

**English 1302-49 – Representing Disaster: “It’s the end of the world as we know it...”**  
Spring 2012, T/TH 11:00 am-12:20 pm, Hyer Hall 106

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**Office hours:** W 11am-noon, Th 10-11am, and by appointment

**Course Description**

This course focuses on the intersection of text and catastrophe by examining natural, manmade, and fictive disasters, both contemporary and historical. Recognizing that contemporary media coverage of disasters forces us to move from one scene of destruction to the next with almost callous rapidity, we will attempt to think through how our representations of disaster reveal deep-seated human values, fears, and behaviors. We will approach the topic from a variety of topical angles and via texts that span a range of genres and media.

This course builds on the reading, writing, and thinking skills developed in ENGL 1301. Throughout the semester, you will explore ideas and practice skills of analysis and argumentation that will help you to interpret and engage the world beyond the classroom. Since this course focuses on the process of critical thinking, it will be structured as a workshop rather than a formal lecture class. Through individual and group work and peer critique, you will encounter writing as a collaborative process of inquiring into a topic, drafting, revising, editing, and proofreading. You will be called on to contribute to class discussion regularly and thoughtfully, and to share ideas about what you have read and/or written.

**Required Course Materials**

- *A Writer’s Resource*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition (McGraw Hill, 2010)
- *Criteria 2011-12* (SMU Rhetoric)
- A double-pocket folder for paper submission, labeled with your name
- Access to the course Blackboard site (<https://courses.smu.edu>)
- A reliable means of printing course readings and other documents (see [smu.edu/cul/services/computing/](http://smu.edu/cul/services/computing/) for information about printers in university libraries)

**Course Objectives**

By the end of the course, students will be able to formulate an argumentative thesis and integrate diverse source material into their essays. In service of these learning outcomes, the instructor’s objective in this course will be to teach the following skills:

- Critical reading and analysis of texts (literary, scholarly, and visual)
- Accurate and concise summary of a longer text’s ideas
- Identification of a text’s purpose and evaluation of its success or failure
- Sophisticated synthesis of ideas (both your own and those of others)
- Formulation of a thesis and construction of an effective argument
- Finding, analyzing, integrating, and documenting appropriate source material to support that argument
- Strategies for drafting, revising, and editing university-level writing

**Assignments & Evaluation**

Writing is the most important part of this course and will account for 70% of your total grade. To

pass the course, you must satisfactorily complete all four major papers. The remaining percentage will consist of your preparation for and participation in class as well as an oral presentation. Grades will be visible on Blackboard throughout the semester, so you will always know where you stand in the course. Because of this, no last-minute petitions for higher grades will be accepted. If you are concerned about the scores your papers receive, please talk with the instructor early in the semester so you can improve your writing (and, thus, your grade).

The following is a breakdown of the assignments I will use to evaluate your course performance:

Essay 1	15 points
Essay 2	10 points
Essay 3	20 points
Essay 4 (Research Paper)	25 points
Oral Presentation	10 points
Class Preparation and Participation	20 points*

\*Please see the Course Policies section of this syllabus for information regarding these points.

### Grading scale

94-100	A	73-76	C
90-93	A-	70-72	C-*
87-89	B+	67-69	D+
83-86	B	63-66	D
80-82	B-	60-62	D-
77-79	C+	0-59	F

***\*Students must earn a grade of C- or higher to satisfy the University's General Education Written Communication requirement. Students earning a grade below C- must repeat the course the following semester. If a student attempts to withdraw after the official university drop/add period ends, the W will automatically become an F at the end of the term.***

### Course Policies

1. **Class Preparation and Participation:** Unlike a lecture-style class, this workshop will focus on your writing, your questions, and your critical thinking; as a result, you must be present, on time, prepared for and fully engaged in every class period. Your presence, preparation, and participation are integral to your success in English 1302. Please come to class each day with questions and comments to offer, as your contributions to group work and class discussion demonstrate your commitment to success in the course. You will have the opportunity to earn 20 participation points over the course of the semester; these points will be split across the four units. For each unit, you will receive a score between 1 and 5 (with 5 indicating the most impressive work) for your preparation and participation. Class participation includes finished **homework** that you bring to class and use during class discussions, as well as thoughtful, informed **participation** on a daily basis and the occasional pop quiz. I will “credit” class participation points when you successfully complete assigned homework and contribute to class discussions, and “debit” class participation points when you do not. Know that **unpreparedness** (i.e. not bringing books or required materials to class, including printed copies of readings, drafts or other homework) or **discourtesy** (i.e. texting, inappropriate laptop use, side conversations, sleeping in class, etc.) will cost you participation points.

2. **Attendance:** I am aware that life is neither predictable nor always controllable—people get sick, deal with family emergencies, miss alarm clocks, etc. Thus, you may miss two classes without any penalty. However, you are fully responsible for any assignments due and/or material covered in class on any day you are absent. As a result, I encourage you not to miss class unless doing so is absolutely unavoidable; I strongly recommend that you reserve your two absences for unanticipated emergencies or illness. In consideration of your peers, please be on time to class. If you come to class more than fifteen minutes late, you will be counted absent for the day.

In keeping with SMU's Department of Written English policy, if you have more than two unexcused absences, your final grade will suffer a penalty of up to a full letter grade. If you miss more than four classes, you should expect to fail the course. Excused absences are rare and contingent upon the student presenting documentation that is acceptable to the Instructor no later than one week after the day of absence. (Keep in mind that notes from family or friends, traffic tickets or jams, disabled vehicles, broken printers or crashed hard drives, lost textbooks or writing assignments, etc. are not sufficient to justify excusing an absence.) Students needing to miss class for official travel (see University Policies, below) should note that they are not exempt from the course attendance policy; students who miss class more than four times may not be able to pass this course.

3. **Conferences:** Three times during the semester regular class meetings will be canceled so each student can have an individual conference with the Instructor about his or her writing. These conferences allow you and the Instructor extended individual time to focus on your strengths and weaknesses as a writer and on the progress you are making in the course. Unexcused missed conferences are not usually made up. Please bring to each conference two copies of your draft and at least two specific questions about improving your draft.

4. **Blackboard (Bb):** With some frequency, I will post on Bb regarding changes to the syllabus, what to bring to class and/or how to prepare for upcoming classes and assignments, as well as writing worksheets, handouts, and other useful information that will help you prepare for and stay current with the class. Since Bb will be an important tool for communication, you should plan to consult Bb prior to (within 24 hours of) each class meeting. You are responsible for printing, reading, and bringing all appropriate materials to class.

5. **Paper Format and Submission:**

- Please observe conventions of formal style, proper spelling and grammar in all written work. All work must comply with MLA format.
- The final version of each paper must be printed in black ink in standard, twelve-point, Times New Roman font, on standard printer paper; the text should be double-spaced with one-inch margins at top, bottom, and sides. It should include numbered pages with your last name on the top right corner. Include your name, my name, the course and section numbers, and the due date in the heading. Please staple pages.
- On the due date for each unit, you will turn in your folder, which should include the following: the final copy of the paper, the conference draft of the paper (if

- applicable), the peer review draft of the paper (if applicable), and any outlines or thesis drafts that you worked on during that unit.
- All essays submitted are also subject to review through “SafeAssign,” a web-based plagiarism recognition program. Please save an electronic copy of each final paper that is identical to the printed submitted version.
  - You are encouraged to visit the Writing Center for assistance with your essays. Because the course allows for multiple drafts and thorough revision, there are no “rewrites” once a paper has been submitted for a final grade.
6. **Late Work:** All work is due at the beginning of class. You should prepare for this requirement by completing assignments well before class begins. Printing/stapling tragedies will not be accepted as an excuse for late work. Late papers will be penalized three points per class meeting. I do not accept late homework. Students who miss class on a day when a final paper is due may submit the paper electronically; the paper grade will not be penalized for tardiness as long as the paper is submitted prior to class time as a MS Word .docx attachment and as long as the accompanying folder (including all supporting documents, as well as a hard copy of the paper) is submitted by 5:00pm. I do not accept late papers over email.
7. **Laptops** are allowed in class but strongly discouraged; they may be used for class purposes only. They may not be used to check email, surf the web, work on other coursework, play games, or perform any tasks not directly related to activities current at the time in class. Students who are discovered using their laptops inappropriately will not be allowed to bring a laptop to class again for the duration of the course. **Cell phones and other electronic devices** (e.g. PDAs, iPods or iPads, Kindles or other electronic readers, MP3/4 type media devices, etc.) should be silenced and concealed during class.
8. **Contacting the Instructor:** Please stop by during office hours if you are concerned about any aspect of the course, feel you need extra help, or are interested in pursuing ideas that come up in the course. You may also email me with any questions or to schedule a conference outside of office hours. I am always willing to meet with you regarding any course issue, including your grades. However, do be aware that it is unethical to ask your instructor to arbitrarily change your grade, even if you feel that you have a good reason for it (i.e. needing a particular grade to get into a Greek house, be accepted to medical or business school, keep a scholarship, etc.). If you have a question about your grades, you should visit during office hours or email to set up a meeting time. Please be aware that I will not respond to emails requesting information about grades.
9. **Honor Code & Academic Dishonesty:** I expect all members of this class to uphold the highest standards of honesty about their written work. Stealing and passing off as your own someone else’s ideas or words, or using information from another’s work without crediting the source, is called “plagiarism.”

Any work submitted to meet a requirement or to earn a grade in this course is governed by the SMU Honor Code. The SMU Honor Code ([http://smu.edu/studentlife/studenthandbook/PCL\\_05\\_HC.asp](http://smu.edu/studentlife/studenthandbook/PCL_05_HC.asp)) states:

The general principles for all honest writing can be summarized briefly. Acknowledge indebtedness:

1. Whenever you quote another person's actual words.
2. Whenever you use another person's idea, opinion, or theory, even if it is completely paraphrased in your own words.
3. Whenever you borrow facts, statistics, or other illustrative material - unless the information is common knowledge.

When you prepare your essays and assignments, if you use sources other than your own ideas, you will need to be meticulous about giving credit to any and all sources, whether directly quoted (even a few words) or paraphrased. We will discuss in class how you should go about doing this; however, if at any time you have questions, please let me know.

Because one of the goals of this course is to help you improve your writing and research skills, plagiarism hurts you as much as it does anyone. If you plagiarize another's work, you will not be receiving the feedback you need to improve your own writing. Therefore, **there will be a zero-tolerance policy for any type of plagiarism in this class.** All incidents of plagiarism will be penalized, reported, and kept on file in the Office of the Dean of Student Life. A plagiarized assignment will receive a failing grade of **zero**.

### University Policies

1. **Disability Accommodations:** Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Disability Accommodations & Success Strategies (DASS) to verify the disability and to establish eligibility for accommodations. Students may call 214-768-1470 or visit <http://www.smu.edu/alec/dass> to begin the process. Once registered, students should then schedule an appointment with the instructor to make appropriate arrangements. Please do this as early as possible in the semester; last-minute or ad hoc accommodations may not be possible.
2. **Religious Observance:** Religiously observant students needing to be absent on holidays that require missing class should notify their instructors in writing at the beginning of the semester, and should discuss with them, in advance, acceptable ways of making up any work missed because of the absence. (See University Policy No. 1.9.)
3. **Excused Absences for University Extracurricular Activities:** Students participating in an officially sanctioned, scheduled University extracurricular activity should be given the opportunity to make up class assignments or other graded assignments missed as a result of their participation. It is the responsibility of the student to make arrangements with the instructor prior to any missed assignment for making up the work. (University Undergraduate Catalogue)

## Schedule of Assignments

(subject to revision)

All reading and assignments must be completed by the due date noted on the syllabus. Please print from Blackboard and bring to class any readings marked (Bb); you will need hard copies to annotate and use during class discussions. Please bring paper and pens/pencils to every class.

### Unit 1: The Great Fire of London

#### Week 1

T 1/17 Course introduction; Sign up for oral presentations  
[Bring *A Writer's Resource (AWR)* to class]

Th 1/19 Strategies for finding sources; **In-class diagnostic essay**  
[Bring *AWR* and 2 reliable writing instruments to class; Print and bring signed Syllabus Contract (Bb) to class]

#### Week 2

T 1/24 Discuss Pepys' *Diary* (Bb); Discuss diagnostic essays and strategies for critical reading & summarizing; **Presentation 1**  
[Bring Pepys, Wall, and *AWR* to class; Print and prepare Discussion Prep Sheet (Bb) and bring to class]

Th 1/26 Discuss Wall article (Bb); Intro to evaluating articles & sources; **Presentations 2 & 3**  
[Bring to class a 1 paragraph summary of Wall's article]

#### Week 3

T 1/31 Discuss embedding quotations and *Criteria* pp. 80-85; Discuss Dryden's "Annus Mirabilis" (Bb); Intro to Invention  
[Bring *Criteria* and *AWR* to class]

Th 2/2 Thesis workshop; Strategies for organization  
[Post thesis to Bb discussion board before class; Bring *AWR* to class]

#### Week 4

T 2/7 Peer critique; Strategies for revising & editing; Sign up for conferences  
[Bring 2 copies of your Essay 1 outline to class; Bring *AWR* to class]

Th 2/9 No class: Individual conferences for Essay 1

### Unit 2: *Contagion* & Fictional Representations of Disaster

#### Week 5

***M 2/13 at 5:00pm Optional screening of Contagion in Fondren (FLE 109B)***

T 2/14 **Essay 1 Due**; Discuss Barney & Scheck article (Bb); Strategies for using film as evidence; **Presentation 4**

Th 2/16 Discuss *Contagion*; **Presentation 5**

[Bring to class a 1 paragraph summary of *Contagion*; You must have watched and taken notes on the film by this day]

#### Week 6

T 2/21 Continue discussing *Contagion*; Invention workshop for Essay 2; **Presentation 6**

Th 2/23 Workshop/peer review for Essay 2 theses and outlines

### **Unit 3: Genre, Representation, & Hurricane Katrina**

#### Week 7

T 2/28 **Essay 2 due**; Intro to Unit 3; Discuss Moeller article (Bb) & visual representations of Katrina (*A.D.* graphic novel and assigned images); **Presentations 7 & 8**

Th 3/1 Discuss Žižek on violence (Bb) & short story (TBD); **Presentations 9 & 10**

#### Week 8

T 3/6 Discuss Tom Junod article & McSweeney's excerpts (Bb); Strategies for synthesis; **Presentations 11 & 12**

[Bring *AWR* to class]

Th 3/8 **Presentation 13**; Essay 3 invention workshop; Strategies for Comparison/Contrast  
[Bring *AWR* and completed worksheet to class]

#### Week 9

T 3/13 No class: Spring Break

Th 3/16 No class: Spring Break

#### Week 10

T 3/20 No class: individual conferences

Th 3/22 No class

### **Unit 4: The Research Paper**

#### Week 11

T 3/27 **Essay 3 due**; Intro to the Research Paper; Annotation workshop and note-taking strategies; **Presentations 14-15** (if necessary)  
[Read *AWR* pp. 265ff and bring *AWR* & *Criteria* to class]

Th 3/29 Library research day; Meet at Fondren circulation desk  
[Read *AWR* pp. 204ff before class]

#### Week 12

T 4/3 **RP prospectus (with tentative thesis) due**; Thesis workshop

Th 4/5 **Annotations 1-3 due**; Discuss *Criteria* pp. 134-145  
[Bring *Criteria* to class]

#### Week 13

T 4/10 Draft of **Annotated Works Cited page due**; MLA documentation workshop

Th 4/12 **RP Outline due**; Organization workshop; Sign up for conferences

#### Week 14

T 4/17 No class: Individual Conferences

Th 4/19 No class: Individual Conferences

#### Week 15

T 4/24 Strategies for Introductions & Conclusions; Revision Workshop  
[Complete Intro exercise; Bring a complete, revised draft of your paper to class]

Th 4/26 **Final Research Paper due**