

G GENERAL AUDIENCES
All Ages Admitted

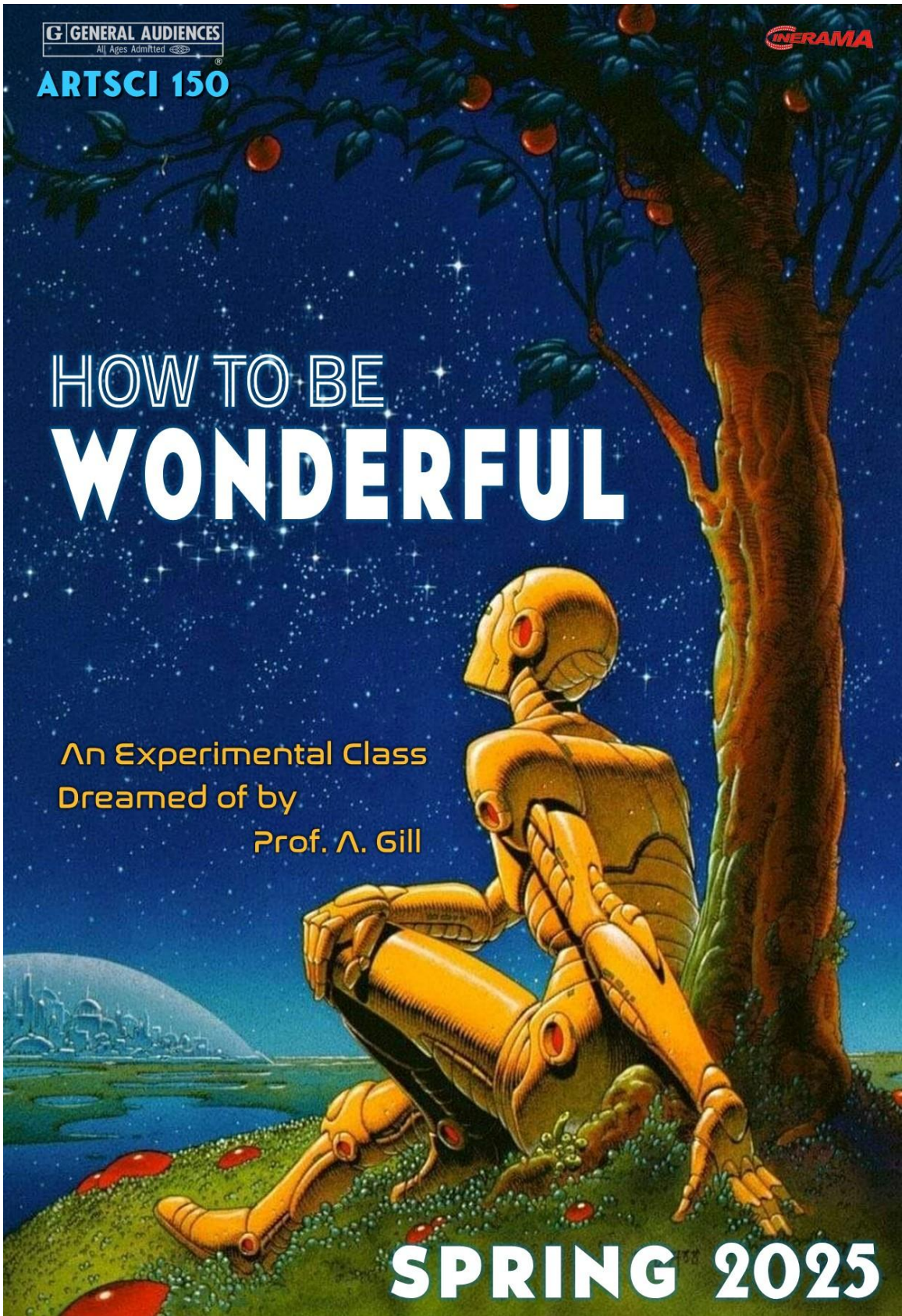
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ARTSCI 150

HOW TO BE **WONDERFUL**

An Experimental Class
Dreamed of by
Prof. A. Gill

SPRING 2025



HOW TO BE WONDERFUL

ARTS & SCIENCES 150 UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON SPRING 2025

Prof. Anthony Gill

Office Hours:

Fridays 11:00 am – 1:00 pm or by appointment

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Wonderfulness! A primary component of learning and scholarship is the ability to be curious; to be **filled with wonder**. That is what we mean in this course as we teach you how to be wonderful. Alas, so many students being conditioned on standardized testing and a never-ending pounding to get a high GPA, never really take the time to be curious, to ask questions, or to be overawed with wonder. Too many collegiates only attend classes with the intention of getting answers, answers that they can memorize and put on an exam to earn a gold star and the approval of their instructors and peers.

Be wary, for there will be no answers here. Only questions. Only curiosity. Only wonder. You will have a chance to speculate, which is the first step towards getting answers, but at the end of the term you will not have a litany of facts and figures stored in your brain with the goal of being competitive on Jeopardy. Instead, you hopefully will be left with something more valuable – the ability to look around your immediate surroundings and develop questions regarding what you observe. You can't have answers without first having questions, so it is odd that students would only enroll in college with the intent of getting answers. And when it comes to observing, the goal is to get you to see things in plain view that you have never noticed heretofore.

All of this will feel odd and uncomfortable to you at first, because it is doubtful that you have ever experienced anything like this in your education to date. However, at the end of your ten-week journey, we want you to have internalized a joy for asking questions, and embrace a desire to wonder about the world, even in its most mundane manifestations.

Granted, ten weeks is not sufficient to develop the wonderful skills you need to be a “grand inquisitor,” but consider this as the first steps along a path that you will find amazing and fun.

Playfulness will be important here. Too much of what you have received in your education has been scaremongering to may you think that the world is nothing but a series of problems and crises that need the attention of an intellectual class to guide the “unwashed masses” to the utopian promised land. It is not surprising that so many young people are anxiety-ridden and paralyzed in fear. Consider yourself freed from that, for at least these ten weeks and in this course. See the world as a beautiful and wonderful place, filled with amazing people doing amazing things.



This is a class that I have always wanted to offer, but the incentives of a university run counter to this. My efforts may fail as this is an experimental class. I do not know where this class will take me or you, but I intend to have a lot of fun along the way. You should prepare yourself for that challenge as well.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There is little you need for this course except for a commitment to try new things, to look around, to attend the three in-person meetings, and to finish tasks by the deadlines assigned. Each of you have been chosen to be in this class because you have shown a degree of dedication to your studies that is above the norm for students in my courses. Don't mess this up. You are being asked to perform a series of weekly tasks that require minimal effort but still depend upon your dedicated willingness to trust the process that I will be setting out for you.

Your final grade will be pass/no pass (or satisfactory/not satisfactory). To obtain a "satisfactory/not satisfactory" grade, you will need to obtain a minimum of 350 points (88% of the total points possible) and have completed at least eight of the assigned weekly Canvas (questions/speculations) assignments. While this seems like a high barrier, you will see completing these tasks is not difficult and you might even find them to be the most enjoyable part of your week. None of the activities will be graded on the traditional 4.0 or percentage scale. If you simply show up and/or complete the very simple task, you get all the points assigned for that assignment. There is no pressure to do "A+" work. As the Nike corporation tells you, "just do it." Indeed, messing up an assignment might even be a good experience.

ASSIGNMENT	POINTS	DUE DATE
Participation in three weekly meetings	300 points	March 31, April 18, May 30
Weekly Mysteries & Speculations	100 points	Fridays by 5:00 pm ¹

PARTICIPATION IN THREE WEEKLY MEETINGS. There will be three in-person class meetings that are not in the typical classroom. Our **first meeting** is set for **Monday, March 31 at 3:00 pm** at the **Uvillage QFC**. Do not be tardy. The meeting will last approximately one hour, and you will be walking around the store. Further instructions will be provided when you arrive (to preserve the mystery and make you wonder what is going on). Please bring a notepad and a writing utensil.

The **second meeting** will be on **Friday, April 18 at 3:00 ~ 4:00 pm** at a coffee shop or cafeteria (place to be determined, but likely the Starbucks in Suzzallo Library). Again, you will be given instructions when you arrive, and you will need a notepad and writing utensil. The **final meeting** will be scheduled for **Friday, May 30 at 3:00 pm**. The meeting place will be determined, but the task for this meeting will be to watch a short (~80 minutes) movie followed by discussion. Budget about 2 ½ hours for this meeting. You are free to bring popcorn and beverages, and we might also have some additional food provided.

All times and places are subject to change, so be attentive to your UW NetID email account. It will be difficult to rearrange and/or make up these meetings, so block them out on your calendar early and make 100% effort to be in attendance.

Grading for these in-person meetings is simple. If you show up and perform the very basic task asked of you, you will earn 100 points for each meeting. This adds up to 300 points.



¹ See below. Your speculations starting Week 2 are due the following Monday by 5:00 pm.

WEEKLY QUESTIONS AND SPECULATION. Starting the first week, you will be required to submit a simple question to an online discussion board (on Canvas) by Friday at 5:00 pm. Note that you can submit this as early as you want in the week. In fact, once a question pops into your head, you should get it on Canvas as soon as possible so it stays fresh. The length of these assignments is relatively short, perhaps no more than a paragraph or two that sets up a context and then follows with a question. You will be given further instructions on how to complete these assignments at our first in-person meeting.

Your questions will be seen by everyone else in the course. I am going to try to anonymize the submissions so although you will see each other's questions you will not know who posted them. I am doing this with the hopes of having a weekly vote on the "best or most wonderful question" and award prizes to incentivize you to take these assignments seriously (but with a wonderful joy).

Beginning Week 2, you will also be asked to respond to at least one (or more) of your fellow students' questions with some speculative answers. These answers need to be **speculative**. I am not looking for the correct answer to any of the questions. **Do not "do research" on the Internet** or by going to the library.² Your speculations must come completely from your own reasoning and imagination. Nothing more, nothing less. To repeat: You are not being graded on getting the right question or the right answer. You are being graded on how "wonderful" you are. As student questions are not due until 5:00 pm on Friday (and some of you might be "last minute workers"), your speculative answers to questions do not need to be completed until the following Monday at 5:00 pm. Don't forget!



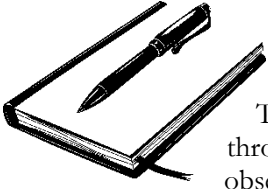
To help you complete these assignments, it is advised that you purchase a small notebook that is easily portable and that you have close at hand throughout the quarter. Something [like this](#) would do (but you are not required to purchase this exact notebook). Think of it as your detective notepad. **Do NOT keep notes on your laptop, phone, or any other electronic device.** I want you to have a physical (paper) notepad and a writing utensil handy for all our meetings and, as you will see, at your ready to write things down. You will need to access a computer or smartphone to complete your weekly assignments on Canvas, but other than that, I want you to be disconnected from the virtual world when doing things for, and thinking about, this course.

Grading for these assignments is also simple. If you submit a question each week and add some speculations starting Week 2, you get 10 points. With ten weeks of assignments, this adds up to 100 points. If you do not submit some sort of speculation beginning in Week 2, you will only receive 5 points per assignment.

Curiouser and Curiouser!

² When students tell me they are "doing research on the Internet," I will frequently chuckle if not outright guffaw. The reason for this is that research requires a level of curiosity and observation that is not common with the typical Google, Bing, or Duck Duck Go search. This class is learning about that frequently overlooked part of research ... wonder.

TEXTBOOKS



There are no textbooks. I only ask that you purchase some sort of notepad that you can use throughout the entire quarter and keep handy on a regular basis to jot down questions and observations. As noted, think of this as your detective notepad and be ready to pull it out on a moment's notice when you observe something odd, interesting, and/or wonderful as you live your day-to-day life.

I would also strongly advise that when you are completing the assignments for this course (and by completing I mean more than just typing your assignment into Canvas) that you put away your cell phone. Look up. Look around. Look carefully into Wonderland.

THE BIG GOAL

My big goal for this class is to have you finish the course at the end of ten weeks and say that this is the best college course you have ever taken. If that is too big, I at least hope that you will have a new way of approaching your collegiate studies and will have started to develop skills that will benefit you for the rest of your life. I hope that in the weeks, months, and years following the conclusion of this class you look back and say, "Wow, I'm really looking at the world differently." Or you might say, "I really understand why questions are so important and what it means to be truly filled with wonder." And, finally, I hope that you have a greater appreciation for the world in which you live in and do not see it as scary, troubling, and miserable as academics make it out to be. You get one shot at this life, make it wonderful.

I should note that I am not being compensated for this course; it represents an activity that I volunteered for that is above and beyond what my university position requires. This is a labor of pedagogical love. I have always wanted to teach a course like this, but the confines of the academic world make it very difficult to do. I will be traveling along the same ten-week journey that you are, practicing my "wonderful" skills and hopefully having fun. I've been blessed with the opportunity to be part of an intellectual profession that should be the envy of any adult, and I want to remember why I chose this profession. If all goes as hoped, this will be one of the most important classes you have ever taken and one of the most inspiring classes I've ever taught.



STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

You have been chosen for this class because I have seen something in you that merits further cultivation. I sense that you have taken your collegiate studies seriously. You also have shown that you take responsibility for your actions and can manage difficulties that arise in ways that do not immediately burden others. Continue doing so. I do not want to have a litany of rules. I intend to trust your best judgement. Take the course seriously. Do not generate excuses for why you cannot do this. Just figure out how to get things done. If we can all do that, we are going to have a great quarter.

1. The Wonder-filled Grocery Store

March 31 & April 4

Meet at University Village QFC ([2746 NE 45th St.](#)) at 3:00 pm on Monday March 31. Do not be late. Bring a notepad and a writing implement. You will be given instructions once you arrive. Prepare to be curious and amazed. Your regular weekly mysteries assignment will be on April 4th, and you may use what you generate at the QFC for that assignment, but you are free to also add something else.



2. Questions and Speculative Answers

April 11

There is no in-class meeting this week. Deposit your mysteries on the designated Canvas page and drop down a few speculative answers to some of the questions you see by 5:00 pm on Friday. Note that your questions are due by 5:00 pm, April 11, but you have until 5:00 pm on April 14 (the following Monday) to lay down some keen speculation. Feel free to complete this assignment earlier than Friday/Monday.

3. Coffee Klatsch: Observation and Speculation

April 18

Meet at Suzallo Library Starbucks at 3:00 pm. Bring a notepad and a writing implement. You will be given instructions once you arrive. Come with eyes wide open and your listening ears on.

4. More Observation, Inquiry, and Speculation

April 25

See instructions from Week 2.

5. Even More Observation, Inquiry, and Speculation

May 2

See instructions from Week 2.

6. Yep, More Observing, Questioning, and Speculating

May 9

See instructions from Week 2.

7. You Should Know What to Do!

May 16

If not, see instructions from Week 2.



8. Keep on Being Wonderful

May 23

See instructions from Week 2.

9. Murder Mystery Movie Time

May 30

Meet in (Place to Be Determined) at 1:00 pm to watch a movie. It will be a murder mystery where the “whodunit and howdunit” comes first. There is nothing less mysterious than a mystery where you know the culprit beforehand, but you will be amazed at how all of what you have been doing up to this point comes together in about 80 minutes. Feel free to bring popcorn and beverages. We might also do a potluck or have a bit of food catered. Stay tuned.

You are still required to submit questions, observations, and speculations by Friday at 5:00 pm.

10. The Final Week before the First Day of Wonderland

June 6

See instructions from Week 2. This will be the last of your chance to be inquisitive and speculative until you start the rest of your life being wonderful.



THE LEGAL STUFF

I must put this here, but chances are you will not need any of this stuff because of the nature of the course.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

If you would like to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disability Resources for Student, 011 Mary Gates Hall, 206-543-8924 (V/TDD). If you have a letter from DRS indicating you have a disability that requires academic accommodation, please notify the professor within the first week of class so that adequate time can be devoted to meeting your accommodations.

RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS

Washington state law requires that UW develop a policy for accommodation of student absences or significant hardship due to reasons of faith or conscience, or for organized religious activities. The UW's policy, including more information about how to request an accommodation, is available at [Religious Accommodations Policy](#). Accommodations ***must be requested within the first two weeks*** of this course using the [Religious Accommodations Request Form](#).

INCOMPLETE GRADES

Incomplete grades may only be awarded if you are doing satisfactory work up until the last two weeks of the quarter. Undergraduate students must not register for courses in which they have received an “incomplete,” since a grade earned in a repeat course will not be recorded as an “incomplete” conversion grade. To obtain credit for the course, an undergraduate student must convert an Incomplete into a passing grade no later than the last day of the next quarter. An “incomplete” not made up by the end of the next quarter (summer excluded) will be converted to the grade of 0.0 by the Registrar unless the instructor has indicated, when assigning the “incomplete” grade, that a grade other than 0.0 should be recorded if the incomplete work is not completed. **The original “incomplete” grade is not removed from the transcript.** Students are responsible for knowing important registration and financial aid deadlines when scheduling make-up work for the incomplete. The professor will need at least one week's time to schedule make-up exams or assignments for incompletes, and an additional week to grade the completed assignments.

RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Questions on mental health resources should be directed to the [UW Counseling Center](#). This website contains a list of helpful resources.

