ENGL 1102

The End is Nigh, Eventually: Global and Local Approaches to the Pre-Apocalypse

Course Description

Apocalypse (noun): From the Greek apokálypsis, 'Uncovering'

The end of the world. The great calamity. The apocalypse. Discussions of climate change, natural disasters, pandemics, and violence have become an everyday occurrence, and the rhetoric surrounding these ideas is often nihilistic -- focused on the inevitability of our destruction – or post-apocalyptic – fixated on how humanity recovers *after* catastrophic events. But what does it mean to experience the time preceding an apocalypse? How can we look at the current events of the world through the lens of preventing the seemingly inevitable 'end of the world'? What happens when we focus on the *pre* apocalyptic scenario instead of the *post* and uncover what's being done to prevent and survive disaster?

This course focuses on current conversation surrounding disasters, calamities, and apocalyptic events, both in real life and fictional contexts, moving from the context of global perspectives on the end of the world to local efforts to mitigate apocalyptic events. Through an investigation of current events, popular culture, and local efforts towards sustainability, students will have the opportunity to explore what it means to engage with notions of the apocalypse, how those notions are discussed across multiple genres, and what's being done to mitigate the seemingly inevitable destruction of all humankind. Assignments will include analysis of apocalyptic media, research and creative projects that engage aspects of WOVEN communication, and active collaboration with local sustainability initiatives through the Center for Sustainable Communities in Atlanta.

Required Texts
- WOVENText: Georgia Tech's Writer/Designer, 2022-2023 (Ball, Sheppard, Arola)
- External readings and texts, posted via Canvas

Course Structure and Workload

Coursework is primarily broken down into three categories: artifact work, short assignments, and revision. Your final artifact, a course portfolio, will be the culmination of three smaller artifacts that work towards the same final goal: creating work that demonstrates an understanding of the rhetorical processes that surround sustainability efforts and the conversation around mitigating apocalyptic ideas.

The course is out of **1000** points, or **100%**, and is broken down as follows:

Artifact 1: Media Analysis (200 pts, 20%):

Artifact 1 is an argumentative analysis of one or more pieces of apocalyptic media. Students can choose a film, television show, book, video game, music album, or other media object(s) of their choice and construct an argument for what defining characteristics of that media apply to notions of the apocalypse.

Artifact 2: Editorial (200 pts, 20%):

Artifact 2 is an opinion-based editorial regarding current rhetoric surrounding the tipping point of sustainability infrastructure. In the context of reading current events reporting on major economic, environmental, and social disasters, students will compose a brief piece of informative work that discusses the facts behind the phenomena they are investigating.

Artifact 3: Local Collaboration Project (200 pts, 20%):

Artifact 3 is a collaboration with Garry Harris of the Center for Sustainable Communities and will involve the class taking on three different options for a project: a video editing project, a newsletter, and a grassroots information campaign (subject to change, will be solidified by Week 4 of class).

Final Portfolio (250 pts, 25%):

Your final artifact is a course portfolio that contains revised and polished versions of all of the work you did during the course of the semester. You will be given the time to revise your work based on the feedback provided by your instructor and your classmates. Final deliverables will vary depending on project types.

Short Assignments (50 pts, 5%):

These assignments are generative and processing work that you will do in the form of freewrites, drafting, and other modes of WOVEN engagement, including class discussions, videos, peer review activities, and drafting for the major course artifacts.

Course Engagement (100 pts, 10%):

Consider engagement as this course's method of measuring participation, attendance, and professional ethos. You will be given a specific engagement assignment during the first week of class. This will be largely self-determined, via a memo at the beginning of the semester and a performance assessment at the end of the semester.

Grade Scale:

All major assignments will be graded on the Georgia Tech letter-grade scale, as listed below:

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

Each percentage corresponds to the same amount of points, for example, an A is the equivalent of 900 to 1000 pts, a B is 800 to 899 points, and so forth.

Deadlines and Flexible Scheduling

All deadlines for projects will be listed on Canvas. If you require an extension, **do not hesitate to reach out** so we can work together and settle on a date and time that works best for you. We are dealing in unprecedented times and I am willing to extend work time and deadlines. The deadlines mainly exist to allow us all to keep up a good pace over the semester and not fall behind, but **are ultimately flexible**.

Course Policies and Accommodations:

For All Common Policies, follow this link [here](#).

Attendance:

My attendance policy is based around two principles: respect and communication. As your instructor, I will do my best to respect the time and effort you put into this class by ensuring every class period includes useful new materials or useful time spent on your projects. In exchange, I expect you to respect my time by attending class, being on time, being present and engaged, and asking generative questions. However, as I'm aware that life can bring unexpected bumps and twists, my official attendance policy is:

As long as you are open and communicative with me about the circumstances of an absence, I will be able to work with you if you need to miss class, and it will not negatively impact your grade.

Bear in mind that this is an in-person course and that there will be some activities and assignments that can only be done during class time. If you need to miss class for any reason, it is your responsibility to reach out and find out what you have missed, either to your colleagues in the class or to me.

As I said above, I am aware that life brings unexpected turns, especially in the time of COVID. Above all the principle I want to impart in this course is that we are humans first and students second. Part of being human means taking care of our bodies and minds so that we are able to learn and grow, and this means taking care of ourselves in a hectic and often punishing world. As long as you communicate with me, I will work with you, and if you do me the same respect, you will get what you need from this course.

E-mail, Instructor Availability, and Feedback Timeframes:

I encourage everyone to check their Georgia Tech email daily for updates or correspondence. I make a point to check my email twice a day on weekdays at **11:00am** and **9:00pm**, and once a day on weekends at around **3:00pm**, but will respond to emails that are marked Urgent in the subject line. I will also always be willing to meet virtually by appointment.

Regarding the work you do in the course, it is my goal to get feedback on all submitted assignments to you within **7 to 10 days** of submission, and I will communicate any delays that occur. Most importantly, don't be afraid to reach out via email with questions or concerns. I am happy to help.

Civility, Equity, and Disruptive Behavior:

College is a time for the exploration and sharing of ideas. It's also often the first time students have the opportunity to experience new perspectives that challenge the way that they see and interact with the world. This can be a difficult experience, but also a beneficial and productive one.

Discussion of current events, especially those of a serious nature, deals with differing perspectives on a wide variety of events, actions, and viewpoints. Society's approach to the future, both the inevitable and the preventable, involves many varied perspectives that speak to people's diversity of viewpoint, opinion, and belief. In this course we will be reading about and discussing topics that are **sensitive**, **difficult**, or **personal**. These could be about any number of things: our backgrounds, our experiences, our identities that uniquely incorporate race,

ethnicity, social class, gender identity and expression, sexuality, religion, disability, etc. Please enter these discussions **mindfully and kindly**, particularly while we are sharing space and **do not belittle or insult your fellow students who may have different experiences from you**.

As your instructor, I aim to be very transparent about my own position in these discussions. As a member of multiple marginalized communities, particularly the LGBTQ+ community, I stand in solidarity with social justice and equity movements in the United States, support the Black Lives Matter Movement, and seek to engage in mindful and honest dialogue about how social justice issues relate to conversations surrounding apocalyptic media and sustainability efforts. Some of the work in this course will address anti-racist scholarship, and all of it will encourage you to consider perspectives that extend beyond the dominant cultural points of view. While I do not expect everyone to agree, with me or with each other, **I expect you all to be respectful when these difficult subjects are discussed, as noted above**. As your instructor, I reserve the right to ask you to leave the classroom if you are behaving in a way that is patently racist, offensive, or that disrupts or distracts your fellow students from the work at hand. You can review Georgia Tech's nondiscrimination policy below:

> *The Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts, the School of Literature, Media, and Communication, and the Writing and Communication Program support the Georgia Institute of Technology's commitment to creating a campus free of discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or veteran status. We further affirm the importance of cultivating an intellectual climate that allows us to better understand the similarities and differences of those who constitute the Georgia Tech community, as well as the necessity of working against inequalities that may also manifest here as they do in the broader society. Alternative viewpoints are welcome in this class; however, statements that are deemed racist, sexist, homophobic, classist, or otherwise discriminatory toward others in the class or outside the class will not be tolerated.*

Along this line of discussion, if you are a member of a marginalized group or minority[1], some of the readings may include content that is triggering, upsetting, or difficult due to collective or personal traumatic experiences. It is my goal as your instructor to provide content warnings for readings and discussion and to give you the space to process this material in a way that you can find productive, and that includes engaging with it on your own terms. I do not want you to ever feel obligated to disclose traumatic associations in this class, just as you should not feel

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[1] The definition of marginalized group being ""Different groups of people within a given culture, context and history at risk of being subjected to multiple discrimination due to the interplay of different personal characteristics or grounds, such as sex, gender, age, ethnicity, religion or belief, health status, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, education or income, or living in various geographic localities." Source: EIGE https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1280

obligated to disclose axes of marginalization that you may or may not be affiliated with. In line with this, know that your role in this class need not extend beyond the role of student, and that you are invited but never obligated to share your experiences with marginalization or discrimination in relation to the contents of the readings and discussions. My goal is to provide an equitable and open space that is also safe for those who need it.

Disabilities, Accommodation, and Mental Health:

I believe that everyone has the right to the full educational experience granted to them by admission and tuition payments to Georgia Tech, and that everyone has different needs when it comes to accessing that experience. It is my goal to make my classes as accessible as possible to any and all students who are enrolled. As a disabled and chronically ill instructor, my goal here is to encourage open communication, so if you need anything to ensure you get the most out of this class, don't hesitate to contact me via email to discuss what you need in more detail.

Please note that regardless of the official Georgia Tech policy, **I personally do not require accommodation letters from my students**. If you have a condition that impacts your learning, diagnosed or otherwise, I am more than willing to work with you to ensure you get the most you can out of this class.

Likewise, I encourage you to investigate Student Support resources for whatever needs may arise during the course of the semester.

I am aware that the current COVID crisis complicates many of the traditional channels for resources and accommodation, so know that while I am not a medical mental health professional, I have experience with mental health services and will happily work with you to accommodate your needs as best I can. Above all, again, **if you reach out to me, we can work together to make a plan. I am happy to do what is necessary to help you succeed**.