Carnegie Mellon University

Writing & Communications

We offer unique, cutting-edge course options designed to help students develop and apply writing and communications knowldge across diverse academic and professional contexts.

Writing & Communication Skills
Enhance Your Career Opportunities

92.4% of employers are intersted in students with strong communication skills.

Engineers and managers spend from **30-70%** of their workday writing.

73.4% of employers list strong writing skills as one of the top 3 desirable skills.

Prof. David Brown Brings Diverse Expertise and a Data-Informed Approach to Writing Instruction

As First-Year Writing's Associate Director for Research and Assessment, and as an Associate Teaching Professor of Rhetoric, David Brown plays several crucial roles. He serves as the lead instructor in charge of teacher training and curricular development for the Writing About Data course.

He also leverages his field-leading research in corpus linguistics and English language studies to coordinate data collection and assessment efforts for the First-Year Writing program as a whole, as well as to develop and implement technology-enhanced learning tools that help students identify features of their own writing and of the written genres they practice in their coursework.

Finally, David is also an inspiring and multi-talented teacher. In addition to Writing About Data, he teaches a Methods in Humanities Analytics course within the Department of English and a Special Topics: Text Analysis course within the Department of Statistics.

First Year Writing

First-Year Writing empowers students to choose among multiple paths in their fulfillment of this requirement.

Two Pathways

Full Semester

Instead of taking two half-semester mini courses, students may choose to take a longer full-semester course.

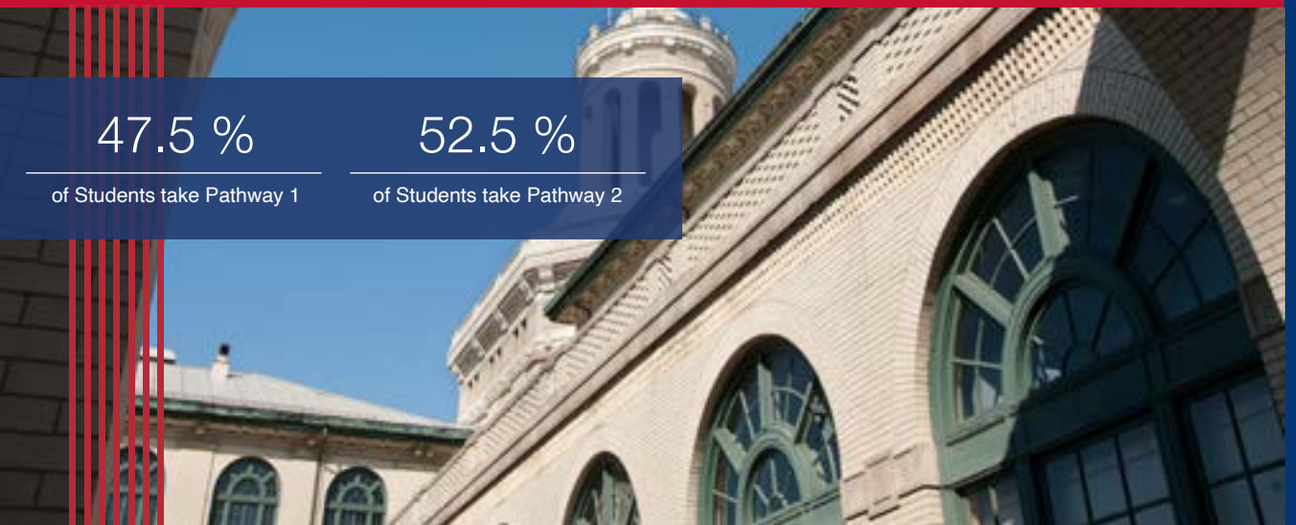
Choose from a series of different courses under the unbrella of 76-101: Interpretation and Argument. See course details document for the full list of course options.

Two "Minis"

Complete two mini courses within the same semester. Take a "mini 3" during the first half of the semester and a "mini 4" during the second half.

Choose from three mini options:

76-106 - Writing About Literature, Art and Culture
76-107 - Writing About Data
76-108 - Writing About Public Problems



47.5 %
of Students take Pathway 1

52.5 %
of Students take Pathway 2

Writing for the Professions

Course Overview:

Readers in professional contexts are busy, actively look for the information they need, and deserve to get that information in a clear and accessible way. Strong writing and communication skills are expected across the professions, from computer science to data science, from healthcare to engineering. In this course, you will strengthen your writing and communication skills through a series of projects that put real readers and users of documents at the center your writing process.

Through genres like job application packages, proposals, presentations of complex information for non-experts, and team-based technical documentation, you will practice the skills you will need as you move from student writer to professional.

Course Details:

The course is writing intensive, and requires regular participation and attendance. This course is designed for all undergraduates pursuing majors and minors outside English, and has no pre-requisites beyond First Year Writing.

Please note: ALL seniors, regardless of major/minor, will be waitlisted in an effort to accommodate those for whom the course is required to graduate.

Frequently Asked Questions

Should i take two minis or the full-semester course?

By taking two minis, students gain exposure to more than one kind of writing. They are also more focused on strategies for particular types of communication situations and target genre.

The full semester First-Year Writing courses offer students the opportunity to read deeply about a controversial issue or topic.

The First-Year Writing course i wanted is full- will i get in off of the waitlist?

The reality is that there are more popular and less popular options. Unless a student is in one of the first two or three positions on the waitlist for a First-Year Writing course, it is unlikely a student will be able to get in to that particular course.

Do all international students need to take the placement test or the prerequisite First-Year Writing course?

Incoming students who are non-native or second-language English speakers, will receive an email from the Department of English in June with instructions for completing an essay-based placement exam over the summer.

CMU English will review every exam and decide whether or not each student is required to take the pre-requisite course, 76-100.

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Carnegie Mellon University

Pathway One: Two Mini Courses

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Each of the "you pick 2" First-Year Writing mini course experiences have been designed to introduce students to particular organizational structures, writing situations, and sets of rhetorical skills. You can see a brief overview below. Continue reading for the particular descriptions of these courses, as well as their schedules and faculty.

	Genre or Type of Writing and Purpose	Organizational Structure	Rhetorical Skills
76-106: Writing About Literature, Art and Culture	Academic writing, interpretive, humanistic	Thesis-driven with topic sentences, claim/reason/ evidence explanation	Applying a theoretical lense
76-107: Writing About Data	Data-driven, academic writing	IMRD and visualizing data	Synthesizing data from sources
76-108: Writing About Public Problems	Writing for professional or public purposes	Problem/solution/ feasibility and formatting for busy readers	Perspective taking (for audience and stakeholders)

Registration Information and Course Descriptions:

Writing About Literature, Art and Culture

76-106

At A Glance...

76-106 courses focus upon teaching skills for making arguments from literary and artistic texts and extending those interpretive and communicative skills beyond the first-year writing classroom. The skills you'll encounter in these courses are highlighted below.

Genre or type of writing and purpose - Interpretive, humanistic academic writing.
Organizational structure - Thesis-driven with topic sentences, hierarchical argument (Claim, Reason, Evidence, Explanation)
Rhetorical skills - Applying close reading strategies, applying a theoretical lens

Course Description

This First-Year Writing course engages students with thesis-driven, interpretive writing. To that end, we read and write about artistic, literary, and cultural texts (e.g., poetry, short story, lyrics, film) so that we can better understand how various representations of people and problems appear in these texts.
We examine how literary and cultural scholars write about texts (defined broadly), how they make claims, provide reasoning, and use textual support to argue for particular ways of seeing cultural objects and texts.
All 76-106 students write short, close reading analyses and also a longer analysis that uses a particular framework or lens to interpret a text. This academic writing course advances students' capacities for arguing convincingly about textual evidence, writing within a critical, humanistic frame, and producing arguments that are neither factual nor fictitious but rather reasonable.
Below is the Fall 2019 course schedule for 76-106. Some sections of 76-106 have a specific theme. Please continue reading for more detailed descriptions of these themes.

Course Schedule

Section	Day and Timeslot	Instructor Name	Course Theme
A3 & A4	MWF 9:30-10:20	Liz Walker	Literature and Disability
B3 & B4	MWF 10:30-11:20	Rebecca Wigginton	Literature and Disability
C3 & C4	MWF 11:30-12:20	Pearl Nielsen	Literature and Disability
D3 & D4	MWF 12:30-1:20	Steven Gotzler	Work and Identity
E3 & E4	MWF 1:30-2:20	Kevin Haworth	Graphic Literature
F3 & F4	MWF 2:30-3:20	Rachel Kravetz	Literature and Disability
G3 & G4	MWF 3:30-4:20	Rachel Kravetz	Literature and Disability

Writing About Literature, Art and Culture

76-106

Course Themes

Literature and Disability

In this version of 76-106, we use a collection of readings from Disability Studies to focus our analyses, raising questions about how language and culture shapes concepts of "normalcy" and difference in the literature and media that we consume.

Graphic Literature

This 76-106 course uses graphic literature to introduce to a variety of academic reading and writing practices that enable students to discuss texts and evidence from multiple perspectives. Throughout the semester, students will draw upon prior strategies and develop new ones for close reading and for critical analysis in order to produce their own thesis-driven arguments about why texts matter.

Work and Identity

In this version of 76-106, we use a collection of readings from critical work studies to focus our analyses, raising questions about how language and culture shape concepts of work and identity in the literature and media that we consume.

Writing About Data

76-107

At A Glance...

76107 courses focus upon teaching skills for reading data-driven texts and writing data-driven, academic writing. These courses apply to all majors, because we encounter arguments about both quantitative and qualitative data in our global society. The skills you'll encounter in this course are highlighted below.

Genre or type of writing and purpose - Data-driven, academic writing
Organizational structure - IMRD and data visualization structures
Rhetorical skills - Synthesizing data from sources

Course Description

This course provides a fascinating look at how numbers and words intersect to create persuasive arguments in academic, professional, and popular contexts. Our lives are increasingly shaped by writing that involves numbers: newspapers routinely report the latest medical fads; politicians support their political agendas with both dubious and credible statistics; parents use data to decide where to buy a house and where to send their kids to school.

We will look at research in a range of disciplines—including psychology, education, medicine, engineering, and the sciences—and note how writers select and analyze the data they collect. Students will practice collecting and analyzing their own data and reporting it to suit the needs of various stakeholders. Students in data-driven majors will find the course useful for communicating in their disciplines.

Students in other fields will learn how to critique and respond to the many ways that numbers shape our lives. This course presumes a basic ability to calculate averages, percentages, and ratios, but no advanced mathematical or statistical preparation. Students will compare and analyze texts that make arguments with data, and practice rhetorical strategies for synthesizing and representing data.

By the end of the class, students will apply these strategies to write an original data-driven research proposal.

Course Schedule

Section	Day and Timeslot	Instructor Name
A3 & A4	MWF 9:30-10:20	Richard Branscomb
B3 & B4	MWF 10:30-11:20	Heidi Wright
C3 & C4	MWF 11:30-12:20	Rebecca Wigginton
D3 & D4	MWF 12:30-1:20	David Brown
E3 & E4	MWF 1:30-2:20	Rebecca Wigginton
F3 & F4	MWF 2:30-3:20	Yishan Wang
G3 & G4	MWF 3:30-4:20	Robert Calton

Writing About Public Problems

76-108

At A Glance...

76-108 courses focus upon teaching skills for communicating a need for change in practice or policy, interacting with stakeholders with professional consideration, and for producing oral, written, and visual communication to make a nonacademic proposal for change. The skills you'll encounter in this course are highlighted below.

Genre or type of writing and purpose - Professional, non-academic genres
Organizational structure - Problem/solution/feasibility and formatting for busy readers
Rhetorical skills - Perspective taking for audience and stakeholders

Course Description

If all problems required a simple fix, we could don our Avenger costumes, pick up Thor's hammer, and right the world's wrongs. But most problems aren't so simple. Most of the problems we encounter require careful investigation and research so that we might propose solutions that connect with others to make change. We will learn how public problems are defined and argued across a range of texts, including proposals, op-ed genres, and white papers.

By analyzing a range of proposal texts, we will identify the different kinds of legwork necessary to write a successful proposal. We will examine how writers unpack problems rhetorically and use evidence to argue solutions for different stakeholders who may not share common values. We will learn strategies for evaluating and synthesizing data from existing research to use in a proposal argument, and we will learn to communicate with individuals professionally over email and other kinds of channels in order to pursue relevant information.

By the end of the course, students will write their own change proposal that recommends a solution and a feasible plan for solving a real problem.

Course Schedule

Section	Day and Timeslot	Instructor Name
A3 & A4	MWF 9:30-10:20	Susan Tanner
B3 & B4	MWF 10:30-11:20	Peter Mayshle
C3 & C4	MWF 11:30-12:20	Nisha Shanmugaraj
D3 & D4	MWF 12:30-1:20	Joanna Wolfe
E3 & E4	MWF 1:30-2:20	Jamie Smith
F3 & F4	MWF 2:30-3:20	Jamie Smith
G3 & G4	MWF 3:30-4:20	Laura McCann

Pathway Two: Semester Course

2

Instead of taking two half-semester mini courses, students may choose to take a full-semester course, **76-101: Interpretation and Argument.**

During the Spring 2020 semester, two special "stretch" sections of 76-101 will be offered. These courses are open only to students who are enrolled in the 76-100 course during the current (Fall 2019) semester. The stretch sections of 76-101 are taught by instructors who are teaching 76-100 in Fall 2019 and who possess deep knowledge to help students make important connections across the two courses. These sections will enroll a maximum of 15 students each (rather than 19 for ordinary sections of 76-101).

Students will not be able to directly enroll themselves in the stretch sections during registration. If you would like to enroll in one of these two courses, please send an email to Mike Brokos, Assistant Director of First-Year Writing, at engfirst@andrew.cmu.edu or mbrokos@andrew.cmu.edu. In your email, please identify which of the two stretch sections you'd like to enroll in.

Please continue reading to learn about the specific course topics, schedules, and faculty information for each of the 76-101 courses being offered in Spring 2020.

Full-Semester Course Schedules and Descriptions:

Interpretation and Argument

76-101

At A Glance...

76-101, Interpretation and Argument, is a foundational, inquiry-driven writing course that introduces students to a variety of strategies for making compositional decisions in writing and communication. Within the course, students learn genre-based skills applicable to a variety of different fields. Students use a comparative genre analysis method to learn how to use models to take on new writing tasks, including an academic research proposal and a research article that contributes to an ongoing academic conversation.

Faculty who teach 76-101 typically select texts—ranging from scholarly texts, journalism, and film—about an issue so that students can identify interesting questions for their own research projects. Students should expect explicit, research-based instruction, practice, and reflection to build knowledge in controlling their writing processes and writing clear, well-supported, reader-oriented arguments. Because the course emphasizes the real stakes of communicating with readers and listeners, students share with their peers both low and high stakes written work within an interactive and collaborative classroom environment.

Stretch Section

76-101

*Stretch Section Course Topics and Schedule**

The following "stretch section" 76-101 courses are very similar to ordinary sections of 76-101, except that they are **open only to students who are currently taking 76-100**, and they will enroll a maximum of 15 rather than 19 students. These courses will include the same major assignments and learning objectives as other sections of 76-101 (see previous page for more information). Students will be encouraged to reflect on and make connections to their experience in 76-100 as they develop and practice the new writing and communication knowledge required for 76-101.

*Students will not be able to directly enroll themselves in the two stretch sections during registration. If you would like to enroll in one of these courses, please send an email to Mike Brokos, Assistant Director of First-Year Writing, at engfirst@andrew.cmu.edu or mbrokos@andrew.cmu.edu. In your email, please identify which of the two stretch sections you'd like to enroll in.

Instructor Name	Course Topic	Section Numbers	Days and Timeslots
Heidi Wright	TBD	C	MWF 12:30 -1:20
Keely Austin	Virtue or Violence	K	TR 9:00 - 10:20

Stretch Section Full Course Descriptions

Section C (Wright)

TBD – Please check back soon for the Section C course description

Section K: Virtue or Violence: Choosing a Response to Conflict (Austin)

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 in 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, 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.

Course Topics and Schedule

76-101

Course Topics and Schedule

Instructor Name			
Peter Mayshle	Site of Innovation: Past, Present and Future	A, AB	A: MWF 8:30-9:20 AB: MWF 9:30-10:20
Calvin Pollak	Is Information Power? Transparency, Secrecy, and Democracy	AC	AC: MWF 10:30-11:20
Kevin Haworth	The Public Intellectual in a Divided Society	AD, BB	AD: MWF 10:30-11:20 BB: MWF 11:30-12:20
Sarah Hancock	Coffee Culture: The Brand and Brew of Caffeine Addiction	B	B: MWF 11:30-12:20
Colby Gillette	Dreaming in the 21st Century	CC, D	CC: MWF 12:30-1:20 D: MWF 1:30-2:20
Julie Pal-Agrawal	Becoming and Un-Becoming Ourselves on Social Media	DD, E	DD: MWF 1:30-2:20 E: MWF 2:30-3:20
Kristy Ganoe	Approaching Conflict: Ethical Engagement in a Globalized World	EE, F	EE: MWF 2:30-3:20 F: MWF 3:30-4:20
Nicholas Huber	Work & Society	G, GG, J	G: TR 9:00-10:20 GG: TR 10:30-11:50 J: TR 3:00-4:20
Emily DeJeu	What is College For? Exploring the Purposes of Higher Education	H	H: TR 10:30-11:50
Kitty Shropshire	CONSPIRACY! Power and Paranoia in American Culture	HH	HH: TR 1:30-2:50
Keely Austin	Virtue or Violence: Choosing a Response to Conflict	I	I: TR 1:30-2:50
Tadd Adcox	Hoaxes, Fakes, and Con-Artists	II, JJ	II: TR 3:00-4:20 JJ: TR 4:30-5:50

Full Course Descriptions

76-101

Full Course Descriptions

Sites of Innovation: Past, Present, and Future (Mayshle)

If Carnegie Mellon represents innovation, how does the university convey it? This introductory writing course looks at the rhetoric/s of innovation and asks, how is innovation conceived, perceived, and lived in Carnegie Mellon? Drawing on work in rhetoric and discourse studies and postmodern geography, students shall examine how Carnegie Mellon represents, embodies, and communicates innovation in various sites around campus: "past" sites could include memorials to Mao Yisheng, Judith Resnik, the Randy Pausch bridge, the CMU@50: For the Founders celebration, and the like; "present" sites could include the places and practices of students' own majors/disciplines/schools, multiple changing exhibits across campus, invited campus speakers, university events, and the like; "future" sites could include newly created spaces such as the Gates and Hillman Centers, the Tepper Quad, the $20M Classroom and Learning Spaces Project, and the like. 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.

Is Information Power? Transparency, Secrecy, and Democracy (Pollak)

According to journalist Glenn Greenwald, "a society in which people can be monitored at all times breeds conformity and obedience and submission." Today, our data is being collected on an unprecedented scale by government institutions like the National Security Agency (NSA) and technology companies such as Google and Facebook. Is our society thus beginning to reflect Greenwald's nightmare vision? Or is data surveillance relatively benign, even beneficial, as security officials and CEOs of tech companies often claim? If our national security benefits from surveillance policies, should we even consider their costs to individuals' privacy? (Does our national security in fact benefit from surveillance?) If surveillance constrains whistle-blowers, journalists, and activists, how might our political debates suffer?

To answer these questions, we'll engage with academic, journalistic, and political texts written before and after the disclosures of classified NSA documents by former contractor Edward Snowden. We'll also examine more recent scandals surrounding Facebook's collection of user data and other social media exploitation by state actors such as Russia and Israel, along with private security firms. Engaging with these issues effectively requires understanding how material (economic) and symbolic (linguistic and rhetorical) power operate 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 break down and interpret arguments according to their material and symbolic characteristics, and craft rigorous, well-researched writing about the present-day circumstances of personal privacy and state power.

Full Course Descriptions

76-101

The Public Intellectual in a Divided Society (Haworth)

What is the role of a public intellectual in a divided society? Artists and intellectuals often try to use their knowledge for the public good—to inform, to advocate, and to argue for change. But do they do so effectively? Are they able to affect public thought about issues like racism, censorship, or gender inequality? What can their examples teach us about connecting academic discourse and public issues? And how does public intellectualism change across time and cultures? In this section, we will read and explore the work of American public intellectuals such as Ta-Nehisi Coates, Gloria Anzaldúa, Neil deGrasse Tyson, Jedediah Purdy, and Susan Sontag, as well as international artists and thinkers such as Ai Weiwei and Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche. Students will read both academic and popular texts by and about these figures to understand different modes of discourse. We will also analyze and synthesize arguments by and about public intellectuals, to propose and develop an original research question, ultimately leading to a unique contribution on the issues related to intellectualism and the public sphere.

Coffee Culture: The Brand and Brew of Caffeine Addiction (Hancock)

How do you take your coffee? A shot of espresso? Lots of milk and sugar? Fair-trade only? Do you like to drink your coffee in the shop that features local art? Perhaps the one with the comfy couches? In cities, coffee shops are around every corner, offering a warm beverage, usually a WiFi connection, and hopefully a seat. These public spaces are often referred to as “third spaces,” a place that is neither home nor work, but is still a place where we spend a lot of our time. Why do we choose to spend our time in particular coffee shops? Does it matter that we prefer to drink our coffee in a certain way? This course will explore the necessity of interrogating our seemingly simple, everyday choices as coffee consumers. We will investigate questions about our personal taste for our coffee drink, the space where we drink it, and the land and people who provide that product for our consumption. These questions will help us to consider our coffee choices outside of the mindlessness of routine.

Throughout the semester, we will read and analyze articles from popular, academic and empirical research journals in order to propose a question to enter research-driven conversations about coffee culture. By engaging with these articles, we will be able to examine the consequences of our choices on a personal, a local, and a global scale. Over the semester, we will synthesize many authors and debates in order to form our own arguments about the implications of our coffee preferences and the necessity of understanding the weight of our coffee choices.

Full Course Descriptions

76-101

Dreaming in the 21st Century (Gillette)

Around ten percent of our lives are spent dreaming, a state which is as likely to produce great scientific discoveries and artistic inspiration as the everyday bafflement we all feel upon waking and remembering a particularly strange dream. Since Freud's pronouncement that dreams are "the royal road to the unconscious," dreams have been a subject of renewed interest in Western culture; this abiding interest has led to dreams becoming an area of study within the fields of psychology, neuroscience and anthropology. In this course we will examine some of the significant contributions to the field of dream research and deepen our understanding of how this research has impacted the human sciences and our broader culture. Throughout the course we will attempt to answer the basic question, What is Dreaming?, by studying some of the major theories of dreams, investigating some common quantitative approaches, such as content analysis, and by examining recent research on the neurological, biochemical basis of dreaming. The varying answers to this question will allow us to see how dream studies can present new perspectives on issues such as the nature of cognition, cultural reality, and the human experience. Assignments will include a comparative genre analysis, research proposal, and research paper.

Becoming and Un-Becoming Ourselves on Social Media (Pal-Agrawal)

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 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 a variety of scholars. Annette Markham and Hugo Liu have described social media as a theatrical space where users can try out new identities and therefore invest in their own self-making. Henry Jenkins and Abigail De Kosnik have discussed the ways that 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 a variety of coercive and disciplinary online processes. Eli Pariser argues that predictive engines work to first 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 into embodying existing negative stereotypes of women and minorities.

These and other related topics will serve as the focus for this 76-101 course. Our class objectives include synthesizing and evaluating a variety of perspectives, organizing persuasive and well-structured arguments, and communicating these ideas in clear and effective prose. We will study a variety of genres such as opinion pieces, academic articles, clips from TV series like Black Mirror, etc., to craft nuanced arguments on the degrees to which trying to become someone on social media can lead to one's self-assimilation and

Full Course Descriptions

76-101

Approaching Conflict: Ethical Engagement in a Globalized World (Ganoe)

Prior to WWII, the world-renowned Japanese martial artist Morihei Ueshiba (1883 – 1969), grew to oppose militarism. He declined to participate in Japan's war efforts, moving to a barn in the countryside rather than helping to train soldiers. While opting out of the war effort, he codified a new non-violent approach to martial arts.

Such acts of political and artistic resistance are the inspiration for this class. We will consider the work of scholars like Stephen Duncombe, Jocelyn Hollander, and James C. Scott, whose surveys of political and cultural resistance have focused on people's creative responses to their politically situated, everyday lives. While these scholars agree on the importance of analyzing relationships between personal and political agency, they differ in methodological approach. The interdisciplinary engagement of history, anthropology, linguistics, performance studies, economics, and area studies enables rich scholarly debates regarding questions such as: In what spaces might resistance thrive? Have new technological developments ushered in an age of democratized access to information? If so, must political and economic systems necessarily follow suit? Under what circumstances are ideas of resistance used in support of nefarious purposes? How do the dynamic actors in historical and contemporary social movements clarify conceptions of justice, violence, and nonviolence?

Students will describe a contemporary cultural conflict from at least three perspectives, outline past attempts to address that conflict, analyze successes and challenges of past interventions, and contribute an original potential solution.

Work & Society (Huber)

This class, inspired by Carnegie Mellon's motto, is about work. What is it? Why do we do so much of it when everything from the automatic dishwasher to the smart phone is supposedly designed to save us from working?
Some people want work and can't get it, some have work but hate it, and some love their work but still struggle to make ends meet. Why is this unavoidable and evidently necessary aspect of our lives so fiercely contested—why are our hearts so "in the work"? How does our work shape who we are, what we want, and what we can imagine? What does it mean to be a worker, employed, productive? What does it mean to not be a worker in the conventional sense—to be unemployed, or unproductive, or just lazy? And what, finally, might happen to our understanding of what it means to be human if work as we know it was automated out of existence?
To address questions like these, students will first be introduced to classical theories of work which have influenced the modern world (Locke, Smith, Marx). To gain an understanding of how far "work" has moved beyond these classical conceptions, we will analyze texts on contemporary forms of work such as care and emotional labor (Fraser, Rivas), internships (D. Thompson, Dholakia), and student athletics (Kalman-Lamb), as well as the relationship of work to time (E. P. Thompson) and to money (Bell, Henry, and Wray). We will also look to sociological accounts of the worksites of global employers such as Starbucks (Simons) and get a glimpse into the history of struggles over work in Pittsburgh (Krause). Finally, students will examine some possible futures of work by discussing the political and economic challenges of technological unemployment and the possibilities of automation (Keynes, Kolbert, Srnicek and Williams).
By the end of the semester, students will build on these readings and on class discussions to develop an argument that makes an original contribution to conversations about work and its role in society. Along the way, students will be invited to examine their own experiences at work and to reflect on their pasts, presents, and futures as workers.

Full Course Descriptions

76-101

What is College For? Exploring the Purposes of Higher Education (DeJeu)

In 2015, Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker quietly attempted to change the University of Wisconsin's mission statement, replacing the objectives "search for truth" and "improve the human condition" with "meet the state's workforce needs". The backlash was furious, and ultimately, the University's mission statement remained intact. However, this incident raises a pressing question: what's the purpose of education, anyway? Is it, as Plato argued, to turn one's soul to the light? Is it, as John Dewey posited, to make one a better democratic citizen? Is education, as Paulo Freire and bell hooks contend, a practice of liberating the oppressed? Or is education really about vocational training?

In this section of 76-101, we will engage with a variety of philosophical perspectives on education. Students will focus in particular on one of three sub-issues: the problem of student debt and the promise of free and open education, the presence of activism and protest in higher education, and the role of the humanities in an increasingly vocationally-oriented college landscape. In the context of this course, students will propose an original research project that identifies and fills a gap in the existing academic conversation related to the purpose of education. Then, as a final project, students will author their own academic arguments that offer new perspectives on the purpose of a college education.

CONSPIRACY! Power and Paranoia in American Culture (Shropshire)

Who killed JFK? Is NASA hiding evidence that the Earth is actually flat? Is the Queen of England a shape-shifting reptilian from the Alpha Draconis star system? And more importantly, how can we know for sure? Despite unflattering representations of conspiracy theorists as paranoid fanatics who exist on the fringes of society, recent research suggests that at least half of all Americans believe in at least one conspiracy theory. If this is true, what are the implications for contemporary American culture and politics? Should we understand conspiracism as a threat to the intellectual health of the nation, or as a type of radical skepticism and free thought? Does conspiracism depress political engagement or invigorate it in new ways?

Guided by these questions, this section of 76-101 will examine the relationship between the "stigmatized knowledge" of conspiracists and the kinds of "institutional knowledge" produced at universities. Not only will we question how we know what we know, we will also consider the broader social, political, and ethical implications of different forms of knowledge-making. Readings will be drawn from fields including political science, sociology, cultural studies, and--of course--from conspiracy theorists themselves. Students in this course will develop critical reading, writing, and media literacy skills while learning the foundations of academic authorship. Ultimately, each student will learn about academic genre features, write an academic research proposal, and produce an original research paper that synthesizes scholarly perspectives and contributes an original perspective on a conspiracy theory of the student's choosing.

Full Course Descriptions

76-101

Virtue or Violence: Choosing a Response to Conflict (Austin)

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 in 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, 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.

Hoaxes, Fakes, and Con-Artists (Adcox)

In 1835, the New York Sun reported that life had been discovered on the moon: men with bat wings, moon-bison, and a species of large, bipedal beaver. Sales of the Sun soared. In 1938, radio reports of a Martian invasion caused panic throughout the country—a (perhaps unintentional) hoax that helped establish Orson Welles as one of the greatest dramatists of the twentieth century. In 2009, people watched breathlessly as authorities tracked a homemade weather balloon, supposedly carrying a scared six-year-old boy (who later told reporters that his parents had staged the whole thing to get on TV). That same year, Bernie Madoff pled guilty to operating the largest pyramid scam in history.

Though the hoaxer is by no means a character restricted to the United States, the US has always had a particular affinity (and, arguably, has been a particularly good breeding-ground) for what showman P.T. Barnum referred to as "humbug." In this class we will explore hoaxers and con-artists as they have appeared in popular culture, literature, and real life, investigating how these characters, real and fictitious, exert such fascination over both victims and audiences. Why are we attracted to stories about con-artists? Why do we often find them more sympathetic, and even more heroic, than other sorts of criminal? And what does this attraction tell us about ourselves and the society around us?
Over the course of the semester you will engage analytically with a variety of sources, including theoretical texts such as David Shields's Reality Hunger and Kevin Young's Bunk, longform journalism such as Maria Konnikova's The Confidence Game, literary representations of con-artists, and hoax memoirs by James Frey and Margaret Seltzer. You will summarize and respond to arguments about the nature and meaning of hoaxes, and propose and develop an original research question which you will use to write your own, research-based essay contributing to the course's conversation.

Design Recommendation

Purpose and Audience

As a whole, these documents are meant to informs students and faculty about the current policies, courses and news from the Writing & Communications department at CMU.

The course list and brochure are both task-oriented documents that are meant to show current students and faculty the course options and answer registration questions. Therefore, it is essential that these documents are straightforward and meet reader expectations so that they can find the information they need. At the same time, all of these documents act as a form of advertising for prospective students who wish to see what the Writing & Communications department has to offer.

Communication Strategies

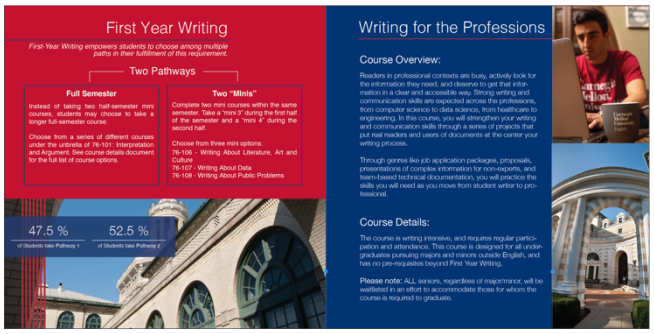
In order to imply to readers, the Writing & Communications department is innovative, we recommend a modern design style. In these sample documents, we created a modern style, via a minimalist design which incorporates elements such as bold color-blocking and sans-serif.

Consistent branding is essential to convey that these documents are part of a related set, which is achieved through both following the official Carnegie Mellon branding guidelines and carrying design details through all documents. In line with the modern, minimalist design we limited the color palette to three selection from the CMU brand color palette including Skibo Red, Blue Thread and Steel Gray. The tartan graphic in the wave pattern is used as a gradient accent in tandem with this color palette. Other document elements such as running headers, contact blocks and section markers are also kept consistent to create a holistic, branded document suite. Following the official CMU branding guidelines also presents a cohesive image with the English department as a whole.

We recommend a diverse selection of images incorporating students, faculty and the campus, in order to showcase the department within the wider context of campus life. The images are bright, human and professional.

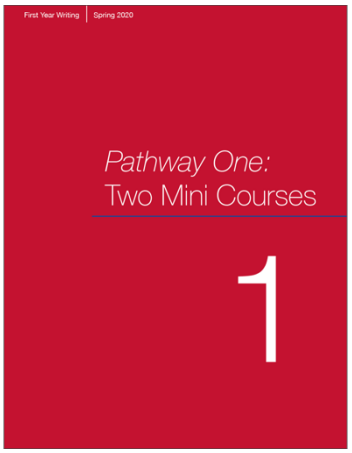
In the brochure, statistics are also strategically incorporated to provide context to given options, and help readers make informed choices. For example, on the inside cover statistic are used to highlight the importance of writing and communications for all career paths.

Brochure Spread

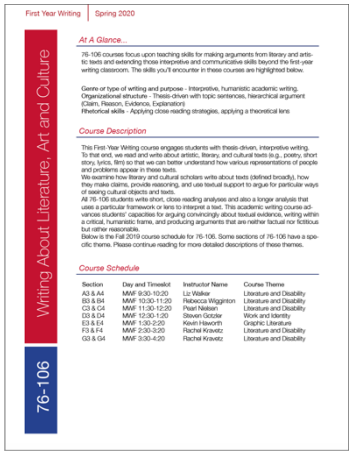


Newsletter

Course Details Cover



Course Details Spread



News

First-Year Writing Program to Recognize Outstanding Students

The Carnegie Mellon University First-Year Writing Program is pleased to announce the call for outstanding student pieces for its inaugural Excellence in First-Year Writing Awards.

These awards will be issued separately for essays produced in 76-100 and 76-101. Essays from Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 will be considered for the 2016 awards, which are open to first-year students across Carnegie Mellon.

Participants must be undergraduate students enrolled in either a fall or spring section of 76-100 or 76-101 of the current academic year. Original essays must have been written in response to the contribution assignment for 76-101 or the position assignment for 76-100. Only one entry per student is eligible for submission.

Fall 2015 students' entries are due by midnight on January 17, 2016; the Spring 2016 deadline will be announced at a later date. The winners will be announced in the sum-

First Year Writing Class Asks: How Do You Talk About Race?

All semester-long, one First-Year Writing class has been engaged in an often challenging, frequently thorny discussion—they've been talking about race. Specifically, Carnegie Mellon University First-Year Writing course "Interpretation and Argument: Communicating about Race," students developed strategies to talk about race in an inclusive and productive way.

Taught by Gregory Laski, a visiting assistant teaching professor in the Department of English, students read theory and essays to examine competing conceptions of race and encountered strategies for talking about race with diverse audiences. The class culminated with a public exhibit at the Center for Diversity and Inclusion of student-created posters intended to elicit thoughtful discussions. The class was a pilot for a new type of of First-Year Writing course focused on community engagement in which students will have the opportunity to research and write about the CMU community.

"In his recent book 'College,' Andrew Delbanco argues that the college classroom should constitute a 'rehearsal space for democracy.' We don't often consider higher education in that way, and I think a course like this one can really help make that crucial aim material for students and faculty alike," Laski said recently about his course. "Certainly, questions of race and equality are inextricable from any discussion of democracy and who counts as a 'citizen.'"

For the exhibit, students created posters that used many strategies to provoke conversations. In one, infographics about CMU's demographic profile laid out what constitutes "normal" on campus. In another, students made use of the iconic CMU Fence with the caption: "Tradition is a guide, not a prison. How does tradition guide you?"

Both the class and the exhibit focused on specific keywords that can guide difficult conversations. In doing research for their exhibit posters, many students made use of archival material from Hunt Library's "Tartan" archive to better understand how the meaning of keywords like "diversity," "majority," and "minority" have changed over time.

As a final culmination to the course and exhibit, students hosted a closing event the final week of classes in which a gathering of roughly 60 participants were encouraged to stand next to the poster that most intrigued them. Student moderators led small group discussions about the ideas and questions the posters provoked.

"This class made me more open to talking about race in general," said First-Year Writing student Aditya Shekar. "Before this class, I was always somewhat apprehensive to ask anyone what their opinions were. However, now I realize the importance of starting these conversations."

For First-Year Writing student Katelyn Liston, she learned one virtue is most important in any discussion about race: patience.

"One of the things I think the course underscored for me is the importance of considering the perspectives of others: to really try to understand, as best as possible, where someone is coming from—and to understand the history behind that position," Laski said. "That's a really difficult and yet urgent skill." ■

Carnegie Mellon University English

Writing & Communications

In This Issue

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Faculty Spotlight

Prof. David Brown Brings Diverse Expertise and a Data-Informed Approach to Writing Instruction

As First-Year Writing's Associate Director for Research and Assessment, and as an Associate Teaching Professor of Rhetoric, David Brown plays several crucial roles. He serves as the lead instructor in charge of teacher training and curricular development for the Writing About Data ourse. He also leverages his field-leading research in corpus linguistics and English language studies to coordinate data collection and assessment efforts for the First-Year Writing program as a whole, as well as to develop and implement

technology-enhanced learning tools that help students identify features of their own writing and of the written genres they practice in their coursework.

Finally, David is also an inspiring and multi-talented teacher. In addition to Writing About Data, he teaches a Methods in Humanities Analytics course within the Department of English and a Special Topics: Text Analysis course within the Department of Statistics. ■

Research Spotlight

Simon Initiative Tool Helps Students Polish Writing Skills

Good prose writing is something Carnegie Mellon University Professor Chris Neuwirth wants to improve. So, she conducted an investigation into how to train students to find nominalizations through technology-enhanced learning.

For students who have used Neuwirth's Prose Style tool, they might revise the above paragraph to say:

Carnegie Mellon University English Professor Chris Neuwirth is helping students learn to write clearly and think about word choices they make through the help of an online tutoring tool, which currently is available by invitation-only.

"When it comes to professional communication and technical writing, the name of the game is readability, accessibility and understanding your audience," said Instructor Andrew Gordon, who has been using Prose Style in his sections of the "Writing in the Professions" course for several years. "Prose Style really dovetails perfectly with the theme of the whole class." ■