ENGL 110-080
The Games We Play
Kyle Meikle
From Angry Birds to Battleship, from Farmville to football, from World of Warcraft to Words With Friends, games play a major role in our day-to-day lives. In this course, we’ll consider how and why playing proliferates: What do games—with their focus on accomplishments, competition, rules, strategies and objectives—teach us about living, learning and literacy? We’ll begin by thinking about the roles that games play in texts like Chuck Palahniuk’s Fight Club, Charlie Brooker’s Black Mirror and David Fincher’s The Game; in a short analytical essay, students will consider how a novel, television episode or film theorizes games and play. In the second unit, we’ll turn from looking at games in texts to looking at games as texts by asking how board, card and video games—from those held in Delaware’s Special Collections to the smartphone games we hold in our hands—perform their own cultural work. Students will analyze a game of their choosing in a slightly longer second essay. In our third and final unit, we’ll take Shakespeare at his word that “All the world’s a stage/ And all the men and women merely players” as we discuss how games become metaphors for the way we read the world. Here we’ll devote attention to reality television competitions, massive multiplayer online role-playing games and social media that turn consumers into gamers. Likely texts include John Darnielle’s Wolf in White Van, Dan Harmon’s Community and Edgar Wright’s Scott Pilgrim vs. the World. In this unit, students will be encouraged to think about the ways that play manifests itself in their own fields and disciplines as the basis for a final research project—all while we learn which rules govern the game of academic writing.

ENGL 110-081
Sports and the Outdoors in American Literature
John Jebb
Sports, athletes, and the outdoors have among their fans some renowned American writers. So this course will use athletics as a means to encounter some great American texts and use these texts as springboards into writing. Among fiction writers who were sports fans, possible authors and their works for our course may be Ernest Hemingway (selected short stories), Ring Lardner (You Know Me Al), William Faulkner (Go Down, Moses), and Mark Harris (Bang the Drum Slowly). Many professional sportswriters are superb stylists, so we may sample the works of journalists such as Frank Deford and Gary Smith (both of Sports Illustrated) and Jon Krakauer. We will use these authors to investigate such topics as the value of the wilderness, team psychology, coaching, differences between male and female athletes (and coaches), athletics in the minority community, and more. The journalism will allow us to consider rhetorical approaches, the authors’ points of view, even reporters’ research methods. During one week, we will sample journalism from different time periods dealing with the same subject. The writing projects will allow you to explore some of these topics as they are treated in our readings and to augment what our authors say with your own experiences as athletes, fans, and readers. The course will begin with shorter writing assignments about our texts, continue with longer analytic pieces, and involve in-depth research. The research topic should grow from our discussion and explore a topic within athletics.

ENGL 110-082
Classic Hollywood Cinema: Movies Worth Watching?
Christina Durborow
Of all the gin joints, in all the towns, in all the world, she walks into mine. I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship. Play it [again], Sam. We'll always have Paris. Here's looking at you, Kid.
Chances are you’re familiar with at least one of these quotes, all of which come from *Casablanca*, a film released in 1942. Whether or not you’re already a fan of the classics, it’s difficult to deny that great movies are an important—and oftentimes iconic—part of modern American culture. This course focuses on Hollywood’s Golden Age, beginning in the 1930s and continuing through the 1950s. As a class we will study the films of this era with an eye toward understanding the social, cultural and political forces influencing not only the types of movies that were made but also the variety of characters filmmakers portrayed. In our quest to determine how these films contribute to American culture and express American values, we’ll consider not only what is present in these films but also what is missing. The films will range in genre, from Hitchcock thriller to war-time drama, from film noir to comedy—both musical and screwball. Readings for the course may include: *The Golden Age of Cinema* by Richard Jewell, *The Hidden Art of Hollywood* by John Fawell and *A Short Guide to Writing about Film* by Timothy J. Corrigan. Additionally, we’ll consider the films themselves as texts, and in addition to *Casablanca* we will screen, discuss and analyze *It Happened One Night* (1934), *Double Indemnity* (1944), *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953), *Rear Window* (1954) and *Pillow Talk* (1959). We’ll watch all films as a class, in most cases outside of class time and on mutually agreed upon dates. Required writing for the course is intended to develop your critical voice while sharpening your academic prose and will include response papers, analytical essays and a final research paper on a film-related topic of your choice.

**ENGL 110-083**

**Debunking: Quackery, Pseudosciences, and Conspiracy Theories**  
**Raymond Peters**

This course will explore debunking of quackery, pseudoscience, and conspiracy theories by analyzing pseudoscientific thinking in print, film, tv shows, and advertising. In particular, we will examine unscientific claims about vaccines, alternative medicine, conspiracies, fringe science, paranormal phenomena, U.F.O.s, and aliens. Throughout the course, the emphasis will be on the rhetorical analysis of texts, focusing on the techniques that result in effective debunking. Readings may include Carl Sagan’s *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*, Paul Offit’s *Do You Believe in Magic? The Sense and Nonsense of Alternative Medicine*, and Kendrick Frazier’s *Science Under Siege: Defending Science, Exposing Pseudoscience*. We will also read online sources such as Quackwatch, Snopes, and the Science-Based Medicine Blog. In order to develop skills in academic writing, we will analyze research papers in the *Arak Anthology* and other samples of academic writing. Students will write brief response papers, critical reviews, analytical essays, and a research paper debunking a pseudoscientific belief.

**ENGL 110-084**

**Great Adaptations: How One Thing Becomes Another While Remaining Itself**  
**Kevin Burke**

Adaptations are everywhere: books become movies, movies become video games; songs, books, films, graphic novels, games, advertising, fashion, and robust markets for various forms of accouterments and paraphernalia generate new versions of fictional and historical characters’ careers and evolve multiple variations on familiar narratives. This course will examine the complex process of adaptation from a variety of perspectives. How does a book or video game become a film? What happens when a film becomes a video game? How do the genres of graphic novel and film influence each other? Why do people transform a beloved novel, comic book, or game into a different form? Why are some characters and story lines apparently infinite in their ability to be adapted? What are the ideological and economic aspects of adaptation? What is the status of the original? Is there an original? Our examination of these and other questions surrounding adaptation will include the complex of comic books, graphic novels, films, television programs, and games associated with the Batman character, the *Firefly* television/graphic novel series, and the unusual video game to novel adaptation associated with the game *Myst*, along with relevant theoretical texts from Aristotle to Thomas Leitch. Students should expect to write several response papers, three reviews of works in different genres, and a research paper focusing on an adaptation project of the student’s choice. In addition, students will remediate one of their assignments into a different format.
ENGL 110-085
Yoga and Meditation: (Re)incarnations of Ancient Traditions
David Soud

Yoga, it seems, is everywhere. So is meditation. And for many people, the two words go together. But what is yoga, really? And how does it connect with meditation? In India, the word “yoga” has been used in many contexts, from postural practices to the classical school of philosophy framed by the thinker Patañjali in the Yoga Sūtras. In the West, yoga has been marketed in a number of ways, many of which have little to do with the traditions they claim to preserve. In this course, we will survey the long and fascinating history of yoga in all its incarnations. Beginning with the earliest Indic references to yogic practice, we will study how the word “yoga” has been adopted over its long history. In addition, we will use the Yoga Sūtras as a way into studying similar contemplative practices in other traditions, including Christianity, Islam, and Buddhism, and look at how those practices have shaped some important and intriguing literary texts. Finally, we will study the contemporary yoga scene, in which the word “yoga” has become a subject of scientific study, a topic for debate, and even a political football. In addition to primary texts, readings will include poems and essays of W. B. Yeats, T. S. Eliot, Gary Snyder, Thomas Merton, Simone Weil, and Anne Carson; the novel Franny and Zooey by J. D. Salinger; Walking Home with Baba by Rohini Ralby (the author will visit class to discuss her experiences and practices); articles and excerpts from contemporary journals, newspapers, and books; and excerpts from the films Holy Smoke by Jane Campion, Into Great Silence by Philip Gröning, Kundun by Martin Scorsese, and Enlightenment Guaranteed by Doris Dörrie. Students will write three short papers on topics we study in the course of the semester, and a final research project examining the influence of contemplative practice on a work of art in any medium or on representations of spirituality in the media.

ENGL 110-086
You Are What You Eat: Food and Culture
Frank Hillson

Yes, the adage—“you are what you eat”—is obviously true. We literally become the stuff of our food. However, eating is more than just ingesting protein, carbohydrates, and fats. There are various protocols for preparing, serving, and eating food, which provide fascinating insights into different societal norms. What do food choices and preparation tell us about people? What insight does food provide into the politics, mores, and religions of a culture? This course will examine food as a gateway into various cultures using a variety of texts. For example, we will read Joel Barlow’s “The Hasty-Pudding” (pub. 1796), a poem praising, in three 400-line cantos, a favorite New England dish—cornmeal mush. That’s a lot of lines celebrating corn! We will look at Native American eating habits through the eyes of a colonial white woman held captive who eats their “filthy trash” and even grows to like it. We will jump ahead to modern times and read Margaret Mead’s essay “The Changing Significance of Food” (1970), Peter Singer’s “Equality for Animals” (2011), and some other recent food essays. Our major texts may include Linda Civitello’s Cuisine and Culture (2011), which provides a good introductory overview and/or Paul Freedman’s Food: The History of Taste (2007), a fine survey regarding food history. We might also use Pierre Bourdieu’s Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste (1984), a significant sociological text of how taste reflects identity. (Think carnivores versus vegetarians or aficionados of Starbucks versus consumers of Dunkin’ Donuts. Yes, food communicates our values.) Requirements will consist of a presentation, several quizzes, short essays, and active participation. Based on our analysis of food and culture, you will also write a research paper (9-10 pages) focusing on a recipe from your family, something that speaks to your culture/ethnicity. Why is it the traditional or signature meal of your home and what does it tell about you and yours? Bon appétit!

ENGL 110-087
Parallel Worlds: Fantasy Reflected in Reality
Rachael Green

What can fantasy stories teach us about the way we understand our world? And how have major works of fantasy (such as those by J.R.R. Tolkien, George R. R. Martin, and J. K. Rowling, as an example) shaped the way we approach our own culture? Using a range of texts from classics such as C. S. Lewis’s The Lion, the Witch, and
the Wardrobe to modern works such as Jim Butcher’s *Storm Front*, we will examine the ways in which worlds and systems of magic are constructed in order to build a fantasy universe. In particular, we will study the ways in which worlds are built both geographically and demographically, the way magic and technology are used and interact in order to structure the world, and the ways in which characters interact with these systems and with each other. Along the way, we will compare these societies to the way our own world is ordered. Using current events and historical stories, we will examine how our own society is structured geographically, demographically, and technologically. The course will try to determine how these stories were influenced, directly and indirectly, by the societies in which they were created, and what they have to say to our culture in America today. We will learn about secondary source use by looking at the reactions to and reviews of the works in order to see the effects they create in society as well as how they are interpreted. Students will complete assignments such as a comparative study between two of the created worlds in works we read in class, as well as a rhetorical analysis of an *Arak Anthology* essay. The semester will culminate with a researched argument examining the influence of a work of fiction on structure of modern culture.

**ENGL 110-088**  
**Gourmets, Gourmands, and Gastronomes: A Taste of Food Writing**  
*Kristin Yonko*

“And soon, mechanically, dispirited after a dreary day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me.” So writes Marcel Proust in his epic work *In Search of Lost Time*, describing the strong emotional response he has to eating a madeleine cookie with tea. Such a connection to food is common for many of us, and what better way to strengthen that connection than to examine it through writing? Participants in this course will hone their writing skills by focusing their attention on food – not just its tastes, but its smells, its textures, its appearance, even its history and its cultural significance. We will discuss food trends, food politics, and other issues connected to food. Writing assignments will involve an ongoing food blog, a food memoir, tasting reports, reviews, and a research project exploring a food-related topic. Readings will include Dianne Jacob’s *Will Write for Food*, *Best Food Writing 2015*, and a selection of food magazines and blogs.

**ENGL 110-089**  
**Reading Renegades: What Bay Boys Tell Us About Culture**  
*Halina Adams*

“There aren’t enough scoundrels in your life.”

What is it about men of questionable character? From Robin Hood to Han Solo, scoundrels steal our hearts and our wallets as easily as they shrug into their James Dean leather jackets. But underneath their flashy veneers and easy demeanors, these figures embody our hostility towards authority, our interrogation of class and social hierarchy, and our desire to opt out of the sometimes-confining rules of contemporary culture. This course examines the development of scoundrels, and interrogates the cultural, intellectual, and rhetorical construction and significance of these figures. Our course will be divided into three sections: 1) traditional bad boys, 2) contemporary outlaws, and 3) new types of renegades. In the first part of the course, we will read and examine texts and images of early bad boys: Robin Hood, gothic anti-heroes, and rakes. We will read traditional ballads and classic tales of seduction while we supplement class discussion with images of bandits, thieves, and gothic villains. In the second part of the course, we will examine how the characteristics and cultural significances of older figures translate into super heroes, cowboys, and celebrity culture. Our readings and artifacts in this section will include *Star Wars*, short stories by Zane Grey, and essays on twenty-first century masculinity. Finally, we will discuss female versions of the bad boy trope, women who function in opposition or similarly to these figures. Texts will include works like *Veronica Mars* and *Catwoman*. Assignments for this class will include: research-based essays, a multi-draft argumentative essay on an outlaw figure, smaller response papers, and a podcast segment based on the argumentative essay.
Writing the Last Frontier: Neuroscience and the Mind-Bending Brain

Emily Carson

Historically, the brain has been perceived as a machine-like organ that was fixed and unchanging. If a person lost function due to illness, trauma, birth, or old age, those limitations were permanent. With developments in neuroscience, however, we now see the brain as malleable and its rehabilitative potential as almost miraculous. This course explores the ways some innovative scientists and determined individuals navigated this uncharted territory over the past few decades through invention, courage and experimentation. In an age of heightened awareness of learning differences, disability, chronic disease, mental illness and extended life-expectancy, the brain represents a last frontier. Our main text for this class will be *The Brain That Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science*, in which Norman Doidge, M.D. details riveting case histories of people whose lives were transformed by neuroplasticity. We will supplement these case studies with historical perspectives, first-person narratives and articles that address topics such as intelligence, rehabilitation, memory, attraction and love, stroke, anxiety and addiction. While neuroplasticity suggests immeasurable rehabilitation, there is also a darker side that exposes human vulnerability. This encourages us, as a class, to develop our critical thinking as we explore the implications of this re-vision of the brain. What are the limits and potential of neuroplasticity? How does culture modify our brains? What deliberate choices can we make about what we think and the way we spend our time that can develop our potential or minimize risk? How does the media reorganize our brain? What can we learn from other individuals and cultures to help us improve our own thinking and functioning? What do we learn by seeing the brain as a text to be studied, analyzed and revised? Writing for the course will follow the development of Doidge’s book as it moves from personal stories to science to philosophy. It will include reflection and response papers and culminate in a research project that explores the implications of recent neuroscientific discovery for a disease, a disability, a mental illness, a sport or a discipline.

Voices of War: Sharing the Incommunicable

Lisa Dill

How do we think about the experience of war? Do we think of clashing swords, sweeping patriotic rhetoric, soldiers in fatigues moving across a television screen? Is it Joan of Arc on a white horse or sepia-toned photographs of young men in uniform, looking proud and unafraid? These and the many other representations of war in our culture – in literature, film, even video games – tell us stories of war, but what kinds of insights do they grant us into the experience? How do we understand this most horrific and yet fundamentally inherent aspect of human nature? This course clusters the experiential notions of war into three perspectives: those in combat (soldiers, nurses, and doctors), leaders (political and military) and those on the peripheries (families at home and civilians living in combat areas). What do these perspectives teach us about the real experience of war? To begin to explore these questions, we will read works of literature and historical speeches, likely including Pat Barker’s World War I novel *Regeneration*, Julian Thompson’s collection of military speeches *Call to Arms*, and *Company Aytch*, the Civil War memoir of Confederate soldier Sam Watkins. We will incorporate letters, journals, scrapbooks and photographs, historical artifacts, and contemporaneous newspaper articles, along with film clips and possibly theatrical productions. Students will write a variety of papers and make two brief presentations on their work, including short response papers, critical reviews, longer analytical essays, a small original editing project in conjunction with the UD Special Collections library, and finally a research paper that will contrast the portrayal of combat in a first-person narrative to portrayals of the same combat experience by historians, politicians and/or the media and extrapolate what this comparison brings to our understanding of that particular battle. Possible field trips include Gettysburg National Battlefield and Pea Patch Island, DE.