along the way, we will identify the challenges in extracting meaning from artifacts, both ancient and contemporary, such as documents and monuments, whether intentional or unintentional.

We will also confront ethical and esthetic issues in identifying what is worth preserving, the challenge of societal pressures on past projects, the possibility of future indifference, and the question of what purpose this endeavor may serve for present-day humanity.

Case studies will include time capsules such as those created by the Westinghouse Electric & Manufacturing Company for the 1939 and 1964 New York World's Fairs; the proposed warning marker system for the U.S. Department of Energy Waste Isolation Pilot Plant; the Voyager Golden Records launched aboard two interplanetary probes; and attempts at communication with extraterrestrial intelligence.

Course enrollment is by permission of instructor.  
Contact William Alba <[alba@cmu.edu](mailto:alba@cmu.edu)> to enroll.  
99-242 meets Spring 2009 on MWF 2:30-3:20p.