

University of Puerto Rico--Mayagüez  
 College of Arts and Sciences, Department of English  
**Studies in Literature and Language** (INGL 3300-066)  
 Chardón 125--T-Th 12:30-1:45  
 Dr. Gregory Stephens (211OF; ext. 6135; [gregory.stephens@upr.edu](mailto:gregory.stephens@upr.edu))  
 Office Hours: T-Th 8-9 a.m.; W 10-12:30

**Class Theme: “Post-Apocalyptic Literature and Film”**

**1. General Information:**

Alpha-numeric codification: INGL 3300  
 Course Title: **Studies in Literature and Language**  
 Number of credits: 3  
 Contact Period: 3 hours of lecture per week

**2. Course Description:**

In this survey of post-apocalyptic fiction as a best-selling genre of our era, students explore the roots of and development of this genre through three primary perspectives: questions of genre, questions of ethics, and questions of culture.

**3. Pre/Co-requisites and other requirements: N/A**

**4. Instructional Strategies**

Lecture & discussion accompanied by film clips, and a variety of audio-visual teaching aides

**5. Minimum or Required Resources Available:**

Classroom, blackboard, overhead projector, tape player, VCR/DVD player; audio films based on some of the material to be covered, computers, internet connection

**6. Evaluation Strategies**

|  | Quantity | Percent     |
|--|----------|-------------|
| <b>Quizzes /in-class writing</b> (low score dropped)             | <b>7</b> | <b>30</b>   |
| <b>Presentations</b> (group projects / written summary)          | <b>1</b> | <b>10</b>   |
| <b>Journals (2)</b> (responses to readings; 250 words)           | <b>2</b> | <b>10</b>   |
| <b>Critical responses (2)</b> [300 words on readings/clips]      | <b>2</b> | <b>20</b>   |
| <b>Final Essay</b> (revision/expansion or prior essay 500 words) | <b>1</b> | <b>10</b>   |
| <b>Final Exam</b>  |          | <b>10</b>   |
| <b>Attendance, Participation</b>                                 |          | <b>10</b>   |
| <b>TOTAL:</b>  |          | <b>100%</b> |

**7. Bibliography / Required texts:**

- 1). *The Giver*, 1993 by Lois Lowry;
  - 2). *The Road*, 2006 by Cormac McCarthy;
- Other required stories & essays will be posted on class webpage (e-courses)

**8. Course Objectives:**

After completing this course, students will: a) write coherent essays which develop a focused narrative; b) identify the utopian dimensions of “end of the world” narratives; c) trace the connection between written and filmic adaptations of such stories; d) connect themes of the post-apocalyptic genre to corresponding issues in politics and popular culture; e) have acquired an expanded English vocabulary; f) improve their ability to engage in close readings of specific scenes; g) improve their skill and comfort level in giving oral presentations.

## **9. Course Policies / Codes of Conduct:**

**The use of cell phones** / other electronic devices *is not permitted* in class. If students ignore this policy, and use electronic devices, they will be asked to leave, and devices may be collected at the start of class and returned at the end. Timely submission of assignments is essential; *late submissions will be penalized one point per day* (off your final grade). Punctuality is expected; students who come in after roll is taken at the beginning of class will receive a “Late” (1/2 attendance); *students more than 10 minutes late will be marked as absent*. The course integrates audio-visual material; *students should take notes during film clips as well as during lectures*, and will be held responsible for lectures and audio-visual material during quizzes. **There are no make-up quizzes, or extra credit work.** The close attention of students is essential, and students who repeatedly talk during lecture or audio-visual material will be marked absent.

### **Academic Integrity Statement**

Plagiarism is defined as “taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as one's own.” Students who plagiarize will be given a zero (0) on the assignment. Students may make use of numerous free on-line services to detect plagiarism in their work, including <http://plagiarism-detect.com/> .

## **10. According to Law 51**

Students will identify themselves with the instructor for purposes of assessment (exams) accommodations. For more information call the Student with Disabilities Office (Dean of Students, Chemistry Bldg, room 019) at 787/265-3862 or 787/832-4040 ext. 3250 or 3258.

## THEMES AND SEQUENCE OF TOPICS COVERED

- 1) Historical Antecedents / Genre. Inter-relationship of utopian and dystopian literatures.
- 2) Science fiction. Post-apocalyptic goes mainstream while on the margins of “literary” fiction. Adaptation introduced; then applied as we examine the differences and similarities between literary and cinematic representations of the post-apocalyptic;
- 3) Young Adult Literature (how the genre entered secondary education, re: *The Giver*);
- 4) Finding meaning or purpose in futures without utopian hopes (*The Road*);
- 5) Student presentations

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

This class explores the roots of and development of the Post-apocalyptic genre through three primary perspectives: questions of genre, questions of ethics, and questions of culture.

A) Generic transformation--what was once considered primarily as genre fiction is acquiring a new status as a pre-eminent form of literature. Edan Lepucki, author of *California* (2014), remarks that “we've seen a *real explosion of literary fiction influenced by genre*,” and that “the rise of literary post-apocalyptic novels is part of a broader trend of genre divides being erased.” This class examines the genre’s inter-textual relationship with film, and various forms of popular culture. While noting precedents in horror and science fiction, we will emphasize a grounding in the deeper currents of utopian and dystopian literature.

B) Ethics—The rapid growth of popularity in this genre is an occasion to bring ethical issues into focus. We will study what prominent writers in the genre themselves have to say about why they use this form, and put them into dialogue with classics of literary and social critique. Walter Benjamin famously wrote that our “self-alienation [is such that] we can contemplate our own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure [a spectacle] of the first order.” This remains a fruitful way to examine the spectacle of our own demise as entertainment. Yet although the post-apocalyptic is most characterized as being about the “end of human civilization,” critics such as Amy Murphy rightly point out that this genre usually functions as an expression of our “utopian desires.”

C) Culture--M.R. Carey notes that while post-apocalyptic film and literature seem to be about horror, it usually offers hope. “We're drawn to the idea of civilization coming crashing to the ground because it would make most of our day-to-day worries irrelevant at a stroke.” We hunger to envision the metanarratives that post-modernism assured us had become irrelevant. This has proven attractive for both writers and audiences. For writers “a post-apocalyptic setting can clear away a lot of unnecessary clutter and let you focus on the big, important stuff however you personally define that” (Carey). Literature is returning to a more narrative-driven approach, and as Lepucki argues, “the apocalypse is a big story — maybe one of our oldest as a species.” PAL allows us to see things whole again. The imagined “world without humans” of post-apocalyptic literature and film has become our primary vehicle for imagining utopian new beginnings. As Martha Bartter sees it, “We long for the opportunity to clean house from top to bottom, to ‘make it new’.” In the house-cleaning of post-apocalyptic literature, contemporary culture has found a utopian vehicle for imagined new beginnings—a way to force ourselves to imagine letting go of the dysfunctional social and personal scripts of the present, and the ever-present past (Faulkner).

### Content Distribution/Weeks

|  | Content  |
|--|--|
| Week 1 (Aug 13-14th)   | Aug. 13. Introduction.<br>Post-Apocalyptic Lit as rooted in utopian vs. dystopian literature.<br><b>Hwk:</b> <b>Order</b> <i>The Giver</i> ; Read <i>The Giver</i> 1-24 (PDF)  |
| Week 2 (Aug 17 <sup>th</sup> – 21 <sup>st</sup> )<br>(No class Sept. 23) | Lecture: Plato’s <i>Allegory of the Cave</i> ); Definitions of apocalypse, etc.<br>In-class: key themes of first 5 chapters: control of emotions; rules<br><b>Read:</b> <i>The Giver</i> , 25-50 (Ch 3-5); “The <a href="#">Comforts of the Apocalypse</a> ” |
| Week 3 (Aug 24 <sup>th</sup> - 28 <sup>th</sup> )                        | Lecture: Questions of genre; YAL (Young Adult Literature)<br><b>Quiz #1</b><br>Lecture/Discussion: Development of the Post-Apocalyptic Genre<br><b>Read:</b> <i>The Giver</i> , (Ch 6-9); “The Utopian Function of Memory in Lois Lowry’s <i>The Giver</i> ” |
| Week 4 (Aug 31-Sep 4 <sup>th</sup> )                                     | Lecture: Questions of Ethics<br><b>Read:</b> <i>The Giver</i> , (Ch 10-13)<br><b>Hwk:</b> Journal Entry #1 (250 words; 3 graphs)   |
| Week 5 (Sep 7 <sup>th</sup> – 11 <sup>th</sup> )<br>(no class Sept. 7)   | <b>Due:</b> Journal Entry #1<br>Lecture: Questions of Culture. <b>Quiz # 2</b><br>Lecture Discussion: Generic Transformation in Post-Apocalyptic Genre<br><b>Read:</b> <i>The Giver</i> , (Ch 14-18)<br><b>[Th Sept. 10 is Monday schedule]</b>              |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Week 6 (Sept 14 <sup>th</sup> – 18 <sup>th</sup> )   | Lecture: Resistance (Dystopian and Utopian dimensions)<br>Clswk: Discuss film adaptation<br>Read: <i>The Giver</i> , (Ch 19-23); “Lois Lowry's and Suzanne Collins' Dystopian Fiction Utopia and Anti-Utopia”<br><b>Hwk:</b> Critical Response #1  |
| Week 7 (Sept 21 <sup>st</sup> - 25 <sup>th</sup> )<br>(No class Wed. Sept 23)                              | <b>Due:</b> Critical Response #1<br>Lecture: Transitional works in the Post-Apocalyptic Genre<br>Clswk Discussion of Presentations. <b>Quiz # 3</b><br>Hwk: Write one paragraph describing presentation; placing the proposed text within the genre, and themes of ethics & culture<br><u>Read:</u> <i>The Road</i> (pp. 1-30) |
| Week 8 (Sept 28 <sup>th</sup> – Oct 2)   | <b>Due: Paragraph of Presentation proposal</b><br>Lecture: Questions of genre (in <i>The Road</i> )<br>Peer Review: Presentation Proposals<br>Sign-up for groups of 3 and setting of dates<br><u>Read:</u> <i>The Road</i> (pp. 31-70)<br><b>Hwk:</b> Journal Entry #2 (250 words; 3 graphs)                                   |
| Week 9 (Oct 5 <sup>th</sup> – 9 <sup>th</sup> )  | <b>Quiz #4</b><br><b>Due: Journal #2</b><br>Lecture: Questions of Ethics<br><u>Read:</u> <i>The Road</i> (pp. 71-120); “Inheritance After Apocalypse”  |
| Week 10 (Oct 12 <sup>th</sup> - 16 <sup>th</sup> )<br>(No class Mon. Oct. 12)                              | Lecture: Questions of Culture.<br><u>Read:</u> <i>The Road</i> (pp. 121-170)   |
| Week 11 (Oct 19 <sup>th</sup> –23 <sup>rd</sup> )  | <b>Quiz #5</b><br>Lecture: The Question of Hope and Redemption<br>Hwk: <u>Read:</u> <i>The Road</i> (171-210);   |
| Week 12 (Oct 26 <sup>th</sup> – 30 <sup>th</sup> )   | Lecture: TBA<br>Discuss film adaptation; Critical Response topics<br><u>Read:</u> <i>The Road</i> (pp. 211-255)<br><b>Hwk:</b> Critical Response #2 (due TH Nov. 12)   |
| Week 13 (Nov 2 <sup>nd</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup> )   | ORAL PRESENTATIONS<br>Class Discussion: Critical Response essays, and presentation topics<br><b>Quiz #6</b><br><u>Read:</u> <i>The Road</i> (pp. 256-end); “There is no God and we are his prophets--Deconstructing Redemption in Cormac McCarthy's <i>The Road</i> ”  |
| Week 14 (Nov 9 <sup>th</sup> - 13 <sup>th</sup> )<br>[T Nov. 10 is Wed. schedule]                          | <b>Due:</b> Critical Response #2 (TH Nov. 12)<br>ORAL PRESENTATIONS  |
| Week 15 (Nov 17 <sup>th</sup> - 21 <sup>st</sup> )<br>(No class Th Nov. 19)<br>[Wed Nov 18 is Th schedule] | Wed – Puerto Discovery<br>ORAL PRESENTATIONS<br><b>Quiz #7</b>   |
| Week 16 (Nov 24 <sup>th</sup> - 26 <sup>th</sup> )   | No class Th Nov 27 <sup>th</sup> (Thanksgiving)<br><b>Hwk:</b> Write Final revised/expanded essay (due Dec. 3)   |
| Week 17 (Nov 30–Dec 4 <sup>th</sup> )  | CONFERENCES<br><b>Due:</b> Th, Dec. 3: Final Essay (revision/expansion)  |
| FINALS (Dec 7 <sup>th</sup> - 16 <sup>th</sup> )   | FINALS WEEK—Final exam time: TBA   |

## READINGS

### Stories

### Allegories/Fairy Stories/Scriptures

### Essays

Rob Goodman, “The [Comforts of the Apocalypse](#),” *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Aug. 19, 2013).

### Novellas / novels

## REVISE BELOW

| <b>11. Course time frame and thematic outline</b>                                      |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| <b>Outline</b>   | <b>Contact Hours</b> |
| Introduction to principles of the analysis of genres in film and fiction               | 6                    |
| Lectures on the historical roots and development of narratives about the “end of time” | 9                    |
| Practice close readings of specific scenes   | 9                    |
| Preparation for, delivery of, and class discussion about oral presentations            | 9                    |
| Conferences with students and peer reviews   | 6                    |
| Introduction to Research Skills and methods of revision                                | 6                    |
| <b>Total hours: (equivalent to contact period)</b>                                     | <b>45</b>            |