Course Description

One of the defining characteristics of human culture across history is its obsession with its own demise. In fact, it often seems as though humanity is doing everything in its power to hasten that demise. Every culture has a revelatory tradition—an apocalypse story. Modern cultures have taken that story a step further by imagining what life would be like—what human beings would be like—if everything that we define as “culture” were stripped away. In “Stripping 101: An Introduction to Post-Apocalyptic Literature in the Americas,” we will read literature, film, and poetry that takes under consideration humanity without artifice—texts that attempt to understand what it means to be human when law, religion, community, and convenience as we know them no longer exist. Our texts for this class are various and come from the northern, central, and southern Americas. We will read fiction and non-fiction and poetry, watch film and television, and read a variety of different scholarly and theoretical attempts to understand both the course texts and the “human” element that forms their narrative foundation. Though we will read texts from both the 20th and 21st centuries, the majority of our texts are authored after the September 11th attacks on the World Trade Center, and our discussions will be wide-ranging in nature, examining such diverse themes as environment, social media, gender, race, survival, and the inclination of (particularly) the human animal towards violence against its own species.

Prerequisites

- English 1301
- English 1302

Student Learning Objectives:

Students who successfully complete this course will be able to demonstrate knowledge and skills in four Core Objectives defined by the Higher Education Coordinating Board of the State of Texas:

Critical Thinking
CT1. Generate and communicate ideas by combining, changing, or reapplying existing information.
CT3. Analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information.

Communication Skills
CS1. Develop, interpret, and express ideas through written communication.

Personal Responsibility:
PR1. Evaluate choices and actions, and relate consequences to decision making.

Social Responsibility:
SR3. Engage in regional, national, and global communities.

Course Objectives:

1. To consider how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture express and affect human experience by examining the connections between literary works and their social, historical, and cultural contexts.
2. To use literature to explore ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures and nationalities.
3. To recognize the distinctive characteristics of relevant literary periods, genres, and writers.
4. To understand and use basic literary terms and concepts.
5. To develop analytic skills by close reading, class discussion, and writing.
6. To use writing as a tool for learning.
Required Reading

—*A Canticle for Liebowitz*—Walter M. Miller
—*The Road*—Cormac McCarthy
—*Into the Forest*—Jean Hegland
—*The Reapers Are the Angels*—Alden Bell
—*The Hunger Games*—Suzanne Collins
—*The Book of Eli* (2010)
—*The Mosquito Coast* (1986)
—Assorted on-line readings

**Note:** Do not come to class without the required text for the day. **Texts can be on a reader (e.g. Kindle, Nook, I-Pad, etc.) or in hardcopy. You may not use your phone as your reader insofar as you will need to be able to easily annotate your texts.** Failure to bring your text with you will result in being asked to leave the class for the day. There is no point in you being in class if you cannot refer to your text during discussion. This means that you need to purchase all of the texts (and read them) before class. Do not wait until the week before a particular text is required to attempt to purchase it. Bookstores run out of copies and on-line sources are not reliable with regards to timely shipping. You may use print or e-book copies of the texts, but you will need to be able to find specific places in the written texts, so know your technology.

**Grade Breakdown**

Explorations (Fifteen /250 words)—30% (2% each)
Exam One—20%
Exam Two—20%
Class Participation—15% (class participation and attendance/discussion--10%, reading quizzes--5%)
Group Presentation—15%

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

**Reading Quizzes**

If it becomes obvious as the semester progresses that students are not coming to class having read the assigned texts and prepared with discussion questions for the rest of the class, I will begin giving reading quizzes at the beginning of class and will be worth approximately 5% of your final semester grade. I will allow five minutes after the beginning of class time for late arrivals, and then I will administer the quiz. If you are late, you will lose the points for the quiz. There will be no chance to make up the quizzes, and the quizzes are pass/fail.

**Course Assignments**

**Explorations:** Over the course of the semester, you will be required to write a total of fifteen exploratory essays. You may submit an exploration any day that you have an assigned reading for class. Explorations should be 250 words (one page) in length. These explorations are not intended to be, and thus should not be, simply summaries of assigned readings. Instead, you should address a theme or a particular motif and connect it in interesting and increasingly complex ways with other readings and with your personal knowledge (or lack thereof) about the issues we discuss.

Begin each exploration with a quote from the text (include a page citation), and end each one with a question for discussion. Where you go in-between is entirely up to you. This is called “writing to learn” and sometimes, the further afield you go—and the more uncomfortable you are—the more profitable the thinking.

The purpose of the explorations is to give you the opportunity to engage with as many of the cultural issues involved in a study of literature and film as possible and to explore your own ideas and thoughts about a given text. These shorter exploratory papers will allow you to address a number of issues, each building on the readings from previous course texts. All explorations must be submitted typed, double-spaced, in 12pt Times New Roman font, in MLA format. If you don’t know MLA, ask. Essays not in the appropriate format will be returned with no grade.

Explorations are a pass/fail assignment and you may not submit explorations for readings from previous classes. Each exploration must be about the reading for the day on which it is submitted. These short essays are intended to be the fodder for our class discussions of the texts.
**Exams:** You will take a two exams during this course (see calendar for specific dates). Exams will be essay in format and will cover all of the texts we will have discussed up to the date of the exam. This means that themes and ideas that we follow throughout the semester, in addition to textual material, from start to finish, will be comprehensively examined on the final exam. Exams are take-home and will require significant writing and use of course texts (films, novels, short fiction, criticism, and literary theory). If you fail to submit your exam on the day it is due, ten points will be deducted from the grade, with ten points deducted for each day late, up to three days—at which point you will receive an F for the exam.

**Class Participation/Discussion:** Insofar as a great deal of time will be spent in discussion of the required texts, class participation carries considerable weight. Students will be expected to come to class having read the assigned texts and having prepared to engage in discussion, to pose pertinent questions, and to develop significant and personal answers to the questions posed by the texts. You will receive at least one percentage point per class for participation, for bringing discussion questions, and, if necessary, for mandatory reading quizzes. With that in mind, and although there is no attendance policy for this class, I will keep roll, and failure to attend class regularly will affect your class participation grade considerably.

Part of the participation grade will be group leadership of a class discussion. Groups will be assigned randomly, and each of the eleven groups in the class will be required to lead a discussion. See calendar for specific dates.

**Presentation:** During the course of the semester, you will work in your pre-arranged groups to develop presentations which your group will present to the class during the final weeks of the semester. You will, therefore, need to know who your group is so that you can work together outside of class. When it is your turn to present, you will be required to come to class with material prepared to address to the class. How you do this is up to you. Presentations should be creative and address one or more of the pertinent issues under discussion for any particular text. Your group will then be required to engage your peers in active discussion of the texts and the presentation material. Further instruction will be handed out in class and a sign-up sheet will be passed around mid-semester. In addition, on your presentation day, you must submit a typed peer evaluation, commenting on the level of involvement in the project by your fellow group members. This evaluation will be used to help determine individual grades for the presentation and no one will read it but me.

**Course Policies**

**Disruptive Behavior:** I reserve the right to ask disruptive students to leave the classroom. Disruptive behavior constitutes any behavior which prevents an active learning environment from developing in the classroom. Students who are asked to leave must make an appointment with me to meet in my office before they may return to class. Disruptive behavior can range from cell phone use to abusive behavior, from open hostility to racial slurs, and so on. We are in this class together. Please, be respectful of one another. P.S. Go to the bathroom before class.

**Electronics:** When you arrive, please remove headphones and turn off phones and put them where they will not be a distraction. Failing to do so is not only disrespectful to both myself and your peers, but constitutes disruptive behavior. Students who fail to adhere to this policy on more than one occasion will be asked to leave the classroom for the duration of the day’s discussion and must meet with me before returning to class. You may use an electronic reader as your textbook, however.

**Cheating & Plagiarism:** Academic Integrity & Dishonesty Specifically Article III, #1 in the Violations of the Student Code of Conduct. Cheating or plagiarism on an assignment or test, or failure to complete any of the course requirements, will result in a zero grade for the assignment in question. Our University catalog defines "plagiarism" as "the presentation of the work of another as one's own work." Please note that plagiarizing someone else's work may lead to an F in the course. To avoid any suspicion of plagiarism, make sure that you always cite your sources properly and clearly identify your own work if you study with other students. Cases will be reported to university officials for further action. Also, anyone signing another student's name may lead to an F in the course for all concerned parties.

**Note:** I should also add that students who plagiarize on any assignment will receive a zero for the assignment with no opportunity to re-write, and the paper will be submitted for disciplinary action. Disciplinary action can range from failure of the plagiarized paper to suspension or dismissal from the university. A second offense will result in
automatic failure of the course in addition to a disciplinary write-up. Plagiarism is a serious offense, amounts to thievery, and will not be tolerated. Make sure you understand conventions for quoting and citing properly to avoid plagiarism. **If you do not understand, ask me.**

**Dropping a Class:** I hope no student needs to drop this course. However, events sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. The University has set November 7th as the last day to drop a course for the semester with an automatic grade of “W.”

**Acceptance of Diversity:** We are the most diverse campus, in terms of self-declared ethnicity, in the Texas A&M system. This means that we are all meeting and working with people who are different from ourselves in terms of their identities: whether that be defined by their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and/or religion. Respecting and accepting difference is vital to your success in this class, on this campus, and in the global community.

**Student with Disabilities:** Notice to Students with Disabilities: Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act in making reasonable accommodations for qualified students with disabilities. If you suspect that you may have a disability (physical impairment, learning disability, psychiatric disability, etc.), please contact the Services for Students with Disabilities Office, located in Driftwood 101, at 825-5816. If you need disability accommodations in this class, please see me as soon as possible.

**Absences:** Although I will keep roll, there is no attendance policy for this class. But let me remind you that your class participation grade (as well as my evaluation of your essays and the ideas they present) depends heavily on your participation in class discussion and activity. In other words, you have to be present to participate. Excessive absences will result in a significant reduction of your class participation grade.

**The Writing Center:** The Writing Center of Texas A&M Corpus Christi provides free help for students at any stage in the writing process. Writing Center consultants are trained to work with writers one-on-one to help them find ideas, organize their thoughts, cite sources, and succeed at all aspects of the writing task. The Writing Center works closely with faculty across campus to understand the writing projects they assign and to help students meet the expectations of those assignments. The Writing Center is located in Glasscock Center (GSSC) 112, in the Center for Academic Student Achievement (CASA). Both drop-in and scheduled appointments are available. The Writing Center will be open soon. More information is available at: The Writing Center website.

**Grade Appeals:** Grade Appeal Process. As stated in University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Rule 13.02.99.C2, Student Grade Appeals, and University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures. These documents are accessible through the University Rules Web site at http://www.tamucc.edu/provost/university_rules/index.html. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Office of Student Affairs.

**Academic Advising:** It is imperative that all students visit regularly with an academic adviser. Each college within the university has an academic advising center, staffed by full-time, professional advisers to assist students with course selection, degree plans, and other academic matters. To find out how to contact the right adviser, go to: http://www.tamucc.edu/academics/advising.php. Students who have yet to declare a major are advised by the Academic Advising Transition Center. For more information, go to: http://www.tamucc.edu/~aac
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. The Academic Advisor will set up a degree plan, which must be signed by the student, a faculty mentor, and the department chair. The College's Academic Advising Center is located in Driftwood 203E, and can be reached at 825-3466.

**Americans with Disabilities Act:** Texas A&M University—Corpus Christi is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of federal equal opportunity legislation; reference Public Law 92-112—The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. As a faculty member, I am required by law to provide reasonable accommodations to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Student responsibility primarily rests with informing faculty of their need for accommodation and in providing authorized documentation through designated administrative channels.

**Finally,** if you are struggling, please come and see me in my office during my office hours or by appointment, or contact me via e-mail before you are hopelessly lost. Students who make use of my office hours and the University Writing Center inevitably improve their understanding of a text, their writing skills and ultimately their grades.

### Course Calendar
(Dates are subject to—and probably will—change)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week One</th>
<th>Introductions to course, syllabi, and assignments.</th>
<th>What is an apocalypse? What is Post-Apocalyptic Literature?</th>
<th>Syllabus</th>
<th>Discussion and ice-breaker.</th>
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<tr>
<td>Class Plan</td>
<td>Reading (Reading/film watching must be completed for the day it is assigned.)</td>
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<td>literary terms and concepts.</td>
<td>Read (BB)</td>
<td>Assign working groups</td>
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<td>Week Two</td>
<td>Miller</td>
<td>McCarthy pp. 3-51</td>
<td>McCarthy pp. 52-100</td>
<td>Discussion—Group One</td>
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<td>McCarthy pp. 101-149</td>
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<td>Week Three</td>
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<td>Exam One due</td>
<td>Hegland pp. 1-40</td>
<td>Hegland pp. 41-80</td>
<td>Discussion—Group Five</td>
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<td>Hegland pp. 81-120</td>
<td>Discussion—Group Six</td>
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<td>Week Four</td>
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<td>Hegland pp. 160-200 Discussion—Group Seven</td>
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<td><em>TMC</em> Group presentations</td>
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