

SOC 200EW (WI)
Sociology and the Post-Apocalyptic Imagination
Spring, 2022

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“When things fall apart, you see what they're made of.” Walter Kirn

“The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.” Antonio Gramsci

“Someone once said that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism. We can now revise that and witness the attempt to imagine capitalism by way of imagining the end of the world.” Fredric Jameson

Required Texts

Sheridan, Sam (2013). *The Disaster Diaries: One Man's Quest to Learn Everything Necessary to Survive the Apocalypse*.

Solnit, Rebecca (2009). *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster*.

Note: Required readings are also posted on Schoology.

You will also need to access the following movies:

Wall-E

The Book of Eli

Mad Max: Fury Road

Zombieland

Snowpiercer

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester, you will be able to:

1. Describe how human, social, and cultural evolution has created types of social orders. You will also be able to describe the main ideas in the debate concerning directional change (i.e., social, and cultural progress).

2. Identify and describe important sociological concepts concerning social order in imagined post-apocalyptic worlds that have been described by various authors, filmmakers, and social commentators.
3. Students will be able to summarize and apply the key findings in the research literature on survival and apply them to imagined post-apocalyptic worlds.
4. Students will be able to apply important sociological concepts concerning the creation and preservation of social order to imagine what a sociologically informed post-apocalyptic future might look like.

Important Note on Flexibility

This syllabus is designed to meet the unique challenges of teaching during the COVID pandemic. Because there are many uncertainties entering this semester, we will need to be flexible. It is therefore important for everyone to be mindful of the fact that changes to the syllabus may be necessary.

I will do my best to make sure any changes to the syllabus do not disadvantage the class (e.g., increase the workload or change grading criteria). Likewise, I have built in some flexibility in terms of your workload, and when things are due. For each assignment, you will see a section entitled *Planning Flexibility*, where I explain flexibility for you as a student. This flexibility should cover most circumstances. If you must quarantine this semester, you can continue your course work remotely.

However, if you are experiencing a situation that requires additional flexibility, you must contact me so we can discuss your needs. The best way to contact me is through email. I check email daily and will typically respond within 24 hours.

Mental Health Resources

I am aware that the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic has been stressful, leading to an increase in mental health issues for many students. While I might be able to assist help you resolve some issues like academic advice, I encourage you to contact the Health and Counseling Center at Carthage if you are struggling with stress, anxiety, or other mental health issues:
<https://www.carthage.edu/life-at-carthage/health-wellness-safety/health-counseling/>

Statement on Learning Differences:

Carthage College strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers due to your disability (including mental health, learning disorders and chronic medical conditions), please let me know immediately so that we can privately discuss options. To establish reasonable accommodations, you also need to register with Diane Schowalter in Learning Accessibility Services (dschowalter1@carthage.edu).

Attendance and Engagement:

Engaging the course material, your peers, and myself will benefit you in several important ways, and is likely the most significant factor in learning the course material.

Because of the complexities with COVID, I will not take attendance. However, I expect people to attend class barring unforeseen circumstances like becoming ill or needing to quarantine.

Academic Honesty and the Carthage Community Code:

Academic honesty is essential to maintaining a high level of academic integrity. Treating others with respect and dignity is also an important dimension in creating a vibrant community where people are free to investigate intellectual ideas, conduct research, and share ideas with others. You are expected to abide by Carthage College's community code, which covers a wide range of community expectations for both faculty and students at: <https://www.carthage.edu/community-code/>

Classroom Conduct:

Due to the ongoing pandemic, Carthage College has adopted a policy requiring masks to be worn by all individuals in all buildings. Masks must be always worn in the classroom, laboratory, studio spaces, hallways, bathrooms, and during in-person meetings. The face covering must conform to CDC guidelines and must always cover both the nose and mouth. Note that bandanas, neck gaiters, and masks with exhalation or external valves are not acceptable and are not sufficient for protection of others or yourself. Acceptable masks tie behind the head or loop behind the ears, fit snugly over the nose and chin, and can include cloth masks, medical/surgical masks, and N95s or KN95s. Eating and/or drinking are prohibited while in the classroom (because those activities interfere with consistent mask wearing).

Any student who refuses to wear a mask will be dismissed from the class.

Stay Safe Guidelines: <https://www.carthage.edu/carthage-covid-19/stay-safe-carthage/>

Frequently Asked Questions: <https://www.carthage.edu/carthage-covid-19/faqs/>

A note on pedagogy:

Throughout the semester you will read several articles and short pieces from our Schoology site. Prior to class, you will have the opportunity to submit a response write (see below). Our in-person class time will be spent talking about the readings, and I will use that opportunity to include additional information and insights about the concepts and ideas you have read about for that day.

Course Assignments

Response Writes (45% of course grade):

You should plan to submit 16 short papers (approximately 3/4 to 1 page in length) for this portion of the course grade. These papers have two parts: a one paragraph summary of one of the readings or videos on Schoology for that day, followed by a paragraph or two that makes a connection between the reading and your own life, other course readings/material, or the larger world around you. Files for the readings each day can be found in folders on Schoology.

Planning Flexibility: There are 20 times throughout the semester when you may submit a response write for the in-class material. I will drop the four lowest scores for this assignment. To earn full credit for this assignment, you must submit 16 response writes that earn 10 points each.

Response Write grading criteria

10 Points: Excellent summary of the article or video, followed by a clear connection to either the larger world around you or the other readings/course material. Paper is written in Standard Written English (e.g., complete sentences, grammatically correct and free of spelling errors and typos).

9 Points: Summary of the article or video is good, but not excellent. Connection to the larger world or other course material is clear. Paper is written in Standard Written English (e.g., complete sentences, grammatically correct and free of spelling errors and typos).

8 Points: Above average summary and/or unclear connection to larger world or other course material. Some writing issues may be present (typos, grammar, etc.).

7 Points: Average summary and/or unclear connection to the larger world or other course material.

6 Points: A paper that is too short, vague, and/or does not make a connection to either your life, the other readings for the class, or the larger world around you.

0 Points: Did not submit a paper.

You will need to submit your paper through the link on Schoology, please do not print them or email them to me.

Response Writes are always due at the beginning of class. Each of you will have one token to use for a late response write where I will allow you to submit your paper within 24 hours of the due date. To use your token, you will need to email me to let me know you're using your token (you can use it for whatever reason you like). ***After you use that token, late papers will not be accepted.***

Film Analysis Papers (45% of course grade):

You will be required to write four (4-6 page) short papers about post-apocalyptic films. You will have 5 opportunities to submit a film paper this semester. Each paper must include the following parts:

1. A summary of the film's plot. This part of your paper must include the heading PLOT. This section of the paper does not have to contain a lot of detail but should give someone who hasn't seen the film a good idea of what the film is about. It should be about 2 paragraphs and 1 to 1.5 pages long.
2. Discussion of two or three of the film's themes. This section of the paper must include the heading THEMES. Themes are messages that the film is trying to convey. For example, one of the major themes in the film *The Matrix* is the concept of free will/choice. When you identify a theme, be sure to give specific examples from the film. To use *The Matrix* as an example, the main character Neo is given the choice to take the "Red" pill or the "Blue" pill. This part of the paper should be 1.5 to 2 pages long.
3. Analysis or Connection/Reflection. The final part of these assignments is to either provide an analysis of the major themes in the film or connect the themes to other ideas in the class (the choicer is yours). If you decide to analyze the film, you must use the heading ANALYSIS. If you decide to connect/reflect, you must use the heading CONNECTION/REFLECTION. Analysis tends to focus on the question, "what does this mean?" To use *The Matrix* as an example again, the character Cypher makes the choice to go back into the matrix and betray Neo rather than live in the real world. A good analysis would then reflect on why this is significant or important (i.e., Cypher would rather live in ignorance than face the reality that humans have lost control to their machine overlords—which they were responsible for creating in the first place). Connection/reflection is open, and if you decide to go this route, you can connect the themes in the film to anything else in the class (i.e., other films, readings, class discussions, etc.). This part of your paper should be 1.5 to 2 pages long.

We will watch the first thirty minutes of each film in class (always on a Thursday) and then spend about 30 minutes discussing the film, looking for themes, ideas, etc. This will give you a good start on your paper. These papers are always due the following Thursday, so you will have a week to watch the film and write your paper. We will discuss the film in more detail on the day your paper is due.

Planning Flexibility: You may submit your paper within one week after the due date with a one letter grade deduction. I will not accept papers that are submitted more than one week past the due date unless you talk with me first.

Final Exam (10% of course grade):

There will be one “open notes” essay exam in this class. Instructions for this exam will be posted in Schoology.

Planning Flexibility: Because this paper is due at the end of the semester, we have limited options to extend your deadline. However, if you need an extension, you must contact me as soon as possible.

Grading

Letter grades will be assigned using the following percentage scale:

A = 94% - 100%

A- = 90% - 93%

B+ = 87% - 89%

B = 83% - 86%

B- = 80% - 82%

C+ = 77% - 79%

C = 73% - 76%

C- = 70% - 72%

D+ = 67% - 69%

D = 63% - 66%

D- = 60% - 62%

W = less than 62%