

DukeWrites

THOMPSON WRITING PROGRAM

Fall 2025 Writing 120

Constellation Pairings

Constellation: How can my education cause trouble and joy?

COMING OF AGE & HAPPINESS

Writing 120.12CN-120.13CN

Instructor: Sheryl Welte

WF 11:45AM-1:00PM- WF 1:25PM-2:40PM

College is one of the many turning points in your coming of age. It is a time when you separate from your family of origin, and thus are in a unique position to be able to reflect on your identity. The questions - “Who am I?”, “Who do I want to be?”, & “What do I want?” – are often daily challenges as you navigate being more independent and living a good life. Together, we will explore your personal and academic identity development, especially in relation to your happiness. In particular, we will reflect on emerging adulthood & student development theories, as well as scientific research on happiness, to help us understand how various factors - such as

socioeconomics, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, and culture - shape the development of your authentic self.

By using a variety of sources about coming of age and happiness, we will engage with the work of others, learn to articulate a position, and situate our writing within specific contexts. To begin, we will read, discuss, and write about our classroom treaty and student learning and other identity stories using both our personal experiences and existing theories on coming of age and happiness (2-3 pages). Informed by these theories, we will write reflect on our own experiences to further our understanding.

The final project will be an exploration in the form of an in-depth Scholarly Personal Narrative about some issue(s) significant to your coming of age and happiness (10-12 pages). The topic, and the related additional readings, will be carefully chosen by you so that each personal narrative will be relevant & meaningful as you continue your coming of age journey at Duke. Throughout the course, we will write self and peer evaluations (2 pages) of our academic writing, and thus collaboratively strengthen our ability to improve our works in progress.

If you are interested in and willing to be introspective to learn about yourself & others through personal writing, discussions, readings, along with some yoga & mindfulness, then this Writing class might be a great opportunity for you.

DAIOST CULTURE

Writing 120.54CN

Instructor: Shih-Han Huang

TUTH 4:40PM-5:55PM

Daoism is one of the central traditions in Chinese thought, with far-reaching influence across areas such as art, mythology, and martial practice. In this course, we explore Daoism both as a way of thinking and as a way of living—one that emphasizes spontaneity, transformation, and harmony with the world.

The course is organized around four thematic units:

- **Philosophical Foundations** – We begin with readings from the two foundational Daoist texts, the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, to examine core concepts such as non-action (*wu wei*).

- **The Body** – We explore parables regarding skills and martial arts to understand Daoist views of the body, its inner cultivation, and its relationship to the world.
- **Nature and Aesthetics** – We consider how Daoist cosmology shapes Chinese landscape painting and broader ideas about emptiness, stillness, and the human place in nature.
- **Difference and Variation** – Through stories of disfigured bodies and social outsiders, we reflect on how Daoism challenges normative values and reimagines wholeness and transformation.

As a writing course, students will engage in a variety of assignments. These may include interpretive essays on Daoist texts, visual analyses of artwork through a Daoist lens, creative retellings of immortals' journeys, and personal reflections on living in harmony with the world. Through structured writing workshops and peer feedback, students will refine their ability to analyze texts, craft compelling arguments, think critically, and communicate ideas with clarity.

The course concludes with a reflective essay, in which students articulate how they've developed as readers and writers, and how they plan to carry those skills into future academic and personal contexts.

Constellation: What drives us to innovate and create?

DECODING DISNEY

Writing 120.23CN-120.25CN

Instructor: Lisa Andres

TUTH 8:30AM - 9:45AM- TUTH 10:05AM - 11:20AM- TUTH 1:25PM - 2:40PM

Pardon Our Pixie Dust: Decoding Disney's Innovative History and Creative Films

Visit any US Disney theme park, and there's always a chance you'll see construction walls around your favorite ride or restaurant. These walls – emblazoned with the words Pardon Our Pixie Dust – are usually accompanied by a number of inspirational quotes attributed to Walt

Disney and are designed to remind (potentially grumpy) guests that much like their founder, the Disney parks can “never stand still.” Instead, they must “explore and experiment.”

One such quote – and my personal favorite – is this one: “Around here...we don’t look backwards for very long. We keep moving forward, opening new doors and doing new things, because we’re curious, and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.” Indeed, Walt Disney’s curiosity and drive cemented him as one of America’s greatest innovators: he (and his team!) blended sound, music, and color animation to produce the first feature-length animated film in 1937, pioneering the use of the multiplane camera in the process; they developed the first audio-animatronics; and, of course, Anaheim’s Disneyland, which opened in 1955, revolutionized the modern theme park.

This course, then, proposes to investigate the intersection of curiosity, creativity, and innovation through the lens of the Disney Company, specifically its films.

We’ll start the semester by establishing a common foundation: we’ll briefly look at the history of the company; read excerpts from the memoirs of current Disney CEO Bob Iger and of Pixar co-founder Ed Catmull; and screen “Disney’s Folly,” the film that started it all – Snow White and the Seven Dwarves. Then, we’ll turn to adopt the Pixar Brain Trust, which Catmull outlines in his book. The goal of the Brain Trust is to bring together a remarkable group of people to see if they could become something more. (No, wait; that’s the Avengers...) The goal is to bring together a remarkable group of people to see if they could create something more. They would take an idea, and rather than focus on “fixing the problem” or “finding a solution,” they would focus on understanding the weaknesses of the story and the perspectives of the people in the room to enhance and strengthen the final product.

With this model in mind, we’ll first work as a class to develop a unifying, over-arching question for our course.

Throughout the semester, we’ll model conversations through assigned readings, podcast listenings, and film viewings – which may include: *Frozen* (2013), *Frozen II* (2019), *Zootopia* (2016); *The Emperor’s New Groove* (2000); *Soul* (2020); *Inside Out* (2015) and Pixar’s new TV series, *Win or Lose* (2025).

And finally, each student will select an “innovative” Disney film of their choice to work with over the course of the semester. Through a series of “puzzle-piece” assignments – a 2-3 page note-taking assignment; two research assignments culminating in a 3-5 page Synthesis and a 4-6 page Summary and Response; and a capstone “articulating a stance” assignment (min. 8 pages) – you’ll develop your own individual answer to our course question.

The ultimate goal will be a class podcast, inspired by Cole Cuchna’s *Dissect*, where we’ll transfer “long-form film analysis” to “short digestible episodes.” We’ll collaboratively write our introductory episode together, but each episode of the “season” will be based on your own research questions and conversations with each other.

*Prior knowledge of the Disney canon is not required but is strongly encouraged.
No textbook will be required; instead you will be required to have a Disney+ subscription.*

WRITING AS A CREATIVE PROCESS

Writing 120.49CN-120.50CN

Instructor: Hannah Davis

TUTH 8:30AM - 9:45AM-TUTH 11:45AM-1:00PM

What does it mean to be creative? What does it mean to be a writer? What is academic writing? In "Writing as a Creative Process," we will explore these and related questions as we engage with both creativity and writing as academic fields of study. As composition scholar Wendy Bishop says, "Writing is, after all, a creative process; and like any such process, it depends on human connection." As such, we will engage in discussions, writing workshops, and activities that help you explore and investigate the course questions and to learn about yourself, creativity, and writing. Throughout the course, you'll practice creative thinking, invention, critical reading, drafting, workshopping, and revising as you complete writing projects that introduce you to writing as a mode of inquiry.

This semester, you will use writing as a mode of inquiry to explore myths about writing and creativity and to join academic conversations. Throughout the semester, you will write short responses and longer, researched papers (1500-2000 words). Each major assignment will receive feedback and undergo multiple revisions. We will spend class time working through the major assignments with a variety of activities that guide your ability to think creatively and engage with writing as a process.

The goal of this course is not to arrive at definitive answers about the course's guiding questions but to practice critical thinking, reading, and writing as we explore new perspectives and form evidence-based arguments. If you are interested in learning about and discussing writing and creativity, then "Writing as a Creative Process" is the Writing 120 course for you.

Constellation: How do Asian cultural heritages work?

WISDOM IN COMPARATIVE RHETORIC

Writing 120.44CN-120.45CN

TUTH 8:30AM - 9:45AM- TUTH 10:05AM - 11:20AM

Wisdom in Comparative Rhetoric

What can we learn when Western and Eastern wisdom traditions meet in conversation? How do different frameworks shape what it means to speak, write, and live wisely? This course invites students to explore rhetorical traditions across time and place. We will engage foundational thinkers alongside contemporary scholarship to examine a wide variety of rhetorical practices, asking: How does one speak with authority? What does ethos look like in different contexts? How do traditions define rhetorical wisdom? What is considered effective—and for whom? Course readings and discussions will help us explore these questions. Students will develop critical and creative approaches to writing by practicing recontextualization, rhetorical analysis, and reflective inquiry.

Constellation: Why do we need rules?

ROAD NOT TAKEN

Writing 120.07CN-120.08CN

Instructor: Laurel Burkbauer

WF 8:30AM - 9:45AM-WF 11:45AM-1:00PM

The Road Not Taken: Alternate Selves, Parallel Lives, and the Choices That Define Us

Do you ever wish you could have a do-over? That you could know the outcome of your choices before you make them? That you could read the last chapter of your own life first? This course will introduce you to the norms and practices of academic writing while exploring what the essayist Cheryl Strayed calls “the ghost ship that didn’t carry us”—the many counterfactual lives we could have lived had we made different decisions at crucial moments along the way. This course topic relates to the Constellation theme of rules on the level of the individual, posing the question: “What rules should we have for ourselves?”

Our course texts—Dickens’s *A Christmas Carol*, Matt Haig’s *The Midnight Library*, and the film *Past Lives*—all ask, “What if...?” What if I could go back and make different choices? What if I had accepted that other job? What if I had married someone else? They feature figures who are able to experience multiple potential lives or who are prompted to stop and reflect on their own life trajectories because of encounters with other people who represent alternative life paths. These main texts will be supplemented by literary criticism, personal essays, and poetry that is concerned with decision-making, regret, potential, and possibility.

The signature assignment of the course requires you to select a novel, film, or piece of narrative nonfiction related to our course themes and interpret it through the lens of relevant secondary sources you find in your own research process. From *Groundhog Day* to *Everything Everywhere All At Once* to *La La Land*—time loops, multiverse stories, and what-might-have-beens are all fair game here! Shorter assignments ask you to close-read a film scene, create an annotated

bibliography, respond to a book review, and craft your own argument related to a critical essay. You will also interview an older adult about a life-changing decision and present key takeaways to the class in order to cultivate wisdom in our community.

Constellation: How does climate change affect our world?

BIOPHILIC CITIES

Writing 120.17CN-120.18CN

Instructor: Lindsey Smith

TUTH 10:05AM - 11:20AM- TUTH 11:45AM-1:00PM

In the 1980s, biologist E.O. Wilson popularized the concept of “biophilia,” that humans have an innate desire to connect with the living world. Yet, 60% of the global population now lives in urban areas that are more gray than green, and a recent Pew survey found that 31% of U.S. adults report being online “almost constantly.” Humans are increasingly disconnected from our inner biophilia, and that shift is negatively impacting our physical and mental health as well as the well-being of our cities. However, there is a movement underway to transform our concrete jungles into “biophilic cities,” filled with innovative greenspaces, wildlife-friendly design, green infrastructure, and habitat restoration that seek to reconnect humans with nature, increase biodiversity in cities, and make our urban centers more climate resilient.

Through a blend of seminar-style discussions, research, and writing projects, we will examine nature’s vast benefits and explore what it takes to design thriving biophilic cities. Our course materials will come from environmental science, urban planning, psychology, and conservation journals, popular magazines and books, and documentaries. In your final project, you will work collaboratively to propose an initiative that seeks to integrate nature into an urban space of your choice. Throughout the semester, you will also take part in a fundamental element of academic writing: exchanging feedback with peers on your works in progress. And, of course, we will get our dose of nature by holding class outside as much as possible and practicing shinrin-yoku (a.k.a. forest bathing) in the Duke Gardens.

HAIKU AND ZEN BUDDHISM

Writing 120.03CN-120.04CN

Instructor: Crystal Smith

WF 1:25PM - 2:40PM- WF 11:45AM - 1:00PM

Zen, Haiku Aesthetics, and Other Japanese Poetic Forms

This course introduces various Japanese forms of poetry including haiku, haibun, senryu, and tanka. We will explore the origins of haiku through Masters like Matsuo Basho, Yosa Buson, Kobayashi Issa as well as its evolution to contemporary English-language form. We'll further explore the principals of Zen and the mediative practices of reading and contemplating haiku.

Haiku evolved from the poetic form, Renga, a collaborative poem which is considered to be one of the earliest forms of poetry, dating back to the thirteenth century. In the sixteenth century, haiku master Matsuo Basho broke from the Renga tradition and began writing a haiku in the 5-7-5 syllable structure. Basho's poems are considered by most to be the magnum opus of haiku. Zen or (Zen Buddhism), in relation to haiku, places strong emphasis on simplicity, naturalness, and solemnity. It also teaches that human suffering is a result of separation. The mediative practice of haiku allows us to experience unity with nature and the world around us. Thus, we can experience a "oneness" with our surroundings. The combination of simplicity of form and profoundness of meaning makes haiku an ideal topic for the interdisciplinary study of creativity.

In addition to weekly writing assignments, students will write descriptive and analytical producing two major writing projects that consider, respectively, Buddhism and poetic forms, and the concepts of enlightenment, impermanence, and Zen Minimalism. Simultaneous creative and theory-based small projects will allow students to engage haiku writing techniques and other forms Zen art.

Constellation: How does social control operate in the modern world?

DYSTOPIAN FICTION

Writing 120.46CN-120.48CN

Instructor: Kevin Casey

TUTH 1:25PM - 2:40PM, TUTH 3:05PM - 4:20PM

Dystopian stories – which typically feature various forms of suffering, subjugation, violence, and injustice meted out by authoritarian or totalitarian people in power – have long held sway in our popular culture and imagination. That’s reflected by decades of memorable entries in the category, from the classics of high school English classes (such as *Brave New World* and *1984*) to the more recent run of bestselling series featuring young heroines (such as *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*).

As part of the social control Constellation, this first-year writing seminar will look at the topic through the disciplinary lens of English literature and other media (such as film, TV, or video games.) In the process, we’ll develop skills in critical inquiry, close reading, and (of course) writing – all while asking questions (and proposing answers) about why dystopian stories are so popular, how this genre of fiction intersects with our real world, and what they can teach us about our current moment and shared histories.

Writing assignments will be finalized in summer 2025, but are likely to include a close reading, a research paper, a personal essay, as well as several shorter pieces. This class makes no assumptions about your background or future plans but does presume you want to read several novels (see below) and engage in regular class discussions about those stories and your own ideas and work.

This class will require reading at least three novels and some shorter pieces. Those texts are remain TBD as of this writing but representative possibilities include *The Handmaid’s Tale* (Margaret Atwood), *The Parable of the Sower* (Octavia Butler), *American War* (Omar El Akkad), *Chain-Gang All-Stars* (Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah), and *It Can’t Happen Here* (Sinclair Lewis.)

WRITING REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

Writing 120.38CN-120.39CN

Instructor: Hannah Taylor

TUTH 8:30AM - 9:45AM, TUTH 10:05AM - 11:20AM

Writing Reproductive Justice, Politics, and Rights

“To obtain Reproductive Justice, we must work on injustices in all arenas: social, economic, gender, racial, environmental, financial, physical, sexual, disability, and carceral.”

– Loretta J. Ross

The landscape of reproductive politics is an example of the complex interaction between belief, culture, law, and embodiment. The past year, in particular, has seen seismic shifts in the way that the United States approaches reproductive rights. But reproductive justice and politics are about

more than just abortion. This course will encourage us to think of the many facets of reproductive justice– menstruation, reproductive technologies, IVF, birth justice, and chronic reproductive illness– and how they are written about in a variety of discourses.

This course will discuss through writings– both scholarly and popular– how we got to this moment in reproductive politics, and what we can do to change it. Using lenses from rhetorics of health and medicine, disability studies, and reproductive justice, this course will ask students to consider how writing has shaped the discourses of reproductive health and politics. Throughout the course, students will be asked to complete weekly reading responses and be expected to share writing via discussion posts regularly. The course will include two longer writing assignments. The first, an analysis of the ways that an aspect of reproductive health has been discussed across mediums, will be between 1,000 and 1250 words. The final project will be a 1,500-2,000 word research paper on a controversy relevant to the course. Students will also produce a public-facing, advocacy document based on a reproductive health issue of their choice.

Constellation: How can we build a more equal society?

WRITING PORTRAYED IN MEDIA

Writing 120.35CN-120.36CN

Instructor: Shariëka Botex

MW 11:45AM - 1:00PM- MW 3:05PM - 4:20PM

How do popular media and scholarly texts portray writing, reading, communication, and other literacy practices of various professions and academic disciplines? In what ways do scholars across disciplines discuss their writing and research on television shows, music, podcasts, and other forms of entertainment and media? When and how do media portrayals of writing, reading, and communication in various fields differ from and/or compare to lived experiences among people in these professions and scholarly fields? These are among some of the questions this class will provide you with an opportunity to explore. In this class, we will explore scholarly texts and popular entertainment media to learn how people discuss the writing, reading, and communication they do in their professional fields. This course requires students to review television shows, podcasts, music, and scholarship that shed light on academic and professional paths to better familiarize themselves with the ways writing, reading and communication transpire in their future majors or careers.

In this class, students are required to complete three main writing projects: 1. Contemporary Issues Journals, in which they respond to assigned writing prompts, explore topics of interest and engage with scholarly texts and popular media sources. 2. An 8–10-page double-spaced research

paper, which explores intersections between media and scholarly sources related to a profession or academic discipline of your choosing and a topic you are interested in writing about. 3. A media pitch in which you propose an idea about media content that you believe should be created to inform people about the writing, reading, and communication in your intended major or future career and persuade them about why literacy practices are valuable in the field. Through writing and revising your assignments and participating in peer-review focused on the major writing assignments, you will develop an awareness of the literacy practices you may use in your future professional and academic endeavors and learn about similarities and differences in writing, reading and communication in different majors and professions.

MEDICAL DRAMAS AND WRITING

Writing 120.33CN- WRITING 120.34CN

Instructor: Jessica Corey

WF 1:25PM - 2:40PM- WF 3:05PM - 4:20PM

Anatomy of a Text: What Medical Dramas Teach Us About Writing

Medical dramas offer a captivating blend of human experience and scientific intrigue, playing on audience members' aspirations and emotions. Through critical analysis of shows like *St. Elsewhere*; *ER*; *Grey's Anatomy*; *Private Practice*; *House*; *Dr. Quinn Medicine Woman*; *Doc*; and *The Good Doctor*, this course explores the conventions, tropes, and narrative structures of the medical drama genre; the sociocultural significance of medical dramas as reflections of healthcare practices and societal attitudes towards health and wellness; and the potential impact of medical dramas on medical decision making, health behaviors, and health policies. More specifically, this course poses the questions: What are the lines between fact and fiction in medical dramas' portrayal of physician, caregiver, and patient experiences; medical institutions; and social systems? How do medical dramas engage rhetorically with ethical principles such as patient autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice? How do these shows account for diversity and inclusion and what are the implications of their representations?

We will examine not only medical dramas themselves but a variety of genres in order for students to learn to identify, articulate, and reflect on the rhetorical choices informing any text; analyze and develop their own arguments from multiple points of view; articulate and support their positions with research in a variety of forms; respond critically and ethically to others' ideas; adjust their writing for multiple audiences, purposes, and contexts; and develop prose that is thoughtful, organized, exact in diction, and structured in a clear manner.

Students will practice the above skills in homework assignments, conferences, and collaborative workshops. In addition, students will take up this work in the following major assignments:

Group Multimodal Analysis—This is a rhetorical analysis of an episode of a medical drama. The analysis should respond to the following questions: What ‘arguments’ does the episode make? Which messages are communicated explicitly and which are communicated implicitly? How do genre; rhetorical appeals; Kairos; and design elements such as dialogue/diction, tone, music and other sounds, gesture, clothing, timing, and setting/scenery function rhetorically in the episode? Your analysis should also be presented in a multimodal form (a screencast, video presentation, visual mapping of elements, etc.) (length dependent upon mode).

Group Research Portfolio—The portfolio consists of a research question, literature review, and research proposal.

Reflective Essay—This is a narrative detailing the student’s experiences with the course, how they as an individual may have changed as a reader and/or writer, and how they will or might transfer what they learned in WRT 120 to other contexts (4 pages).

Constellation: How do we understand global injustice and resistance?

MEM AND RESIT IN LAT AME FILM

Writing 120.28CN-120.29CN

Instructor: Sandra Sotelo-Miller

WF 8:30AM - 9:45AM- WF 11:45AM - 1:00PM

Writing has been crucial to Latin America in the construction and understanding of the region’s histories and identities. Since the introduction of cinema into the Latin American imaginary at the end of the 19th Century, however, this art-form has had a massive impact because of how easily accessible it is as well as how it revolutionized storytelling through a multisensory experience. Film’s ability to evade the challenges of illiteracy as well as its ability to be mass-produced quickly caught the interest of artists and intellectuals alike. Initially, the majority of the films shown came from Hollywood or mimicked productions coming from the U.S or Europe. However, by the 1960s, the Third World Cinema movement swept through the region. Directors stopped seeing film as a form of personal expression and instead saw it as a vehicle for collective expression. Through movies, many directors sought to present the truth about each country’s history and culture and in doing so, inspire their viewers to learn more and connect more deeply to the communities and histories they told. In this class, we will view movies that deal with historical moments and events and explore how filmmakers use these histories and retell these

moments as a way to understand them, memorialize them, and in a sense bring about change. These films explore themes including the legacy of colonialism and slavery in the region, the construction of a national identity, repression during dictatorships, and the role of women and youth in resistance movements. In our explorations, we will consider how film can be seen as a valuable form of historical discourse in providing meaning to the past.

In helping us understand the importance of these films, we will also read and engage with the work of Film Studies and Latin American Studies scholars who reflect on the power of these films in understanding Latin American history and memory. In coming into conversation with the films and these writer's thoughts on them, we will consider the following questions: What is the role of film in the construction or deconstruction of history? What new meaning do these films provide to our imaginings of the past? What power does film have in reflecting counter-narratives to oppressive historical discourses? How do films participate in collective memory processes?

The core assignments in this course include a 750–1000-word review, where you practice using your perspective to persuade a reader to watch a film. You will also write a 1750 –2000-word film analysis where you contextualize and interpret a film for an academic audience supporting your views with secondary sources. The last two major components of your grade will be collaborative in nature. Through these assignments you will continue practicing your analytical skills and also learn how to work effectively as a team. Learning effective collaboration skills will be instrumental in your time as a student at Duke and beyond. The first of these assignments is an oral context report and discussion centering the work of a Latin American director. You will present and lead this discussion with a group of your peers. You will also co-create an entry introducing, contextualizing, and providing key points of entry to a film which will become part of a Digital Critical Edition of Latin American film catered to anyone interested in exploring it. Through multiple writers' workshops and reflective exercises, you will learn to critique your peers' work as well as revise your own. These writing skills, along with the practice of careful observations, gripping descriptions, and critical analysis, will prepare you to articulate your thoughts and ideas in writing here at Duke and beyond.

THE NARRATIVE SELF

Writing 120.53CN

Instructor: Audrey Ledbetter

WF 8:30AM-9:45AM

Joan Didion famously wrote, “We tell ourselves stories in order to live. [...] We live entirely, especially if we are writers, by the imposition of a narrative line upon disparate images, by the

‘ideas’ with which we have learned to freeze the shifting phantasmagoria which is our actual experience.” This conviction, however, only lasts for the first paragraph of *The White Album*. The second paragraph begins, “Or at least we do for a while. I am talking here about a time when I began to doubt the premises of all the stories I had ever told myself, a common condition but one I found troubling.”

Didion’s remarks inspire many questions regarding the role of narrative in our lives and how we understand ourselves. What are the ethics of transposing our lives into stories? What form do these stories take? How do self-narratives affect our identity, our sense of self? What happens when these stories break down? What is the relationship between writing and understanding oneself narratively? In this course, we will examine the peaks and pitfalls of the narrative self, drawing on insights from both philosophy and literature. We will read essayists such as Joan Didion and Jia Tolentino, philosophers such as Daniel Dennett and Peter Goldie, novelists such as Elena Ferrante and Rachel Cusk, and philosopher-novelists such as Iris Murdoch and Simone de Beauvoir. Students will learn strategies for reading various kinds of academic texts with a focus on developing close reading skills and practicing attention. This writing-intensive course will include two short papers—one close reading of a literary text and one reconstruction and analysis of a philosophical argument—and a final project (format TBD) that combines both of these skills for students to present an original argument.

THE IRAQ WAR AND ITS LEGACY

Writing 120.55CN

Instructor: Ethan Foote

TUTH 8:30AM-9:45AM

The 2003 U.S.-led invasion and subsequent occupation of Iraq was an epochal event of the 21st century, the ramifications of which persist to this day. This course looks at the people, places, things, and ideas central to what we refer to as the Iraq War, mapping a legacy that begins with the British and French empires and stretches all the way to the present crisis of American democracy.

Through reading the words of politicians, journalists, intellectuals, combatants, activists, and other writers and speakers, students will examine the Iraq War as a material reality inseparable from a complex web of discourses. Course readings will tend toward one or more of the following: argument for and against the war, experience of the war’s impact, and critique, or the application of some wider theoretical framework to explain the war’s political and historical significance. Students will be asked to draw connections between the content of a given piece of writing and its context, genre, and intended audience, and to address the relationship between

language, facts, and politics in everything from public oratory to private diaries, award-winning analysis to dry memoranda, muckraking reporting to junk intelligence, and more.

Specific topics will include the history of U.S. Middle East policy and U.S. involvement in Iraq; making the case for invasion; who supported the invasion, who opposed it, and why; 9/11 and the global war on terror; Islamophobia; neoconservatism; weapons of mass destruction; media coverage of the war; the insurgency against coalition forces in Iraq and sectarian civil war; day-to-day life in a war zone; the antiwar movement; the relevance (or not) of Israel and Zionism; the long-term impact on Iraqi society and on the Middle East; and the political economy of war.

In looking at current U.S. politics through the lens of the Iraq War, we'll see how the widespread backlash against military adventurism during the 2010's was central to antiestablishment revolts on the left and, more importantly, the right; why certain hawks have bitterly decried the Trump ascendancy while others have embraced it; how the global war on terror has managed to outlive the failures of its marquee operations in Iraq and Afghanistan; how a renewed insistence on the enduring threat of Islamic extremism holds together an uneasy coalition of neoconservatives and "America-First" isolationists; and how competing narratives of American global power are entwined with now-endemic themes of division, populism, authoritarianism, misinformation, and pervasive distrust.

Constellation: How do we understand life, death and the in-between?

WE ARE WHAT WE EAT

Writing 120.26CN-120.27CN

Instructor: Rhiannon Scharnhorst

MW 3:05PM - 4:20PM- MW 4:40PM - 5:55PM

Mark Menjivar's photo essay "[You Are What You Eat](#)" (*Gastronomica*, Fall 2012) captures diverse refrigerators alongside brief household biographies, reflecting Brillat-Savarin's insight that our food choices reveal our identity. Food practices are shaped by history, culture, and gender dynamics. This course explores how personal identity intertwines with food history, emphasizing women's contributions to food traditions. Through feminist scholarship in anthropology, history, and rhetoric, we'll examine how food symbolically defines who we are.

Course components include regular writing assignments to develop your critical voice, a collaborative research essay exploring feminist food history, and a student-designed class exhibit

for the library titled "We Are What We Eat." Throughout the semester, you'll engage with diverse food writers, conduct primary research, and create work for public audiences while developing essential writing and analytical skills.

PREVENTING PANDEMICS

Writing 120.09CN-120.10CN

Instructor: Miranda Welsh

WF 11:45AM - 1:00PM-WF 3:05PM - 4:20PM

Preventing pandemics: interdisciplinary approaches to preparedness

In 2015, in the wake of SARS, H1N1, and Ebola, the United Nations and the World Health Organization convened a global team of experts to assess the threat of future epidemics. The team found that outbreaks are becoming more common for a multitude of reasons and we are unprepared to deal with them when they occur. They concluded that without better approaches to prevention and containment, future epidemics are inevitable: a prediction that has come to bear.

Where are new outbreaks most likely to occur and why? What ecological, sociopolitical, and cultural factors contribute to differences across locales in disease emergence, spread, and the capacity to respond? How have our dominant understandings--or narratives--of disease shaped our preparedness and response efforts to date? In the first third of our course, we will use an interdisciplinary case study of a single epidemic to examine these questions together, via guided readings, writings, and small-group discussions. You will summarize two of the guided readings independently (1 page each) and compose a written analysis of one of them (2 pages).

In the second two-thirds of the course, you will use your developing interests to form a three-person research team. Throughout the rest of the course, each team will collaborate to research a contemporary epidemic (e.g., cholera, Zika, SARS) and compose a review and synthesis paper about that epidemic (15-20 pages). In the paper, teams will summarize the biology of and public health response to the epidemic and then present three additional narratives of the epidemic, each from a different disciplinary perspective:

- 1) Ecological: specific environmental conditions and human-environment interactions encourage outbreaks (e.g., El Niño, deforestation, wildlife trade)
- 2) Cultural/anthropological: specific beliefs, values, norms, or customs (e.g., distrust, stigma, individualism) encourage outbreaks, as do culturally inappropriate interventions
- 3) Political/economic: specific characteristics of states and sociopolitical systems encourage outbreaks (e.g., by increasing poverty or inequality, by decreasing security or stability)

Each team member will research one of the three disciplinary narratives and present their findings in one of three sub-sections of the review and synthesis paper (3-4 pages per sub-section). Team members will work together to compose: 1) an introduction that summarizes the biology of and public health response to the epidemic; 2) a conclusion that applies the results of all three sub-sections to suggest specific improvements to prevention and/or mitigation efforts (3-4 pages each). 70% of the grade for the review and synthesis paper will be based on your individual sub-section and 30% will be based on the co-written introduction and conclusion; 5% of the overall grade will be based on team member evaluations.

As you work on the review and synthesis paper, you will be expected to meet with your research team outside of class on a few occasions. Throughout the course, we will use guided workshops and peer review to revise our writing, and you will be expected to consider and incorporate the feedback you receive from your peers and/or professor before submitting a final product.

Constellation: How do we see ourselves as political beings?

DOLLY PARTON FOR PRESIDENT?

Writing 120.42CN-120.43CN

Instructor: Leslie Maxwell

MW 8:30AM - 9:45AM- MW 11:45AM - 1:00PM

During last year's United States presidential election, you might have noticed a different name pop up on T-shirts as a possible contender: Dolly Parton. A search on Etsy reveals that there are dozens and dozens (maybe hundreds and hundreds) of Dolly for President T-shirts and other merch. Of course, Dolly Parton, the famous—dare I say legendary—country singer, pop singer, businessperson, and philanthropist isn't really running for president—but clearly there are many who might at least entertain the notion.

Parton is nearly universally beloved in the United States (and abroad!), and often for different reasons: some may see her as a savvy businessperson, others love her music, and still others admire her philanthropy. Sometimes how we see Parton gets more complicated, too—where some see her embrace of her sexuality as fem inist, others see it as decidedly anti- fem inist. Some see her as an icon of and advocate for the LG BT Q+ community. At the same time, many conservative Christians celebrate Parton and her faith. Where some see a high-powered businessperson, others may see a cog in capitalism's machine. Some see her embrace of characteristics stereotypically associated with the South, and even more specifically with Appalachia, as bringing awareness of Appalachian culture to the mainstream—yet others see this

as exploitative of a culture that is already marginalized in the United States. Some see a public figure that is outspoken, and others see a public figure that never speaks out (how is this one even possible? we'll explore!). She's embraced by today's pop singers, recently collaborating with artists such as Beyoncé and Sabrina Carpenter.

In this course, we will explore these (and more!) complexities. How much does Parton contribute to the mythology of Dolly Parton, and how much does our culture contribute? How much do we, as members of the same society, continue to contribute? We will explore these questions and more, all the complications, twists and turns that make Dolly Dolly. Through this investigation, we will hone skills needed in academic writing and discourse, such as those skills that ask us to look at the complexities and complications inherent in an academic discipline. This course will use a multidisciplinary framework to explore these complexities.

We will read books and essays, both in Parton's words and in the words of others. We will listen to podcasts, watch movies/films, and, of course, listen to Parton's music. You will have the opportunity to lead a class discussion, and you will engage in regular online discussion forums and posts. Our class will emphasize critical reading and writing, and you will learn about how and why we use sources and texts in writing. Students will generate three major writing projects: a close reading of a text, an annotated bibliography, and a creative project. Classes will consist of small-group, large-group, and individual activities and small-group and large-group discussions. Engagement is an important part of the course grading components, as well.

Though we'll work hard, we'll also have fun, remembering Dolly's wise advice: "Don't get so busy making a living that you forget to make a life."

Constellation: What is the Cosmos?

LANGUAGE DIFFERENCE & WRITING

Writing 120.31CN

Instructor: Charlotte Asmuth

MW 3:05PM - 4:20PM

What do linguists know about language, and how can this help us with our writing? How do our identities shape our language use/writing—and vice versa? How does language change, and why might some people resist such change? How might we (as readers, writers, researchers, and language users ourselves) respond to language difference?

These are some of the questions we'll explore in this section of Writing 120—questions that are part of debates students are not normally invited into. Historically, language use marked as “different” in some way has been treated by politicians, educators, and the general public as a problem to be fixed or eradicated. Our course operates with two assumptions, both of which make studying language in a college writing course interesting and useful: (1) the ability to communicate in multiple languages and/or use varieties of English is an increasingly common asset in today's world; (2) given that you will need to write for a variety of contexts in college and beyond, it's more useful to explore language patterns and options for what people *can* and *do* in their writing rather than for someone to tell you what you *can't* or *shouldn't* do in your writing. After all, any proscriptions about writing (e.g., “don't use *I*,” “avoid contractions”) are not generalizable to all writing contexts!

In addition to regular weekly writing assignments, the course involves two major writing projects, both of which will be reviewed by peers and the professor:

1. **Slang analysis** (~1,200 - 2,000 words). For this project, you'll explore a slang word or phrase that interests you by studying use of the expression by family and friends, in current dictionaries, and in a global corpus of web-based English.
2. **Research project** (~2,500 - 3,500 words). You'll get the chance to further explore language and writing through small-scale primary research (e.g., interviews, surveys) that relates to your own interests. The project will be divided into manageable stages over the second half of the semester.

RADICAL MAGIC

Writing 120.05CN-120.06CN

Instructor: Cheryl Spinner

MW 3:05PM - 4:20PM- MW 4:40PM - 5:55PM

We are the weirdos, mister.”

—Nancy, *The Craft*

“So I leap from the gallows and I levitate down your street.”

—Taylor Swift, “Who's Afraid of Little Old Me?”

“I'll follow you down to the ground

My voice will haunt you.”

—Stevie Nicks, Fleetwood Mac, “Silver Springs”

The past decade has witnessed the renaissance of the witch, which last had its height amidst the “goth weirdos” of the 1990’s. Currently, patches, t-shirts, and pins pepper Etsy with statements like “Hex the Patriarchy” and “We Are the Granddaughters of the Witches You Could Not Burn.” Books and think-pieces have been published about this current phenomenon by popular tarot readers, astrologists, and witches, all of whom address the feminist, queer, activist potential of these practices. Most recently, performing powerhouse Taylor Swift has been accused of witchcraft on stage during her record-breaking concert, “Eras,” and Swifties are experiencing a real psychological condition known as “post-concert amnesia.”

Did you manage to snatch tickets to Eras and can’t remember anything about the show? Why is Miss Americana being accused of a witch now, at the height of her popularity? We will address such questions and more over the course of this semester by surveying the ways in which magic and the supernatural have been coded as feminine, irrational, and sinister. We will begin with the Salem Witch Trials, traverse the 19th-century spiritualist and occultist movements, pivot to witches and second-wave Feminism in the 1960’s and 70’s. spend some time in the grungy 90’s, and end with witchcraft in our current moment. We will explore the feminist and queer communities who have gravitated towards spells, incantations, and Tarot decks to provide a greater insight into a dominant world that was not made for them. We will examine the literary qualities of Tarot, spells, and incantations, and question the distinction between writing and magic. Is there really a difference between a poem and an incantation? Can the lyrics of a rock song be a hex? We will look into histories and theories of the bookbinding and books as objects that age, warp, yellow, and develop that distinctive smell. With spines that hold them together, are books bodies?

As a whole, the course is an alchemy of disciplines. You might think of it as the following equation:

$$RM = W+L+H+A$$

(Radical Magic = Writing + Literature + History + Art)

Expect to produce quite a bit of writing over the course of the semester, which will include:

1. Weekly Blog Posts
2. Digital Archival Research Project
3. Literature Review
4. Grimoire

These assignments are intended to teach you varying techniques of writing genres over the course of the semester, which range from traditional academic writing, writing for the general public, and magical writing. Bi-weekly blog posts will clock in at around 250-500 words and

will be informal responses to the reading of the week, and/or be a space to complete short assignments in response to a prompt. With the digital archival project you will learn how to conduct advanced academic research in David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Duke University. You will choose an object from the treasures of Duke's extensive collections related to magic and the supernatural and provide a 1,000 word description of the piece and why it is important for an exhibit on magic, feminism, and the supernatural. Collectively, we will gather the artifacts each of you have chosen and present them in a virtual exhibition. The archival project is intended to give you an opportunity to engage in writing that is not academic but intended for a more public facing audience. The literature review will train you in traditional academic writing. You will choose your topic of interest and write a literature review requiring a minimum of 10 peer-reviewed sources that outlines the major debates in the field.

For your final project, you will create your own physical grimoire. Creativity is encouraged. These grimoires, or "spell-books," are yours. If something inspires you, don't ask me—just put it in! There are parameters to the assignment that make it gradeable, but aside from those you really have free-range.

Constellation: How does artificial intelligence impact human experiences?

AM I A ROBOT?

Writing 120.20CN-120.22CN

Instructor: Michael Dimpfl

MW 11:45AM - 1:00PM- MW 3:05PM - 4:20PM

AM I A ROBOT? The Social Life of Technology in the Age of Connection

How do we develop our skills as writers if our goal is to analyze and understand our experience of the world? What is an analytical argument and what writing tools are necessary to develop effective argumentation?

In this seminar, our goal will be to hone our skills as writers by developing a shared analysis of the shifting relationship between technology and society, particularly as it affects our ability to understand our past, relate to our present and construct our future.

In contemporary life, we are immersed in a technological landscape. More than half of the world's eight billion people own a smartphone, and the numbers grow daily. Our financial, medical, educational, informational, and social lives are increasingly mediated and managed through AI, screens, QR codes, and the cloud. This has opened tremendous potential and

possibility for connection, convenience, access to information, and more. But, the technological landscape is not power neutral.

Tech-enabled interactions have produced profound social alienation and are subjected to surveillance by corporate and governmental actors who are able to intervene in or appropriate these interactions for purposes -- good, bad, or indifferent -- that might be different than those we intend or desire. What does this mean for the future of our “information society”? Does the increasing presence of automation mean that computers will determine our future? Will we, as many science fiction films suggest, find ourselves subordinated to a world controlled by AI? Or will technology serve us, creating more productive ways for technology to deliver a “good life” to increasing numbers of people?

The answers to these questions are central to how we might consider the challenges we face today. In this class, we will develop a set of critical analytical writing skills to explore them. Writing practices will be based first in the development of strong reading habits. From here, we will explore formulating and mobilizing effective claims and the challenges of producing nuanced engagement with course content. We will develop these skills through an investigation of the history of our networked technological world, from the origins of the internet in the department of defense’s counterinsurgency projects to the predominance of so-called “big tech.” We will examine the power technology has in our daily lives, particularly the effects it has on our psyches, social relationships, politics, and environment.

This is a writing intensive seminar designed to help students develop their facility with writing as a tool for critical analysis in the tradition of the social sciences. We will draw on a variety of different texts, from film to journalism, social science to philosophy. Writing projects will include reading responses to assigned texts, a discussion facilitation project undertaken in collaboration with classmates, and two essays.

HIDDEN CURRICULA: SCIFI & GAMING

Writing 120.51CN- 120.52CN

Instructor: Sarah Ishmael

TUTH 3:05PM - 4:20PM-TUTH 4:20PM- MW 4:40PM

Science fiction and video games serve as powerful platforms for exploring the complex boundaries of human identity, technology, and social dynamics. This course invites students to critically examine how narrative worlds in science fiction as well as video games and create “hidden curricula”—embedded messages that shape our understanding of humanity, difference, its relationship with technological evolution - specifically the evolution of artificial intelligence.

A key discussion in this course will revolve around how Hollywood's depictions of AI differ from real-world AI development. What are the exaggerated risks that Hollywood presents—such as AI revolts or android uprisings—versus the actual risks we are seeing emerge, like the misuse of image generation, deepfakes, and algorithmic biases? How do these differences shape public understanding and ethical debates? We will also discuss how video games and films act as both mirrors and teachers, subtly (and sometimes overtly) influencing players' understandings of humanity. In doing so, they serve as critical platforms for both perpetuating existing stereotypes and offering spaces for reimagining and resisting cultural narratives.

Through an immersive academic writing experience, students will analyze science fiction films and video games like *Mass Effect*, *Cyberpunk 2077*, and *Horizon Zero Dawn*, alongside films and documentaries about gaming, science fiction, artificial intelligence and philosophy. We will investigate how these media:

- Explore concepts of humanity and artificial intelligence
- Reflect and challenge existing social hierarchies
- Communicate complex ideas about identity, power, and technological transformation

More specifically, we will be playing through the video game *Detroit Become Human* as a class. Students can play through the game by themselves, play in pairs or groups of no more than three students. Major assignments include a literature review as well as media/content analysis of a game or science fiction show.

Our course texts will include published academic articles, websites and videos that offer examples of methods/data for researching language use. What concepts of difference and sameness differentiate peoples from each other, and how do these concepts reflect, complicate and shape notions of human difference in the United States or differ from them entirely?

To respond to these questions, we will read, watch, listen to, and analyze a variety of media. In addition, we will produce our own texts such as personal reflections and academic essays. Students will learn to research, workshop, revise and edit their own ideas in form and content. In addition, they will learn how to analyze and develop their own arguments from various points of view, articulate and support their positions with research in a variety of forms, respond critically and ethically to other people's ideas, adapt their writing for a variety of audiences, purposes, and contexts, and develop prose that is thoughtful, organized, precise in diction, and structured.

Perhaps unlike other courses you've taken, our course texts will also include the writing you and your peers will produce in response to these published texts. That is, some classes will involve peer review and others will revolve around discussions of anonymous samples of your writing. As we look at the writing you and your peers have done, we won't be examining it to see what is

“good” or “bad” about it. Rather, we’ll examine it to hone our sense of how readers might respond to our writing and to learn writing moves from each other.

We’ll start the semester experimenting with and reflecting on strategies for reading challenging texts. As we read these texts, we’ll also analyze them for writing techniques (for anticipating readers’ expectations and concerns, representing work with sources, defining and contextualizing key terms, summarizing texts, and taking a position in relation to others).

Major Scholarly Assignments

1. **Comprehensive Literature Review:** Students will conduct an in-depth scholarly investigation synthesizing academic research on representations of humanity in science fiction media.
2. **Critical Media Analysis of a Game:** Students will produce a sophisticated analytical text examining the narrative structures, representational strategies, and embedded ideological frameworks of a selected science fiction video game or television series.

Key Focus Questions:

- How do speculative narratives redefine human ontological categories?
- What implicit messages emerge about technological agency and social difference?
- How do representational strategies in science fiction media negotiate complex power dynamics?

The course emphasizes advanced scholarly writing practices, including:

- Introduction to theoretical frameworks
- Introduction to different forms of media analysis
- Critical analysis development
- Sophisticated argumentative strategies
- Peer-review and collaborative scholarly discourse

By the end of the semester students will have developed advanced academic writing competencies and a nuanced critical approach to analyzing representational systems in science fiction media. This hands-on approach emphasizes synthesizing research, articulating arguments clearly, and contributing to academic and policy discussions about the construction of humanity in sci-fi and gaming narratives.

TECHNOLOGIES OF STORYTELLING

Writing 120.22CN

Instructor: Julia Gordon

MW 4:40PM-5:55PM

What kind of stories are made possible by the written word? How do you make sense of a life lived surrounded by technology? How do concepts like ‘truth’ and ‘reality’ hold up in this technological environment? Does technology put us in a world of illusions? Or does technology actually bring us closer to self-knowledge? Together, students in this course will investigate how ordinary technologies influence the way we tell stories, how these stories change our perception of reality, and how these questions impact what, how, and why we write.

We will read and watch a handful of novels, short stories, and films that explore the technologies of writing, broadcasting, the moving image, the Internet, and AI. Through critical analysis, we will explore what versions of reality are made knowable through these technologies, and we will interpret the personal, social, and political consequences of these technological mediations. Texts may include Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897), Nathanael West’s *The Day of the Locust* (1939), John Cheever’s “The Enormous Radio” (1947), Jennifer Egan’s *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (2010), and Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Klara and the Sun* (2021), as well as films like *Network* (1976) and *Blade Runner* (1982). Students will reinforce their theoretical studies in this class by engaging hands-on with the written word through reflective, creative, and analytical assignments.

In this course, students will practice writing for academic and public audiences. Students will learn how to identify and interpret arguments posed by literary texts, and they will use their cognitive and emotional responses to said texts as a roadmap to an articulated, analytical, and academic response. These assignments will teach students the writing, editing, and research skills needed to formulate an interpretive argument about a text, engage with literary and cultural disciplines, and write a college-level paper. Most importantly, the practice of these skills will equip students with the confidence to write exploratively and earnestly.

Assignments will include...

- Weekly discussion posts (150-200 words), for students to practice close reading and prepare for lively in-class discussions.
- One personal essay or creative work (2-3 pages) reflecting on a personal encounter with ordinary technologies, written for a public audience.

- Two short argumentative essays (3-5 pages) in which students will analyze a text from class and argue for their interpretation of it. Each essay will focus on a different skill: 1) thesis statement and argument construction, 2) close reading and integration of evidence.
- Final research paper (5-6 pages), which will synthesize the skills developed throughout previous assignments. This paper will be broken down into several smaller assignments: 1) thesis statement and introductory paragraph, 2) annotated bibliography, and 3) 2–3-page draft. These components will be workshopped and peer-reviewed in class.

Constellation: How do people respond to and resist Colonialism?

RHETORIC OF COMEDY

Writing 120.37CN-120.46CN

Instructor: Benjamin Hojem

MW 11:45AM – 1:00PM-MW 4:40PM - 5:55PM

From Jonathan Swift’s “A Modest Proposal” to *South Park* and *The Daily Show*, we take it for granted that comedy is a form of resistance, resistance against hypocrisy, corruption, and oppressive forces in our politics and culture. But is this true? Does comedy stoke our rebellious natures, or is it more like a release valve that encourages us to capitulate to the status quo? This course will explore this question through the perspectives of cultural critics, academic theorists, and the comedians themselves.

Constellation: What drives the decision for war or peace?

ATTENDING TO ATTENTION

Writing 120.32CN

Instructor: David Landes

TUTH 1:25PM - 2:40PM

Attending to Attention - The Secret Method of the Liberal Arts

A revolution is occurring in the ways we pay attention, demanding that we learn, unlearn, and relearn ways of attending across most aspects of contemporary life. To our aid, a liberal arts education trains students' attention--liberally and liberatorily--to "cultivate and practice the kinds of attention that will make them intelligent observers, diligent critics, and thoughtful actors on the stage of human life" (Sullivan). This academic writing course teaches critical research and writing skills through exploring how different kinds of attention shape our various ways of knowing, thinking, and doing.

Our inquiry-driven writing within the liberal arts tradition will organize our survey of various conceptions of attention and will aid our building of cutting-edge vocabularies for attention's situational dynamics from the experiencer's point of view (e.g., the kind of attention you're using while reading this). Guiding texts will span the humanities, sciences, arts, and the technological frontier, providing theories and case studies to help us ask: What are the means by which attention is formed in any given situation? How is attention constructed, structured, and variably reconfigured? Students will select situations of their interest where the type of attention used determines differences in outcomes. Writing and research assignments will scaffold the process of conducting attention analyses. The final essay culminates your work as a participant-researcher analyzing and creating modes of attention optimized for goals in a given situation. Ultimately, students will be learning two interrelated fundamental methodologies of the liberal arts: 1) the conventions of academic reading, writing, and researching, and 2) the foundational skills of attention that are implicit to all academic work, disciplinary knowledge, and social action.

Constellation: How do humans and natural systems interact in our complex world?

HUMOR AS HEALTH CARE

Writing 120.01CN-120.02CN

Instructor: Cary Moskovitz

TUTH 10:05AM-11:20AM-TUTH 1:25PM-2:40PM

We all like to laugh, but can humor actually improve our health? for some health issues, it seems that it can--but whether such benefits accrue depend on the type of humor and how it is employed. This Writing 120 course will interrogate published research on the effects of humor on human health.

Through critical analyses of published studies investigating humor and health, students will develop skills in academic reading, writing and research. To begin, students will learn

selected principles of experimental, human-subject research and some basic statistics concepts. Students will then practice careful, skeptical reading, effective summary, and thoughtful analysis as they draft, give and receive feedback, and revise written reviews of experimental research reports. In the second half of the term, students will produce a research-driven essay on an area of current research on the topic. Audiences for student writing will include both classmates and those beyond the classroom.

Over the course of the semester, students will develop skills in finding and working with appropriate sources, identifying and articulating claims, synthesizing and incorporating evidence, writing structure, and addressing counterarguments and conflicting evidence. Much of the work of the course will be collaborative, with students coauthoring at least one paper, giving feedback on others and working in small groups on many occasions. Students should be comfortable with group work and reasonably available to collaborate with classmates outside of class time. Prior coursework in statistics is useful but not required.

NEUROSCIENCE & SOCIETY

Writing 120.40CN-120.41CN

Instructor: Emily Parks

TUTH 8:30AM-9:45AM- TUTH-11:45AM - 1:00PM

Can brain scans reveal whether someone is lying? Is there such a thing as a "criminal mind"? Do we have free will, or can we blame the brain for our moral shortcomings?

This course will introduce you to the goals and practices of academic writing as we evaluate how neuroscience can inform ethical, legal, and medical questions of our time. We will reflect on themes both ancient and modern: How can neuroscience inform our understanding of our own minds? And how can that understanding, fueled by cutting-edge advances in brain imaging, impact our modern society? Along the way, we explore scientific inquiry – the process by which scientists work together to build and communicate ideas. You will experience this process first-hand, taking on several roles along the way – the scholar learning to respond to scientific texts, the ambassador deciphering complex research for a public audience, and the researcher working in collaboration with other scientists (your classmates!).

Across the semester, you will write two major projects: a scholarly perspective piece (4 pages) and a scientific literature review (~12 pages), both of which will synthesize neuroscientific research to address a societal problem of your choice (e.g., racial bias, disease treatment, juvenile sentencing, drug addiction). For the latter project, you will work on a team of 2-3 students, co-writing the literature review.

This course is ideally suited for students interested in neuroscience, psychology, biology, or the law. The course is built on three principles. First, writing is a vehicle for critical thinking. It is the tool by which you will bridge the classroom and the real world. Second, good writing depends on revision. Thus, you will have many opportunities to practice giving and receiving meaningful feedback amongst your peers. Third, scientific innovation requires collaboration. By joining this Writing 120, you agree to be a contributing member of a team.

Constellation: How do sports shape society?

SPORTS AND THE WRITTEN WORD

Writing 120.15CN-120.16CN

Instructor: James Holaday

TUTH 3:05PM - 4:20PM-TUTH-11:45AM - 1:00PM

For well over 100 years, sports have played an important role in American (and world) culture. And as long as there have been sports, people have written about them. From game reports in newspapers to biographies to autobiographies to predictions for the future to pure fiction, writings related to sports run the gamut. They often cross the line from journalism to literature or even poetry. In this class we will examine how writing about sports has changed over time by reading some of the genres listed above; then students will embark upon several sports-related writing projects of their own. First, students will produce a memoir-type paper on their experiences with sports. Athlete or fan, success or failure, funny or sad—everyone has a story! Secondly, students will produce a paper on an element of sports history. Sports have helped shape society (think Jackie Robinson’s integration of major league baseball) or been shaped by them (think performance enhancing drugs or Olympic boycotts). For this paper, students will go beyond the obvious and do some research to examine a bit of sporting history. Third, since a large part of writing about sports involves telling stories about others, often using the words of those people, the next project will consist of interviewing a sports personality. To do this successfully, students will do any necessary research so that relevant questions can be asked of their subjects. Finally, students will have a chance to use their creativity and write a short story. The story must center around a sporting event of some sort and be written within set word limit guidelines.

Updated 6/24/2025