

**SCI-FI AND DYSTOPIAN LITERATURE:
IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT**
FYS ENGL 2370 (CRN 11130) — fall 2017
MWF 8:00-8:50 in Irby 201

Professor: Dr. Katherine E.C. Willis

Office: Irby 317D

Office hours: MWF 9-11 and 1-2 and by appt.

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COURSE SCHEDULE

1. Welcome to your First Year Seminar!
Discussing your goals and learning about the UCA Core mission.
Aug. 25-Sept. 1
Reflective essay due Sept. 6

2. What is speculative literature?
Sept. 6

3. *The Road*, by Cormac McCarthy
Read Sept. 8-15
Writing workshop on Sept. 18
Essay due Sept. 20

4. *The Doomsday Book*, by Connie Willis
Read Sept. 20-27

EXAM 1 (on *The Road* and *The Doomsday Book*) — Sept. 29

Writing workshop on Oct. 2
Group conferences Oct. 3-9
Essay due at the time of your appt.

5. *Bloodchild and Other Stories*, by Octavia Butler
Read Oct. 11-18
Essay/creative project due Oct. 23

6. *Children of Men*, by PD James
Read Oct. 23-30

EXAM 2 (on *Bloodchild* and *Children of Men*) — Nov. 1

Essay/creative project due Nov. 3

7. *The Handmaid's Tale*, by Margaret Atwood **Nov. 10: final date to drop with a W
Read Nov. 3-20
Essay due Nov. 27
8. *1984*, by George Orwell
Read Nov. 27-Dec. 1
(No essay/project on this book)
9. Reflection on your goals and the UCA Core
Dec. 4-6
Final reflection essay due at the time of the final exam

FINAL EXAM (cumulative) — Dec. 11 from 2-4 pm

REQUIRED MATERIALS:

- *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy
- *Doomsday Book* by Connie Willis
- *1984* by George Orwell
- *Bloodchild and Other Stories* by Octavia Butler
- *Children of Men* by P.D. James
- *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood
- other readings and materials (posted/linked online)

ASSIGNMENTS:

Below is an overview of the grade components for this course and the weight assigned to each. The descriptions for each category are an overview; any further requirements/details and information about grading will be distributed separately in assignment sheets. Be sure to save all of your work during the semester.

- 10%** **Participation:** Come to class each day prepared to write and to discuss. Because this is a seminar course, our success as individuals and as a group depends upon your consistent, active, and vocal participation. Good participation means being regularly present *and* active in class, engaging with me and your classmates in generative, constructive discussion, and being prepared for each day of class (i.e., you completed the reading, finished the assignments, arrived with the text in hand, etc). See the rubric online.
- 15%** **Discussion questions:** We will have a discussion question for almost every class. I will provide the question one class in advance. Be sure to obtain the question and think about it in relation to the reading. When you are assigned the lead on the question, you will be responsible for starting class by presenting an original, thoughtful, evidence-based answer. Cite the text and close read in your answer. Your informal presentation will take 3-5 minutes. I will assign each student's dates several classes in advance. Keep track of your date and be sure to be in attendance; because of the tight schedule of the semester, there may not be an opportunity to make up this portion of your grade.
- 20%** **Essays:** At the beginning and end of the semester, we will work on an reflective writing assignment that will help you understand your identity and plans as a student, the UCA Core Mission, and the nature of a university education. You will also have a series of essays related to our readings. You will submit a passage

analysis for *The Road*, *Doomsday Book*, and *The Handmaid's Tale*. You will also submit one for either *Bloodchild* or *Children of Men* (whichever one you don't do an essay on, you will do a creative project on — see below). No essay is required for *1984*. Your essays should be exactly 1.5-2 pages long with MLA document formatting. You choose an important passage and make an argument about its significance through literary analysis. We will workshop the first two essays. Your participation in these workshops counts towards your participation grade (see above). See the assignment sheet and rubric for more information.

- Sept. 6 Reflection essay
- Sept. 20 Essay on *The Road*
- Oct. 3-9 Essay on *Doomsday Book* due at time of conference
- Oct. 23 Essay/creative project on *Bloodchild*
- Nov. 3 Essay/creative project on *Children of Men*
- Nov. 27 Essay on *The Handmaid's Tale*
- Dec. 11 Final reflection essay due

- 5% **Creative project:** For either *Bloodchild* or *Children of Men*, you will complete a creative project as an alternative to an essay (whichever one you don't do a creative project on, you will do an essay on — see above). Your creative project could be a cartoon/comic, a meme, an imaginary thread of text messages/tweets/tumblr comments. Whatever form you choose, the project should represent your interpretation of a key scene or passage. Your project must be accompanied by a full 1-page essay (in MLA document formatting) that explains how you came up with the idea and what you intend for it to convey. See the assignment sheet and rubric for more information.
- 10% **Exam 1:** Expect a combination of passage identification, character identification, plot point recognition/explanation, and short answer (about the length of a concise paragraph).
- 15% **Group Conferences:** For your second essay, you will get feedback from me and your peers in the form of a group conference. In groups of 5 students each, I will provide guidance on ways to improve your work. Your fellow students will contribute as well. You will be able to revise your essay based on this conference experience. You will sign up for time slots as it gets closer to the week. See the assignment sheet and rubric for more information.
- 10% **Exam 2:** Same format as exam 1.
- 15% **Exam 3/Final Exam:** Same format as exams 1 & 2, but with a cumulative portion.

MY POLICIES FOR THIS COURSE:

EMAIL ETIQUETTE:

I will respond to your email within 12 hours (if you do not hear from me in that time window, contact me again). That means you should not email last minute concerns. In addition, I only respond to emails that follow basic etiquette. That includes the following:

1. Salutation line with my name
2. Decent grammar and spelling
3. Signature line with your name

OFFICE HOURS:

My door is open for you during the office hours listed above, so you do not need an appointment to see me then. If you cannot make those times, however, just ask to set up an appointment.

COURSE SCHEDULE:

Readings and assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day on which they are listed. Some days may specify other materials you are required to bring. *Note: I reserve the right to change the schedule below if it will help the class. I will announce any changes in class and via email.*

GRADING POLICIES:

- If you are unable to submit work on time due to an excused reason, it is your responsibility to contact me as soon as possible to document your reason and to make timely alternative arrangements. As the Student Handbook specifies in the section on Attendance, "Make-up examinations and assignments are required only for valid absences as determined by the faculty member. Students who miss an examination or assignment without a valid excuse may receive a failing grade for that exam or assignment."
- **Excused reasons** include (but are not limited to): official university-sanctioned athletic or organizational events (requires appropriate documentation), severe illness, death of a family member, court appearances, jury duty. For such excused reasons, late work will be accepted for full credit. However, be aware that some in-class activities may not be possible to make up.
- **Unexcused reasons** include (but are not limited to): computer/printer malfunctions, traffic problems, family vacations/travel, or forgetfulness. For such unexcused reasons, I might accept late work for partial credit, but you must discuss it with me first. For example, after you discuss it with me, I might accept a late paper for a letter grade off per day late.
- *In all circumstances of unexcused reasons, acceptance of late work and the loss of credit is ultimately at my discretion on a case by case basis.*

ATTENDANCE AND DROP POLICY:

- Participation is part of your course grade, but in a larger sense, all of our other assignments and activities will require you to build on what happens in class. In other words, irregular attendance will affect not just participation but will also hinder your ability to complete major assignments and activities.
- If you are absent or late for any reason, it is your responsibility to let me know in a timely manner, acquire notes from a classmate, and then come see me with questions and concerns.
- I reserve the right to drop students for non-attendance by the date specified in the UCA academic calendar.
- Your attendance at each class meeting throughout the semester is the foundation of your grade in this course. As the Attendance section of the Student Handbook explains, "A student's official program is regarded as his or her obligation to the institution, full performance of which requires regular and punctual class attendance and active participation. A

student is responsible for coming to class prepared, completing any missed work, and knowing the dates and places of required course examinations.”

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:

FOCUS: The starting premise of this course is that speculative fiction (including sci-fi, fantasy, post-apocalyptic fiction, dystopian lit, and many others) is the most “fictiony” fiction there is. Fiction is a broad category of literature. Unlike nonfiction (histories, biographies, diaries, essays, etc.), which covers the world as we know it in its historical and present dimensions, fiction allows writers and readers to explore real ideas, principles, concepts, and truths in a setting that is not real or even realistic. Speculative fiction pushes this “unreal” dimension of fiction to an even greater extreme, setting stories within made-up solar systems, featuring dragons and monsters, giving characters special powers, etc. We will be reading major works from the middle ages to the 21st century, working our way towards a better understanding of why fiction, with all its “falseness,” is every bit as important as factual, historical non-fiction.

COURSE FORMAT: The assignments will strengthen your reading, research, and writing skills for other advanced/graduate courses and for professional work. In other words, regardless of the type of literature you choose to focus on during your time in the program, this course will be practically useful for you.

OBJECTIVES:

- ✓ Analysis: To be able to close read passages collaboratively in order to connect specific details to broader themes and contexts (Communication Goal C).
- ✓ Context: To be able to recognize and identify stylistic and thematic properties of different authors and to study them in light of scholarly research. (Critical Inquiry Goal A).
- ✓ Social and historical contexts: To be able to compare and contrast themes and styles among diverse works and perspectives (Diversity Goal C).
- ✓ Writing: To be able to articulate an original and critical response to literature in the clear, fluid prose of analysis (Communication Goal B).
- ✓ To orient students to the UCA Core mission, goals, and values (FYS rubric — Knowledge of the Core).

UCA CORE:

This course is part of the Diversity component of the Lower-Division Core. Diversity courses promote the ability to analyze familiar cultural assumptions in the context of the world’s diverse values, traditions, and belief systems as well as to analyze the major ideas, techniques and processes that inform creative works within different cultural and historical contexts. For more information, go to <http://uca.edu/core>.

This section is also designated as a First-Year Seminar [FYS] course. The purpose of the first-year seminar is to provide a small-class learning environment to facilitate engagement in academic study at the collegiate level, make a connection to the university, and reinforce the importance of written communication skills.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

In all cases, it is your responsibility as a student to be familiar with all policies and requirements outlined in the Student Handbook. The Sexual Harassment Policy and the Academic Policies are particularly important. The policies below are ones that are most pertinent to our course.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT STATEMENT:

The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Disability Resource Center, 450-3613.

BUILDING EMERGENCY PLANS:

An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at <http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/>. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

TITLE IX DISCLOSURE:

If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to "student-on-student" or "employee-on-student"), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs, and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on the specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit: <https://uca.edu/titleix>. *Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.

COURSE EVALUATIONS:

Student evaluations of a course and its professor are a crucial element in helping faculty achieve excellence in the classroom and the institution in demonstrating that students are gaining knowledge. Students may evaluate courses they are taking starting on the Monday of the thirteenth week of instruction through the end of finals week by logging in to myUCA and clicking on the Evals button in the top right.