

ENGL 6830 OA | CRN 3424 | Online | Summer 2022

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# British & American Literature: Post-Apocalyptic Fiction

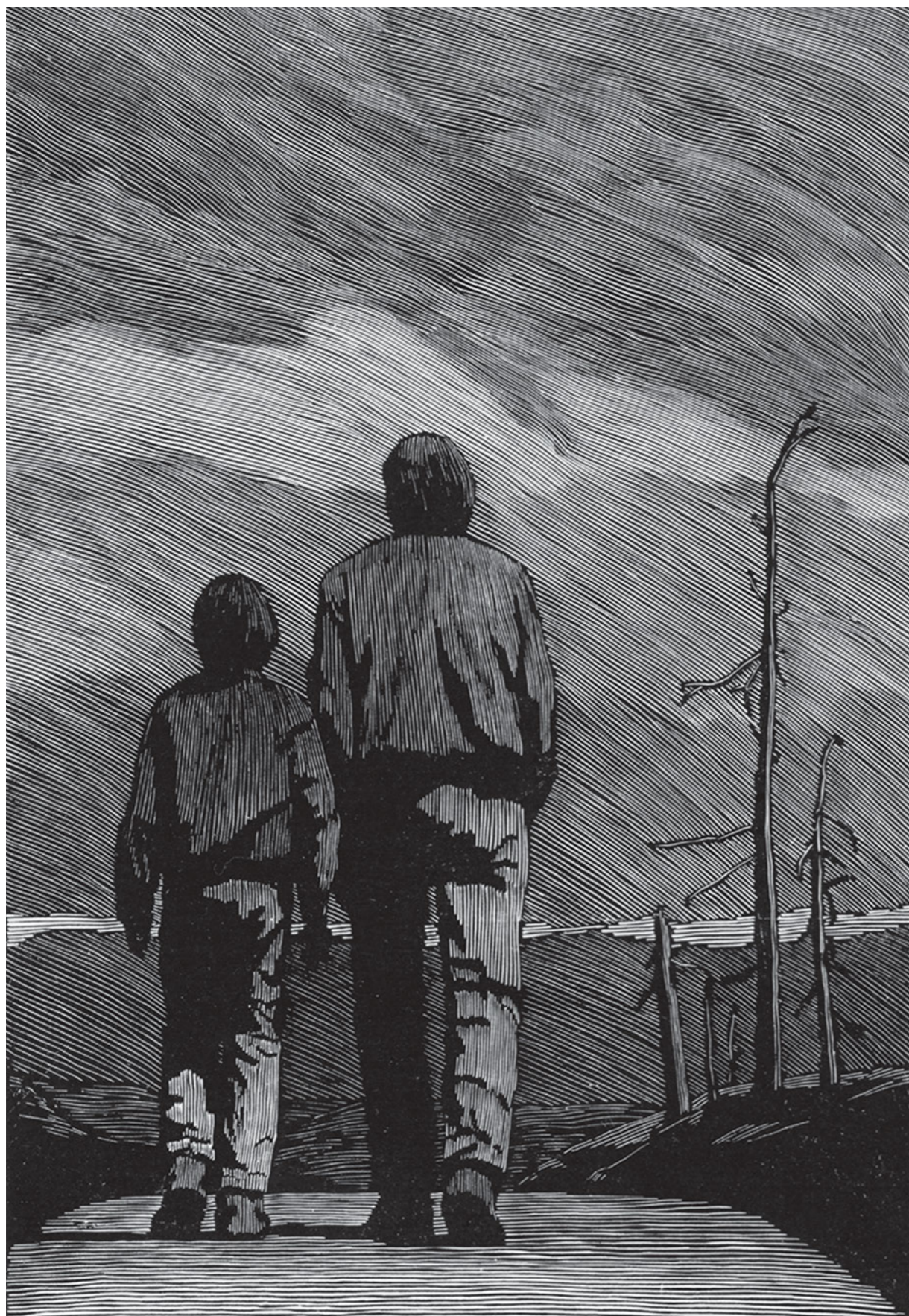
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## Dr. Seth T. Reno

Distinguished Research Associate Professor  
Department of English and Philosophy  
College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences

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# Course Description

Catalog description: Topics combining British and American literary works and examining themes, movements, or other phenomena that illustrate transatlantic connections. Focus varies with each course. May be repeated twice when topics vary. May be offered concurrently with ENGL 6830.

Why and how do authors imagine the end of the world? What do literary depictions of apocalypse tell us about the present and potential futures? What roles do politics, philosophy, and science play in post-apocalyptic literature? These questions will frame this course as we read four post-apocalyptic novels (and one novella), as well as a few shorter pieces. There is a vast body of post-apocalyptic fiction out there, but the novels we will read share two rough thematic strands: the “Last Man” trope and ecological disaster. We will begin with the origins of post-apocalyptic literature in the Last Man genre of the early nineteenth century, and then work our way through three post-apocalyptic novels published in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

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# Course Objectives

- (1) become familiar with the post-apocalyptic and Last Man genres
- (2) read and analyze works of post-apocalyptic literature
- (3) practice analysis of literary texts in well-written assignments
- (4) develop research skills in order to analyze and interpret literary texts

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# Required Texts

Kim Stanley Robinson, *New York 2140* (Orbit, ISBN 9780316262316)

Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (Vintage, ISBN 9780307387899)

Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (Anchor, ISBN 9781588346018)

PDF readings on Blackboard

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# Course Website

<https://postapocfiction.weebly.com>

# Course Requirements

Course prerequisites: graduate standing

## Expectations and Tips for Success

- You will do a lot of reading for this class—this is an English class, after all! You should keep up with the readings and assignments each week, and you should submit everything on time. However, if something is not working for you, please let me know—I'm flexible and will consider changing my approach if you are struggling.
- Make sure you have a strong and reliable Internet connection. This is an online course, so it's vital that you have consistent access to the Internet.
- Check your AUM email at least once each day.
- Spend at least one hour each day on course readings and assignments.
- Take notes on every reading and lecture.
- Organize your time so that you can complete the work throughout the week rather than trying to cram everything in on one day.
- Begin working on major assignments well in advance of the deadline.
- Make some time to meet with me via Zoom to talk about the readings, assignments, and class on a one-to-one basis (this is what my office hours are for; if you can't make my office hours, we can schedule a time to meet that works for you).
- Ask questions early and often—lots and lots of questions!
- As this is a graduate-level course, I have higher expectations for your work than I do for the undergraduates. In addition to writing longer and more advanced papers, and to giving a presentation on scholarship, I expect you to take initiative in the online discussions by starting threads, writing detailed posts, and, generally, performing at the level of a graduate student.

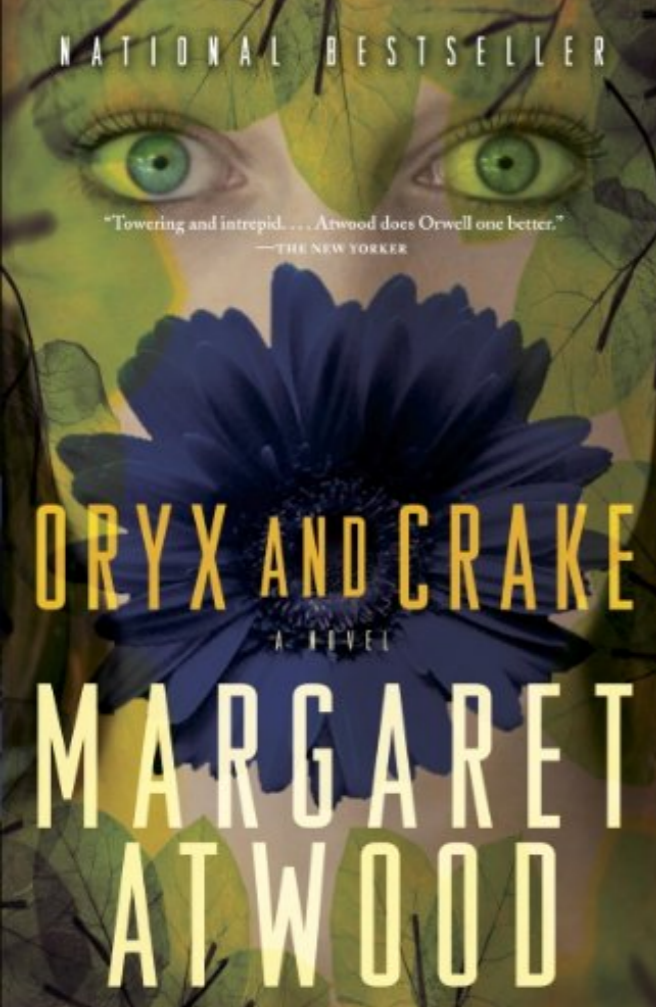
## Email Etiquette

I will do my best to respond to your emails within 24 hours during the week and within 48 hours over the weekend.

When you email me (and any other professor):

- Use your AUM email address
- Add a subject line so I know what you're writing about and so I can keep track of our email conversation
- Address me as Professor Reno or Dr. Reno (pronouns he/him/his)
- Sign off your email with your full name
- In general, follow professional email etiquette and structure—if you're not sure what this means, Google it for some examples
- NOTE: I may not respond to your email if you don't follow etiquette, especially if there's no subject line, no salutation, and no name. This is one of the few things that irks me: I interpret an email with no salutation, subject, and/or sign off as rude, unprofessional, and offensive (whether you intend it or not!).





# Assignments

**Note:** You will receive individual assignment sheets and grading rubrics for most of these assignments.

**Weekly Discussion Board (25%):** You will write eight posts on our Blackboard discussion board throughout the term. The prompts/questions for each post are on the discussion board and on our course website. These posts will be both academic and creative in nature—they are informal and are meant to replicate, in a modest way, how a discussion might work if this were an in-person class. One goal is to get you to interact with other students in the class and to hear others' viewpoints (other than mine!). Each post is worth 3%. The math doesn't quite work out, but Blackboard will handle that, probably.

**Midterm Essay (15%):** You will write a "midterm" essay of around 750 words as a close reading of **one** of the nineteenth-century text we read during weeks 1 and 2 **or** a key passage from McCarthy's *The Road*. This will be a close reading paper, so you'll need to engage directly with the text, offering your analysis and interpretation of the literary work.

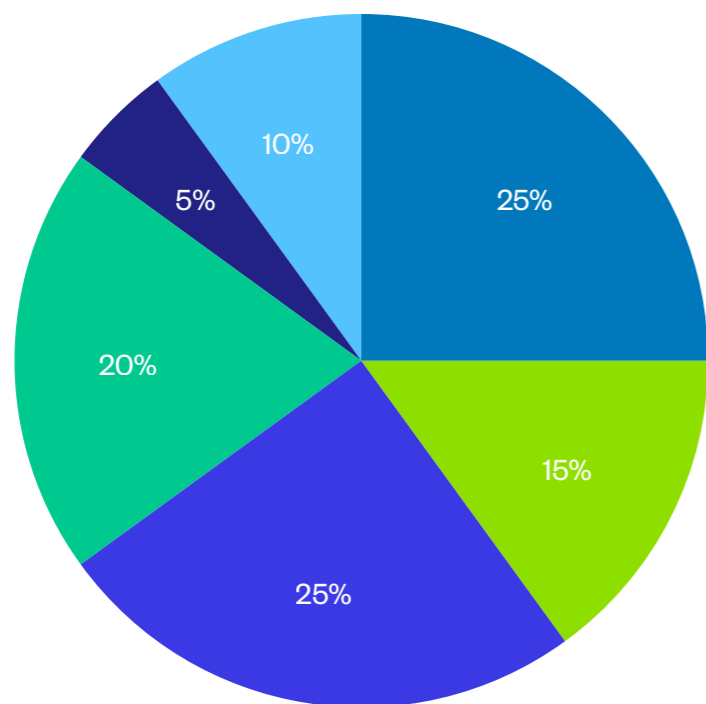
**Final Essay (25%):** You will write one final paper of around 1500 words. This will also be a close reading paper that incorporates some outside, scholarly research, but it must be on one of the three novels assigned for this class (and it can't be on *The Road* if that's what you wrote about for your midterm essay). This is a fairly standard "graduate-level English paper."

**Presentation (10%):** You will put together a 5- to 10-minute video research presentation based on a work of scholarship related to one of the assigned readings. Think of this as giving a "guest lecture" for the class—teach us something new and interesting about what we're reading. You will sign up for a week at the beginning of the semester.

**Creative Project (20%):** Your final assignment will be a creative project inspired by our study of post-apocalyptic fiction. I'm totally open to your interests and ideas. Your project might be a 5-minute **podcast** on some aspect of the course; a post-apocalyptic poem or short story of your own; **video project**, like a short experimental film or a series of Tik Tok videos; a **song/musical composition** inspired by a reading; a work of visual/digital art; or anything else you'd care to create. I am open to you taking the project in any direction that you'd like. This project will focus on creativity, imagination, and adaptation. The idea will be to share these projects with the class during the last week of the semester as a celebration of our work—you know, ending on a positive note after reading about the end of the world for two months.

**Zoom Conference (5%):** Schedule a time to talk to me about your midterm essay, final paper, or creative project, or drop in during my office hours. Easy peasy. I want to see/talk to you all at least once, and this forces you to think about these "big" projects at least a little bit in advance. Summer semester flies by, so it's good to plan and think ahead.

- Discussion Board
- Midterm Essay
- Final Essay
- Creative Project
- Conference
- Presentation



# Course Policies

## Assignment Deadlines and Make-up Policy

All assignments are due when they are due. But I'm not a monster: if something comes up and you need an extension, please talk to me in advance of the due date. If you have a job or other commitments that make the deadlines difficult, we can discuss alternative submission dates on a case-by-case basis. But for the most part, plan to turn in assignments when they are due.

## Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

Plagiarism is the unauthorized use of the words or ideas of another person. All writing for this class must be your own and must be written exclusively for this class. Any use of quotation, paraphrases, or ideas from outside sources, including Internet sources, must be properly documented. You may not reuse or recycle papers you've written for other classes. You may not copy a sentence or paragraph from a paper someone else wrote. In cases where you have clearly plagiarized, or committed some other act of academic dishonesty, you will automatically fail the assignment. In other words: **don't cheat**. If you are confused or struggling with an assignment, talk to me about it. If you are unsure of whether you've quoted a source properly, talk to me about it. If you put off writing a paper until the night before it's due and you're feeling stressed out and tempted to copy something online, talk to me about it. **A big note here:** plagiarism will result in automatic failure of the assignment.

## Grading

For any assignment, and for the course overall, I consider A-work as exceptional. Such work goes above and beyond the requirements. B-work is good, quality work. Such work pushes beyond the requirements. C-work satisfies the minimum requirements of the assignment/course. C is an average grade; most work falls near this range. D or F means you submitted nothing or completely disregarded this syllabus and the assignment prompts. For major assignments, please see the prompts and rubrics. I will ask you to grade some of your own assignments as a way to reflect on your writing skills (but no guarantee I will agree with your grade!).

A = 90-100	B+ = 87-89	B = 80-86	C+ = 77-79
C = 70-76	D+ = 67-69	D = 60-66	F = 59 or lower

I also want to stress: **learning is more important than grades**. Discovering something new about the world or about yourself is more important than a grade. Becoming a better reader and writer is more important than a grade. Becoming a

more informed citizen of the world is more important than a grade. So, think about what you put into the class—what you put into your education—because that is what really matters. You may get an A in a class, and then forget everything about that class within a month. You may get a C in a class, but what you learned changes your life forever. In the end, grades don't matter that much.

You may talk to me at any point in the semester about your standing in the class. There is usually a curve up for final grades, depending on the overall class average once all assignments are complete.

## Academic Support

All students have the opportunity to receive free academic support at AUM. Visit the Learning Center in the WASC on the second floor of the Library or the Instructional Support Lab in 203 Goodwyn Hall. They offer writing consulting as well as tutoring in almost every class through graduate school. You can reach the Learning Center at 334-244-3470 and the Support Lab at 334-244-3265.

## IT Support

Students may seek technology assistance from the ITS Help Desk located in the computer lab on the first floor of the Taylor Center. You may also call 334-244-3500 or email [helpdesk@aum.edu](mailto:helpdesk@aum.edu).

## Accommodations

Students who need accommodations should contact me by email to discuss specifics. If you have not registered for accommodation services through the Center for Disability Services but need accommodations, please give them a call at 334-244-3631 or email [cds@aum.edu](mailto:cds@aum.edu).

## Evaluations

You will receive a link through your AUM email to complete a voluntary, anonymous course evaluation during the last few weeks of the semester.

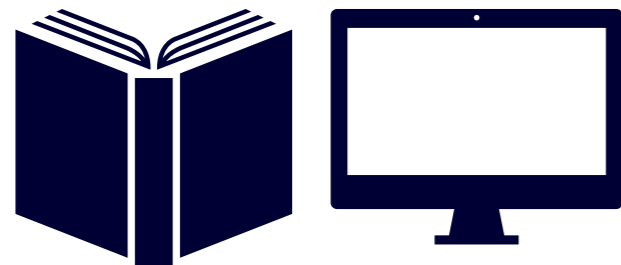
## Important Dates

The last day to add classes is June 7. The registration cancellation date is June 10. The last day to drop is July 17.

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# Suggested Weekly Timeline

This sample timeline is meant to give you a suggested structure to complete the readings and assignments successfully each week. **All assignments are due before you come to class each week.** But you won't be able to cram in the entire week's worth of reading and writing in one day. So, you must manage your time to ensure that you can meet the weekly deadlines. As a general guideline, **you should spend at least 9 hrs/week on work for this class, including our 2.5-hr class session.**



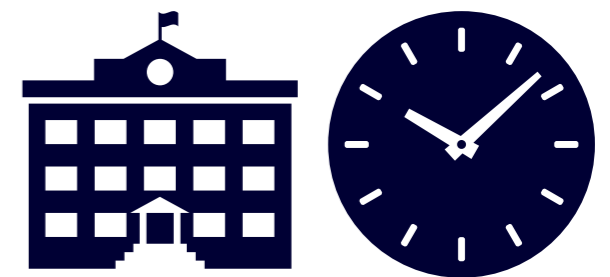
## Sun–Mon: Class Preparation and Reading

Think of Sunday–Monday as an opportunity to prepare for the coming week. You should consult the syllabus and course materials to see what's due in the coming week, make a plan for completing the readings and assignments, and begin on the readings, if you can—but you should also practice self-care and take time off from school, which may come on the weekend, depending on your schedule. Take lots of notes as you read and begin on the week's assignments.



## Tues–Thurs: Readings and Assignments

You should complete readings no later than Thursday. Once you've finished the readings, you'll be able to complete the assignments for the week (discussion posts, papers, planning for projects, etc.). You'll need to complete the readings before beginning on assignments. A good plan is to complete everything by Thursday so that you can take the weekend off—but I know you all have ever-changing schedules, so do what's best for you.



## Friday–Saturday: Complete and Submit Assignments

All assignments are due no later than 11:59pm on Saturday, but I hope you don't stay up that late on the weekend doing school work! It's important to take some time away from work, and the weekend is traditionally the time to relax, so try to get your work done and submitted no later than Friday, if you can (or, even better, Thursday! And I say that because you know AUM doesn't have Friday classes—but that doesn't matter for an online class).

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# Daily Schedule

AS THIS IS AN ONLINE COURSE, WE DON'T HAVE A MEETING DAY/TIME, BUT I'VE ORGANIZED THE DAILY SCHEDULE BASED ON SATURDAY DEADLINES. YOU MUST COMPLETE AND SUBMIT ALL ASSIGNMENTS BY 11:59PM SATURDAY EACH WEEK.

## Week One: June 4: Introduction to the Course

### DUE: DISCUSSION POST #1

Watch: all introductory videos

Read: Book of Revelations

Read: Lord Byron, "Darkness"

Read: Thomas Campbell, "The Last Man"

## Week Two: June 11: The Doom

### DUE: DISCUSSION POST #2

Watch: all week 2 lectures

Read: William Delisle Hay, *The Doom of the Great City*

## Week Three: June 18: Carrying the Fire I

### DUE: DISCUSSION POST #3

Watch: first three Road lectures

Read: Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*, pages 1-130

## Week Four: June 25: Carrying the Fire II

### DUE: DISCUSSION POST #4

Watch: remaining Road lectures

Read: Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (finish)

## Week Five: July 2: The Last (Hu)Man I

### DUE: DISCUSSION POST #5

Watch: first three Atwood lectures

Read: Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*, Parts 1-8

## Week Six: July 9: The Last (Hu)Man II

### DUE: DISCUSSION POST #6

Watch: remaining Atwood lectures

Read: Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake* (finish)

## Week Seven: July 16: The Pulse I

### DUE: DISCUSSION POST #7

Watch: first two Robinson lectures

Read: Kim Stanley Robinson, *New York 2140*, Parts 1-4

## Week Eight: July 23: The Pulse II

### DUE: DISCUSSION POST #8

Watch: remaining Robinson lecture

Read: Kim Stanley Robinson, *New York 2140* (finish)

## Finals Week: July 28 (this is a Thursday)

### DUE: FINAL PAPER

### DUE: CREATIVE PROJECT

**\*\*PAY NO ATTENTION TO THIS BLANK SPACE\*\***

**\*\*IMAGINE THE SCHEDULE IS PERFECTLY SYMMETRICAL\*\***

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# General University Policies

## Attendance Reporting Policy

An attendance verification is in place for students accepting federal grants and loans. Absences from class may affect a student's eligibility for these funds. Students who have not participated in any session by the report due date are reported as no shows and their financial aid may be reduced or cancelled as a result. For purposes of financial aid and enrollment, a student will be considered to be in attendance in an online class when he student has met one of the following conditions: (1) submits an academic assignment, exam, or quiz on time; (2) participated in an interactive tutorial or computer-assisted instruction; (3) posts by the student show participation in an online study group that is assigned by the institution; (4) posts by the student in a discussion forum show the student's participation in an online discussion about academic matters; or (5) emails initiated by the student to a faculty member to ask a question about the academic subjects related to the course materials on Blackboard.

## Withdrawal

A student who wishes to withdraw from the course or has missed too many classes must complete the standard process for dropping a class by the withdrawal date for the term (Sunday, July 18, 2021).

## Disability Accommodations

Students who need accommodations are asked to contact me by email to discuss your accommodations. If you have not registered for accommodation services through the Center for Disability Services (CDS), but need accommodations, make an appointment with CDS, 147 Taylor Center, or call 334-244-3631, or email CDS at [cds@aum.edu](mailto:cds@aum.edu)

## Free Academic Support

All students have the opportunity to receive free academic support at AUM. Visit the Learning Center (LC) in the WASC on second floor Library or the Instructional Support Lab (ISL) in 203 Goodwyn Hall. The LC/ISL offers writing consulting as well as tutoring in almost every class through graduate school. The LC may be reached at 334-244-3470 (call or walk-in for a session), and the ISL may be reached at 344-244-3265. ISL tutoring is first-come, first-served. Current operating hours can be found at <https://www.aum.edu/academics/academic-support/warhawk-academic-success-center/learning-center-isl/>.

## Academic Honesty

The Student Academic Honesty Code applied to all student taking Auburn University at Montgomery classes, By act of registration, all students agree to conform to this Code. The regulations are designed to support the interests of AUM and its students and faculty, in maintaining the honesty and integrity essential to and inherent in an academic institutions. Full policy, including potential penalties for violation, can be found in the Student Handbook beginning on page 65. Full text at: <https://www.aum.edu/aum-student-handbook/>.

## Technology Assistance

Students may seek technology assistance from the ITS Help Desk, located in the computer lab on the first floor of the Taylor Center. You may also call 334-244-3500 or email [helpdesk@aum.edu](mailto:helpdesk@aum.edu).

## Curtiss Course Critiques

AUM is committed to effective teaching, Students assist in maintaining and enhancing this effectiveness by completing teaching evaluations in a thoughtful and honest manner. We ask that you take time to respond to all questions and write comments. I can use your feedback to know what is working in the course and what is not working and improve the learning experience. The instructor will not be given student comments nor informed of the aggregate results of evaluations until after final grades have been submitted. All individual student responses will be confidential. The evaluations will be available on the following schedule for our class: evaluations open on April 13 and close on April 27. See <https://www.aum.edu/curtiss-course-critiques/>.

## Key Dates for Full Term Fall Classes

Last Day to Add Classes	June 7
Last Day for 100% Refund	June 10
Last Day for 50% Refund	June 22
Holiday	June 20
Mid-Semester Grades Due	June 29
Holiday	July 5-6
Last Day to Drop	July 17
Classes End	July 28