

**Carleton University: (late) Summer 2023  
Department of English**

**ENGL 2100A: Topics in Popular Culture  
Topic: Post-Apocalyptic Narratives in 20-21<sup>st</sup> Century Popular Culture**

**Prerequisites: second year standing or permission of the department.  
Preclusions: additional credit for ENGL 2101 (no longer offered).**

**Format: online (Brightspace) and asynchronous**  
**No scheduled time:** lectures posted twice/week (likely Tuesdays and Thursdays at 11:30 am)

**Instructor:** Dr. Esther Post  
**Email:** [estherpost@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:estherpost@cunet.carleton.ca)  
**Office hours:** by Zoom (date and time TBD)

**Course Description:**

Apocalyptic narratives have existed since ancient times, with prophets and prophecies imagining the end of the world in religious texts, philosophical tracts, and mythological stories. This course will examine late-20<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup>-Century fictional representations of worlds destroyed by technology, environmental issues including climate change, viruses or other pandemics, and astronomical events, among other causes. Some of the questions this course will seek to address are: How do individual humans and collective humanity respond to the total destruction of their physical worlds and cultures? How are religious beliefs and faith affected or implicated by apocalyptic events? What tools do humans need to survive cataclysms? Do they forge new, meaningful, loving connections with strangers, or do they revert to tribalism? Are they completely isolated, estranged from, and fearful of other humans? How can lost cultures and environments be remembered, reclaimed, or remade? What role does art play in terms of surviving catastrophe? How do hope and trust function in post-apocalyptic settings marked by devastating loss and nostalgia? These questions will be answered through our close analysis of a novel, at least two films, several short stories (available on Brightspace through ARES), and a television series based on a video game.

**Course Format:**

This course is fully online (at Brightspace) and fully asynchronous; however, students must remain up to date with the readings, lectures, and assignments (see more info highlighted below). Twice per week, I will post recordings of lectures and accompanying Powerpoint slides for each assigned text and/or the specific topic for that class. Lectures will be recorded in small segments, usually around 20 minutes each. While our twice-weekly lectures are scheduled for three hours, I will NOT be posting a three-hour lecture for each class, as I will allot time for students to take notes while listening to my recorded lectures and to post to discussion forums so that we may try

to digitally replicate the actual classroom experience of lively discussions, debates, and participation from students.

**\*\*\*Please note:** A six-week summer course is often quite intensive, and if my home circumstances were different, I would be teaching this course in a synchronous format to keep students on track with the readings. However, since my husband is working from home and I have 2 young children at home 24/7, live lectures are not a realistic circumstance for me. **It is imperative that students keep up to date with the readings, lectures, and assignments, complete the assigned readings before our scheduled class time, and meet assignment deadlines.** Ideally, students should view the lectures when they are posted so that they can stay up to date.

**Required Texts** (subject to change):

**Novel:**

*Station Eleven*, Emily St. John Mandel (available at any bookstore or through Amazon)

**Films:**

*The Matrix*, Dir. The Wachowskis (available on Youtube, Google Play Movies, Apple TV, and Amazon Prime for \$4.99)

*The Road*, Dir. John Hillcoat (available on Netflix)

*Don't Look Up*, Dir. Adam McKay (available on Netflix)

**TV Series:**

*The Last of Us* (available on Crave) \*or\* video game version

**Short Stories:** (\*all will be available online or through ARES on Brightspace)

Ray Bradbury, "There Will Come Soft Rains"

[https://www.btbooces.org/Downloads/7\\_There%20Will%20Come%20Soft%20Rains%20by%20Ray%20Bradbury.pdf](https://www.btbooces.org/Downloads/7_There%20Will%20Come%20Soft%20Rains%20by%20Ray%20Bradbury.pdf)

Jonathan Lethem, "How We Got In Town and Out Again" [ARES]

Nancy Kress, "By Fools Like Me" [ARES]

Stephen King, "The End of the Whole Mess" [ARES]

Octavia Butler, "Speech Sounds" [ARES]

**Evaluation:**

Weekly Discussion Forum Posts (DFPs) (6 X 5%) (deadlines outlined below): 30%

Expanded Discussion Forum Post (short essay; 3 full pages double-spaced) (due July 21): 15%

Final Essay Outline (due August 4): 10%

Final Essay (due August 16): 20%

Take Home Exam (due August 25): 25%

**Learning Outcomes:**

By the end of the course, students will be able to

- identify and understand the different genres and historical traditions that have contributed to fictional post-apocalyptic narratives in literature and film
- conduct close, critical, and analytical readings of post-apocalyptic literature and film
- identify the major themes that characterize post-apocalyptic narratives
- communicate ideas and arguments in a clear writing style

### Technical Requirements:

Students will need a computer with high-speed Internet access to view videos, lectures, and slides, to post to discussion forums, and to submit assignments. Ideally, students will have a webcam and mic to meet with the instructor and/or other students.

**Please note:** Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

**Note: If one of your assignments is lost, misplaced, or not received by the instructor, you are responsible for having a backup copy that can be submitted immediately upon request.**

**Please note: all course materials, including recorded lectures, Powerpoint slides, assignments, and discussion prompts are copyright of the instructor and are made available only to students registered in the course. Any reproduction or distribution of any of the course material is strictly prohibited.**

### Assignment Submission Policies:

- All assignments **MUST** be submitted as **Word documents**. Those submitted as PDFs, Pages, shared Google files, or any other form will **NOT** be accepted, nor will they be graded.
- Please note that as a Carleton University student, you have free access to Microsoft Word 360 (<https://carleton.ca/its/help-centre/get-microsoft-office-for-students/>).
- All essays and other written assignments must be double spaced, formatted in Times New Roman font 12, with one-inch margins on all sides, and must conform to MLA style and documentation guidelines. Please consult the MLA style and documentation guidelines at [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/mla\\_style/mla\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/mla\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_formatting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html).

### Late Policies and Due Dates:

- Deadlines for the 6 required discussion forum posts are firm (see dates highlighted in blue on the schedule below); forums will be closed to posts at 11:30 am for each due date; **late posts will not be accepted or graded**.
- Due dates for the Passage Analysis, Final Essay Outline, and Final Essay are firm (see dates highlighted in purple for each assignment on the schedule below). Assignments submitted past the due date will be penalized 2% per day up to 5 days; **assignments will not be accepted or graded if they are submitted 5 days past the due date**.
- \*If you are in situation or have extenuating circumstances that may affect your ability to

meet the deadlines for assignments, you may request an extension by emailing me, but extensions **must be requested in advance** of the due date. **No requests for extensions submitted on or after the due date will be considered or accepted.**

- **Please note that the university has mandated that all final term work (including your final essay) is due by Wed. Aug. 16, 2023; assignments submitted after Aug. 16 will not be accepted without prior approval for a formal deferral from the Registrar's Office.**

**Plagiarism:** There will be a policy of ZERO TOLERANCE for plagiarism and a grade of zero will be assigned to any plagiarized assignments. I will record a lecture reviewing the definitions of plagiarism and the University's policies and procedures for suspected plagiarism. All students are required to watch this lecture and sign a "contract" acknowledging they understand what constitutes plagiarism and what possible penalties may result. No work, including the Discussion Forum Posts (DFPs) will be graded until this contract has been submitted through Brightspace.

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "*presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own.*" This can include:

- reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

#### **The Use of AI (ie. ChatGPT) and Academic Integrity:**

- Unless otherwise directly specified by the instructor and required for a specific assignment, any use of generative AI tools to produce, develop, or create content assessed for the course (including but not limited to text, code, imagery, summary, video, etc.) is a violation of Carleton's Academic Integrity Policies. If the instructor suspects that a generative AI tool was used for an assignment, the instructor reserves the right to require students to attend a formal meeting with the instructor, to provide drafts, rough notes, and other evidence of work prepared for the assignment in question, and to participate in a detailed discussion of how the final assignment came to be developed.

Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include failure of the assignment, failure of the entire course, or suspension from a program. For more information please go to:

<https://carleton.ca/secretariat/wp-content/uploads/Academic-Integrity-Policy.pdf> and <https://carleton.ca/registrar/academic-integrity/>.

## COURSE EXPECTATIONS and CLASSROOM NETIQUETTE

- Students are expected to have read the assigned material before our lectures
- **Brightspace:**
  - You will be required to use Brightspace on a regular basis, as all relevant documents related to our course, including the syllabus, assignment instructions, lectures, etc. will be uploaded to this page. **Most importantly, please download, print, and regularly consult this syllabus**, as it provides all necessary information in terms of reading and assignment schedules, submission policies, contact information, etc.
  - You should also **frequently check the announcements** on our course page at Brightspace, as this is where I will post important announcements and information
- **“classroom” netiquette/discussion forums/chats:** I will be discussing this in more detail in my intro lectures, but these are some of the most important principles:
  - Always remember that there are real people behind screens and be respectful
  - No harassing, racist, homophobic, sexist, or transphobic language will be tolerated
  - Avoid using all caps, as it often comes across as shouting at and/or bullying
  - Emoticons can be helpful to convey tones, but avoid using them too much
  - Avoid dominating discussions online so that everyone gets the chance to participate
  - Always read over your posts before sending them
  - Be careful when using humour or sarcasm and ensure that your tone is properly conveyed
  - Keep an open mind, so that you are prepared to have your thinking challenged
  - Debates are certainly welcome, but again, ensure that you are respectful of others’ opinions

### Contact with the instructor:

- The best way to get in contact with me is by email ([EstherPost@cunet.carleton.ca](mailto:EstherPost@cunet.carleton.ca)). I check email at least once a day, and will respond to emails within 48 hours, though it could take longer on weekends.
- I am a contract instructor, which means that I am a part time employee. I am working two other jobs and teaching two courses this summer with no TA support, so please keep this in mind when emailing and waiting for responses.
- When emailing, please be professional. Do not use text speak, do not begin your email with an informal greeting such as “hey!”, and identify yourself by your full name as well as the course code. Remember you are not sending an informal text message to a friend, but a formal email to your professor.
  - Emails should be reserved for clear, precise questions; they should not be used to ask questions such as, “what should I read for next week?” or anything else that simply requires you to read the syllabus.
  - Emails for inquiries about grades and/or my comments and feedback for assignments should be sent only after you’ve had 48 hours to fully review and

consider my comments

- My office hours will be offered by Zoom for at least one hour per week (day and time TBD). Otherwise, I am available to meet with students at another time by request. Please email me if you would like a meeting or have any questions or concerns

### **Accommodations:**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

**Pregnancy obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details click [here](#).

**Religious obligation:** write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. For more details click [here](#).

**Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520-6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

**Survivors of Sexual Violence:** As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit:

<https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

**Accommodation for Student Activities:** Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. Write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

**Reading Schedule** (\*subject to revisions)

\*please note: all short stories will be available online and/or through ARES

| <b>Dates</b>                       | <b>Topic</b>                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Readings</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Assignments due</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Week 1:</b><br>Jul. 4-7         | <b>Lect. 1:</b> Intro to course, overview of syllabus and assignments; overview of literary terms; lect. on plagiarism<br><br><b>Lect. 2:</b> Bradbury and Lethem (short stories) | <b>1:</b> This syllabus; Instructions and grading rubrics for DFPs; review plagiarism policies (see links above on this syllabus) and plagiarism contract<br><br><b>2</b> Ray Bradbury, “There Will Come Soft Rains” and Jonathan Lethem, “How We Got In Town and Out Again” (short stories) | <b>*due by Sunday, July 9 at midnight:</b><br><br><b>Plagiarism contract</b> (please note: no assignments, including discussion posts, will be marked until this contract is submitted)<br><br><b>*due by Thurs. July 6 at 11:30 am:</b><br><br><b>DFP 1(5%):</b> Bradbury and Lethem |
| <b>Week 2:</b><br>July 10 - 14     | <i>The Matrix</i> (film)                                                                                                                                                          | <b>1:</b> <i>The Matrix</i> (1/2)<br><br><b>2:</b> <i>The Matrix</i> (2/2)                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>*due by Tues. July 11 at 11:30 am:</b><br><b>DFP 2 (5%):</b> <i>The Matrix</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Week 3:</b><br>Jul. 17 - 21     | <i>The Road</i> (film)                                                                                                                                                            | <b>1:</b> <i>The Road</i> (1/2)<br><br><b>2:</b> <i>The Road</i> (2/2)                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>*due by Tues. July 18 at 11:30 am:</b><br><br><b>DFP 3 (5%):</b> <i>The Road</i><br><br><b>*Short essay (expanded DFP) (15%):</b> due by Friday, July 21 at 11:59 pm                                                                                                               |
| <b>Week 4:</b><br>Jul. 24-28       | <i>The Last of Us</i> (series; episodes TBD)                                                                                                                                      | <b>1:</b> <i>The Last of Us</i> (1/2)<br><br><b>2:</b> <i>The Last of Us</i> (2/2)                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>*due by Tues. July 25 at 11:30 am:</b><br><br><b>DFP 4 (5%):</b> <i>The Last of Us</i>                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Week 5:</b><br>Jul. 31 - Aug. 4 | <i>Station Eleven</i> (novel)<br><br>Kress (short story)                                                                                                                          | <b>1:</b> Emily St. John Mandel, <i>Station Eleven</i> (1/2)<br><br><b>2:</b> <i>Station Eleven</i> (2/2) and Nancy Kress, “By Fools Like Me” (short story)                                                                                                                                  | <b>*due by Tues. Aug. 1 at 11:30 am:</b><br><br><b>DFP 5 (5%):</b> <i>Station Eleven</i>                                                                                                                                                                                              |

|                                        |                                                                                    |                                                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                        |                                                                                    |                                                                                                      | <p>*due by <b>Thurs. Aug. 3</b> at 11:30 am:</p> <p><b>DFP 6 (5%):</b> Kress</p> <p><b>*Essay outline: (10%)</b> due by <b>Friday, Aug. 4</b> at 11:59 pm</p>        |
| <p><b>Week 6:</b><br/>Aug. 8 - 11</p>  | <p><i>Don't Look Up</i> (film)</p>                                                 | <p><b>1:</b> <i>Don't Look Up</i> (1/2)</p> <p><b>2:</b> <i>Don't Look Up</i> (2/2)</p>              | <p>*due by <b>Tues. Aug. 8</b> at 11:30 am:</p> <p><b>DFP 7 (5%):</b> <i>Don't Look Up</i></p>                                                                       |
| <p><b>Final class:</b><br/>Aug. 15</p> | <p><b>Lect 1:</b> King and Butler (short stories); course review and exam prep</p> | <p>Stephen King, "The End of the Whole Mess" and Octavia Butler, "Speech Sounds" (short stories)</p> | <p>*due by <b>Tues. Aug. 15</b> at 11:30 am:</p> <p><b>DFP 8 (5%):</b> King and Butler</p> <p><b>* Final essay (20%):</b> due by <b>Wed. Aug. 16</b> at 11:59 pm</p> |