



Human Memory, Big Data, and The Digital Age

figs.wisc.edu/2019fall35

FIG 35 • Fall 2019

main class instructor: **Mark Vareschi**

10 credits

MAIN CLASS

English 178

Digital Media, Literature, and Culture

LINKED CLASS

Philosophy 101

Introduction to Philosophy

LINKED CLASS

Computer Sciences 200

Programming I

This is a FIG about memory. We will consider the relative frailty of human memory in comparison to the unforgetting nature of digital storage. Humans forget; computers do not.

The main seminar in this FIG, **English 178: “Digital Media, Literature, and Culture,”** will begin by considering the relationship between memory and human identity. In many ways, we are who we are because we remember who we are day to day. However, human memory is fragile. We forget things; we misremember events.

By contrast, any and all online

activity leaves a trace that can be collected to form a version of the user. This version is not identical to the human user and yet is often a frighteningly accurate image of the user whose behaviors may be tracked and predicted.

Importantly, this digital version of the user is produced by a form of memory (or more precisely a storage of information) that does not forget. You may not remember “liking” that photo on Facebook at 3 am, but Facebook does.

The class will draw its reading and viewing list from a variety of literary and nonliterary sources. Our central texts will include: *Frankenstein* (1818), *Robocop* (1987 and 2014), and current debates around NSA surveillance, social media literacy, online persona, and online privacy.

Our primary project will be to develop a digital portfolio of work in collaboration with DesignLab. The other two classes in this FIG will help develop a greater understanding of the place of memory in human experience and a critical perspective on our place in 21st-century digital culture.

This FIG is well suited for students

interested in a certificate in Digital Studies and majors in English, Computer Sciences, Communication Arts, Journalism, Legal Studies, and Philosophy.

Philosophy 101: “Introduction to Philosophy” — The purpose of this class is to give you a better sense of what philosophy is, how it relates to other disciplines, and what it is good for. We will proceed by considering possible answers to a number of key philosophical questions such as: Do we have free will? What is knowledge and what sorts of things can we know? What is the fundamental nature of reality? Does God exist? Is truth relative or objective? Is life absurd and meaningless? What, if anything, determines that an action (for instance, intentionally killing an innocent person) is morally wrong? As will soon become clear, much of philosophy consists in formulating and evaluating arguments.

Computer Sciences 200: “Programming I” — This class will provide you with an introduction to programming from a data science perspective. No previous programming experience is required. ●

[more on the other side](#)

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FIG 35 • Fall 2019

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
8:00 am					
9:00 am					
10:00 am	PHILOS 101 LEC 1 9:55–10:45 am	ENGL 178 LEC 1 9:30–10:45 am	PHILOS 101 LEC 1 9:55–10:45 am	ENGL 178 LEC 1 9:30–10:45 am	PHILOS 101 LEC 1 9:55–10:45 am
11:00 am		PHILOS 101 DIS 301 11:00–11:50 am			
12:00 pm					
1:00 pm					
2:00 pm	COMP SCI 200 LEC 3 1:20–2:10 pm		COMP SCI 200 LEC 3 1:20–2:10 pm		COMP SCI 200 LEC 3 1:20–2:10 pm
3:00 pm		COMP SCI 200 LAB 334 2:30–3:45 pm			
4:00 pm					
5:00 pm					
6:00 pm					

Enrolled in a FIG and you change your mind?

FIG classes are designed to be taken together. When you enroll in a FIG, you are signed up for these classes as a whole group, not as separate classes.

Dropping one FIG class means ending your enrollment in all of the classes in the FIG.

So, here's what you should know if you want to drop the FIG:

- You can drop all the classes on your own at enroll.wisc.edu. Any non-FIG class will not be affected.
- After classes begin, if you need to drop a single class within the FIG, please contact Kari Fernholz (see below) to review your situation. If necessary, she will provide the required authorization to drop the class.
- Wednesday, September 11, 2019** is the last day to drop a class without it appearing on your college transcript.
- Friday, September 13, 2019** is the last day to add a class without first getting department permission.

MAIN CLASS

English 178

Digital Media, Literature, and Culture

LEC 1: TR 9:30–10:45

- Literature
- Elementary
- Honors Optional

credits: 3

class number: **62717**

LINKED CLASS

Philosophy 101

Introduction to Philosophy

LEC 1: MWF 9:55–10:45 +
DIS 301: T 11:00–11:50

- Humanities or Social Science
- Elementary

credits: 4

class number: **55582**

LINKED CLASS

Computer Sciences 200 Programming I

LEC 3: MWF 1:20–2:10 +
LAB 334: T 2:30–3:45

- Quantitative Reasoning Part B
- Natural Science
- Elementary

credits: 3

class number: **60777**



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get help from **Kari Fernholz**, assistant director
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