

Wretched Worlds Fall 2019

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Office hours: TBD

Course Meetings: TBD

Introduction

In our present age, questions of where the next century will lead us are both insistent and incessant. We “hope for the best,” yet we are constantly preparing for the worst. What does it mean that we cannot help but envision a dark and gloomy future overruled by technology or a lack thereof? Scholars and bloggers alike have attempted to answer this question, and now so will we. Through lenses of literature, television, and film, we will analyze different visions of dystopia and the human fascination with the satirical and dark future. From the Middle Ages to the present, we will examine diverse dystopias and their creators to gain insight into this corrupt genre. We will organize our texts thematically, focusing on past and present dystopias dealing with tribalism, social taboo, science, and the limitation of knowledge. Over the course of our meetings, we will read two novels, a variety of excerpts, and view four episodes of the popular Netflix series *Black Mirror*.

Course Objectives

Through a variety of texts, we will engage ourselves in a realm of dystopias and their “wretched worlds.” We will define what a dystopia is, where it comes from, and examine why we have, and always will be, fascinated with dystopian worlds and visions of the dark future. When we approach texts, we will approach them wholly, examining their creators and historical context along with the worlds themselves. We will search for tropes and traditions in the genre. While we will focus heavily on dystopian literary texts, this nature of this course is interdisciplinary; thus a variety of assignments will be incorporated into the course. Students will explore primarily through creative and argumentative academic writing, but this course will also include a multimedia presentation evaluation. Ultimately, students will be able not only to discuss the genre and its implications, but also how these wretched worlds and dark futures have developed throughout time.

Course Texts

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins
Brave New World by Aldous Huxley
Select episodes of *Black Mirror*, provided by the instructor
Excerpts from other texts and articles on Canvas

Grading

The following is a break down of how grades will be determined in this course. For more information on the assignments, see below. For detailed information, see the Assignment Sheets on Canvas.

4 Response Papers (50 points each) = 200 points
Leading Class Discussion with a Partner = 150 points
Short In-Class Assignments = 150 points
1 Short Argumentative Paper = 100 points
1 Creative Representation = 100 points
Final Multimedia Presentation = 300 points

TOTAL = 1000pts

Response papers. For each of our thematic sections (Tribalism, Social Taboos, Science & Technology, and Knowledge Limitations), you must submit a 1-2 page response paper to some part of the material we have covered. This can include short readings done in class, the short story or excerpt, or the novel readings. While you must submit the response before the end of the unit, the exact date of your submission is up to you. Responses will not be accepted after the conclusion of the unit.

Short argumentative paper. During the first semester of our studies, you must select a dystopian work that we have not discussed and write a 3-5 page argumentative essay about it, linking to the themes we've considered. This work must be approved by me prior to the final submission. It may be a supplementary *Black Mirror* episode, a film, TV show, the entire work of an excerpt we've discussed, or a work you've found in your own research.

Creative work. In order to stretch our creative muscles, you will be required to complete a creative project during the second half of our course. It may be a poem, short story, photo, painting, sculpture, or short film. Any other forms of creative expression may be used if they are pre-approved. Specific requirements for each project are listed in the Assignment Sheet.

Leading class discussion. Over the course of our class meetings, you will be required to lead the second half of class discussion with a partner on a pre-determined day. You will contextualize the day's readings, provide a short activity, and pose insightful questions to fuel the discussion. I am more than willing to work with you to come up with a helpful activity, though you will likely draw inspiration from your fellow classmates and our daily class activities.

Short in-class assignments. We will complete a variety of short assignments throughout the semester including mind maps and group work. All assignments in this category are completion only, and your participation requires your attendance in both presence and mind in class.

Final project. Your final project will incorporate a greater theme you've found within the course. It may be related to how people respond to dystopian fiction within their worlds or within ours, how the environment adapts to the future, or based on creative expression. See the Assignment Sheet for ideas on which direction to take. The project will culminate in a 10-minute class presentation, complete with questions from your peers. This project may be pre-filmed or presented live. You may use Powerpoint or other presentation tools. Also accompanying the project will be a 2-page write up of the major points and ideas.

Course Policies and Resources

Attendance. Attendance and participation is required in this course. Interacting with other students within Collins Living-Learning Center both contributes to the Collins' intellectual life and is important for us to create meaningful class discussion. While your attendance is an important factor in your success in this course, I will not be enforcing a strict attendance policy. However, please keep in mind that the Short In-Class Assignments are worth 150 points, which is 15% of your final grade. If you are not present for these assignments, you cannot receive credit for them. There will be no alternate assignments offered. If you foresee a problem with your attendance in this course that will severely impact your grade, please come and talk to me.

Class Roster. If you prefer to be called a different name than what is listed on the class roster, please let me know. Also, feel free to specify your preferred gender pronoun usage. If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to contact me.

Late assignments. The structure of this course allows you to take your own time with your assignments. However, as you'll see in the assignment descriptions, there are deadlines for which assignments may be turned in. All assignments turned in on the deadline must be done so at the start of class. If you do not meet these deadlines, a 10% deduction will be made for each **calendar day** that the assignment is late.

Meeting with me. I am available to meet with students on the office hours listed on the first page of this syllabus. Office hours conversations can focus on any aspect of the course: ideas, themes, projects, assignments, grading, and drafts. If you are unable to meet during my office hours, please email me with your availability, and I will check my schedule to set up an appointment. I check my email once a day; do not expect an immediate response.

Canvas. Be sure to check Canvas regularly this semester for updates, announcements, and course materials. This is where you will find all of your readings for class that are not in your required texts, and we will frequently use our class page to share and discuss ideas.

Technology in the classroom. I welcome your use of laptops and tablets in class, with the understanding that you limit your use to tasks that are directly relevant to our coursework; other uses are an unfair distraction to those seated around you. Please do not use mobile devices of any kind for texting, checking email, or any other activities not directly related to class discussion. You will receive one warning about distracting use of technology in class. If it technology continues to be a problem, I will be forced to ask you to leave.

Fair Use. The essays and other copyright materials that you will be working with in the course have been made available to you within the provisions of “fair use,” as explained in the US legal code that governs copyright. In general, this means that you will use these materials exclusively for their designated purposes within the course and that you will not post, email, or otherwise distribute them to others outside the class. If you have any questions about fair use, please ask me.

Plagiarism. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course, or in any course on IU’s campus for that matter. Indiana University’s official statement on plagiarism is as follows:

Plagiarism is defined as presenting someone else's work, including the work of other students, as one's own. Any ideas or materials taken from another source for either written or oral use must be fully acknowledged, unless the information is common knowledge. What is considered "common knowledge" may differ from course to course.

- a. A student must not adopt or reproduce ideas, opinions, theories, formulas, graphics, or pictures of another person without acknowledgment.
- b. A student must give credit to the originality of others and acknowledge an indebtedness whenever:
 1. Directly quoting another person's actual words, whether oral or written;
 2. Using another person's ideas, opinions, or theories;
 3. Paraphrasing the words, ideas, opinions, or theories of others, whether oral or written;
 4. Borrowing facts, statistics, or illustrative material; or
 5. Offering materials assembled or collected by others in the form of projects or collections without acknowledgment.

Student disability services. If you require assistance or appropriate academic accommodations for a university-documented disability, please speak with me after class, during office hours, or by appointment. If you have not yet established your eligibility for disability support services through the Office of Disability Services for Students in the Herman B. Wells Library, Suite W 302, please contact them first (812-855-7578).

Veteran Services. If you are a veteran, on active duty, in the reserves, in the National Guard, or a spouse/dependent of a veteran, please let me know if an aspect of your present or prior service affects your ability to fulfill the requirements of the course. I realize that you have no control over training and drill schedules, calls to active duty, GI Bill disbursements, and other aspects of service. I am happy to help in any way I can, especially by putting you in contact with university staff who are trained to assist you. Campus resources for veterans, service members, and families

are located at Veteran Support Services on the mezzanine level in the Indiana Memorial Union. The VSS office can be reached at 812-856-1985, vetserv@indiana.edu, or veterans.indiana.edu.

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). If you are struggling with your mental health, I highly encourage you to check out CAPS, located on the 4th floor of the IU Health Center. It is important to take care of yourself physically and mentally, and CAPS provides a variety of services including: academic concerns, relationship concerns, stress management, power and privilege, time management help, sleeping issues, adjusting to college life, anxiety, depression, substance use, body image, eating and exercising concerns, and sexual assault or abuse. Sessions with CAPS are offered in English, Spanish, and Mandarin. You can schedule appointments at 812-855-5711, or contact their 24-hour crisis line at 812-855-8900.

Writing Tutorial Services (WTS). I encourage you to visit a W131 tutor at Writing Tutorial Services for feedback on your work at any stage of the writing process for both our response papers and argumentative paper. Their incredibly valuable services are free to all IU students. WTS is not a proofreading service. Rather, tutors do something much more valuable: they assist you in developing your ideas and skills in written communication. You can call WTS at 812-855-6738 for hour-long appointments in the Wells Library, and you can check their website (www.indiana.edu/~wts) for hours at other WTS centers.

Course Schedule

This schedule has been created for a course that meets twice a week. It can easily be adjusted to work for a thrice-a-week course.

| Day | Class Topics | Assignments |
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| 1 | What is dystopian literature? How do we define it? Where do we see it? How long has it been around? Does the genre have any constraints? | ASSIGNMENT: SHORT PAPER |
| 2 | Why do we love dystopias so much? What draws us to it? Activities: Fan Fiction readings & discussion of NPR article | NPR article (Teens' Infatuation with Dystopia) on CANVAS |
| UNIT 1 Tribalism | | |
| 3 | Introduction to Tribalism. What does it mean when the future looks like the past? | ASSIGNMENT: RESPONSE PAPER #1 |

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| | Activities: “Men Against Fire” episode of <i>Black Mirror</i> & discussion | |
| 4 | <p>Why do we choose to revert to tribalism in re-imaginings of the world?</p> <p>Activities: Readings of <i>Divergent</i> by Veronica Roth & <i>Candide</i> discussion</p> | Excerpts from <i>Candide</i> by Voltaire, on CANVAS |
| 5 | <p>What are the ways in which dystopian authors divide their worlds? What is the significance of these divisions? Introduction to <i>The Hunger Games</i>.</p> <p>Activities: Readings of <i>The Red Queen</i> by Victoria Aveyard & “The Lottery” discussion</p> | “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson |
| 6 | <p>How do we reach a tribal future? Topics of environmental impact.</p> <p>Activities: Excerpts from <i>Death in the Anthropocene</i> by Ray Scranton & <i>The Hunger Games</i> discussion</p> | <i>The Hunger Games</i> , pg. |
| 7 | <p>What happens at the conclusion of tribal dystopias? Are the tribes eliminated or are new ones formed? <i>The Hunger Games</i> continued.</p> <p>Activities: Scenes from <i>The Hundred</i> & <i>The Hunger Games</i> discussion</p> | <i>The Hunger Games</i> , pg. |
| 8 | <p>Are we meant to see tribalism dystopias as a warning? Of what? Are they unavoidable, unstoppable? What are these authors’ purposes in writing such a wretched world?</p> <p>Activities: TBD readings/showings & <i>The Hunger Games</i> discussion</p> | <p><i>The Hunger Games</i>, pg.</p> <p>LAST DAY TO TURN IN RESPONSE PAPER #1</p> |

| UNIT 2 How Dystopias Employ the Taboo | | |
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| 9 | <p>Introduction to taboo. What constitutes a social taboo? Why do Dystopian authors employ them?</p> <p>Activities: “Shut Up and Dance” episode of <i>Black Mirror</i> & discussion</p> | <p>ASSIGNMENT: RESPONSE PAPER #2; CREATIVE PROJECT</p> |
| 10 | <p>Is there crossover between satirical readings and dystopias? In what ways do we see the genres intermingling?</p> <p>Activities: Excerpts from <i>Gulliver’s Travels</i> by Jonathan Swift & “A Modest Proposal” discussion</p> | <p>“A Modest Proposal” by Jonathan Swift on CANVAS</p> <p>LAST DAY TO TURN IN SHORT ARGUMENTATIVE PAPER</p> |
| 11 | <p><i>The Hunger Games</i> continued. What elements of taboo is Collins using? Why? Is it satirical? Do we see similarities between Swift and Collins?</p> <p>Activities: Excerpts from <i>A Clockwork Orange</i> & <i>The Hunger Games</i> discussion</p> | <p><i>The Hunger Games</i>, pg.</p> |
| 12 | <p>How does dystopian fiction stand out from satirical texts? Are all dystopian worlds satirical? Why or why not?</p> <p>Activities: The Nacerima anthropological satire & <i>The Hunger Games</i> discussion</p> | <p><i>The Hunger Games</i>, pg.</p> |
| 13 | <p>How far is too far? When do satirical and taboo dystopias cease to be effective? Why?</p> <p>Activities: Excerpts from <i>The Handmaid’s Tale</i> by Margaret Atwood</p> | <p><i>The Hunger Games</i>, pg.</p> |
| 14 | <p><i>The Hunger Games</i> conclusion. Revisit: What happens at the conclusion of tribal dystopias? Are the tribes eliminated or are new ones formed? What about at the end of taboo dystopias? Is the</p> | <p><i>The Hunger Games</i>, pg.</p> <p>LAST DAY TO TURN IN RESPONSE PAPER #2</p> |

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| | <p>problem solved? Does it need to be?</p> <p>Activities: Scenes from Hulu's <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> & discussion of <i>The Hunger Games</i></p> | |
| <p>UNIT 3 Worlds Dominated by Technology</p> | | |
| 15 | <p>Sci-Fi Dystopias I. How can we examine the genre with regards to Sci-Fi, and even fantasy? Are there similar crossovers as with satire?</p> <p>Activities: "Hated in the Nation" episode of <i>Black Mirror</i> & discussion</p> | ASSIGNMENT: RESPONSE PAPER #3 |
| 16 | <p>Visit to the Lilly Library. With the help of the amazing staff at the Lilly, we will examine the world in which sci-fi and dystopian sci-fi really began.</p> | "The Machine Stops" by E.M. Forester on CANVAS |
| 17 | <p>Are we living in a dystopia? How is our future in comparison to Huxley's, or other authors we've read? Are there taboos at work, or just differences? Introduction to <i>Brave New World</i> by Aldous Huxley.</p> <p>Activities: Excerpts of <i>1984</i> by George Orwell & <i>Brave New World</i> discussion</p> | <i>Brave New World</i> , pg. |
| 18 | <p>Does modern primitivism apply in science fiction? Why or why not?</p> <p>Activities: Scenes from <i>Westworld</i> & <i>Brave New World</i> discussion</p> | <i>Brave New World</i> , pg. |
| 19 | <p>What is the difference between science fiction and dystopian literature? Which came first? How do the genres affect each other? <i>Brave New World</i> continued.</p> | <i>Brave New World</i> , pg. |

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| | Activities: Excerpts/scenes from <i>Ender's Game</i> & <i>Brave New World</i> discussion | |
| 20 | <p>How do we envision technology in the future? How does social media affect our lives? Do we foresee it gaining momentum or slowing down?</p> <p>Activities: Excerpts from <i>The Circle</i> by Dave Eggers & <i>Brave New World</i> discussion</p> | <p><i>Brave New World</i>, pg.</p> <p>LAST DAY TO TURN IN RESPONSE PAPER #3</p> <p>LAST DAY TO TURN IN CREATIVE WORK</p> |
| <p>UNIT 4 Limitations of Knowledge</p> | | |
| 21 | <p>In what ways do dystopian societies limit knowledge? Where have we seen this before? Is it necessary to the genre?</p> <p>Activities: "Black Museum" episode of <i>Black Mirror</i> & discussion</p> | ASSIGNMENT: RESPONSE PAPER #4 |
| 22 | <p>To what extent will leaders go to limit knowledge? Why? Will people always rebel against these limits?</p> <p>Activities: Scenes from <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> & excerpt discussion</p> | Excerpt from <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> by Ray Bradbury on CANVAS |
| 23 | <p>How is knowledge limited in <i>Brave New World</i>? What are the reasons for it? How do we let it get this bad? <i>Brave New World</i> continued.</p> <p>Activities: Excerpts from <i>The Other Side of the Island</i> by Allegra Goodman & <i>Brave New World</i> discussion</p> | <i>Brave New World</i> , pg. |
| 24 | <p>How can we relate dystopia and utopia?</p> <p>Activities: Visit from Dr. Karma Lochrie, our resident specialist in Utopia & <i>Brave New World</i> discussion</p> | <i>Brave New World</i> , pg. |

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| 25 | Can limiting knowledge protect or satisfy us? Is it worth the cost? Activities: Excerpts from <i>The Giver</i> by Lois Lowry & <i>Brave New World</i> discussion | <i>Brave New World</i> , pg. |
| 26 | How do we keep knowledge and thought free? Does it need to be? Can we relate this to current First Amendment issues? Conclusion of <i>Brave New World</i> . Activities: Scenes from <i>Pretty Lake</i> & <i>Brave New World</i> discussion | <i>Brave New World</i> , pg. LAST DAY TO TURN IN RESPONSE PAPER #4 |
| 27 | Class Presentations | |
| 28 | Class Presentations | |
| 29 | Class Presentations | |
| 30 | Class Presentations | |

Condensed Weekly Schedule

Here, you'll find a condensed version of the weekly schedule given above.

UNIT 1: Tribalism

Possible in-class readings and activities: Excerpts from *Divergent* by Veronica Roth, *The Red Queen* by Victoria Aveyard, showings of *The Hundred*

Week 1: What is Dystopian literature? How do we define it? Where do we see it? How long has it been around? Readings: NPR article on teens' infatuation with dystopia

Week 2: Tribal Dystopias I. What does it mean when the future looks like the past? Readings: "Men Against Fire" episode; excerpts from *Candide* by Voltaire.

Week 3: Tribal Dystopias II. Introduction to *The Hunger Games*. What are the ways in which Dystopian authors divide their worlds? What is the significance of these divisions? Readings: *The Hunger Games*; "The Lottery" by Shirley Jackson

Week 4: Tribal Dystopias III. *The Hunger Games* continued. What happens at the conclusion of tribal dystopias? Are the tribes eliminated or are new ones formed? Readings: *The Hunger Games*

UNIT 2: Social Taboos

Possible in-class readings and activities: Excerpts from *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, showings of the Hulu television show of the same title

Week 5: Taboo Dystopias I. Introduction to taboo. What constitutes a social taboo? Why do Dystopian authors employ them? Is there crossover between satirical readings and dystopias?

Readings: “Shut Up and Dance” episode; “A Modest Proposal” by Jonathan Swift

Week 6: Taboo Dystopias II. *The Hunger Games* continued. What elements of taboo is Collins using? Why? Is it satirical? Readings: *The Hunger Games*

Week 7: Taboo Dystopias III. *The Hunger Games* conclusion. Revisit: What happens at the conclusion of tribal dystopias? Are the tribes eliminated or are new ones formed? What about at the end of taboo dystopias? Is the problem solved? Does it need to be? Readings: *The Hunger Games*

UNIT 3: Crossover Between Dystopia and Science Fiction

Possible in-class readings and activities: Excerpts from *1984* by George Orwell, showings of *Westworld*, excerpts from *Ender’s Game* by Orson Scott Card

Week 8: Sci-Fi Dystopias I. How can we examine the genre with regards to Sci-Fi, and even fantasy? Are there similar crossovers as with satire? How do we envision technology in the future? How does social media affect our lives? Readings: “Hated in the Nation” episode; “The Machine Stops” by E. M. Forster

Week 9: Sci-Fi Dystopias II. Introduction to *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley. Are we living in a dystopia? How is our future in comparison to Huxley’s? Are there taboos at work, or just differences? Readings: *Brave New World*

Week 10: Sci-Fi Dystopias III. *Brave New World* continued. What is the difference between science fiction and dystopian literature? Which came first? How do the genres affect each other? Readings: *Brave New World*

UNIT 4: Limitations of Knowledge

Possible in-class readings and activities: Excerpts from *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, excerpts from *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, excerpts from *The Trial* by Franz Kafka, excerpts from *The Other Side of the Island* by Allegra Goodman, showings of *Fahrenheit 451*, showings of *Pretty Lake*

Week 11: Limitations of Knowledge I. In what ways do dystopian societies limit knowledge? Where have we seen this before? Is it necessary to the genre? Readings: “Black Museum” showing; excerpt from *Fahrenheit 451*.

Week 12: Limitations of Knowledge II. How is knowledge limited in *Brave New World*? What are the reasons for it? How do we let it get this bad? *Brave New World* continued. Readings: *Brave New World*.

Week 13: Limitations of Knowledge III. How do we keep knowledge and thought free? Does it need to be? Can we relate this to current First Amendment issues? Conclusion of *Brave New World*. Readings: *Brave New World*.

Week 14: Class Presentations

Week 15: Class Presentations