

Apocalyptic Literature
Mr. Langerman



Today, the apocalypse pervades the American imagination. Religious evangelical prophets predict Judgment Day is at hand. Political and environmental activists warn of the coming end through nuclear annihilation or climate change. Countless post-apocalyptic films and video games titillate the imagination with different scenarios for human extinction. Even music genres like metal depict mass destruction. Through poetry, novels, film, and graphic novels, this course will explore the origins of our contemporary obsession with the apocalypse and ask how current apocalyptic literature has transformed since its biblical origins with the Book of Revelations.

At stake is understanding how the problems that modernity posed at the beginning of the 20th century still haunt us. In this course, we will explore the following topics: the dangers of science and progress, the question of theodicy and the problem of evil, the difficulties that the Holocaust poses to our basic assumptions about ethics, questions surrounding which forms of political and moral authority are most valid, and ultimately, what it means to be human and have purpose in one's life. Ultimately, students will use the argumentation and writing skills developed in this course to make original claims about human existence using apocalyptic literature.

Grading:

- **Essays: 50%** – students must complete the three assigned essays to pass the course. **Failure to complete one or more of the essays will result in an immediate F in the course.** Moreover, **extensions will not be given on any major writing assignment** content and skills of the course through participation. Participation will be graded frequently **in this course**. Since each writing assignment is a multiweek endeavor, it is the student's responsibility to pace out the workload and not leave the writing for the night before it is due. **Essays will receive a full-grade letter deduction for every day that it is late.**
- **Participation: 25%** – Instead of burdening students with excess filler homework assignments, students will be held accountable for mastering the content and skills of the course through participation. Grades for this category will be based on three standards:
 1. **Willingness:** When a student is called on, is he willing to engage in a sustained dialogue or does he shut down, give up easily, and avoid answering the question?

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2. **Preparedness:** Has the student completed the reading and prepared for class in a way that he can engage in discussion or is he clearly unprepared?
 3. **Attitude and Behavior:** Is the student respectful, attentive, and facilitate classroom discussions or does he distract others, talk out of turn, and disrupt the class? Falling short in this standard is the quickest way to have one's participation grade lowered.
- **Non-compositions: 25%** – Every other assignment will be entered in the non-composition category. Since there are few daily homework assignments given in this course besides the reading, most of the points in this category will be quizzes and tests on the readings.


Course texts – Here are the texts and films that will be explored during the class. For essays, if a student writes on a film, they will be responsible for either renting or purchasing that film on their own.

- Elie Wiesel's *Night*
- Walter Miller Jr.'s *A Canticle for Leibowitz*
- Kurt Vonnegut's *Galápagos*
- Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*
- Alan Moore's *The Watchmen* (graphic novel)
- Alfonso Cuarón's *Children of Men* (R)
- Other films may include:
 - *Akira* (R)
 - *Ex-Machina* (R)
 - *12 Monkeys* (R)
 - *Wall-E* (PG)
 - *Interstellar* (PG-13)
 - *Snowpiercer* (R)
 - *Matrix* (R)

Other important policies:

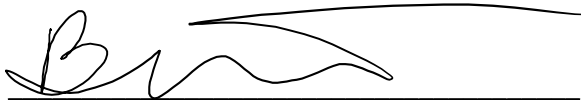
- **Stay updated on assignments and grades through Canvas** – Every assignment will be posted in advance on Canvas and graded there as well. If students have any questions regarding homework or want a snapshot at their most current grades, please check Canvas, not PowerSchool. PowerSchool will only be updated periodically throughout the semester.
- **Appropriate use of tech** – Each student must have their Surface but Surfaces will only be used if Mr. Langerman explicitly tells students to take them out. Notes cannot be taken on a Surface or laptop. Each student must have a notebook or a binder with paper.
- **Bathroom and food** – If you need to go to the bathroom, then go. You do not need to ask. You are allowed to eat food in my class, as long as you do not make a mess, it does not distract others, and it does not impact your ability to take notes or be engaged.

I hereby certify that I have read the above course description and understand the major policies:



(Student signature)

I have discussed the above course description with my son and approve that my son is allowed to read the above texts and films:



(Parent signature)