

ANG 1750: SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY CULTURAL CRISIS AND POST-APOCALYPTIC NARRATIVES

FALL 2011

INSTRUCTOR: TAIWO ADETUNJI OSINUBI
TIME: TUESDAY 1-4 PM
VENUE: PAV. MCNICHOLL B Z-120 (EXAM: B-3245, PAV. JEAN-BRILLANT)
OFFICE HOURS: MONDAY 14.00-15.30 & TUESDAY 16.15-17.30

“What does the Apocalypse matter, unless in so far as it gives us imaginative release into another vital world? After all, what meaning *has* the Apocalypse? For the ordinary reader, not much.”

–D.H. Lawrence

Apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives constitute popular sub-genres of SF and SF film. Departing from D. H. Lawrence’s provocation statement, I invite students to reflect on a single question: Into what kinds of vital worlds does the apocalyptic imagination release us? Especially popularized by cold-war tensions, visions of ends of the world exist in various forms and go beyond the Biblical. Given the popularization of 3D CGI driven disaster films, these narratives are staples of popular culture. But do they also go beyond mere entertainment? What does the post-apocalyptic allow writers and filmmakers to represent that other narrative modes do not allow? We will frame our inquiries around the basic premise that apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives respond to a sense of cultural crisis. Such feelings emerge as a crisis of faith, political impasse, during economic downturns, or as a heightened awareness of our imagined planetary demise. Through analysis of some novels and films, we will identify the insights these narratives offer.

Books.

Cormac McCarthy. *The Road*.

Nnedi Okarafor. *Who Fears Death?*

Octavia Butler. *Parable of the Sower*.

Max Brooks. *World War Z: an Oral History of the Zombie War*.

Suzanne Collins. *The Hunger Games*.

These books are available at the University of Montréal Bookstore.

Films.

District 9, dir. Neil Bloomkamp.

2012, dir. Roland Emmerich.

Recommended viewing:

Deep Impact, dir. Mimi Leder.

WEEK 1: September 6 th	<i>2012</i> , introductory lecture.
WEEK 2: September 13 th	<i>2012</i> , discussion, analysis & comparison with <i>Deep Impact</i> , dir. Mimi Leder.
WEEK 3-4: September 20 th	McCarthy, Cormac. <i>The Road</i> .
WEEK 4: September 27 th	McCarthy, Cormac. <i>The Road</i> . [Comparison with John Hillcoat’s film version]
WEEK 5: October 4 th	Butler, Octavia E. <i>Parable of the Sower</i> .
WEEK 6: October 11 th	Butler, Octavia E. <i>Parable of the Sower</i> .
WEEK 7: October 18th	MID-TERM EXAM (IN CLASS)
WEEK 8: October 25th	READING BREAK
WEEK 9: November 1 st	Okarafor-Mbachu, Nnedi. <i>Who Fears Death</i> .
WEEK 10: November 8 th	Okarafor-Mbachu, Nnedi. <i>Who Fears Death</i> .
WEEK 11: November 15 th	<i>District 9</i> .
WEEK 12: November 22 nd	Brooks, Max. <i>World War Z: an Oral History of the Zombie War</i> .
WEEK 12: November 29 th	Brooks, Max. <i>World War Z: an Oral History of the Zombie War</i> .

WEEK 14: December 6th Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*.

WEEK 15: December 13th **EXAM WEEK (IN CLASS)**

EVALUATION: Mid-Term Exam 30%; Independent Essay 30%; Final Exam 30%; Participation 10%.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course requires student participation; we will spend at least a sizeable part of each class discussing individual responses to the readings and films. Students are expected to complete all assigned readings. The Mid-Term Exam, worth 30% of your final grade, will include the reading list up to October 11. While the Final Exam, another 30% of your final grade, focuses on the second half of the term, the questions will require knowledge of the critical terms we have acquired over the course of the whole term. The Independent Essay, also 30% of the final grade, gives you the opportunity to write a 6/8-page essay on a topic of your choice. You will write a comparative analysis of a theme in any two books we will read in the course. This essay will be graded on the basis of 1) the quality of the argument, 2) the attention to textual analysis, 3) the use of critical concepts we would have used in the course, and 4) the organization of the essay. **PLEASE PROOFREAD YOUR ESSAYS BEFORE YOU SUBMIT THEM!**

Conduct

All students are required to conduct themselves in a manner that promotes an effective learning environment and according to university rules and regulations on classroom behavior. Since this is a fairly large class, our discussion will work best when everyone gets a chance to participate. This means that we all need to watch the length of our interventions. The best comments tend to be pertinent to readings/discussions and offer insight into the ongoing inquiry. The most helpful questions also tend to be focused.

Academic integrity/Plagiarism

The unacknowledged use of another author's work will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty will be dealt with according to department and university regulations. Students are advised to familiarize themselves with the policies of the FAS: www.fas.umontreal.ca/plagiat. All students are also advised to consult the pages on plagiarism in the FAECUM agenda 2011 -2012. If I find evidence of any form of plagiarism, you may receive a failing grade on an assignment or for the course.

Communication

We shall use several lines of communication throughout the course. You may send me emails regarding any course related issues you would like to discuss, but please allow a window of at least 24 hours—excluding Saturdays and Sundays—for me to respond to your emails. **DO NOT AUTOMATICALLY EXPECT ME TO READ AND RESPOND TO YOUR EMAILS ON THE WEEKEND!** Students are also welcome to meet or call me during my office hours. I will be sending all email communications concerning the course to the umontreal.ca addresses that I receive from the department. It is the duty of each student to reroute emails to other Internet addresses—if they do not use their U de M addresses.

Evaluation policies

Assignments must be submitted in class on the due date unless students request (and receive) an extension. Requests for extensions must be made in writing **before** the due date. Late submissions will be penalized—I deduct 5% for each late day including Saturdays and Sundays. Students unable to write quizzes or exams on the fixed dates need to notify me a week in advance. Those students have to submit a formal request for accommodation.

Please do not email or fax assignments to me.

Assignments that cannot be handed in to me personally should be submitted in the English department main office (C8132-Pavillon Lionel-Groulx) or put in my mailbox.