UN 1001: Perspectives on Inquiry: Zombies in Popular Culture & Modern Thinking

Zombies are apocalyptic. I think that's why people love them because we're living in, not apocalyptic times, but I think we're living in fear of the apocalyptic times.
Max Brooks, author of The Zombie Survival Guide

Just the facts...

- Class meets Monday, Wednesday and Friday:
  R17 — 1:05 PM to 1:55 PM
  R22 — 2:05 PM to 2:55 PM
- Class meets in MEEM 0407
- Your instructor is Dr. Casey J Rudkin
  - Office location: 140 Walker Hall
  - Office hours: Monday and Wednesday 10 AM to 11 AM and by appt.
  - Office phone number: 487-2540 (please leave a message)
  - Home phone number: 337-1546 (never before 10 AM/never after 10 PM)
  - Campus e-mail: casey@mtu.edu
  - I check my e-mail once a day -- give me at least 48 hours to respond.
  - Web site: all information will be on Blackboard this semester
  - Class lists: zombiesR17-L@mtu.edu / zombiesR22-L@mtu.edu
- Required Textbooks:
  Pride & Prejudice & Zombies by Jane Austen & Seth Grahame-Smith ($12.95)
  Gospel of the Living Dead: George Romero’s Visions of Hell on Earth by Kim Paffenroth ($29.95)
  World War Z by Max Brooks ($14.95)
  The Zombie Survival Guide by Max Brooks ($13.95)

Your own notebook – same one, every day in class, with pen or pencil – I suggest a composition book dedicated to this class. You will be expected to take good notes on lectures, activities and discussions.

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Course Description & Goals
During this course, students will...

- Develop the ability to thoughtfully consider others' ideas and positions
- Demonstrate intellectual curiosity, which contributes to lifelong learning
- Develop tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty
- Show appreciation for, and willingness to engage, complex questions
- Understand expectations of academic integrity
- Write and speak precisely and persuasively
- Read critically and thoughtfully
- Choose reputable sources to support arguments
- Learn to use appropriate citation practices
- Demonstrate the ability to engage issues from diverse disciplinary and cultural perspectives
- Learn to use reason, evidence, and logical inquiry to support written and oral arguments

Course Overview
This is a General Education requirement, and it is in the course schedule to help you broaden your worldview, deepen your inquiry into our subject and practice your communication skills. "But why," you may ask, "would I want to do that?" This semester, I'll show you. We will be discussing intellectual curiosity, persuasive writing and complex questions. The idea is that by looking at ways your worldview (and your audience's worldview) shapes communication, you will become better at crafting your ideas into effective communication. Of course you already know how to communicate, but by analyzing and practicing what you do, you will be even more effective. In this class, you will do a lot of writing.

I am very excited about our subject this semester, but there is more to study than zombies from different disciplines. You will also learn the citation style of your major, which will help you to uphold academic integrity. If you are interested in shoring up your grammar issues, I would suggest Strunk and White's The Elements of Style. I would also STRONGLY RECOMMEND that you buy a dictionary — a real, live, paper dictionary. It is my hope that these texts, as well as the in-class discussions and projects, will provide you with some vital information that will benefit you in your academic, professional and personal lives.
Grading Policy

I base your grade in my course on a 1000-point system. Remember, you must complete all assignments to receive a passing grade in this course. Expect the basic breakdown to look like this:

- 200 points for active class participation/social practices
- 200 points for homework/reading responses/in-class assignments
- 100 points for “What's Your Style?” Project #1
- 200 points for “Rhetorical Analysis: Zombie Edition” Project #2
- 300 points for “Researching the Zombie” Project #3

Most majors require you to get a C or better to pass. You can expect a grade breakdown to look something like this:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Points Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>935-1000 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>865-934 points</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>795-864 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>725-794 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>665-724 points</td>
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<td>CD</td>
<td>595-664 points</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>540-594 points</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>you really don’t want to go here...</td>
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Reading Responses

A major component of this course will be informal writing. This is writing that helps you to understand and reflect on the subject matter, without the high-pressure of an actual paper. One way we will do this is through reading responses. Ten times, you will study a reading or visual source and write a two-page response. This response may be in reaction to a specific writing prompt from me, or it may be your general impressions of the reading or visual source from a rhetorical standpoint (more on that later).

Section #1 – Historical Zombies vs. Popular Culture Zombies

In the beginning of the course, we will focus on the historical background of zombies. We will begin by reading Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica by Zora Neale Hurston. After that, we will study further academic readings from Kyle Bishop. Zombies moved into the mainstream consciousness with some of our
next readings such as "Herbert West – Reanimator" by H.P. Lovecraft. You may also want to read *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley. Finally, we will look at the current popular context of zombies with *The Zombie Survival Guide* by Max Brooks.

During this time, you will undertake Project #1 called "What’s Your Style?" in which you will learn how to evaluate academic sources and cite them properly, in the style of your major. This will help you to uphold Michigan Tech’s standards of academic integrity, while simultaneously preparing you for academic writing in your major.

**Section #2 - The Social Meaning of Zombies in Popular Culture**

Once popular culture and, specifically, Director George Romero, latched onto zombie histories and myths, there was no going back. However, beyond being simple stories about the shambling dead, Romero and his followers imbued the zombie with social significance. In this section, we will be watching *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) directed by Romero, as well as reading *Gospel of the Living Dead: George Romero’s Visions of Hell on Earth* by Kim Paffenroth. I will make Romero’s *Dawn of the Dead* (1978) available for you at the JRVP Library, which you may want to watch. We will also read excerpts from *World War Z* by Max Brooks to understand how social concerns are still being addressed in zombie literature.

During this time, you will undertake Project #2 entitled "Rhetorical Analysis: Zombie Edition" in which you will perform a written rhetorical analysis of one of the sources from the course or a similar modern source, like the mash-up we will read: *Pride & Prejudice & Zombies* by Jane Austen and Seth Grahame-Smith. You will delve into the rhetorical aspects of the source, including the purpose of the work, the targeted audience for the work and the context for the work. You will also look at the source to determine the rhetorical effects of the arrangement, strategies and medium employed. Finally, you will determine to what extent the author/director uses ethos, pathos and logos in her or his argument. This will help you determine the historical and social dimensions of the source.

**Section #3 - Philosophical Zombies & Taking Zombies Beyond the Pop**

In this third and final section, we will be looking at zombies in a context beyond the historical and social. There will be a number of readings from PDFs in this section, including an academic reading from Kette Thomas, with topics ranging from economics to biology, from apocalyptic thinking to library organization. We will look at other uses for the zombie concept, including the idea in philosophy. Using excerpted readings from *The Conscious Mind: In Search of a Fundamental Theory* by David Chalmers and *Zombies and Consciousness* by Robert Kirk, we will explore the philosophical zombie and its effect on modern thinking. We will also watch *Zombie Girl: The Movie* (2010) that will illustrate some of the post-modern ideas on zombies.

During this time, you will undertake Project #3 entitled “Researching the Zombie,” which will be a multi-step research project. You will perform a complete
analysis of a zombie source, thoroughly exploring the historical basis for the source, the social and popular contexts of the source and, finally, the philosophical ramifications of the source. This project will give you practice in critical thinking, citation, persuasive writing and engaging in a complex question. As part of this project, you will also develop a multimodal component for class discussion and an oral presentation on your topic.

The Fine Print...

**Attendance Policy**
Your grade is dependent upon your participation and your performance in our academic community. Doing well on assignments in isolation is fine, but without participation, you cannot contribute and learn from this course. While lack of participation and attendance will figure into your final grade, lowering it significantly, having more than six absences during the semester results in your automatic failure in the class. I do not distinguish between excused and unexcused absences, so plan well. If you have more than six absences, you have missed two solid weeks of class, and you have obviously not participated enough to warrant passing the course.

**A Note About Assignment Structures**
Several of your assignments in this course require you to work through multiple drafts, steps and revisions. I will only accept work that develops out of these processes. In other words, don’t throw me a curve ball; you may not change your subject or your scope late in the game without my explicit permission.

**Pet Peeves & Other Important Stuff**
I have an electronics policy of which you really need to be aware. I do not permit cell phones in my class – ditto for smart phones, pagers, iPods, TV s, PSPs, iPads, laptops or any other electronics you may possess that I haven’t even heard of yet. If an electronic item beeps, buzzes, whirs, sings, or chirps, you will be marked absent for the day; I will assume you were paying attention to it, as opposed to the class. If you have an emergency, and your electronic device HAS to be on, please talk to me before class begins. I will show you the same courtesy. I instituted this rule to make it easier for all of us to communicate in the classroom.
Second, please do not wear hats or sunglasses to class — even touks. It is distracting when I cannot see your eyes, and it is not that cold in here. Eye to eye contact is very important communication, and I want a lot of it during this course. Besides that, I was raised in the era of dinosaurs and not wearing hats indoors. Humor me.

**MTU's Policy on Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism and cheating are serious academic offenses. They are defined by this policy as: "knowingly copying another’s work or ideas and calling them one’s own or not giving proper credit or citation," and this policy covers copying sections or entire papers from printed or electronic sources, as well as handing in papers written by students for other classes or purchasing academic papers. Plagiarism and cheating not only are dishonest but also cheat you out of learning, the prime reason you are here. If you ever have questions about this issue, please talk with me or consult a coach in the Multiliteracies Center (487-2007). (http://www.mtu.edu/dean/conduct/policy/academic-integrity/)

**MTU's Policy on Discrimination and Harassment**

Michigan Technological University complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. If you have a disability and need a reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at Michigan Tech, please call the Dean of Students Office, at 487-2212. For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact your advisor, Chair/Dean of your academic unit or the Affirmative Programs Office, at 487-3310.

Disability Services (http://www.admin.mtu.edu/dos/disability.htm)

**Safe Place**

Safe Place’s Mission Statement is: "The GLBT Safe Place Program strives to reduce homophobia and heterosexism on Michigan Tech’s campus. Through education, advocacy, and awareness, the program contributes to an open campus climate that is safe and accepting to all members of the University community" (from www.safeplace.mtu.edu). I am a proud member of Safe Place.