

TERM: Spring 2025

COURSE NUMBER & CATEGORY: ENGL 2400: Reading and Writing Genres

COURSE TITLE: Post-Apocalyptic Literature

SECTION TIMES/DAYS: MW 9:55-11:35 am

INSTRUCTOR: Alexandra Neel

COURSE DESCRIPTION/PRINCIPAL TOPICS:

This course will examine postapocalyptic and dystopian fiction through a theoretical and historical lens. We'll be examining how literature, in its most prescient and admonishing mode, serves up visions of future societies. Among the numerous traditions the genre encompasses, we'll be dipping into Afrofuturism, speculative fiction, and eco-fiction, with special attention to how class, race, gender, and sexuality inform various authors' expressions of what the future of the world might hold. Although a genre that is predominantly set in the future, all dystopian and postapocalyptic novels are topical—about our times—delving into the urgent struggles that society faces today. We'll be exploring questions of identity, what it means to be part of a society, to be an outcast, or even the last human to survive on a dead planet. What are the shifting contours of personhood and our role on the planet, and beyond? How do humans shift from a parasitical relationship to the earth to one based on mutualism? Will science and technology save us? And, if so, at what cost? How do concepts of the posthuman, AI, family, religion, nation, race, class, and gender factor into this world-building genre? Though often bleak and misanthropic, postapocalyptic and dystopian fiction allows us to explore what a future world of inclusion, tolerance, difference, and hope might look like because mere "survival is insufficient."

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

- Students will know how to read different forms of literature closely (from a short story to a novel) in the post-apocalyptic genre and know the appropriate technical and critical vocabulary with which to interpret it.
- Students will be able to analyze a literary text and discern what secondary sources are useful and even necessary to understand the richness of its world.
- Students will understand the unique quality that literature has to convey the ambiguities and complexity of human experience in extremis.
- Students will learn how to construct arguments based on the evidence supplied by a literary text, as well as to use appropriate critical frameworks to contextualize and ground their interpretations.
- Students will value the imaginative and world-building capacity of the postapocalyptic genre across cultures and histories.

CLASS LEVEL RESTRICTION:

N/A

RECOMMENDED/PREREQUISITES:

English Major/Minor

COURSE ATTRIBUTES:

OLD CURRICULUM

- GENRES (LD)
- HISTORIES (LD)
- AUTHORS (UD)
- CRITICAL/THEORETICAL (UD)
- COMPARATIVE (UD)
- CREATIVE/ARTISTRY (UD)

NEW CURRICULUM

- DISCIPLINARY RESEARCH (LD)
- HISTORY OF LIT, MEDIA, AND CULTURE (LD)
- READING AND WRITING GENRES (LD)
- THEORY, POWER, AND RHETORIC (LD)
- PRE-1800 (UD)
- CREATIVE ARTISTRY (UD)
- RACE, INTERSECTIONALITY, AND POWER (UD)
- UPPER-DIVISION ELECTIVE (UD)
- 5000-LEVEL SEMINAR (UD)