

PSCI T380: Apocalypse, Dystopia, and Political Science
Drexel University
Fall 2019
4 credits

Instructor: Professor Amelia Hoover-Green (she/her)
Email: ameliahoovergreen@gmail.com
Time & Location: Tuesday/Thursday, 2:00-3:50 pm, location TBD
Office hours: Wednesday, 10:00am-noon, 3025 Macalister, or by appointment

Course Overview

Is *The Hunger Games* realistic? What about *1984*? *Mad Max*? And what does “realistic” even mean? What does the political future look like, and why? This course brings political science findings into conversation with works of speculative fiction. Substantively, the course focuses on state violence and repression, war, state collapse, statelessness, and state-building. Methodologically, we consider counterfactual reasoning — what-ifs.

Learning Outcomes

Students who complete the course should be able to:

- **Accurately describe** works of speculative fiction from the syllabus.
- **Accurately describe** several types of non-democratic regimes, especially totalitarianism.
- **Accurately describe** key debates in the political science of state-building and state collapse.
- **Accurately describe** guidelines for counterfactual reasoning in political science.
- **Critically assess** works of speculative fiction through the lens of political science evidence.

Drexel Student Learning Priorities

The course contributes to student progress in achieving one key DSLP: Creative and Critical Thinking.

Required Texts

All these texts can be purchased in the Drexel Bookstore, but most are also available, used, for much cheaper. Whether new or used, you must buy the edition listed.

- Atchison, Amy, and Shauna Shames. 2019. *Survive and Resist: The Definitive Guide to Dystopian Politics*. New York: Columbia UP. ISBN: 0231188919.
- Atwood, Margaret. 1998 [1986]. *The Handmaid's Tale*. New York: Anchor Books. ISBN: 038549081X.
- Butler, Octavia. 2019 [1993]. *Parable of the Sower*. New York: Grand Central Publishing. ISBN: 1538732181.
- Butler, Octavia. 2019 [1998]. *Parable of the Talents*. New York: Grand Central Publishing. ISBN: 153873219X.
- Levitsky, Steven, and Daniel Ziblatt. 2018. *How Democracies Die*. New York: Broadway. ISBN: 1524762946.
- Mandel, Emily St. John. 2014. *Station Eleven*. New York: Knopf. ISBN 0804172447.
- Orwell, George. 1949. *Nineteen Eighty-Four (1984)*. Signet Classics. ISBN 9780451524935.

All other readings will be available on Blackboard. Videos and other episodes are generally on streaming services. In addition, most units have a long list of optional/supplemental books that you might also want to read.

Classroom Climate and Participation: Policies

Please read this section carefully, paying close attention to the four initial paragraphs (beginning “You must”).

You must come to class, and you must come on time. Attendance and promptness are both components of your participation grade. I understand that in some classes you can just do the readings and the assignments. In this class, if you’re not in class, you’re not taking class.

You must do the reading, and you must bring your readings to class. I expect each class session to require about 2-4 hours of preparation outside of class.

You must participate in class. Participation accounts for a significant portion of your grade, and is an important element of both your learning and the learning of your colleagues. If participation is hard for you—as it is for many people—email me or meet with me. I will help you strategize about participating in a way that feels challenging but not terrifying.

You must treat me, and your classmates, with respect. Treating others with respect is a key part of your participation grade (and an important life skill). Some indicators of respect that I demand are:

- No phones: no texting, no talking, no surfing the web. Turn them to silent and put them away.
- Computers are for notes, or (extremely occasionally) looking up class-relevant stuff on the web.
- No side conversations (unless I specifically ask for them, which I will occasionally do).
- Warm, non-judgmental attention to whomever is speaking. This means: active, attentive listening; nonverbal demonstrations of engagement using eye contact and/or body language and/or facial expression.
- If you’re bored, I expect you to pretend otherwise.
- If you have a hard time staying awake, feel free to get up and pace, grab a drink of water, or bring a fidget. If you really *can’t* stay awake, don’t come to class.

Participation Grading: I assign a rough participation grade (on a 0-5 scale) to each student after each class period. In general, “A+” (5/5) participation for a class period requires all of the following: (1) you attend, (2) you are extremely well-prepared, as evidenced by in-class writing exercises and/or class discussion, (3) you make comments in class that are relevant to the discussion, and demonstrate knowledge of the reading, and (4) your comments are respectful of your classmates and me. Failing to meet any of these requirements will lower your grade. In general, when students are present in class, I assign participation grades of no lower than 3/5. However, you cannot receive a participation grade when you are not present to participate; you receive a 0/5 for days you are absent. At the end of the quarter, I drop your two lowest participation grades when I calculate your participation score.

Specific ways to improve your participation grade:

- Really listen when your colleagues are speaking. Don’t just wait for your turn.
- Listen actively, making eye contact, signaling your agreement by nodding, and so on. (Although, as a side note, I appreciate folks letting me know if they are autistic/have autism, or another kind of neurodivergence that makes this behavior particularly difficult.)
- If you have trouble participating in class, email me or make an appointment, and we’ll strategize.
- If you are someone who likes to speak a lot in class discussions, that’s awesome. Still, be mindful of colleagues who have less practice speaking up by pausing for a few seconds before you jump in.
- If you disagree, do so respectfully. Try jumping off from a point of agreement.
- Don’t make assumptions about what is “basic” knowledge. Judgment makes learning harder for everyone.

If you’re not sure about your participation grade, it’s your right and responsibility to check in with me. If your participation problems are particularly severe, I may reach out to discuss them with you—but it’s not wise to assume that your participation grade is perfect just because you haven’t heard otherwise.

Other Course Policies

Please read this section, which is organized alphabetically by topic, carefully. I treat a syllabus as a contract of sorts. If you take my class you are bound by the terms here.

Academic Integrity: ALL YOUR WORK MUST BE YOUR OWN. I cannot emphasize this enough. If you feel that you're in over your head, or you don't know whether what you're doing constitutes plagiarism or another academic integrity violation, PLEASE talk to me. Making the wrong decision could get you expelled from Drexel. Under most circumstances, if I find that you have committed an academic integrity violation, you will fail my course, and I will make a formal report to the Provost. The full text of Drexel's academic misconduct policies can be found at http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/academic_dishonesty.asp.

Attendance: You receive a zero participation grade for class meetings you do not attend; participation is 20% of your grade. Perhaps more importantly, when you are absent you do not have the opportunity to learn materials that are discussed in class rather than in the readings, which decreases your likelihood of earning full credit on written assignments.

Changes to the Syllabus: I reserve the right to change this syllabus at any time. I do my best to communicate clearly about any changes.

Disability Statement: Here is Drexel's official policy on disability accommodations: "[T]he University is committed to the non-discrimination of students with disabilities. Students with disabilities requesting accommodations and services at Drexel need to present a current accommodation verification letter (AVL) before accommodation can be made. AVL's are issued by the Office of Disability Services." (The Office of Disability Services can be reached at disability@drexel.edu.)

Beyond this official policy, here is my approach: I work hard to help everyone take full advantage of my classes, but in some cases I'm not sure what my students' specific needs are. If you have a disability, think you might have a disability, or become disabled, please let me know as soon as possible so that we can work out a plan. There is no need to have a specific accommodation figured out in advance; we can talk about your needs and the class requirements, and figure out what is necessary. However, if your accommodation request requires considerable effort on my part, you may also need to get an accommodation verification letter, as described in Drexel's policy.

Diversity and Inclusion: I try to teach in a way that promotes the full, equal participation of people from many different backgrounds, including people who have had different educational opportunities, people with a variety of mother tongues, and people of different racial, socioeconomic, sexual and gender identities. You may not misgender your colleagues purposefully, use slurs of any kind, or comment on others' bodies or other private choices. This stuff earns you a zero participation grade for the day. If you aren't already familiar with ideas such as intersectionality, privilege, and white fragility, please take some time early in the quarter to learn about them. They often come up when we discuss various types of dystopia, so this is an important vocabulary to learn. You can find some short readings that I have found helpful in the folder marked "Inclusion" on Blackboard.

Drops and Withdrawals: I adhere to the University's policies on drops and withdrawals, which are available at <http://www.drexel.edu/provost/policies/course-add-drop/> and <http://drexel.edu/provost/policies/course-withdrawal/>, respectively.

Emergencies: If you believe you will miss class, or be unable to turn in an assignment on time, due to legitimate, verifiable illness, disability, or emergency, please contact me directly and we will consider how to proceed.

Gender/pronouns: My pronouns are she/her. You will call your colleagues what they want to be called, including using singular "they" if respected, or face my wrath. Please let me know if you prefer to use a different name or pronouns than is listed for you in Drexel's records.

Grading Notes: I give grades of A+ only in exceptional circumstances. A rule of thumb: if your insight is new to me, and extremely clearly presented, then you *may* receive an A+. Rubrics for individual assignments will be handed out separately, but these general guidelines apply to all written assignments and are the only way to receive an A.

- For assignments that ask you to “evaluate” or “analyze,” please do so. You may summarize *if and only if* the finer points of the material summarized are relevant to the evaluative argument.
- Use evidence: quotations from the reading, examples from the news, and readings from other courses are all appropriate sources. All claims must be accurately and completely sourced.
- Evaluate your evidence and arguments fairly. Social science writing is not about winning a debate or laying out one side of an argument; it’s about critically but open-mindedly assessing theory and evidence.
- Be clear. It doesn’t have to be beautiful prose (although that helps), but it does have to get the point across with a minimum of fuss and confusion.
- I do not grade on spelling or grammar, but I do grade on clarity. Always proofread to make sure that your writing says what you want it to say. If you’re not sure about how clear your writing is, have someone else look over it.

Grading Scale:	A+	98-100%
	A	93-97%
	A-	90-92%
	B+	87-89%
	B	83-86%
	B-	80-82%
	C+	77-79%
	C	73-76%
	C-	70-72%
	D+	67-69%
	D	63-66%
	F	62% and below

How to Turn in Your Work: Hard copies only, please, at the beginning of the class period.

Incompletes: Drexel’s policy requires that any student seeking a grade of incomplete has completed at least 70% of the work for the quarter at the time of the request. If you haven’t completed 70% of the work, consider requesting a late withdrawal instead.

Late Work/Extensions: In this course, I will accept work up to one week late for a 10% grade penalty. After one week I will no longer accept late work. *However*, under certain circumstances, or as an element of a disability accommodation, I will consider accepting late work with no penalty. If you need an extension, please speak with me before the scheduled due date if at all possible. We will create a contract specifying a new due date.

My title: You are more than welcome to refer to me as “Amelia” and call me “Amelia” in class and office hours. However, if you’re not comfortable with that, you should use “Professor Hoover Green” or “Dr. Hoover Green” since I have a Ph.D. *Please don’t call me Miss, Ms., or Mrs.* Also, please understand that your professors will differ on this — some are not OK with first names, for example. In general, call people what they want to be called. (See also: Gender/pronouns)

When to Expect Grades: I make every effort to return all written work promptly. In general, you should expect to receive your grade and any comments by one week after the due date. However, this is not always possible. I will advise you if grading will take longer than expected.

Components of Your Grade
Specific rubrics on following pages.

Component	Description	Due When	% of Grade
Participation	Participation is vital to the functioning of this class. Read and follow all the guidelines on pp. 2-3. You are welcome to ask at any point for a rough approximation of your participation grade.	Ongoing	20%
Discussion lead	With your group (3-4 students, determined during week 2), lead the first hour of discussion on a prearranged day. This means (1) reading the assigned material particularly carefully and well ahead of time, (2) meeting or emailing with Amelia to discuss discussion objectives by the day before class, (3) circulating a list of discussion topics/questions to the class by the evening before class, (4) introducing your discussion or activity, (5) keeping the discussion queue, and (6) returning a group- and self-evaluation form.	TBD	20%
Reading responses (2)	Twice during the quarter (NOT on the same day your group is scheduled to lead discussion), write a brief (300-500 words) response to the day's readings. A+ reading responses will incorporate optional as well as required readings.	TBD	20%
Final paper introduction	Write the introduction to your final paper (see assignment below). This introduction should introduce the reader to the central question(s) of your essay, its key argument(s), and its evidence and structure. It must be at least 500, and no more than 1000, words long. In addition (and separate from the word limit), please include a proposed bibliography of no less than 8 items, of which 4 must be peer-reviewed academic research. NOTE: Topics must be approved by Amelia by Friday 11/22.	12/3	10%
Final paper	Write an essay of at least 3000 (and absolutely no more than 5000) words on any aspect of the course material.	12/12	30%

Course Schedule

NOTE: Some readings are full novels. These will take more time than your standard readings. So that you can plan ahead, they are marked with a double asterisk (**).

Week 1

Introduction: Counterfactual reasoning, the possibility principle, and speculative fiction. Class ground rules and goals.

Tuesday readings: Nothing.

Thursday readings: King, *11/22/63* (excerpts); James Fearon, "Counterfactuals and Hypothesis Testing in Political Science." **Optional:** Mahoney and Goertz, "The Possibility Principle;" Jemisin, Introduction to *The Parable of the Sower*.

Week 2

How do we end up in Dystopia? Democratic decline and varieties of authoritarianism.

Tuesday readings: Roth, *The Plot Against America* (excerpts); video: Charles Lindbergh and the rise of 1940's Nazi Sympathizers (2 minutes; https://www.smithsonianmag.com/videos/category/history/charles-lindbergh-and-the-rise-of-1940s-nazi_1/). **Optional**: Lewis, *It Can't Happen Here*.

Thursday readings: Atchison and Shames, *Survive and Resist* (Introduction and chapters 1-3, pp. 1-62). **Optional**: Levitsky and Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (Introduction and chapter 1, pp. 1-32).

Week 3

Dystopian politics I: surveillance, indoctrination, repression, resistance.

Tuesday readings: Orwell, *1984***

Thursday readings: Atchison and Shames, *Survive and Resist* (chapters 4 and 5, pp. 63-126). **Optional**: Watch *The Lives of Others* on any streaming service.

Week 4

Dystopian politics II: Race, gender, and dystopia.

Tuesday readings: Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*** **Optional**: Atwood, *The Heart Goes Last* (excerpts).

Thursday readings: Ruffin, *We Cast a Shadow* (excerpts); listen: "The Reformatory: An Interview with Tananarive Due" (<http://bostonreview.net/podcast-literature-culture-arts-society/tananarive-due-history-dystopia>) (41 min)

Week 5

Dystopian politics III: The limits of totalitarianism; resistance; revolution.

Tuesday readings: Collins, *The Hunger Games* (excerpts); Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness* (excerpts); Pepinsky, "Life Under Authoritarianism is Mostly Boring and Tolerable" (<https://www.vox.com/the-big-idea/2017/1/9/14207302/authoritarian-states-boring-tolerable-fascism-trump>).

Thursday readings: Wood, *Insurgent Collective Action in El Salvador* (excerpts); Einwohner, "Opportunity, Honor, and Action in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943." **Optional**: Howard and Hussain, "The Upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia: The Role of Digital Media."

Week 6

Many roads to apocalypse: invasion, plague, famine, state collapse, etc.

Tuesday readings: Butler, *The Parable of the Sower*** (including introduction by Jemisin); Keneally, *Three Famines* (excerpts). **Optional**: Christopher, *The Death of Grass*.

Thursday readings: Butler, *The Parable of the Talents*** **Optional**: Brin, *The Postman* (excerpts).

Week 7

Environmental apocalypse: global warming, sea level rise, water scarcity, forced migration.

Tuesday readings: Bacigulapi, “The Tamarisk Hunter;” Theisen, “Climate Change and Political Violence: Insights from Political Science.” **Optional**: Butler and Gates, “African range wars: Climate, conflict, and property rights.”

Thursday readings: Watch *Mad Max: Fury Road*. **Optional**: Watch *Mad Max* (the original).

Week 8

Human nature in the post-apocalypse

Tuesday readings: Hobbes, *The Leviathan* (excerpts); Butler, “Speech Sounds;” McCarthy, *The Road* (excerpts). **Optional**: Mandel, *Station Eleven* (excerpts).

Thursday readings: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (excerpts); Mandel, *Station Eleven* (excerpts); Gintis, Bowles, Boyd and Fehr, “Explaining altruistic behavior in humans.”

Week 9

Rebuilding: forms of power in the post-apocalypse.

Tuesday readings: King, *The Stand* (excerpts); Cronin, *The Passage* (excerpts); Reno, “Order and Commerce in Turbulent Areas.” **Optional**: King, *Under the Dome* (book or streaming series).

Thursday readings: Brin, *The Postman* (excerpts); Mandel, *Station Eleven* (excerpts).

Week 10 (Short week: Thanksgiving)

Rebuilding: state formation “from scratch,” versus in the ashes of the old state.

Tuesday readings: Brin, *The Postman* (excerpts); Mampilly, “Stationary Bandits: Understanding Rebel Governance.” **Optional**: Olson, “Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development.”

Thursday: **No class.**

Week 11

Wrap-up.

Tuesday readings: None. Paper introductions (500-1000 words) due.

Thursday: **No class.**