

Dark Futures: Apocalypse and Dystopia

Honors First Year Seminar



Why are we so interested in how things could go very, very wrong? In this course, guided by a history professor, we look at how authors and culture creators -- both now and in the past -- envision dystopian futures, and what those visions tell us about values, priorities, possibilities, and fears.

Blending fiction, history, film, and other forms of media, you will analyze a variety of cultural texts through the lens of apocalyptic and dystopian narratives, and try your hand at creating your own futuristic stories.

Course Basics

WHERE & WHEN

Tues / Thurs 10 am

Room Sullivan 314

COURSE INSTRUCTOR

Instructor: Dr. Tona Hangen
(History Department)

Office: Sullivan 327D

Phone: x8688 (on campus)

617-506-9440 (text)

Email: thangen@worchester.edu

Office hours: In-person or via Zoom, by appt. Scheduled hours: M 3-4, Th 8:30 - 10. Link for online scheduling is posted on Blackboard under "Prof Info."

CREDITS (3*) - Meets your FYS requirement in LASC; also counts as one of your 7 Honors courses.

*See course website or the course catalog for the official University definition of a credit hour.

A WORD ABOUT THE HONORS PROGRAM

This course, along with the other honors first-year learning communities, is a key component of the Commonwealth Honors Program at Worcester State University. You have been invited to be part of one of the state's premier programs for high-achieving students who show great academic promise.



The Honors Center and Student Lounge is located in LRC 218 on the main floor of the library; phone x8467. Stay up to date with honors news with their weekly email newsletter and follow Honors social media feeds. The Director is Dr. Cleve Wiese (English) hwiese@worchester.edu and the Assistant Director is Dr. Nicole Rosa.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course involves weekly reading, writing, research and group learning. It is set up as an active learning discussion-based seminar, not a lecture course. It is intended to be both a fun and challenging course for Honors students. You will be expected to read 50-100 pages a week (sometimes more), and to write approximately 30 pages over the course of the semester. You will need to put in consistent effort and attendance during the whole term. You'll enhance your academic and problem-solving skills. You'll need to speak up in class and demonstrate active learning, not passive absorption.

Learning is not a spectator sport. Seminar-style learning is successful when discussion involves everyone in passionate, informed conversation. To take advantage of multiple learning styles and to help create a community of learning in this classroom, this course will assess your progress in several different ways. See page 3 for the specifics on how your grade is calculated.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES



In this course students will ...

- 1) explore and engage in university opportunities that support transition, academic growth, and cultivate a sense of belonging.
- 2) set short-term and longer-term academic and personal goals.

And students will formulate solutions to ...

- 3) solve problems and negotiate within the institution and the

world around you.

- 4) incorporate effective time management, organizational planning, conflict resolution, and deliberation.
- 5) develop academic skills and study strategies suited to Honors-level courses in the humanities, including critical and historical thinking, strategic reading, library research, seminar discussion preparation, and note-taking.

In other words ...

This course is designed just for you as a first-year honors student. Through seminar discussion and active learning, you'll come to understand important (and also

READING LIST

Required Books:

Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (Vintage, 2006).

Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1985).

Any edition / format is OK for the novels. Other course readings will be provided on Blackboard or available free online.



hopefully interesting and relevant elements of culture and history.

You'll write a lot, and learn to write better. You'll help create an inclusive environment for all students, take intellectual risks, and be an integral part of a collaborative and welcoming learning community.

You'll learn to analyze many kinds of cultural texts and represent your findings in fresh ways. You'll be able to navigate library resources, evaluate what you find there and online, and cite your sources using standard academic methods.

You'll figure out college and how you fit in. You'll explore, set goals, and reach some of your goals this term.

You got this. Let's get started!

GRADING AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Strong Start (10%)

Kick off the first weeks of class by introducing yourself to your colleagues (Slide Intro, 2 points) and by writing thoughtful discussion questions for two of our early seminar discussion days (8 points).

Participation (25%)

Your 25-point participation grade includes consistent attendance (factoring in any appropriate makeups if you have to miss class for medical reasons). It includes your lively, respectful, and substantive discussion that shows evidence of having done the assigned reading. ***Silent presence will not receive full credit.*** Participation may also include written or video responses, being an active participant in class activities like peer review or maker-space days, visiting office hours, and taking part in any assigned university experiences occurring during our class time.

The participation grade will be recorded at the end of the semester, but if you need feedback on your participation at any time during the term, I'm happy to provide it, and I will reach out individually if I have concerns about your participation level.



Analysis Papers (30%)

Three short papers give you experience analyzing different kinds of sources: Wikipedia entry, Visual Sources, and Scholarly Articles. Each one is 10 points. These are opportunities to demonstrate increasing complexity of thought and prose as the term progresses.

Cart Project (15%)

In this project, inspired by our reading of *The Road*, you'll articulate your academic goals, plan your college journey, and reflect

on your first semester's lessons learned. 15 points.

Final Project (20%)

You'll identify a scholarly problem (i.e. an answerable question worth asking), apply critical and historical thinking, and employ strong written communication in a final, well-researched project that could take one of several possible forms. The project is built over time with revision, peer review, and feedback along the way. 20 points, plus opportunity to present at Honors Showcase.



CLASS COMMUNICATION AND COURSE POLICIES

Course Blackboard

Use Blackboard to access the syllabus, course announcements, readings, grades, and other resources. See also "Syllabus Additional Information" posted on Blackboard.

Important Course Policies

- If you feel sick, are in quarantine, or have tested positive for a communicable disease, please stay home and follow the guidance of your health care provider. We can work out a makeup strategy if needed.
- In-class technology: we will be busy in every class session and we don't need technological distractions. In class, silence your cell phones & refrain from texting and social media use. Use electronic devices during class for taking notes, accessing course materials, and conducting course-related tasks.
- Use MLA when citing sources (this style is thoroughly described in any standard writing reference). Demonstrate exemplary academic integrity in all your writing for this course. Plagiarism will not be tolerated and will result in failing the class.

- WSU is committed to providing equitable access and appropriate reasonable accommodations within courses and programs for students with disabilities. If you have a disability that requires reasonable accommodations, visit the Student Accessibility Services website worchester.edu/Student-Accessibility-Services/ or contact their office at SAS@worchester.edu, call 508-929-8733, or stop by the office, Suite 131 in the Administration Building. Please be aware that accommodations cannot be enacted retroactively, so if you need them, take care of this in a timely way.

Email

Your worchester.edu email account is your official university email for course and college-related correspondence; please use it rather than a private email address for any course-related communication.

Email is a good way to reach me; I check it several times a day, and I am more likely to answer it during business hours; however, please be patient on weekends and holidays. thangen@worchester.edu

Or text me at 617-506-9440 anytime.

My office hours and location are listed on page I.

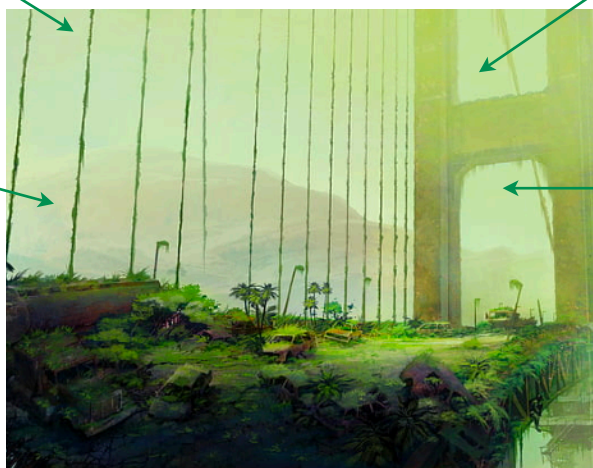
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

Contact the **Honors Program** with questions about honors courses and events, and for academic advising related to honors. LRC 218, x8467

Student Accessibility Services Office is located in Admin A131, x8733. SAS promotes an accessible college experience for disabled students.

Counseling Services can provide confidential assistance in crisis or ongoing support for any student's emotional/mental health. Staff are also trained responders for sexual assault. Office: Student Center 325, x8072

If you've read this entire syllabus, please email me a cool image of a futuristic city



Career Services: yes, even first-year students should get to know this office for help with resume, career exploration, jobs, internships, and more. Office: 3rd floor of Student Ctr, x8941

Your Academic Advisor in your department is a very important resource! If you've been assigned one, meet with your advisor early and often!

The **Academic Success Center** is the go-to location for first-year and undeclared advising and for tutoring services (all free of charge). Location: Admin A130, x8139. They run the **New to Woo Workshops** every Wed at 5 pm.

The **Writing Center** provides free assistance to all students in areas of research & writing. Location: Sullivan 306, x8112. Email: writingcenter@worchester.edu. For hours, info, and online writing lab, visit the website: wooforwriting.wordpress.com or like its Facebook page.

Worcester State Library: in addition to its book, journal and reference collection, the library has access to many articles through online databases, and to nearly anything in print through interlibrary loan (ILL). **If you hit a payroll in your research, do not pay:** work with the reference staff to find the appropriate way to access materials you need. In all likelihood you can get them either online or via ILL for free. Reference librarians are geniuses.

COURSE SCHEDULE *REVISED* as of 10/13/22

Date	Topic	What to Prepare or Read	What's Due (11:59 pm unless otherwise listed)
Week 1			
Tues 9/6	Course Intro	Bring laptops to class. Get both books.	Due: Powerpoint Intro
Thurs 9/8	Close Encounters	Reading: "Ted Chiang Explains the Disaster Novel We All Suddenly Live In"; Sontag, "The Imagination of Disaster."	Due: 4 Discussion Qs
<i>Also this week: Convocation.</i>			

Week 2			
Tues 9/13	Terms and Tools	Reading: Critical Thinking Handout; Lepore, "A Golden Age for Dystopian Fiction;" <i>Handmaid's Tale</i> , Parts I, II, and III.	Begin reading & taking notes on <i>Handmaid's Tale</i>
Thurs 9/15	Campus Scavenger Hunt	Meet in LRC library cafe area. Keep reading <i>Handmaid's Tale</i> on your own.	Due: Wikipedia Analysis
<i>Also this week: Honors Welcome Pizza Party. Club Kickoff (outside Student Center)</i>			

Week 3			
Tues 9/20	Revelations	Reading: Apocalypse of John (Revelation). Keep reading <i>Handmaid's Tale</i> on your own.	Due: 4 Discussion Qs
Thurs 9/22	Eschatology	Reading: Baer, "American Dispensationalism's Perennially End Times." Keep reading <i>Handmaid's Tale</i> on your own.	
<i>Also this week: Student Center Open House. Sept 21 is your Speak About It required FYS event. Dr. Hangen Office Hours visit.</i>			

Week 4			
Tues 9/27	Handmaid's Tale	Discuss Atwood, <i>Handmaid's Tale</i> (entire).	Due: Book Response
Thurs 9/29	War of the Worlds	Listening: WOTW 1938 recording (1 hour).	Due: Radio Response
<i>Also this week: Complete FYS modules on Mental Well-Being and Diversity, Equity & Inclusion.</i>			

Week 5			
Tues 10/4	Bomb Scares	Reading: Northcutt, "Women and the Bomb"; and LIFE Magazine 9/15/1961, pp. 95-108.	Due: Cart Project Part 1
Thurs 10/6	Exclusion Zone	Reading: Kingsley, "Life at Chernobyl After 35 Years."	Due FRIDAY: Image Response

COURSE SCHEDULE *REVISED* as of 10/13/22

Date	Topic	What to Prepare or Read	What's Due
Week 6	Campus Community		
Tues 10/11	Unity Day	Unity Walk and Flag-raising	
Thurs 10/13	ASC Presenter + Intro to Film Studies Terminology	Reading (in class): Duke "Writing About Film" handout	

Week 7	Zombies		
Tues 10/18	Zombie Apocalypse	Reading: CDC Preparation 101; CONPLAN 8888-11; Munz et al, "When Zombies Attack: Mathematical Modeling of an Outbreak of Zombie Infection."	
Thurs 10/20	Hunters and Hunted	Reading: Dendle, "Zombie Movies and the Millennial Generation"	Due FRIDAY: Scene Response
<i>Also this week: Oct 20 is this term's deadline to declare or change Major/Minor.</i>			

Week 8	Visions		
Tues 10/25	Visual Paper Maker Space	Bring laptops to class.	Due: Peer Review
Thurs 10/27	Envisioning the Future	Visual Paper: Present and Discuss.	Due FRIDAY: Visual Sources Analysis
<i>Also this week: Fresh Check Day is Oct 26. Watch for Spring schedule to go live on Search for Classes on or before Oct 31.</i>			

Week 9	Threats and Theories		
Tues 11/1	Scholarly Approaches	Reading: Drissel, "Fear and Consumption in the Face of Disaster"; Huber and Mould, "On the Edge of Apocalypse"; Hennessy, "Handling Human-Created Risks."	
Thurs 11/3	How Scholars Argue	Reading: Your chosen article.	Due FRIDAY: Article Analysis
<i>Also this week: Spring Pre-Registration Advising; meet with your advisor between Oct 31 and Nov 14</i>			

Week 10	The End of Civilization		
Tues 11/8	The Dark Side	NPR CodeSwitch "How White Extremism Seeps into the Mainstream" 1/15/21 (Vocab words: prepper, militia, vexillology).	
Thurs 11/10	Ash and Blood	Reading: McCarthy, <i>The Road</i> , Part 1	Due: Cart Project Part 2
<i>Also this week: Nov 8 is First Year Registration Day for Spring. Nov 9 is last day to declare Pass / Fail.</i>			

Note: the syllabus is subject to change; check Blackboard for any updates.

COURSE SCHEDULE ***REVISED* as of 10/13/22**

Date	Topic	What to Prepare or Read	What's Due
Week 11-12	Survival		
Tues 11/15	The Coast	Reading: McCarthy, <i>The Road</i> , Part 2	
Thurs 11/17	Making Meaning	Reading: McCarthy, <i>The Road</i> , Part 3 and Miller, "The Cultural Logic of Post-Capitalism: Cormac McCarthy's <i>The Road</i> and Popular Dystopia."	Due: Cart Project Part 3
Tues 11/22	The Road on Screen	Reading: As assigned, see Blackboard.	Due: Final Project Proposal
Thursday 11/24 Thanksgiving, No Class			

Week 13-14	Scenarios		
Tues 11/29	Final Project Maker Space	Bring laptops and project ideas	
Thurs 12/1	Peer Review Day	Bring laptops and your work in progress	
Tues 12/6	TBA		Due: Final Project
Thurs 12/8	What (your) Future Holds	<i>Last day of class and to submit coursework. There is no final exam for this class.</i>	Due: Cart Project, All Parts



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