

**UH 4000-01: Surviving Apocalypse**  
**Spring 2021, Online with set meet time**  
**Tuesdays from 2:00-3:20 pm**

**Dr. Hope Jennings, Department of English Language and Literatures**

**Email: [hope.jennings@wright.edu](mailto:hope.jennings@wright.edu)**

**Office Hours: By appointment (online or email)**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Although apocalypse is a narrative about the end of a world, it is equally interested in its own aftermath, the post-apocalypse, and thus invested in questions of survival and recovery. In the wake of Covid-19, while the global scale of illness and death and the extensive disruptions to normal life might feel like the end of the world for some people, many others have already experienced a long history of violence and vulnerability. In this sense, the apocalypse is not the same for everyone, often exposing the ongoing inequalities of economic precarity and systemic oppression. In this course, we will read a range of contemporary novels that express a clear concern for not only who survives the apocalypse but what that survival looks like for different groups of people. How does the apocalypse give voice to the oppressed? How does it function as a response to contemporary anxieties and traumas? How does it engage with utopian visions or demands for a better world? We will primarily focus on plague or pandemic fiction alongside selected chapters from David Quammen's *Spillover*, which provides a nonfiction science account of global viruses and zoonotic diseases. Each chapter will correspond with one of the novels and students will also have access to an interdisciplinary podcast discussion of *Spillover* with Prof. Thomas Rooney from the Department of Biology.

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**REQUIRED TEXTS\***

- Atwood, Margaret. *The Year of the Flood*. Anchor Books, 2010. **ISBN: 9780307455475**
- El Akkad, Omar. *American War*. Vintage, 2018. **ISBN: 9781101973134**
- Erdrich, Louise. *Future Home of the Living God*. Harper, 2017. **ISBN: 9780062694065**
- Mandel, Emily St. John. *Station Eleven*. Vintage, 2015. **ISBN: 9780804172448**
- Quammen, David. *Spillover: Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic*. W.W. Norton, 2012. **ISBN: 9780393346619**
- Sweterlitsch, Tom. *The Gone World*. Putnam, 2018. **ISBN: 9780425278901**
- Whitehead, Colson. *Zone One*. Anchor, 2012. **ISBN: 9780307455178**

*\*Supplementary readings are available in Pilot as PDFs.*

**COURSE EVALUATION**

**Grades are based on the following points (1,000 total)**

| <b>Assignment</b>                         | <b>Points</b> |
|---|---------------|
| Participation & Discussion Board          | 250           |
| Website (50 pts) and Blogs (6x50 pts)     | 350           |
| Final Project, Proposal, and Presentation | 400           |

The grading scale is as follows:

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| 90-100% | A |
| 80-89%  | B |
| 70-79%  | C |
| 60-69%  | D |
| 0-59%   | F |

### **Participation (15%)**

We will have a Zoom class discussion of the assigned readings and related critical approaches every Tuesday from 2:00—3:20 pm (classes will **not** be recorded). Students are expected to attend class fully prepared to contribute to discussion, which includes completing all reading assigned for that day, responding to questions, and engaging respectfully with peers. You will also need to prepare at least one question in response to the readings and post this question in the Zoom chatbox. If you meet all of these expectations then you will receive full credit (FC/fully present); if you log in to Zoom but are clearly unprepared or unwilling to participate, do not post a question, or are not present when called on to discuss your question, you will receive partial credit (PC/non-participatory); if you are absent or engage in any disruptive behaviors (see general conduct rules below), you will receive no credit (NC/absent). Simply showing up to class does not mean you are fully present, and absences are factored into your final participation grade, which is based on the average of points that you've earned. **NB:** *Missing more than 6 classes, including partially missed classes, will lead to at least a full letter grade deduction (100 points) from your overall final grade for the course.*

### **Discussion Board (10%)**

For the discussion board, students will respond to a chapter from Quammen's *Spillover* with reflections on how the material in Quammen links to the assigned novels. Responses should be about 150-200 words and are due every other Thursday (starting Week 2) and will be assessed according to the same criteria as your participation grade. Peer responses on discussion board posts are not required but will receive extra credit points (5 points each added to final adjusted grade). **See course website for discussion board guidelines and links to accompanying podcast.**

### **Website (5%) and Blogs (30%)**

You will create a personalized, individual website where you will post a series of blogs in response to the assigned novels. Think of your website as a professional portfolio that showcases the research and writing that you will be doing throughout the semester. You will be updating and posting your assignments to the website when they are due, and at the end of the semester you will be graded on the finalized version of your website (10% of your final grade). The overall assessment of your finalized website will include consideration of its cohesive, appealing, professional appearance, organization, and design. You must do a total of 6 blog posts (50 pts. each) and these will be due every other Thursday (starting Week 3). **See course website for detailed guidelines and rubrics.**

### **Final Project (25%), Proposal (5%), and Presentation (10%)**

The **final project** (worth 250 points) will also be posted to a section of your website; formatting and content will vary depending on students' different approaches. Overall, it should be original, innovative work that combines your personal, academic, and/or professional interests while showcasing your critical and creative skills and strengths. Your project should demonstrate a depth of learning and engagement with the course topic and within the specific contexts of apocalypse studies and the theme of survival. Projects may take any form and do not need to respond directly to any of the assigned novels; rather, your project should work in dialogue with the readings by exploring a specific mode, genre, or topic of apocalyptic literature.

For example, you might write a pandemic journal (fiction or memoir) or a time-travel narrative exploring the before and after of an apocalyptic event, or, you could create an archive of objects and documents meant to survive the apocalypse. Other options could include a research paper or nonfiction essay that explores the history, politics, or religious views of apocalypse; a series of video diaries, podcasts, or interviews exploring participants' experiences of Covid-19; or even a board game created digitally or with a 3-D printer. The options are wide-open and you should be thinking about and developing your project throughout the semester.

During the last week of classes, we will have a project workshop, in which you will be able to discuss your ideas and progress with me and your peers. You will also need to submit the **project proposal form** (worth 50 points) prior to the start of class. During the scheduled exam time, you will provide a **presentation of your project** (worth 100 points) that includes some visual element (like a PowerPoint and/or your website where the project is uploaded). Presentations will be through Zoom and should be approximately 5-10 minutes in length. **See course website for detailed guidelines and rubrics.**

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#### GENERAL EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR ALL WRITTEN WORK

- A = Demonstrates advanced critical thinking skills and outstanding knowledge of the readings and course content. Ideas are original and depth of analysis is excellent. Writing is clear, concise, free of basic errors, easy to follow **and** shows excellent command of language and disciplinary style.
  - B = Demonstrates critical thinking and familiarity with readings and course content; provides relevant examples. Writing is coherent, concise, easy to follow, and **nearly** free of basic errors.
  - C = Demonstrates basic understanding of the readings and other course content and can provide a good summary of material but only provides superficial analysis and support for issues raised. Writing is coherent and easy to follow but wordy, repetitious and/or marred by numerous errors.
  - D = Demonstrates minimal understanding of readings and course content; ideas are vague or not supported by any analysis and shows overall lack of effort. Writing lacks general coherence and shows little to no command of the English language.
  - F = Demonstrates serious lack of understanding of readings and other course content; serious lack of analysis and/or effort. Writing is incoherent and impossible to follow
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#### ACADEMIC HONESTY GUIDELINES & POLICY

Penalties for academic dishonesty and student procedure in academic dishonesty prosecution are clarified in the *Wright State University Student Handbook* and on the Office of Community Standards & Student Conduct website at: <http://www.wright.edu/students/judicial/integrity.html>. Plagiarism is using other people's ideas and/or words without crediting them and is considered intellectual theft; paraphrasing also requires citations and page numbers. For further information about plagiarism, refer to: <http://www.wright.edu/academics/writingctr/resources/plagiarism.html>.

**INSTRUCTOR POLICY ON PLAGIARISM:** If any portion of submitted work is plagiarized, you will receive a "0" on that assignment; if you commit a second offense, regardless of circumstances, you will receive an F for the entire course and may be subject to disciplinary action.

## Class Calendar

| WEEK     | DATE | Assigned Reading & Due Dates (Schedule subject to changes)         |
|----------|------|--|
| ONE      | 1/12 | Introduction to the Class  |
| TWO      | 1/19 | Margaret Atwood, <i>Year of the Flood</i> , pp. 1-192              |
|          | 1/21 | Discussion Board: Quammen, Chap. 1                                 |
| THREE    | 1/26 | Margaret Atwood, <i>Year of the Flood</i> , pp. 195-431            |
|          | 1/28 | Blog # 1   |
| FOUR     | 2/2  | Louise Erdrich, <i>Future Home of the Living God</i> , pp. 3-119   |
|          | 2/4  | Discussion Board: Quammen, Chap. 3                                 |
| FIVE     | 2/9  | Louise Erdrich, <i>Future Home of the Living God</i> , pp. 123-267 |
|          | 2/11 | Blog # 2   |
| SIX      | 2/16 | Emily St. John Mandel, <i>Station Eleven</i> , pp. 3-164           |
|          | 2/18 | Discussion Board: Quammen, Chap. 4                                 |
| SEVEN    | 2/23 | Emily St. John Mandel, <i>Station Eleven</i> , pp. 167-333         |
|          | 2/25 | Blog # 3   |
| EIGHT    |      | <b>NO CLASSES: Spring Break</b>                                    |
| NINE     | 3/9  | Omar El Akkad, <i>American War</i> , pp. 3-211                     |
|          | 3/11 | Discussion Board: Quammen, Chap. 5                                 |
| TEN      | 3/16 | Omar El Akkad, <i>American War</i> , pp. 215-413                   |
|          | 3/18 | Blog # 4   |
| ELEVEN   | 3/23 | Colson Whitehead, <i>Zone One</i> , pp. 3-128                      |
|          | 3/25 | Discussion Board: Quammen, Chap. 6                                 |
| TWELVE   | 3/30 | Colson Whitehead, <i>Zone One</i> , pp. 131-322                    |
|          | 4/1  | Blog # 5   |
| THIRTEEN | 4/6  | Tom Sweterlitsch, <i>The Gone World</i> , pp. 1-173                |
|          | 4/8  | Discussion Board: Quammen, Chap. 9                                 |
| FOURTEEN | 4/13 | Tom Sweterlitsch, <i>The Gone World</i> , pp. 177-388              |
|          | 4/15 | Blog # 6   |
| FIFTEEN  | 4/20 | Final Project Proposal Form and Workshop                           |
| EXAM WK  | 4/29 | Final Project and Presentation, Thursday 2:45-4:45 pm              |

### GENERAL CONDUCT & COURSE POLICIES

- You are expected to compose yourself as if in a professional environment. This includes attending class regularly and on time, being prepared for each class session, and contributing to course requirements as if you were in a workplace. Unprofessional behavior will imperil your ability to get a good grade, but also your ability to receive a letter of recommendation from me should the need arise. I request that you address me as Dr. Jennings and not by first name.
  - Electronic devices may only be used for taking notes and/or referring to assigned readings. Cell phones must be on silent and video/audio recording of class discussions are not permitted.
  - Respect toward peers and the instructor includes active listening, even if your views differ, and refraining from bigotry and intolerance toward others. Although your individual opinions about the texts and issues explored in this class are encouraged, you must be able to present your interpretations or stance through an informed lens, using critical thinking and/or verifiable evidence beyond personal beliefs or anecdotal experiences (such as reference to textual examples, reliable secondary sources, or socio-cultural, historical, and political contexts).
  - You are expected to follow the class calendar and assignment guidelines. If you are confused about any of these it is your responsibility to ask for clarification, and NOT the night before something is due. I do not accept late submissions and any missing assignment will receive a zero. All submission deadlines are posted in the class calendar below as well as in Pilot.
  - Extensions are granted ONLY in extreme cases of illness or emergency, which must be documented and, if possible, communicated to me *before* the due date and not after the missed deadline. Regardless of circumstances, I reserve the right to deny any requests for extensions and will only grant incompletes to students who have consistently attended class and are missing no more than 1-2 assignments. I do not offer individual extra credit opportunities; extra credit assignments are rarely provided and only as an option available to the entire class.
  - Raider Mail is the best way to communicate with me. You can expect to receive a reply within a 24-hour period on weekdays; I normally do not respond to e-mail on weekends. Check the newsfeed on the course homepage in Pilot for any class updates or info. If I make changes to the syllabus or class calendar, I explain these in class and post them in Pilot.
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### USEFUL CAMPUS & ONLINE RESOURCES

**University Libraries:** The University Libraries are the scholarly information center for the University. In support of the University's mission of educational excellence, the Libraries collect, organize, preserve, and facilitate access to scholarly resources in all formats; support teaching, learning, and research in an intellectually open environment; and provide instruction in the use of traditional and new information resources and technologies. The libraries' online catalog, databases, and interlibrary loan service is essential for conducting research. Web page: <https://www.libraries.wright.edu/>

**New Media Incubator (Inc):** The Inc is an innovative and welcoming space where students get hands-on training with professional production equipment and processes. The editing suites are equipped with industry standard technologies where students learn to create long and short form marketing spots, documentaries, podcasts, news segments, cultural programs, and other projects. Web page: <https://liberal-arts.wright.edu/about/new-media-incubator>

**CATS:** Faculty are not experts in trouble shooting Pilot or computer programs of any type. The quickest way to resolve technical issues is by using the resources at the HELP Desk: 937-775-4827 or 1-888-775-4827.

**The Student Technology Assistance Center (STAC):** Located in the Paul Laurence Dunbar Library, the STAC provides Wright State students with the tools to make productive use of multimedia. Students can create original academic and creative works using either Windows or Macintosh computers. The STAC employs trained student mentors who share a wealth of experience, skills, and backgrounds. In a unique peer-to-peer learning environment, knowledgeable mentors are available to assist students with their projects several hours each week. At other times, the STAC is open and available as a DIY space with access to the latest software applications. The library has technology to borrow such as cameras, tripods, green screens and more for your multimedia projects. Students can also schedule individual appointments with STAC staff for individual help on projects.

<https://libraries.wright.edu/stac/>

**Counseling and Wellness Services:** If you are suffering from depression or have any other mental health concerns, please be aware that counseling services are available on campus. Counseling and Wellness offers a wide range of services to the Wright State University community, including the following: group, individual, couples, and family counseling, crisis intervention, and outreach. They offer specialized services on a variety of mental health, multicultural, diversity, and wellness issues. Location: the bottom level of the Student Union off the Atrium and below the Admissions Office in suite 053. Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Call 775-3407 or stop by to set an appointment. Web page: <http://www.wright-counseling.com/>

**Disability Services:** If you require course accommodations due to a disability, please inform me so we can make arrangements early in the quarter. For more information about support services offered by Disability Services (E186 Student Union), call 775-5680; TTY: 775-5844. Or visit their Web page: [http://www.wright.edu/students/dis\\_services/](http://www.wright.edu/students/dis_services/)