



Capstone Seminar in the Liberal Arts and Sciences
***The Social Construction of an Apocalypse, Infectious Disease, & Literary Dystopias:
The Rise of (Zombie) Terror in the 21st Century***

Course Number/Section: LASC 254

Instructor Names: Dr. Alia Tyner-Mullings, Dr. Karla Fuller, Dr. Lori Ungemah

Days/Times: Wednesdays

Course Location: Dr. Tyner (403), Dr. Fuller (503), Dr. Ungemah (405)

Course ePortfolio: <https://guttman-cuny.digication.com/zombie-apocalypse>

Instructor Information:

Name & Email	Office Hours	Office Phones
Dr. Alia Tyner-Mullings Alia.Tyner-Mullings@guttman.cuny.edu [Module 1]	Monday 10-11a Wednesday 11-12p Room 605	646-313-8052
Dr. Karla Fuller Karla.Fuller@guttman.cuny.edu [Module 2]	Monday 10-12:30am Room 604	646-313-8044
Dr. Lori Ungemah Lori.Ungemah@guttman.cuny.edu [Module 3]	Wednesday 11-12p Room 606	646-313-8053

Course Overview:

Zombies and the zombie apocalypse have infiltrated pop culture. Television shows, movies, and books about this fictional (?) apocalypse entertain us, but—as academics in our various disciplines—we are curious from where this cultural obsession sparked, how it affects our understandings, and why it has gained popularity at this moment in history. In this course, you will investigate the zombie phenomenon through the disciplinary lenses of Sociology, Biology, and Literature to analyze how the metaphor of the undead is a lens through which to view very real contemporary social issues in our world today.

The course is broken into three modules, each module lasts four weeks: Module 1: the Social Construction of the Apocalypse (Professor Tyner-Mullings), Module 2: Infectious Disease (Professor Fuller), and Module 3: Literary Dystopias (Professor Ungemah). Students will rotate between the three professors every four weeks to complete the 12-week semester. As the final course in the Liberal Arts & Sciences program, students are asked to synthesize their skills and prior knowledge through these three interrelated areas of study; each module adds an

additional layer of concepts, texts, and skill development. Students will work on individual and collective projects across the modules as well as a culminating ePortfolio and poster project.

Co-requisites or Prerequisite(s):

Students must have successfully completed 45 credits of the Liberal Arts & Sciences major and be in the last 12-week semester of their studies at Guttman. Students must have successfully completed Introduction to Sociology, Introduction to Biology, and Composition II.

Credits/Contact Hours:

3 hours; 3 credits

Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- 1) Use two or more distinct disciplinary-based perspectives to better understand social issues.
- 2) Demonstrate in writing and through oral presentation his/her individual grasp of biological and social science perspectives on a specific aspect of the social world.
- 3) Demonstrate understanding of inquiry, problem construction, and principles of analysis and synthesis needed for interdisciplinary work and understanding.
- 4) Demonstrate emerging mastery of the complexities of a literary work, the revision process, and various literary elements and techniques.
- 5) Work collaboratively in groups across various disciplines.

Required Materials:

1. Student ePortfolio

2. Books:

- *The Five Stages of Collapse: Survivors' Toolkit* by Dmitry Orlov (selections) [Module 1]
- *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Zombies* by Matt Mogk [Module 2]
- *After the Apocalypse: Stories* by Maureen F. McHugh [Module 3]

Other readings available via the course ePortfolio or in handouts from the professor.

Suggested Materials:

Apocalypse Film Festival: Each Wednesday we will screen a film that addresses the topics covered in our course. Please grab some food, come back to Guttman, and join one of your faculty members in Room 508 for a viewing and discussion. Schedule on p. 9 of the syllabus.

For richer discussions, projects, and assignments, students should consider **reading the books or watching any of the movies or television shows on apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic worlds from the list on pages six and seven** of this syllabus. Other books or movies may also be good sources of information.

Harris, Angelique and Tyner-Mullings, Alia R. 2013. "Writing for the Public" in *Writing for Emerging Sociologists*. Sage: Thousand Oaks, CA

GRADING & ASSIGNMENTS

Due to the interdisciplinary (and moving!) nature of this course, your grade will be compiled by three faculty members. In order to make this transparent, we are using LearnBoost.com so that you can track your grades in the course. You will receive a login and password the second week in class. Please check your grade consistently and bring any questions to the attention of the faculty member from that module of study. Remember: The Capstone course is a requirement to graduate—do not find yourself surprised in June.

Grading:

Attendance & Participation	10%
Module 1 –The Social Construction of an Apocalypse	25%
Module 2 –Infectious Disease	25%
Module 3 – Literary Dystopias	25%
Final Poster Presentation	15%

Assignments:

MODULE 1: NEWSPAPER ARTICLES: For Dr. Tyner, each student will be expected to complete two contributions to a newspaper. They should be no longer than two pages each. You may write it as a feature, an opinion piece, an informational report or two cartoons or advertisements (if you chose to do this for both newspaper assignments, you will have to submit a total of four assignments). These will both be submitted to the class for grading and posted on the course's Apocalypse Now! Newspaper ePortfolio on an appropriate tab/page. Each article must have a headline and the cartoons and ads must have titles and/or a product to be sold. The work must follow the conventions required of a newspaper.

MODULE 1: SOCIAL INSTITUTION EPORTFOLIO: The second assignment for Dr. Tyner is to use our ePortfolio platform to create websites for your assigned social institution. Each website should include the mission of the new institution, its current campaigns and resources, and the staff who work there. Each member of the group will report their specific responsibility and will be both graded on their individual piece and the site as a whole. Each entry of the ePortfolio/website should be two to four paragraphs.

MODULE 2: WEEKLY ONLINE DISCUSSION: With Dr. Fuller, students will be expected to contribute to a weekly online discussion pertaining to the topic(s) covered in class.

MODULE 2: EPORTFOLIO RESPONSE: In Dr. Fuller's classes, at the end of each class period, students will be given a writing prompt that they must answer in their ePortfolio.

MODULE 3: YOUR DYSTOPIAN SHORT STORY: In Dr. Ungemah’s class, you will write and revise a short story during our four weeks together. The story will need to be 5 pages in length, single spaced, and refined to demonstrate your best writing before final submission. The story should explore either a pre-, during, or post-apocalyptic setting, deal with one specific situation or set of circumstances, contain one to a few characters that develop over the story, and explicitly incorporate information gleaned from your previous module(s). The story should have an intentional structure as well as purposeful word choice. You should strive to establish and unique voice for your narrator.

MODULE 3: SHORT STORY ONLINE DISCUSSION: Each week’s readings will require an online discussion of short essay answers via the course ePortfolio that will question your understanding of the week’s assigned short stories, how they do or don’t affect your writing, and connections made to previous module(s) of study from this course.

END-OF-MODULE REFLECTION ESSAYS: At the end of each module, you will be asked to complete a reflection essay that summarizes what you have learned and synthesizes how your current module of study built upon your prior module(s) of study. These essays are both a summative assessment exercise as well as a way for us—your professors—to measure how well the interdisciplinary nature of the course is working.

FINAL POSTER PRESENTATION: You will create a final capstone poster that will provide an audience with a brief synopsis of the work you completed in all three modules and how the work overlaps. Using the knowledge you have acquired from all three modules, select one of your final projects (short story, social institutions, or outbreak plan of action) and revise it to include the information you learned from your other two modules. For example, if you selected your short story, you will go back and revise it to include information you learned from Dr. Fuller and Dr. Tyner. Your poster will highlight the important elements of all three modules into a coherent presentation of your post-apocalyptic world. Please see the example posted on ePortfolio.

REQUIREMENTS & COURSE POLICIES

Take home written assignments should be typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12-point font. Any included citations should be written in American Psychological Association (APA) format.

Attendance & Participation:

The importance of your attendance in each class is self-evident. Your *consistent, punctual presence* and *active participation* in class, assigned events, reading, discussion, and assignments positively impact your grade. Students should be prepared and are expected to read the required chapters. Students will be expected to collaborate with their classmates when working in groups and complete any in-class writing assignments or activities.

We take seriously our obligation to respect your time, effort, and tuition dollar to make each class as productive and worthy of your time as possible. Therefore, *how* we all show up each day matters. If your presence, pattern of lateness or absenteeism, or lack of active participation in any way prevents you or others from achieving learning goals, we reserve the right to ask you to meet with us to determine how we can help you to problem-solve.

As this course represents the culmination of your time at Guttman, the completion of your classes in the school and your transition to your next step, we have a very strict attendance policy. **If you are absent more than twice (which is the equivalent of two weeks), you will fail the course. If you are more than 15 minutes late to the class, you will be marked as absent.**

Deadlines:

Assignments are to be submitted electronically to the course or uploaded to your ePortfolio, according to the instructions given by your professor, before the beginning of the class in which they are due and/or by the given deadline. If the assignment is meant to be in hard copy, it must be handed in on paper by the end of the class for which it is due, unless otherwise instructed.

Appropriate Use of Technology:

Phones, laptops, tablets and other electronic tools are a necessity for all of us in the workplace and are used for appropriate functions, during appropriate times, and in appropriate places. Guttman is our workplace. We understand that in some instances you may need to take a phone call or text a family member or employer during the school day. If you have an emergency and you need to take a call, please step out of class for a moment, keep the volume low and return when you have finished it.

At all other times, personal, non-instructional use of technology is considered inappropriate and you will be asked to put the device away. If you are working on an independent assignment during class time and music as background noise is helpful to your thinking, please feel free to use headphones or earbuds at a volume that can be heard only by you. If it is loud enough that your classmates or instructors can hear it, it is too loud. Collaborative work does not count as an independent assignment.

Movies, Books, & Television Shows

(*Indicates that this film/TV show will be screened during the course's weekly Film Festival):

Movies	Movies (cont.)	Movies (cont.)	
28 Days Later*	The Matrix*	The Host	
After Earth	The Road	Books	
Blindness*	Wall-E*		<i>The Cell</i> by Stephen King
Contagion*	Warm Bodies		<i>The Road</i> by Cormac McCarthy
Day of the Dead	Waterworld		<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> by Margaret Atwood
I Am Legend*	World War Z*		<i>Oryx & Crake</i> by Margaret Atwood
Land of the Dead	Zombieland		<i>MaddAdam</i> by Margaret Atwood
Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome	Deep Impact		<i>Brave New World</i> by Aldous Huxley
Melancholia	Armageddon		<i>Zone One</i> by Colson Whitehead
Needing a Partner for the End of the World	The Living		<i>The Walking Dead</i> by Robert Kirkman [comic]
Night of the Living Dead*	When the Wind Blows		<i>The Age of Miracles</i> by Karen Thompson Walker
Oblivion	Attack the Block		
Planet of the Apes	Children of Men		<i>Blindness</i> by Jose Saramago
Terminator	12 Monkeys		<i>The Hunger Games, Catching Fire, or Mockingjay</i> by Suzanne Collins
Terminator II	War of the Worlds		<i>After the Snow</i> by S.D. Crockett
Terminator: Salvation	Divergent (3/21)		<i>Life as We Knew It, The Dead & the Gone, or This World We Live In</i> by Susan Beth Pfeffer
The Book of Eli	Noah (3/28)		
The Cell			<i>Ready Player One</i> by Ernest Cline
The Day After Tomorrow	Pompeii (2/21)		<i>The House of the Scorpion</i> by Nancy Farmer

Books (cont.)		TV
<p><i>Divergent, Insurgent, or Allegiant</i> by Veronica Roth</p> <p><i>How I Live Now</i> by Meg Rosoff</p> <p>Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Season 8 [Comic]</p> <p>Angel: After the Fall [Comic]</p> <p><i>The Gathering Dead, The Rising Horde, or Left with the Dead</i> by Stephen Knight</p> <p><i>Parable of the Sower</i> or <i>Parable of the Talents</i> by Octavia Butler</p> <p><i>When the Tripods Came, The White Mountains</i> or <i>The City of Gold and Lead</i> by John Christopher</p>		<p>The Walking Dead*</p> <p>Falling Skies</p> <p>Firefly</p> <p>The Stand</p> <p>Jericho</p> <p>Defiance</p> <p>Revolution</p> <p>Robotech</p> <p>Terminator: The Sarah Connor Chronicles</p>

Apocalypse Film Festival

In addition to the three-hour class per week, we will hold an Apocalypse Film Festival during the duration of this course. Films will be screened weekly and rotate in apocalyptic themes in order to build your background knowledge about various scenarios, to provide us all with a common visual vocabulary, and to give you ideas for your projects in each section of your capstone course. These screenings are not mandatory, but they are encouraged.

You may bring food to the screenings. At least one of your three professors will be there to moderate discussion and to take attendance.

They will be held Wednesdays, 7pm, in Room 409.

The schedule is as follows:

February 11th--*Warm Bodies* (zombie apocalypse) Course launch party! Come get your syllabus, hear your professors explain the unique nature of the course, ask questions, eat snacks, and watch *Warm Bodies*.

March 5th--*Contagion* (infectious disease)

March 12th--*The Day After Tomorrow* (natural disaster)

March 19th--*District 9* (alien invasion)

March 26th--*Terminator* (technology apocalypse)

April 2th--*World War Z* (zombie apocalypse)

April 9th--*28 Days Later* (infectious disease)

April 23rd-- COMMUNITY DAYS – No Movie

April 30th--*Deep Impact* (natural disaster)

May 7th--*Night of the Living Dead* (zombie classic!)

May 14th--*Outbreak* (infectious disease)

May 21st--*The Happening* (strange natural disaster)

May 28th--*Cloverfield* (alien invasion)

June 4th--*The Matrix* (technology apocalypse)

OUTLINE OF MODULES

MODULE 1 - THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF AN APOCALYPSE

Week 1: The meaning of meaning: Students will explore the social construction of social science concepts such as social problems, social panic and collective behavior.

Assignment: Newspaper article 1: The Event

You will take a current social issue and follow it through to an apocalyptic conclusion.

This will create the structure for the world within which your short story characters live.

Week 2: Defining our apocalypse: Students will examine the trajectory of our social institutions and how we will meet the needs of a new society.

Assignment: ePortfolio, first draft: Social Institutions

You will design a social institution to serve the needs of the society that develops after your apocalypse.

Week 3: Power and its abuse: Students will explore the deviant aspects of society and the way in which new resources are distributed.

Assignment: Newspaper article 2: The Life

You will write an article describing an interaction in which an individual interacts with your social institution. This individual must be a character in your short story in module 3.

Week 4: Who we are: The final social science module will dissect the culture that will arise with the changes in our society and elaborate on how we develop, change or maintain it.

Assignment: ePortfolio, final draft: Social Institutions. End-of-Module Reflection Essay.

THIS CALENDAR IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

MODULE 2 - INFECTIOUS DISEASE

Week 1: Public health and infectious disease: Students will be introduced to the fields of public health and epidemiology through a historical view of actual and fictional viral epidemics (Ebola, rabies, black plague, yellow fever, cholera, 1918 influenza, typhus, AIDS, zombieism, vampirism and lycanthropy).

Assignments: Weekly online discussion, ePortfolio response 1 - Epidemics that shaped history

Week 2: Zombie physiology I: Students will explore the physiology of viral epidemics throughout history and compare them to the portrayal of viral epidemics in film and literature. Students will work with a medical doctor to learn how to diagnose and propose treatments of fictional viral diseases.

Assignments: Weekly online discussion, ePortfolio response 2 – How to diagnose zombieism (and other health conundrums)

Week 3: Zombie physiology II: Students will explore human anatomy to identify physiological causes of fictional viral diseases and analyze brain function to expand ideas on the roots of social deviancy as discussed in Module 1.

Assignments: Weekly online discussion, ePortfolio response 3 – Zombie neurology: identifying the kill zone

Week 4: Starting anew: Analyzing the concept of social panic (from Module 1) through the lens of infectious disease, students will propose plans for institutional responses to outbreak. Students will synthesize the lessons learned in Modules 1 and 2 to devise a treatment or eradication program to eliminate a fictional epidemic in NYC.

Assignments: Weekly online discussion, ePortfolio response 4 - Curing and managing the zombie scourge. *End-of-Module Reflection Essay.*

THIS CALENDAR IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.

MODULE 3 - LITERARY DYSTOPIAS

Week 1: Beginning of Days/End of Days: Students will explore stories that pertain to the end of the world by first exploring creation myths. In this investigation, as students define cosmogony they will create definitions for destruction narratives as well. This will lead into a discussion of “A Change of Seasons” and the use of plagues as a means of destruction through a study of Exodus. Lastly, we will discuss the short story as a literary genre and the module assignment.

Assignments: Read: “The Naturalist” and “Going to France” from After the Apocalypse and “The Yellow House” (in the ePort) and contribute to online discussion. Write: Your first draft of your short story.

Week 2: The Idea of Resetting Planet Earth: Students will explore the idea of prophets and predications across time as well as the need to reset the world through looking at the writings of Nostradamus and the Old and New Testament. The concept of infectious disease (plague!) from Module 2 will be explored parallel to our readings this week. We will discuss the short stories read for HW for setting and structure and revise and grow the drafts of the students’ stories.

Assignment: Read: “Special Economics” and “After the Apocalypse” from After the Apocalypse and contribute to the online discussion. Write: Revise for setting and structure and add to your short story.

Week 3: Dystopia—Now what?: What is a dystopia? What happens to resources? What happens to humanity? What does it mean to survive? Is survival sufficient? These questions will be explored through short stories as well as current films and television. Using knowledge gleaned from Module 1 on the Social Construction of the Apocalypse, they will connect what they learned to how society tries to rebuild in the stories we read. They will use this study to develop the characters, details, and plot of their story.

Assignment: Read: “The Lost Boy” and “Honeymoon” from After the Apocalypse and contribute to the online discussion. Write: Revise for character, detail, and plot and add (or cut) to your short story.

Week 4: Why Apocalypse/End-of-Days/Dystopian stories? Looking at excerpts from texts from the medieval era (Lais de Marie de France) to present (*Divergent*, *Noah*, *The Hunger Games*, *The Road*), students will debate the purpose and function of dystopian literature. A discussion of the stories read for HW will be included in addition to the final revisions of the students’ creative story of a modern dystopia.

Assignment: Your dystopia: Final revisions/edits, refine moral/message. End-of-Module Reflection essay.

THIS CALENDAR IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE.