What counts as a literary argument? What kinds of evidence does literary argumentation require? What makes some interpretations more compelling than others, and do all strong interpretations work in the same ways? As a means of proposing some answers to these questions, we will explore a wide historical and generic range of texts that describe and create real or fantastical places. By looking at these texts’ evocation of the extraordinary and the implausible, we will articulate the grounds of persuasion and proof.

This course is designed to sharpen your critical reading skills through in-depth analysis of poetry, drama, and fiction and to improve your writing skills so that you can articulate those interpretations clearly, grammatically, and persuasively. Consequently, this course is writing-intensive: you will be writing and revising every week, in class and out of it. Class requirements include mandatory attendance, active participation, and the willingness to engage actively and respectfully with course texts and with varying interpretations. Readings for the course will include a wide selection of poetry, William Shakespeare’s As You Like It, Richard Sheridan’s The School for Scandal (to coordinate with the IU production), Virginia Woolf’s Mrs. Dalloway, and Jhumpa Lahiri’s Unaccustomed Earth.