LIT-131.001H MTH 8:55-10:10 a.m.
The Dissemination of Information: Examining the Media Perspective
Professor Stina Oakes

When was the last time you read a newspaper or magazine? How often do you watch TV? We crave information, whether about the latest developments in politics or the most recent celebrity breakup. The media cater to these desires with a constant stream of information in various formats with a myriad of angles. How does this barrage influence our perceptions about the world and ourselves? How do we begin to understand and sift through this information?

In our exploration of the media we will be reflecting on the issues and rhetorical strategies surrounding the role of the media. In particular, we will be exploring the role of fear and how it impacts our beliefs. We will also be examining our own experiences as information consumers. To gain this understanding we will be using a variety of texts, including books, newspapers, magazines, television, music, and the Internet. Writing assignments will include reading responses, a personal essay, a critical analysis, and an extended research piece. The goal of the course is to widen our conception of the role of the media in our own lives and culture.

Texts may include:
*Media Mythmakers*, Benjamin Radford
*The Culture of Fear*, Barry Glassner
*Being There*, Jerzy Kosinski
*Everything Bad is Good for You*, Steven Johnson
Selections from anthologies of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, etc.

LIT-131.002H TF 11:45 a.m.-1 p.m.
Meet The Little Man in Your Brain: The Problems With “Junk Science”
Professor Edward Comstock

We all know that scientists have made major strides in understanding the human brain and in cracking the genetic code. Riding the wave of scientific advance, popular magazines, newspapers, and television news outlets constantly trumpet the latest advances in medicine and neuroscience—finally, we’re told, the secret recesses of our humanity are revealing themselves to us. And we’re buying in. Don’t like your current relationship? There’s a pill for that. Feeling moody or greedy? That’s just your genes. Don’t like modern art? Well, the structure of your brain repels you from it. Thanks to science, we now have control over this crazy thing we call humanity. But is it all too good to be true? In this course we will explore the limits of “junk science” and examine why our culture is so willing to buy in to any new “finding.” In becoming critical about claims made based on junk science, we will trace the origins of and relations between ideas as they well up through texts and into the popular imagination. In this process you will become empowered to critique ideas and problematic claims made under the banner of science and truth—you’ll find, for instance, that this type of knowledge characteristically displaces the problem of understanding human behavior by
“rediscovering” it in the brain (the brain then becomes a “little man”). At the same time, you’ll discover that, at least when it comes to human behavior, “the truth” is a contention rather than a metaphysical certainty and that one woman’s junk science is another woman’s hard reality. But ultimately, the goal of this course will be to cultivate the research and writing skills that will enable you to debunk myths and falsehoods and to make a significant contribution in the name of truth.

Possible texts include:
Joseph Harris *Rewriting*
Stanley Fish *How to Write a Sentence*
Roger N. Lancaster *The Trouble with Nature: Sex in Science and Popular Culture*

**LIT-131.003H MTH 1:10-2:25 p.m.**
**At the Intersection of Art and Commerce in American Popular Culture: A Beatles Case Study**
**Professor John Elderkin**

What separates passing popular fads from art that influences both “high” and “low” culture over time? And, how can we make sense of the values placed on cultural artifacts from the popular entertainment industry? This course will consider the intersections of artistic value, crass commerce, and cultural impact by examining different genres of criticism responding to, among other artists, The Beatles, who, in the era of mass entertainment, perhaps best represent the coming together of those matters. Using those critical responses as a starting point, you will be expected to develop and defend your own rigorous standards of cultural, economic, and artistic merit. Note: developing these standards will require extensive writing assignments. There will also be regular tests and quizzes.

Texts may include:
*The Beatles*, Bob Spitz
*Revolution in the Head*, Ian MacDonald
*Main Lines, Blood Feasts, and Bad Taste: A Lester Bangs Reader*

**LIT-131.004H TF 8:55-10:10 a.m.**
**The Fractured Narrative**
**Professor Jocelyn McCarthy**

Writers have long been aware of the power of narrative to appeal to readers and hold their attention. Many savvy nonfiction writers have learned to build narratives into their arguments to maximize their persuasive powers. But what happens when we break the narrative? What happens when the narrative is in pieces, deconstructed, told out of order? Writers have used this technique for a long time, but it’s picked up steam in the postmodern era. In this course, we’ll examine how and why writers make this choice and
how we can strengthen our own persuasive, argument-driven writing by incorporating elements of fractured narrative.

**LIT-131.005H TF 10:20-11:35 a.m.**  
**Watching Our Mouths: Writing about Our Language in 2013**  
**Professor Kelly Joyner**

What [man] cannot express, he cannot conceive; what he cannot conceive is chaos, and fills him with terror. — Susanne K. Langer

Don’t ask, don’t tell. — President Bill Clinton

It’s only words, and words are all I have to take your heart away. — The Bee Gees

We are surrounded by language. Face-to-face and online conversation . . . written texts . . . live and recorded public speech . . . signs, posters, and advertisement . . . song lyrics and shouts in the night. In this class, we’ll try to step back from ourselves and the many texts around us and figure out what all this language is saying about who we really are, what we believe and assume, what we want to tout, and what we’d like to hide. We’ll establish an academic foundation with the help of the texts listed below, and we’ll create our own scholarship by analyzing, close-reading, arguing, and speculating about words.

Texts may include:  
*Ascent of the A-Word: Assholism, the First Sixty Years*, Geoffrey Nunberg  
*Garner’s Modern American Usage*  
*How to Do Things with Words*, J. L. Austin  
*The Professor and the Madman*, Simon Winchester  
Articles by Susanne K. Langer, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, D.F. Wallace, Malcolm Gladwell and others.

**LIT-131.006H TF 1:10-2:25 p.m.**  
**Our Friends, Our Foes, Our Food: The Bizarre Relationship Between Humans and Other Animals**  
**Professor Lydia Morris Fettig**

Our relationship with animals is complex and, let’s face it, really weird. We all know about the animals in the wild, in zoos, in labs, and in our homes, and yet we rarely think about the many other ways we encounter and interact with animals. For instance, consider that neighbor, friend, or relative we all have -- the one who, you know, obsessively collects pig figurines. Need some more examples? Think about the many animals that serve as school mascots; now think about the many animals served as school lunch or the many animals dissected in school classrooms. Too upsetting? Shift your attention to the plethora of funniest animal videos on YouTube or focus instead on the simple existence of doggles (think goggles, think sunglasses for dogs). And, if you’re still
not convinced that animals are all around us, reflect upon the relentless anthropomorphism that Disney movies provide; or those elderly women who care for more than fifty cats in their homes; or the Ohioan who, before shooting himself, released his extensive collection of exotic wild animals on an unsuspecting public. Lions, tigers, and bears. Literally.

This course will examine the multifaceted interactions between humans and animals. While some of our inquiries will lead us toward issues regarding animal rights and what appears to be a profound human need to dominate animals, we will also enter critical conversations about our inherent desire to be with and understand animals. For this reason, we will thoroughly examine the human-pet bond. By the end of the term, our inquiries will have led us through explorations and writings rooted in the natural and social sciences, economics, environmental issues, race, culture, gender, and concepts of selfhood. Major course assignments will include several research-based projects, some of which may require field research or first-hand experience. Students will also prepare and participate in a series of presentations.

Texts may include:
- *Why We Love Cats and Dogs* (documentary film)
- *Mine: The Pets That Hurricane Katrina Left Behind* (documentary film)
- *Pets in America: A History*, Katherine C. Grier
- *Some We Love, Some We Hate, Some We Eat: Why It's So Hard to Think Straight About Animals*, Hal Herog
- *Animals Make Us Human*, Temple Grandin
- *Rats: Observations on the History and Habitat of the City's Most Unwanted Inhabitants*, Robert Sullivan
- *Squirrel Seeks Chipmunk: A Modest Bestiary*, David Sedaris
- *Eating Animals*, Jonathan Safran Foer
- *A Rat Is a Pig Is a Dog Is a Boy: The Human Cost of the Animal Rights Movement*, Wesley J. Smith

Short works by Aristotle, Jeremy Bentham, Rene Decartes, Peter Singer, Tom Regan, Arnold Arluke, Clinton R. Sanders, Malcolm Gladwell, Matt Cartmill, Leslie Irvine, among others.