

WIZARDS AND WILD THINGS

David Barber

Once upon a time, there was no Harry Potter. Once upon a time, there was no such thing as children’s literature. When and if children learned to read, they read what grown-ups read. How then did writing for children as we now know it come of age? Why does the genre have such an enduring hold on our cultural imagination, even as it continues to provoke sharp debate over its greater purpose and value? Are classic children’s books like *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, *The Wind in the Willows*, and *The Cat in the Hat* instructive or subversive, didactic or liberating? In this course we’ll examine selections from three centuries of popular prose and verse written expressly for and about children as we investigate how this eclectic canon reflects evolving ideas about childhood, changing views about educating and enchanting young readers, and persistent disputes over what and how children should learn from books. In Unit 1 we’ll survey landmark works in English for children from the Puritan through the Victorian eras, including *The New England Primer*, *Grimms’ Tales*, and *Alice in Wonderland*, as we consider what these texts tell us about the origin and evolution of the genre. In Unit 2 we’ll examine works by touchstone authors for younger readers including Mark Twain, Louisa May Alcott, Rudyard Kipling, E. B. White, C. S. Lewis, Ursula Le Guin, Roald Dahl, Maurice Sendak, and others, drawing on the critical perspectives of thinkers such as John Locke, Bruno Bettelheim, Alison Lurie, Jacqueline Rose, and Marina Warner to assess arguments about the essential function of imaginative literature from infancy through adolescence. In the final unit, students will conduct their own research to place a major children’s author of their choice in a relevant cultural and historical context.

WASTELANDS

Collier Brown

The impenetrable wilderness of *The Revenant*, the diseased streets of *Children of Men*, the trash heap cities of *Wall-E*—these are the wastelands that fascinate our pop culture. On the screen, they come to life as horrifying alternate universes and dead civilizations—the very fates we must avoid at all costs. And yet wastelands are not exclusively the stuff of science fiction. In this course, we will grapple with both imaginary and actual wastelands. We will begin with short stories by Jack London, Thomas King, and Octavia Butler. From the icy wilds of the Yukon to the borderlands of Native American exile, these writers question the way wastelands have been imagined, especially in North America, over the past century. Next, we will turn to real wastelands—to the garbage dumps and arid landscapes where nothing grows. We will ask what these places reveal about their inhabitants, their struggles, and their achievements. Finally, students will research a wasteland of their own choosing—anything from the mega slums of Mumbai to the sprawl of Boston’s unused rooftops. Along the way, we will investigate how wastelands form and evolve, and how people adapt to them. Are wastelands actually the places we should avoid at all costs, or are they the places we can no longer afford to ignore?

REMEMBERING THE CIVIL WAR (*Engaged Scholarship Course*)
Willa Brown

Over the summer, cities across America erupted in protest. As the weeks dragged on, civil unrest that began with the murder of George Floyd shifted focus. Protesters across the US, and then across the globe, began to tear down statues. And not just any statues – memorials to Civil War generals. Since the violent protests in Charlottesville four years ago to the banning of Confederate flags at NASCAR, the Civil War is at the center of American conversations. How did we get here? How is it that in 2020 symbols and flags of a war a century-and-a-half old still dominate our political landscape? One hundred-and-fifty-five years after Lee and Grant shook hands at Appomattox Court House, it was clearer than ever that the Civil War is not part of our past – it is at the very core of our present.

Together, we will examine the fine line between history and memory, and explore the history of memory. We will explore where the mythologies around the War came from, and try to understand how they affect our current understandings of politics and identity. This course will teach you to read the arguments all around you, whether they're being made by traditional sources like books and articles, or by buildings, statues, and movies. We will begin by decoding the arguments made by Memorial Hall, at the heart of Harvard's community. We'll then dive into the single biggest source of Civil War memory: *Gone with the Wind*. Finally, you will choose an area of your own interest to dig into for a research paper. Throughout, we'll focus on evaluating arguments and making our own, finishing up with the creation of a well-researched, accessible op-ed and media presentation.

The 2020 Election and American Democracy (*Engaged Scholarship Course*)
Matthew Cole

It's a cliché for pundits and politicians to declare that each election is the most important in our lifetimes, maybe all of American history – at least, that is, until the next one. Even so, it's easier than usual to make the argument that the 2020 Election finds American democracy at a crossroads. President Trump's bid for re-election was bound to be contentious, given the shocking upset that brought him to the White House in 2016 and the divisive character of his policies and rhetoric. Less expected was that the 2020 Election would be held amidst a deadly pandemic that has ground normal life to a halt and raised uncertainty about how to conduct the vote safely and fairly. Or that the preceding summer would see a national reckoning with systemic racism and police brutality. Consider that all of this occurs within a political climate of intense polarization, refracted in a media environment which frequently distorts reality to fit partisan narratives, and it is clear that the 2020 Election will test America's democracy like none before. And yet, for all that makes this election unique, we have arrived at this critical juncture as a result of forces that are deeply rooted in our nation's history, from the bitter residue of the 2016 Election, to the unfinished work of the Civil Rights Movement, to paradoxes of democratic citizenship that date back to the nation's founding.

In this course, we'll draw on works by political scientists, historians, journalists, and activists to better understand the stakes of the 2020 Election and the wider issues it raises about

participation, representation, citizenship, and equality. The first unit of the course focuses on voting as a right and as a responsibility. Our readings will address barriers to the ideal of full and equal participation - such as low voter turnout, voter suppression, gerrymandering, and the Electoral College - and assess potential solutions, from the seemingly common-sense to the deeply controversial. The second unit then asks that we zoom out from the polls and take a broader view of the systemic challenges facing American democracy. As a class, we'll engage with cutting edge research on topics like polarization, authoritarianism, inequality, and the influence of money in politics. These readings will lay the groundwork for students to conduct original research and analysis on American politics in 2020 and beyond. Along the way, we'll be cataloguing our predictions and reactions as the electoral drama unfolds, curating our own archive of news items, and reflecting on our part in the process from the unique vantage of point of the University, where many students will be casting their ballots for the first time. This work will provide the materials for our third unit capstone, where students will contribute to a collaborative project that blends public writing with visual media and compose a personal reflection discussing their experience of this historic moment.

MODERN LOVE

Maggie Doherty

“Reader, I married him.” As this famous line from Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* reminds us, writers have long been preoccupied with matters of the heart. Love stories are everywhere, from the novels of Jane Austen to the “rom-coms” of the 1980s and 1990s to essays in the “Styles” section of the *New York Times*. For centuries, marriage was primarily an economic relationship, and love outside of marriage ended in humiliation or even death. But what happens when society expands the options for living and loving? What happens to love stories when divorce has been normalized, taboos have been trampled, and the definition of marriage is ever-expanding? When couples are as likely to meet through Tinder as they are through mutual friends? In this course, we’ll explore what love stories can tell us about changing concepts of gender, sexuality, family, and freedom. We’ll start with short stories by Kathleen Collins—a playwright and filmmaker working in the aftermath of the civil rights movement and Black Power movement—and Lydia Davis, an acclaimed contemporary writer of epigrammatic short stories. In our second unit, we’ll look at a couple of love stories through the lens of feminist and queer theories. Our texts for this unit will include an essay by the black feminist poet and theorist Audre Lorde, the Academy-Award-winning film *Brokeback Mountain*, and the viral *New Yorker* short story “Cat Person.” Finally, in our third unit, students will pick a modern love story of their choosing—a novel, a memoir, a film—and, drawing on the work of critics and scholars, make an argument about what this story shows us about our society’s romantic and sexual mores.

EATING CULTURE

Janling Fu

"Food . . . is not art. . . . A good risotto is a fine thing, but it isn't going to give you insight into other people, allow you to see the world in a new way, or force you to take inventory of your soul." So William Deresciewicz, in an opinion piece for the *New York Times*, dismisses our

society's rising fascination with food over the last few decades, from the explosion of cookbooks, food blogs, and bestselling histories of cod, salt, and sugar, to the glut of cooking shows, many featuring contestants dueling in gladiatorial kitchens. Like the ancient Romans, we have become obsessed with food. But is Deresciewicz right to say that food won't give us insight into ourselves? Is it not possible that by examining what scholars and commentators call "foodways"—the various forces involved in how different cultures produce, buy, sell, and consume food—we learn much about ourselves and the world? In this course we will be guided by the maxim of famous anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss, "food is good to think," as we contemplate various foodways from a number of illuminating perspectives. In our first unit we delve into what makes food "disgusting" or "natural." How do we categorize edible material as polluting or pure? What even counts as food in different societies? In our second unit, we explore what we can learn about food and culture by looking at successful cooking shows produced in different countries, for instance, *Top Chef*, *Iron Chef*, and *The Great British Bake Off*. What do these shows as cultural artifacts tell us about the values that are celebrated or perpetuated through food? Our third unit will consider global trends of commodities, economics, and food ethics. For this unit students will conduct a research of food practice centered in some way on Annenberg. Can we define what a dining hall does, or should do? How has the ritual and practice of dining changed over time at Harvard? Along the way, we will read classic works, from theories of food by anthropologists Mary Douglas, Jack Goody, and Michael Dietler, to ideas about food as a medium for relationships between people, including the relationships that make up a vast food economy of farms, factories, supermarkets, and our tables, as seen in the writing of novelists, essayists, and food journalists as diverse as Marcel Proust, David Foster Wallace, Wendell Berry, M.F. K. Fisher, and Michael Pollan.

TELLING HER STORY: NARRATIVE, MEDIA, AND #METOO

Alexandra Gold

In a powerful essay, the late writer and activist Audre Lorde suggested, "Where the words of women are crying to be heard we must each of us recognize our responsibility to seek those words out, to read them and share them and examine them in their pertinence to our lives." Lorde is not alone in asking us to pay attention to and take responsibility for women's stories; for centuries scholars and activists alike have championed the words of women, including women of color and queer women, whose stories have routinely gone untold or unheard. Yet if this issue has always been pressing, the call to heed women's stories seems especially urgent at a moment when such stories have come to dominate the cultural landscape and public consciousness – from news accounts to popular shows, literature to social media. This course responds to this moment by examining how women's stories are narrated across a variety of media and exploring what impact the sharing of them can have. Our first unit focuses on short stories by contemporary authors Roxane Gay, Carmen Maria Machado, and Jenny Zhang that raise questions about the body, family, love, and intersectionality. Our second unit engages visual and performance art alongside "hashtag activism" movements like #MeToo and #SayHerName. We'll probe the relationship between art and activism, considering how - and whether - art and social media can achieve what Sarah Lewis has termed "representational justice." Students develop independent research papers surrounding these topics. The semester ends with a capstone project that asks students to "curate" an online, public-facing exhibit related to their research.

HUMANS, NATURE, AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Martin Greenup

Deforestation, overpopulation, pesticide use, toxic oceans, endangered species, global warming. How are we to make sense of the many environmental problems facing the Earth today? Although the sciences provide a factual account of environmental threats and ways of countering them, scientific facts seem not to be enough, since artists, writers, filmmakers, and even scientists find themselves turning again and again to their imaginations to respond to the environmental predicaments of industrial society. They may be doing what English Romantic poet Percy Shelley powerfully described 200 years ago as an essentially human and creative impulse: “to imagine that which we know.” How, then, have creative minds imagined – in essays, books, and movies – the very idea of nature, the place of humans in it, and their power to change the environment? In this course, we will consider both the possibilities and the problems that writers and filmmakers have imagined about human interactions with the natural world. We begin with the nineteenth century, when Romantic writers were urgently contemplating the meaning of nature in an age of increasing industrialization. In the first unit we interpret “Walking” (1862), the naturalist Henry David Thoreau’s seminal nature essay that imaginatively explores the concept of wildness. In the second unit we will critically compare the literary approaches of two popular books by scientists – Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962), and James Lovelock’s *The Revenge of Gaia* (2006). Through shocking critiques that draw upon the power of the imagination, both writers, in different ways, have tried to inform the public of the harm being done to nature in the hope that this harm can be averted. And in the final unit we will examine the techniques of documentary movies about relationships between humans and animals – Werner Herzog’s *Grizzly Man* (2005) in which the filmmaker takes issue with the self-proclaimed environmentalist Timothy Treadwell who strove to protect bears in the Alaskan wilderness, and Gabriela Cowperthwaite’s *Blackfish* (2013) in which she delivers a brilliant polemic against the Sea World corporation and its treatment of captive killer whales.

CLASS AND CULTURE

James Herron

It is commonplace to note that in the United States many people identify as “middle class” even though our society is marked by deep, persistent, and increasing class inequality. Such self-identification, however, can obscure the complex and often contradictory ways in which we experience social class in our everyday lives. This course explores the cultural dimensions of social class in the U.S. from an ethnographic perspective, focusing on the everyday lives and cultures of ordinary Americans. We will consider questions such as the following. What is it like to be a working class person in a society heavily invested in ideas of individual advancement and meritocracy? How do professionals (the “upper-middle” class) define themselves and how do they view those above and below them in the class structure? What role does elite education play in the creation and reproduction of class inequality? How does social class shape people’s values, political views, and tastes? In our first unit we will compare two important ethnographic studies of working class Americans — Michèle Lamont’s classic *The Dignity of Working Men*

and Jennifer Silva's more recent *Coming Up Short* — in order to gain some understanding of how working class people have responded to the relative decline in their living standards over the past 20 years. In the second unit we will read selections from Armstrong and Hamilton's *Paying for the Party* in order to analyze the role of higher education in shaping the class trajectories of students from working-, middle-, and upper-class backgrounds. For the third unit students will devise their own research project concerning the roles and self-conceptions of elites. For inspiration, we'll read selections of Shamus Khan's *Privilege*, which examines life at an elite New England boarding school, and Karen Ho's *Liquidated*, which analyzes the ideologies and identities of Wall Street financiers.

SOCIETY AND THE WITCH

Richard Martin

Riding broomsticks and dancing in the woods at night, witches are often imagined to be outside society. But in these representations may be keys to understanding social norms, norms that get articulated through the witch's very violation of them. In this seminar, we ask what discourses about witches tell us about the societies that produce them. We begin by examining anthropologists' depictions of witchcraft among people who come to find magic believable: how do we understand others' beliefs in the seemingly irrational idea that magic is real? Closely considering evidence from classic ethnographic accounts, we critically examine other scholars' answers to questions such as this one by thinking across competing approaches to the study of magic. Next, we closely analyze the film *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* and the television sitcom *Bewitched*, bringing these pop-cultural phenomena into conversation with Mary Douglas's treatise on *Purity and Danger*, Pierre Bourdieu's critique of *Masculine Domination*, and Umberto Eco's ruminations on interpreting serials. Using these theories, we examine the aesthetic and cultural significance of imaginative representations of witches. For the research paper, each student chooses their own example of witchcraft on which to conduct independent research. Sample topics include postmodern fairy tales like *Frozen* and *Maleficent*, Broadway musicals like *Into the Woods* and *Wicked*, historical witch-hunts and contemporary occult practices. What unites our diverse inquiries is a common interest in the social significance of this seemingly marginal figure: the witch.

WORK: CULTURE, POWER, AND CONTROL

Rachel Meyer

This course explores the structure and experience of work in the contemporary political economy with an eye toward both its liberating and oppressive potential. We will take up enduring sociological questions with respect to power, control, autonomy, surveillance and self-determination on the job. How do different forms of work affect our life circumstances, personalities, and connections to each other? In the first unit we will examine corporate culture and how it affects the experience of professional work. Does a strong corporate culture enhance professional autonomy or management's power? Does it facilitate or undermine community? In unit two we explore the crucial issue of workers' control over their own labor and the concept of alienation. We examine accounts of deskilling, the separation of mental and manual labor, and

the consequences of these processes for workers' experience on the job. To what extent does alienation occur in offices versus factories versus service counters? For the final unit we will critically engage in a debate about the development of "flexible" labor and the ways in which workers' connections to employers, occupations, and locations have become more fluid and transitory. We will explore what flexibility means in a variety of contexts and ask: does flexibility lead to liberation or loss of identity? Does it bring self-fulfillment or insecurity? What does flexibility mean for tech workers in Silicon Valley, bankers on Wall Street, and gig workers? Our texts consist of case studies and ethnographic accounts representing a variety of workplaces along with readings from prominent social theorists who in different ways seek to elucidate the conditions of work under modern capitalism.

THE FEMME FATALE

Lindsay Mitchell

The femme fatale—the attractive, seductive woman who brings about the downfall of men—has fascinated us through the ages, from Biblical figures like Eve and Delilah, to historical women such as Cleopatra and Wallis Simpson, to the media personas of modern pop stars like Cardi B and Miley Cyrus. In the classic femme fatale narrative, the woman's dangerous actions empower her, but she also must submit to the fact that her empowerment renders her a villain. Might this contradiction in the femme fatale's character reflect tensions in our own evolving understanding of gender? How can the femme fatale character help us untangle the real-world gender problems that modern women and men face?

This course will begin to explore these and other related questions by studying accounts of femme fatales in literature and film. In our first unit, we'll explore 1920s and 1930s pulp fiction as a source of the modern fatale archetype, with special focus on James M. Cain's noir novella *Double Indemnity*. In our second unit, we'll move forward to the post-feminist movement 1990s and examine two films featuring teenage femme fatales, comparing Gil Junger's *Ten Things I Hate About You* to Alexander Payne's *Election*, both released in 1999. Finally, in our third unit, students will research a modern-day femme fatale, either real or fictional, and argue why the modern version is recognizable as a femme fatale, but also represents some evolution of, or twist on, the classic archetype. Here students will be challenged not only to apply broad theories and ideas from the course, but also to reach a greater understanding of why some modern women seem so dangerous.

"NONCOMBATANTS": THE HOME FRONT IN TOTAL WAR

Shannon Monaghan

While it is perceived today as one of the greatest aberrations in human society, warfare has also been one of the most common experiences in human history. Yet popular conceptions of the history of warfare are often limited to the myth of completely separated soldiers and civilians. This has not, historically, been so: there is a reason that we call the "home front" a *front*. We begin by looking at the idea of "total war" within the context of several modern case studies. We will question and examine the roles of women and children, as agents and as targets, in these

conflicts. We then move to thinking about the memory and meaning of war through the art and memoirs of the great German printmaker and sculptor Käthe Kollwitz and the intellectual polymath (and French Resistance member) Marguerite Duras. What do the histories and stories that we tell about war, about resistance and about patriotism, particularly stories told by those *not* in uniform, add to the national and cultural understanding of a conflict? In the final unit, students will choose their own historical research subject from a variety of options. They might investigate conflicts and wars ranging from the recent (the “forever wars” of Iraq and Afghanistan) to the nineteenth century (the U.S. Civil War); from the modern and industrial (the Second World War) to the guerrilla, civil, and anti-imperial (the Spanish Civil War and the Algerian War of Independence). Further research options include different types of participants in conflict (from forcibly recruited child soldiers to anti-war activism) and different ways to pressure an enemy (food policy and blockade). Students will analyze the conflict in their chosen subject through the lens of the unexpected agent in modern warfare: the woman and/or the child. Throughout the course, we will ask what it means to be a “soldier” or a “civilian” in modern conflict, pondering the nature of the distinction.

GENETICS AND BIOETHICS

Emilie Raymer

When researchers at the National Institutes of Health announced in June 2000 that they had successfully sequenced the human genome, President Bill Clinton asserted that “with this profound new knowledge, mankind is on the verge of gaining immense, new power to heal.” Since 2000, scientists have developed DNA-risk tests, stem-cell therapies, and precise gene-editing techniques. Yet, despite the potential benefits of these breakthroughs, some have expressed concerns about the bioethical consequences of these new technologies. Critics have voiced fears that scientists are “playing God” and have expressed apprehensions that those who can afford new gene-editing technologies may produce “designer babies” while those who cannot will continue to suffer from heritable diseases. In this course, we will explore how to balance the medical advantages of genetic technologies with their potentially deleterious social consequences. For the first essay, we will analyze “The Case Against Perfection” by Harvard political philosopher Michael Sandel, who emphasizes the dangers of genetic enhancements. For the second essay, we will explore claims that new genetic techniques could create a contemporary eugenics movement. For the third and final essay, students will examine both the positive and negative consequences of a genetic technology of their choice and decide how to establish bioethical guidelines to direct its use. Possible topics could include human germline editing, pharmacogenomics, stem-cell therapy, cosmetic enhancements, cloning, or CRISPR-CaS, a new gene-editing technique. The course will culminate with a capstone project, and students will prepare a short talk about the social and biomedical ramifications of a selected genetic technology.

GOD AND GOVERNMENT

Kip Richardson

“God is Back!” proclaims the title of a 2009 book by the editor-in-chief of *The Economist*. “Democracy is giving the world’s peoples their voice,” asserts a feature in *Foreign Policy* magazine, “and they want to talk about God.” Although many have assumed that modernization would diminish the cultural and political salience of religion, the contemporary world provides little evidence to sustain that belief. Religious difference has been central to some of the most violent conflicts of the past thirty years (the Balkan Wars, the “Troubles” in Northern Ireland, Israeli-Palestinian border clashes, ethnic cleansing in Burma, the rise of ISIS), even as it is also central to many figures of political resistance (e.g., the Dalai Lama) and a wide range of reformist and humanitarian efforts worldwide. Meanwhile, even in the supposedly more secular West, religion remains a volatile flashpoint on a range of political issues, from immigration and assimilation (the Trump administration’s “Muslim ban”) to free speech and self-expression (the Charlie Hebdo affair in France) to the politics of gender and sexuality (the perennial fights over abortion and LGBT rights). Without a doubt, religious actors remain a potent and visible presence in the political workings of the contemporary world.

To get a handle on this complex topic, this course is organized around a set of carefully selected case studies that showcase some of the most significant philosophical, legal, and sociopolitical challenges posed by the problem of state governance of religion. In the first Unit, we explore the intellectual foundations of our modern ideas about religion and state power by examining writings by James Madison and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose long-term influence on the political traditions of the United States and France should not be underestimated. Using the contrast between their writings, we will begin to understand why, to take just one example, headscarf bans in France are legal and broadly popular, but an obviously unconstitutional, political non-starter in the United States. From there, we move to the present day, where we consider the thorny challenges of attempting to protect “religious freedom,” as many national constitutions and declarations of human rights claim to do. We will take as our starting point the provocative book, *The Impossibility of Religious Freedom* (2004) by Winnifred Sullivan, and evaluate its argument in light of two recent religious freedom court cases: *Navajo Nation v. US Forest Service* (2007), a dispute about Native American sacred land use, and *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission* (2018), a dispute about whether vendors with religion-based opposition may refuse to provide services for gay weddings. As these texts will show, “religious freedom” has become a particularly vexing ideal for states to litigate effectively and fairly. Finally, the course will turn to a set of global case studies that illustrate how religion has intersected with various political realities, including the fomenting of resistance movements (the Palestinian territories), the forging of power sharing agreements (Nigeria), and the consolidation of state power against internal threats (China).

Throughout the course, then, we will have ample opportunity to reflect on the oddities and perplexities of religion’s place in the modern world. For myself, religion has always been a subject of interest because it is, among the varied repertoire of human behaviors, among the most difficult to explain and comprehend. The claims of religion on other people, perhaps particularly when they entail politics, can seem baffling, irrational, even contemptible. To write about religion thus requires care and compassion, an attentiveness to analytical precision and evenhandedness. Students in the class can expect not only to think carefully about some of the trickiest and most tendentious political issues of the modern era, but also how to write effectively

and persuasively about them. Learning to write about religion, then, is a great preparation for learning to write persuasively about any complex or controversial issue.

AMERICAN MONEY

Hannah Rosefield

Money is famously difficult to talk about: too awkward, too divisive, too complicated, too abstract, too personal. In this course, we look at how contemporary American writers, philosophers and filmmakers have chosen to talk about money, and how these conversations involve questions of class, justice, work, race and gender. In the first unit of the course, students will watch the 2015 film *The Big Short* and read sociological writing about the culture of Wall Street, in order to explore how the film portrays the values and practices of the financial industry. Unit Two focuses on arguments made by contemporary philosophers and journalists about how individuals and governments should spend their money in order to reflect their values and create a just and healthy world: readings will include Ta-Nehisi Coates's article "The Case for Reparations", Silvia Federici's manifesto "Wages Against Housework" and Michael Sandel's work on morals and markets. We will ask questions such as: What is money? How do we decide what monetary value to place upon love, or a nation's racist history, or body parts—and is there anything that should not have a price put on it? How does money interact with race, class and gender in the United States, and how does it mediate our personal relationships? The final unit of the course presents students with a selection of recent films and television series, including *Magic Mike* (2012), *Support the Girls* (2018) and *Mad Men* (2007-15), that raise questions about the relationship between money, work and gender. Focusing on one of the suggested films or television shows, students will undertake their own research and, in conversation with the scholarship of other critics, write a paper about how money and value function in their chosen work.

JOURNEY TO MARS

Ramyar Rossoukh

In recent years, interest in outer space has galvanized around the exploration of Mars. This summer alone three nations launched missions to the red planet (UAE, USA, China). Meanwhile, this fall's Netflix series *Away* is only the latest in a series of recent Hollywood portrayals of human missions to Mars that includes the blockbuster *The Martian* (2015). Why Mars? Why now? What is the relationship between scientific and artistic imaginaries about Mars? This course explores the meaning of our fascination with Mars and what this might tell us not only about Mars but also ultimately ourselves. Our launch begins with a close analysis of a Hollywood film about Mars to examine themes and imagery associated with the red planet in popular culture. We then chart a path through two ethnographies about the scientific study of Mars to gain a better understanding of the relationship between visualization and the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge about Mars. Drawing on ideas from these readings, students write an analytical essay that argues for a new way of seeing a Martian site of their choosing. In the final unit, we bring together speculative and scientific perspectives to form the first Ministry of Tourism of Mars and develop a research project that engages with possible futures in which humans have become a multi-planetary species. In small groups, students will

imagine an activity or event on Mars that addresses the priorities of the Mars 2050 “Visit Mars” campaign and present it in the form of a webpage on the course website.

PHILOSOPHICAL FILMS

Ben Roth

How should society be organized? What should individuals do when they disagree with the reigning order? Protest? Revolt? Withdraw? Our class will approach these perennial philosophical questions through a number of recent films. At the beginning of the semester, we will watch Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite*, about the stratification of wealth and opportunity in contemporary South Korea; Michael Haneke's *Caché*, in which a man's personal history—and France's colonial one—come back to haunt him; and *Queen and Slim* (directed by Melina Matsoukas, screenplay by Lena Waithe), about race and policing. As students develop their interpretations of one of these films in their first paper, we will also learn the basic vocabulary of cinematography and editing. Then, in the middle of the semester, we will turn to questions of adaptation, reading two classic works of philosophical literature and watching films that import their stories into radically different settings. Tolstoy's novella *The Death of Ivan Ilyich*, about how awareness of our mortality affects our values, is relocated from nineteenth-century Russia to post-World War Two Japan in Akira Kurosawa's *Ikiru*. Aristophanes' ancient drama *Lysistrata*, in which the women of Greece go on a sex strike to end the Peloponnesian War, is transported by Spike Lee to Chicago's South Side in *Chi-Raq*. Students will compare one of these films to its source material in their second papers. Finally, at the end of the semester, we will read some short theoretical selections about the relationship between philosophy and film, attuning students to larger issues as they write a research paper about a philosophical film or filmmaker of their choice, such as *Memento*, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*, *Stalker*, Claire Denis, Jordan Peele, David Lynch, or Terrence Malick, among many other possibilities.

ANIMALS & POLITICS (*Engaged Scholarship Course*)

Sparsha Saha

Animals play an important role in politics and society; yet, there is not much academic, governmental, or societal attention on them or on our relationship to them. In this engaged course, you will have the opportunity to learn more about how animals, with a focus on farm animals, impact the environment, our health, pandemics, our prejudicial attitudes toward other humans (like racism and sexism), and even elections. In the first unit, we'll focus on the question of why should we care about the wellbeing of animals in society? We'll read different theories and you'll come up with your own answer. In the research unit, you'll have the chance to ask your very own research question. Given the lack of attention on animals, there are a plethora of topics that could be developed further if we “consider the role of the animal,” so this unit very much encourages you to bring your interests to the table. In the capstone unit, you'll work in teams to come up with a “message to the world” about animals based on your individual research projects. The medium for this — a song? A poster? A website? A short movie? Something else? — is up to you. You'll present your projects to our community partners: Ed Winters (Earthling Ed) and the Animal Law and Policy Program over at Harvard Law School. The course finishes

up by asking you to write a short blog. There will be required outside of class events. Please be sure to [watch the course trailer](#) for more information.

THE UNDERWORLD

Adam Scheffler

Hell is popular. In fact, it's been doing much better than heaven. It's practically a literary consensus that Dante's best book is his *Inferno* not *Purgatorio* or *Paradiso*, and that Milton, a Christian believer, got so carried away in describing Satan and hell that he ended up being "of the Devil's party without knowing it" (Blake). And the world today may be more secular than in past generations, but hell is doing just fine. Harvard presents its own interesting case: Currier House's annual "Heaven and Hell" party has situated "Hell" in a room that can hold about 500 people whereas "Heaven" can fit only about 50. (This past year heaven was eliminated entirely.) But what are the components of hell – what archetypes or depictions of hell and the underworld helped to cement their importance in culture? And why is hell so alive in secular culture? Why do those people who don't believe that hell is real want to keep imagining it again and again (in *Lucifer*, in *Good Omens*, in *The Good Place*, etc.)? In our first unit, we will examine famous underworld themes and archetypes as we look at short excerpts from *Gilgamesh*, Homer, Virgil, Dante, Milton, Jonathan Edwards, the story of Persephone, and the story of Orpheus and Eurydice. In our second unit, we'll consider how these themes and archetypes are taken up by recent secular texts such as a Stephen King short story, the film *Pan's Labyrinth*, and a *New Yorker* article by Harvard Professor Danielle Allen about her cousin's experience in the American prison system. Finally, in our third unit, students will select and research a contemporary depiction of hell, and make an argument about how that hell works as a metaphor for a real-world issue or fear (such as the sleaziness of Hollywood, or bickering families, or mental illness, or the vastness of outer space). Throughout, we will try to better understand the curious attraction of hell, and why its 4,000-year-old story shows no sign of ending.

LANGUAGE, IDENTITY, AND POWER

Jessica Schwab

While a variety of animal species can communicate, humans are unique in their use of language. Language enables us to talk about the future and the past, express complicated thoughts, and develop new technologies. But to what extent does the language we use also make us who we are? How do our social and cultural backgrounds inform our use of language, and how does our use of language influence our social relationships? In this course, we will explore the intersections of language, identity, and power from an interdisciplinary perspective. In our first unit, we will consider opposing theoretical claims regarding gender differences in communicative interactions, and we will test these theories by analyzing elements of conversations shown in reality television. In our second unit, we will collect our own data (in the form of conversation recordings, surveys, or interviews) to further examine the complex interactions between language, identity, and power dynamics. Here you will form an argument regarding the extent to which elements of our daily language use help to reinforce or subvert existing power structures or markers of identity. In our final unit, you will work to communicate

your research-based argument to a wider audience by planning and producing a 10-minute podcast, in which you will distill your research findings and weave in interviews as evidence. Throughout the course, students will also be encouraged to reflect on their own experiences with language, including the ways in which their native languages, accents, and communication styles influence their identity and relationships.

TRUTH CLAIMS IN A POST-TRUTH WORLD

Julia Tejblum

We often describe an idea or phrase as having “the ring of truth,” but what does truth sound like? And what happens when politicians, news organizations, and advertising agencies learn to reproduce or mimic that sound? This course addresses recent claims that we are living in a “posttruth world,” and considers the fate of argument in a world in which truth is subjective, and fact divided into mainstream and alternative forms. Is it possible to draw clear lines between fact and fiction, truth and lies? And if, as Oprah Winfrey has insisted, there is value in the transformative power of “speaking your truth,” what does this mean for debate and the project of seeking a truth that exists beyond our personal experience? In our first unit, we’ll consider the methods we use to distinguish fact from fiction as we examine fictional and philosophical texts by Tim O’Brien, J.L. Austin, and others that seek to distinguish (or blur the lines) between truth and fiction. In the second unit, we’ll focus on subjective truths (or truths that differ for each individual) and examine the challenges these truths pose for our justice system and for fields like medicine and science. Students will choose from a number of potential topics that address the intersection of truth and race, including racial bias in witness testimony and in medical treatment. Our final unit will take us where the quest for truth reaches its extremes: the conspiracy theory. We’ll look at the complex anatomy of conspiracy theories from the world-wide (the moon landing “hoax” and “crisis actors,” among others) to the local (Harvard-based conspiracies), and students will have an opportunity to design original research projects that fit their interests.

BUDDHISM, MINDFULNESS, AND THE PRACTICAL MIND

Ezer Vierba

Today, mindfulness is touted as a panacea, the secret to happiness and health, superb sex and unparalleled productivity. The hype is not entirely new, however. For decades, ostensibly Buddhist ideas have been tossed around in the West as recipes for success in just about any art or craft. But what hides behind this craze? Can Buddhist teachings offer us tools with which to achieve our goals, or are we corrupting Buddhism by using it in such a way? What have artists and practitioners thought of the use of meditative tools, and how have they integrated Buddhist terms like “bare awareness” and “emptiness” into their work?

In order to answer such questions, we will start the course with a reading of the *Satipatṭhāna Sutta*, the Buddha’s instructions on mindfulness meditation. A close reading of the text in our first unit will give us a glimpse of the ancient Buddhist practice, its complexity and richness. In our second unit, we will read the text that gave the West the idea that Buddhism can allow us to “hit the mark” without trying to do so, Eugen Herrigel’s bestselling *Zen in the Art of*

Archery. Using Edward Said's classic work, *Orientalism*, we will ask if Herrigel was romanticizing Zen Buddhism, and if he was, what the consequences of such a romanticization have for Japan and the West. In our last unit, we will stage a series of class debates about "mindfulness," joining a larger conversation with scientists and Buddhist practitioners about the compatibility of Buddhism with its modern, secular appropriations.

As we reflect on these matters intellectually, we will also *practice mindfulness meditation*, as well as various other forms of Buddhist meditation. In doing so, we will think about these meditations both practically and critically, at the same time as we refine our analytical understanding of Buddhist ideas.

ARE PRISONS OBSOLETE? (*Engaged Scholarship Course*) **Hudson Vincent**

With 2.3 million Americans currently locked behind bars, the United States imprisons its citizens at a higher rate than any other country in the world. But calls to reimagine our country's carceral system are on the rise. Black Lives Matter and other movements are asking urgent questions: Why are Black Americans imprisoned five times more than white ones? Should there be for-profit prisons? What crimes merit confinement? What is the purpose of prisons? And do we even need them? In this course, we will grapple with these questions by examining a variety of scholarly perspectives on the United States prison system. We will begin by analyzing the arguments for prison abolition versus reform in [Angela Davis's *Are Prisons Obsolete?* \(2003\)](#). To situate ourselves within a broad debate over the recent history of mass incarceration in the United States, we will then compare new scholarship on the subject by [Michelle Alexander](#), [James Forman, Jr.](#), and [Elizabeth Hinton](#). We will also read first-hand accounts of prisons in [Reginald Dwayne Betts's memoir and poetry](#), as well as [Shane Bauer's investigative journalism](#). Over the course of the semester, we will receive visits from prison reform advocates, prisoners' rights attorneys, and formerly incarcerated people, who will help us understand the United States prison system and the movement for carceral reform today.

WHY SHAKESPEARE? **Jeffrey Wilson**

Shakespeare, we have all been told, is extremely important. You might agree or disagree with this pronouncement, but do you know why Shakespeare matters to so many people? Why does every high school in America assign Shakespeare? Why did the world erupt with jubilation on his 450th birthday in April 2014? Why did the British government pay \$2.4 million to have Shakespeare translated into Mandarin? Does Shakespeare deserve this fuss, or is he really overrated? In this section, Shakespeare lovers and haters alike are invited to consider the question of Shakespeare's popularity by looking into the relationship between his methods of artistic creation and the values of the modern world. We'll begin with the most famous artwork of the past millennium, *Hamlet*, about a young scholar (like you) who finds the injustice of the world overwhelming (like you?). Then we'll turn to *Much Ado About Nothing*—a precursor to

the modern rom coms where two people who can't stand each other end up falling in love—in conversation with two additional texts: (1) Jeffrey Hall's *The Five Flirting Styles*, a sociological theory and, at times, a how-to manual, and (2) the Public Theater's summer 2019 production of *Much Ado*, which featured an all-Black cast under a Stacey Abrams 2020 banner. Finally, we'll ask, "Why Shakespeare?" and entertain answers ranging from the skeptical (Shakespeare is a dead, white male that other dead, white males have used to promote the values of dead, white males) to the euphoric (Shakespeare is universal; Shakespeare invented the human).

WHAT IS HEALTH?

Eve Wittenberg

Health care is on everyone's minds these days: polls show it is among voters' top priorities when considering candidates, it dominates headlines, and elected officials wrestle with options to improve our insurance system. Underlying all this talk is a fundamental goal of health—yet what in fact does this term mean? What does it mean to be healthy? What are we trying to achieve with our health system or with health insurance? How would we know if we've done a good or bad job? These are the questions that challenge practitioners of medicine, public health, and health policy. To be "healthy" may be living very long, having healthy behaviors, or being happy; it could be a combination of all of these, and it could be different for different people. Understanding what we mean when we talk about health is important to every facet of the health system and to everyone who interacts with it, so we know what we are collectively and individually aiming for and whether it is achieved.

This course will explore what health is, what it means to be healthy or not healthy, and how we can improve people's health. The emphasis will be on writing from a science and social science perspective, highlighting the distinctions with writing in the humanities. It is an "active-learning" seminar, which means we will use in-class exercises and frequent assignments to build writing skills: you will write, critique others' writing, talk about writing, read writing aloud, draw diagrams of arguments—all sorts of varied exercises to understand, develop, and improve your own writing style. Unit 1 will focus on the definition of health to form a basis for the semester, including the World Health Organization's definition and case examples of people who we may or may not consider healthy (for instance, would Stephen Hawking have been considered healthy?). Unit 2 will look at health policies, specifically focusing on childhood obesity prevention. We will read conflicting views of obesity as a medical condition or a descriptor of body size, and grapple with a situation where science points in different directions. Unit 3 will introduce research papers, and you will write on an individually-chosen topic around improving college students' health. You will learn to use the Harvard library system and resources to write a final paper. The materials for the course will consist of scientific articles (mainly in medicine and public health), online health data sources, commentaries and editorials, videos/TED talks, and a few newspaper articles and websites. Some classes will be held at Harvard's Global Health Education and Learning Incubator to use verbal and visual exercises to clarify concepts, practice articulating ideas, and develop a focus for writing.

REPRESENTING CHILDHOOD

Lusia Zaitseva

Cultural attitudes toward childhood have long been complex. Novelists, poets, and philosophers alike have espoused the virtues of cultivating cherished qualities of childhood: the playfulness, authenticity, and boundless curiosity of children unburdened by the stifling responsibilities of adulthood. But, as educators and political commentators remind us at every turn, childhood is also a condition to be overcome, a state of unsophisticated lack of discipline and immaturity that our leaders should avoid. These tensions have made children—so often spoken *for* and *about* on the page and screen, but rarely speaking for themselves—into vessels of meaning for a wide variety of purposes, from rallying cries urging military involvement abroad to immigration reform at home. In this course, we'll consider what representations of childhood can tell us about the adult world and childhood itself. What is the root of adult anxieties about children? And what are the moral and practical costs of upholding certain images of childhood—for example, its innocence—to both adults and children themselves? We'll begin our exploration of these questions by attending to the imagined worlds of Brian Aldiss, Ray Bradbury, and Lesley Nneka Arimah. What deeper meanings, we will ask, can be uncovered by attending to representations of children and the child's point of view in their works? Next, we'll shift our gaze to the highly controversial photographs of Sally Mann as we question the limits of acceptable representation of childhood. In the third unit, students will have the opportunity to conduct their own original research as we explore how childhood figures in a range of recent debates from climate change to slacktivism.

THE USES OF HORROR

Mande Zecca

In a conversation with Stephen Colbert, comedian and filmmaker Jordan Peele referred to his 2017 horror film, *Get Out*, as a “historical biopic.” His claim that “the movie is truth” invites us to reflect on the relationship between horror and history – between fictional and filmic fantasies that terrify us, and our own lived realities. In this course, we'll think about what happens when we encounter works of art that are disturbing, excessive, horrific, and about how horror, as a genre, has given us new ways of understanding and describing our experiences. In our first unit, we'll read a classic work of horror: Henry James's 1898 novella, *The Turn of the Screw*, which its author once described (misleadingly) as “a ghost story, plain and simple.” We'll discuss what makes it much *more* than a simple ghost story, what we find most frightening about it and why, and what allows us to read it as a psychological and social allegory. In unit two, we'll read a selection of stories by Edgar Allan Poe, framing them in relation to larger questions about gender, race, and the history of science. Paying particular attention to patterns of transgressed boundaries between self and other, life and death, and sanity and madness within the stories, we'll assess how Poe's seemingly self-contained tales of terror express anxieties about 19th-century American society. Finally, for our third unit, we'll turn our full attention to horror's most contemporary (and popular) iteration: the scary movie. Students will write a research paper about a horror film of their choice (some suggested options will include *Night of the Living Dead*, *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Babadook*, and *Get Out*), drawing on readings in philosophy, psychology, and film theory in order to tackle some of the central questions animating this course: what

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makes horror cohere as a genre, how do its aesthetic qualities operate on the mind of the observer, and what kinds of social and cultural commentary might it be capable of making?