

Department of English & Writing Studies  
**Speculative Fiction: Utopias and Dystopias**  
**English 2073G (001)**  
Winter 2026

**Instructor:** Dr. Gabrielle Ceraldi  
Office Hours: M, W: 3:30-4:30 pm  
[gceraldi@uwo.ca](mailto:gceraldi@uwo.ca)

Course Description

This course will examine the utopian and dystopian traditions as they have developed during the twentieth century from visions of an ideal future to nightmares of government surveillance, warfare, and poverty.

**Learning Objectives:**

By the end of the course, the successful student will be able to:

- Place individual texts into the context of the utopian and dystopian genres;
- Identify and analyze the basic elements of literature such as plot, character, point of view, theme, setting, imagery, and diction;
- Understand the political, religious, moral, and philosophical underpinnings of the texts on the course;
- Write an essay about a work of literature containing an effective thesis supported by adequate evidence from the original text;
- Offer independent insights, beyond those outlined in class;
- Organize and present ideas clearly and effectively.

Course Materials

**Required Texts:**

Veronica Roth, *Divergent* (HarperCollins)  
Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (Vintage)  
Lois Lowry, *The Giver* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)  
George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Penguin)  
Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (McClelland & Stewart)  
Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games* (Scholastic)  
    *Catching Fire* (Scholastic)  
    *Mockingjay* (Scholastic)  
Cormac McCarthy, *The Road* (Vintage)

The texts for this course are available from the Western Bookstore. You may use another edition of these texts where available; if you do so in an essay, you should include the publisher and date of publication in your Works Cited list.

Link to the Western Bookstore course site: (not yet available)

### Methods of Evaluation

Essay 1 (750 words, due January 30)	20%
Essay 2 (1750 words, due March 27)	40%
Attendance and Participation	10%
Final Exam	30%

Please note: The department of English & Writing Studies does not release final grades. All undergraduate grade reports will be available online from the Office of the Registrar.

Students are fully responsible for looking at and being familiar with the information posted on the department website at <https://www.uwo.ca/english/undergraduate/Student%20Information.html>.

### Academic Integrity Tutorial

All students are required to enroll in and complete the Centre for Teaching and Learning's Academic Integrity Tutorial. To access the tutorial, please follow the instructions in the course OWL site. Once the tutorial has been completed, you will receive a downloadable certificate. You must upload the certificate and submit it through the course Assignments tab in order to complete this assignment. The tutorial must be completed by Friday in the second week of term. This tutorial is mandatory in order for you to complete and pass the course. If you have completed the tutorial already for another course, you may upload the same certificate for this course; you do not need to repeat the tutorial.

### Attendance

Attendance is mandatory in all classes and tutorials. In cases of excessive absenteeism (e.g. more than 9 unexcused hours for a half course, 18 for a full course), which are not accounted for by either academic consideration or accommodation, students may be debarred from taking the final examination, and will receive an official warning to this effect by or before the course drop date (see Senate policy). In classes with or without final exams, students who do not attend class will receive 0% for course participation grades. Unless other policies dictate a different set of penalties in specific English and Writing Studies programs, this will apply to all department programs.

### Intellectual Property/Copyright

All instructor-written materials (e.g. PowerPoints, lecture notes, oral lectures) for this course are created solely for students' personal use within the course, and remain the instructor's intellectual property. Further reproduction, fixation, distribution, transmission, dissemination, communication, or any other uses, without securing the consent of the copyright owner (the course instructor) may be an infringement of copyright. You may not distribute, email, or otherwise communicate these materials to any other person. These limitations extend to recording, photographing, or sharing lectures (online or in-person) and lecture material without permission. Posting the instructor's content from this course to online course sharing sites like OneClass or Course Hero without permission is both an infringement of intellectual property law and a violation of academic integrity guidelines. The instructor will pass these cases on to the Western University Ombudsperson or their Department Chair as appropriate.

### General Information

1. Regular attendance at lectures is essential (see department policy above). An emailed explanation is sufficient for a class missed due to emergency or illness; for longer legitimate absences (a week or more), students should see the academic counsellor in their dean's office to arrange accommodation in order to avoid penalty. To catch up on missed material, you may request notes from another student either in person or on the OWL Discussion board.
2. All written assignments should be double-spaced in a standard font such as 12-pt Times Roman. Please follow MLA format (see attached guidelines). Essays must be uploaded as documents to the Assignments tool. Email is not an accepted method of submission. To count as on time, an essay must be uploaded to the OWL by 11:59 pm on the due date. One percent per day (including weekends) will be deducted from late essays, beginning 48 hours after the due date (that is, essays submitted on the third day will receive a 3-mark deduction). No paper will be accepted beyond two weeks after the due date or after the last day of classes (April 4).
3. The written assignments in this course have flexible deadlines; that is, late penalties will not be deducted for a period of 48 hours after the due date. These assignments are not eligible for additional academic consideration without supporting documentation. Students can obtain additional academic consideration by submitting appropriate documentation to the academic counsellor in their home faculty through the Student Absence Portal (see below for more details). Please email me only after you have contacted academic counselling.
4. The Participation Grade will reflect your presence in class and your lively participation in discussions. You may also acquire credit towards your participation grade by posting comments on the course material to the Discussion tool on OWL. The highest marks in this category will be achieved by those who participate every week, either in person or online (or a combination of the two).
5. All grades, once assigned and/or posted, are final. While formal appeal processes do exist in the Department of English and Writing Studies, grades will not be changed after the fact in response to emailed requests and/or GPA requirements, nor will the weighting of assignments be altered for individual students.
6. Students are responsible for checking the course OWL site on a regular basis for news and updates. This is the primary method by which information will be disseminated to all students in the class. If students need assistance with the course OWL site, they can seek support on the OWL Help page. Alternatively, they can contact the Western Technology Services Helpdesk. They can be contacted by phone at 519-661-3800 or ext. 83800.

### Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence

The use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools/software/apps is unacceptable in this course.

### **Academic Consideration**

Students may request academic consideration in cases of extenuating circumstances – that is, personal circumstances beyond the student's control that have a **substantial but temporary** impact on the student's ability to meet essential academic requirements.

1. Requests for academic consideration are made to the Academic Advising office of the student's Faculty of Registration.

2. Requests for academic consideration include the following components:
  - a. Self-attestation signed by the student;
  - b. Indication of the course(s) and assessment(s) relevant to the request;
  - c. Supporting documentation as relevant.

Requests without supporting documentation are **limited to one per term per course**.

Instructors may designate one assignment or assessment as exempt from this allowance. In this course, all assignments have flexible deadlines, so I am not making use of this designation.

Assignments with flexible deadlines and any term work that does not count towards the course grade are **not** eligible for additional consideration.

Documentation for medical illness, when required, includes the completion of a [Western Student Medical Certificate \(SMC\)](#) or, where that is not possible, equivalent documentation, by a health care practitioner.

Requests linked to examinations scheduled by the Office of the Registrar during official examination periods as well as practice laboratory and performance tests typically scheduled in the last week of term **always** require formal supporting documentation.

### **Religious Accommodation**

Students should consult the University's list of recognized religious holidays, and should give reasonable notice in writing, prior to the holiday, to the Instructor and an Academic Counsellor if their course requirements will be affected by a religious observance. Additional information is given in the [Western Multicultural Calendar](#).

### Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at [http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### **Plagiarism**

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offence.

### **Plagiarism Checking**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

All instances of plagiarism will be reported to the Chair of Undergraduate Studies. Proven cases of plagiarism will result in a grade of zero for the assignment. Subsequent offences will result in failure for the course.

### **Gender-Based and Sexual Violence**

Western is committed to reducing incidents of gender-based and sexual violence and providing compassionate support to anyone who has gone through these traumatic events. If you have experienced gender-based or sexual violence (either recently or in the past), you will find information about support services for survivors, including emergency contacts, here. To connect with a case manager or set up an appointment, please contact [support@uwo.ca](mailto:support@uwo.ca).

### Support Services

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Academic Support and Engagement <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Health and Wellness <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

### Schedule of Classes and Assignments

Jan. 6: Introduction to the Course

Jan. 8: Veronica Roth, *Divergent* (Chapters 1-5); E. Nesbit, "The Sorry-Present and the Expelled Little Boy" (Ch. 12 of *The Story of the Amulet*) (link on OWL)

#### **Conversations with a Better World**

Jan. 13: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland* (Ch. 1-6) (on OWL)

Jan. 15: *Herland* (Ch. 7-12); Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (Ch. 1-2)

#### **False and Real Utopias**

Jan. 20: Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (up to p. 105)

Jan. 22: *Brave New World*

Jan. 27: *Brave New World* (ending)

Jan. 29: Lois Lowry, *The Giver*

Feb. 3: *The Giver* (ending)

Feb. 5: Ursula K. Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" (on OWL)  
George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Part 1)

#### **Big Brother**

Feb. 10: George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Part 2)

Feb. 12: *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (Part 3)

Feb. 16-20: SPRING READING WEEK (no class)

Feb. 24: Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (up to Part 8)

Feb. 26: *The Handmaid's Tale*

Mar. 3:        *The Handmaid's Tale* (ending)  
Mar. 5:        Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*

Mar. 10:       *The Hunger Games*  
Mar. 12:       Suzanne Collins, *Catching Fire*

Mar. 17-19:   Suzanne Collins, *Mockingjay*

**Apocalypse**

Mar. 24-26:   Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*

Mar. 31-Apr 2: film viewing and discussion: *Children of Men*

Apr. 7-9:       review

## Grading Rubric

### **THESIS**

- Is there a unifying idea in this paper?
- Is this idea specific, original, and argumentative?
- Is this idea explained clearly near the beginning of the paper?

### **ARGUMENT**

- Does the material in this paper go beyond description to explore the implications and meaning of the text(s)?
- Have opposing ideas been acknowledged and given a convincing response?

### **ORGANIZATION**

- Do paragraph breaks reflect a meaningful shift in topic?
- Does the opening sentence of each paragraph identify the central idea of that paragraph and its relationship to the thesis?

### **USE OF SOURCES**

- Is there textual evidence to back up each claim in the paper?
- Is there an attention to detail (word choice, imagery, etc.) that adds intricacy to the argument?
- Are quotations integrated smoothly and cited correctly?

### **STYLE**

- Is the writing style clear, concise, and readable, so that the focus falls on the ideas in the paper?
- Are sentences punctuated correctly?

A+ (90-100) = Excellent ("Yes, absolutely!" in all categories)

A (80-89) = Very Good ("Yes" in almost all categories)

B (70-79) = Good ("Yes" or "Somewhat" in all categories)

C (60-69) = Satisfactory ("Somewhat" in most categories OR "No" in one category)

D (50-59) = Poor ("No" in several categories)

F (49 or below) = Unsatisfactory (does not meet the requirements for the assignment)

Sample MLA Format

Surname 1

Your Name

Name of T.A./Professor

English 2072G

February 12, 2018

Diary of a Young Girl

First-Person Narration in Jo Walton's *Among Others*

If you have a snappy, attention-grabbing title, follow it with an informative subtitle that indicates your topic as well as the work(s) you will be discussing. Titles of books should be *italicized*. Titles of articles and short stories should be put in "Quotation Marks." Introduce quotations in your own words, identifying the speaker and context: EXAMPLE: As Morwenna points out, "If you love books enough, books will love you back" (300). Use ellipses to indicate where you have omitted words from the quotation, and put any changes in brackets: EXAMPLE: The White Witch is described as "a great lady ... covered in white fur up to her throat [who] held a long straight golden wand in her right hand" (33).

If the quotation is longer than four lines, do not use quotations marks; instead, indent the passage five spaces from the left and continue to double space.

EXAMPLE: Walton offers a sceptical take on the boarding-school novel:

My popularity, bizarrely, goes both up and down slightly because of the marks. They don't care about lessons, and they hate me for beating them, but you get house points for exceptional marks, and they care a lot about house points. It's depressing how much boarding school is just like Enid Blyton showed it, and all the ways it's different are ways it's worse. (35-36)

At the end of the essay, list all the works you have discussed or used in the preparation of your paper. Staple the top left hand corner.

Works Cited

Lewis, C.S. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. HarperTrophy, 1950.

Walton, Jo. *Among Others*. Tor, 2010.