



## Zombies, Plagues, and Aliens: Post-Apocalyptic Literature and Culture Course Syllabus

The zombie apocalypse horror drama series *The Walking Dead* has been a ratings superstar for AMC for almost eight years now. Last year's ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo reminded the world of the ebola epidemic in several African nations in 2014-2016 during which 28,600 people were infected by the virus and 11,300 were killed. And as our nation's nuclear talks with North Korea are set to resume, we are reminded of the threat nuclear weapons pose in today's world. All of these events and issues are alive and happening now in our world. The simple question we'll be asking ourselves throughout the semester is:

Why this? Why now? Why us?

*Zombies, Plagues, and Aliens* undertakes a close study of the popular genre of post-apocalyptic literature and media. Beginning with an exploration of such contemporary texts as Max Brooks' *World War Z* and Robert Kirkman's *The Walking Dead* and George Romero's 1968 cult classic *The Night of the Living Dead*, we will explore the contemporary context for these popular works to better understand the societal and cultural influences behind these phenomena. The central themes for the course are broad and each will allow us to look at these issues from a variety of perspectives, reflecting the worst and best of humanity:

### ***Confront and dispel . . .***

#### ***WORST***

Fear  
Distrust  
Isolation  
Ignorance  
Violence  
Anger  
Hate  
Prejudice  
Blame  
Weakness  
Blindness

### ***Embrace and exhibit. . .***

#### ***BEST***

Comfort  
Collaboration  
Community  
Understanding  
Freedom  
Faith  
Love  
Trust  
Trust  
Strength  
Self-Discovery

The definition of "post-apocalyptic" is "the time after any period of widespread destruction or disaster." Interestingly, the Greek root of the word "apocalypse" means to uncover or reveal. We will look at each of the texts--both fiction and nonfiction from a variety of media--we encounter with this in mind: What do they reveal about us as Americans or as human beings, both who we were and who we are?

The three units for the course and the major texts associated with each are:

**Zombies 'R Us: *The Walking Dead* and the 21st Century**

- Essays from *The Walking Dead and Philosophy: Zombie Apocalypse Now* (essays)
- *The Walking Dead: A Continuing Story of Survival Horror, Book 1*, Kirkman & Moore (graphic novel)
- Episodes from AMC's *The Walking Dead* (television series)
- *World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie Wars*, Brooks (novel & film)
- *Night of the Living Dead* (film)

**A Plague On All Our Houses: When Disease Rules the World**

- Essays from *The Walking Dead and Philosophy: Zombie Apocalypse Now* (essays)
- *The Hot Zone: The Terrifyingly True Story of the Ebola Virus*, Preston (nonfiction)
- *Frontline: Ebola Outbreak* (PBS documentary)
- *American Experience: Influenza 1918* (PBS documentary)
- *Bird Box* (film)
- *Contagion* (film)

**Life During Wartime: Looking the End of the World in the Eye and Blinking**

- Essays from *The Walking Dead and Philosophy: Zombie Apocalypse Now*
- *The War of the Worlds*, Wells (novel, radio play and film)
- *Frontline: Inside Japan's Nuclear Meltdown* (PBS documentary)
- *Hiroshima*, Hersey (nonfiction)
- *Fail Safe* (film)

Each unit will feature a variety of reading, writing and speaking tasks, encouraging you to tell stories, reflect on experiences and issues, provide information from research, and take a stand on and argue a position. Accordingly, your quarterly grade will be determined using the following categories:

Reading	30%
Writing	30%
Speaking & Listening	20%
Homework	10%
Classwork & Journal	10%

The classroom rules are simple:

1. Be on time. As per school rules, five lates equals a cut, five cuts equals armageddon.
2. Come prepared every day with your device and any related print texts or materials.
3. Strive to be a kind, courteous, and understanding member of our classroom community.
4. Ask questions when you are uncertain or confused about an idea, expectation or assignment. I check my email frequently up until 9 p.m. at night.
5. Engage the material, take intellectual risks, and challenge your own preconceived notions while sharing your thoughts and ideas with your peers and me.