

**ENC 1145: Topics in Composition**  
**Writing the Outbreak Narrative**  
**Fall 2021**

**Class:** 13074, **Section:** 3312

**Instructor Name:** Suvendu Ghatak

**Course meeting times:** Monday, Wednesday & Friday Period 2 (8:30 AM – 9:20 AM)

**Class Location:** LIT 0233 (Little Hall)

**Office Hours:** Tuesday and Thursday Period 6 (12:50pm- 1:40pm) and by appointment via Zoom.

**Office Location:** TBD

**Zoom link for Office Hours:**

<https://ufl.zoom.us/j/95189856553?pwd=a2o1QVozSkc4eHdwbTh6VzRjL2xBZz09>

**Course website:** Canvas

**Course Description:**

As we continue to grapple with the COVID-19 crisis, this course offers a portal into the depiction of health disasters in literature and cinema, across space and time. From the ravaging plagues in medieval and early modern Europe to the deadly flu outbreaks in the twentieth century, the spread of diseases has not only created panic and suffering, often disproportionately affecting vulnerable social groups, but also altered shapes of human society, language, and imagination. We will examine how the outbreak narratives expose a range of emotions: fear, grief, anxiety, as well as delirium and desire, often buried under the everyday life, bending literary genres, and even upending the barriers of gender, race, and class.

The course is structured into four clusters: titled “Plague”, “Cholera”, “Malaria”, and “Flu”. In the cluster on plague, we start with the Swedish director Ingmar Bergman’s film *The Seventh Seal*, set in the middle of the Black Death in Medieval Europe, and then read selections from Daniel Defoe’s *The Journal of the Plague Year* written in the eighteenth century, during the last outbreak of bubonic plague in London. In the cluster on cholera, we read the India born English novelist Rudyard Kipling’s short story “The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes”, and the Colombian writer Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s novel *Love in the Time of Cholera*. In our study of the malarial narratives, we read Vernon Lee’s short story “A Wicked Voice” set in 19th century Italy and the South African writer Nadine Gordimer’s short story, “An Emissary”. In our concluding section on flu, we read the American author Katherine Anne Porter’s short novel

*Pale Horse, Pale Rider* set during the Spanish Flu pandemic in 1918, and close off the course with the 2013 Korean film *Flu*.

This course can satisfy the UF General Education requirement for Composition (C) or Humanities (H). For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-programs/general-education/>

This course can provide **6000 words** toward fulfillment of the UF requirement for writing (WR). For more information, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/student-responsibilities/writing-requirement/>

### Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, students will:

1. Be able to critically analyze, discuss, and write about the social roles of epidemics in human history.
2. Be able to think and write about the relation between narratives of disease and human emotions across cultures.
3. Be acquainted with a range of effective writing styles, suited to different readers and audiences.
4. Be able to formulate and defend critical theses, using different methods of interpretation, analysis, and argumentation.
5. Correctly use MLA formatting and style for all written assignments.

### Required Texts:

1. Bergman, Ingmar; Svensk Filmindustri. *Det sjunde inseglet (The Seventh Seal)*. Criterion Collection, 1998. Available in UF Library West DVD Collections, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor.
2. Defoe, Daniel. *A Journal of the Plague Year*. Penguin Classics, 2003. Or, *The Project Gutenberg Ebook*: <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/376/376-h/376-h.htm>
3. Kipling, Rudyard. "The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes", in *The Phantom Rickshaw and Other Tales*.  
[https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Phantom\\_Rickshaw\\_and\\_Other\\_Tales/The\\_Strange\\_Ride\\_of\\_Morrowbie\\_Jukes](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Phantom_Rickshaw_and_Other_Tales/The_Strange_Ride_of_Morrowbie_Jukes)
4. Márquez, Gabriel García. *El amor en los tiempos del cólera (Love in the Time of Cholera)*, translated by Edith Grossman. Vintage, 2007.
5. Lee, Vernon. "A Wicked Voice" in *Hauntings. Project Gutenberg Ebook*.  
<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/9956/pg9956.html>
6. Gordimer, Nadine. "An Emissary" in *Loot and Other Stories*. Penguin Books, 2004.
7. Porter, Katherine Ann. *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*.  
<https://ia801602.us.archive.org/2/items/in.ernet.dli.2015.184599/2015.184599.Pale-Horse-pale-Rider.pdf>

8. Kim, Sung-su. *Gamgi (Flu)*. CJ Entertainment, 2013. Available for streaming on Amazon Prime.

**Note:** While you may purchase any edition of these texts, please be sure that they are not abridged. I have attached links to some of the texts available online. I might upload some others on Canvas if they are available. Supplemental readings on these texts will be available through Canvas/Ares Course Reserves.

## **COURSE POLICIES:**

1. You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course.
2. **Attendance Policy:** Attendance is fundamental for the success of this course. Like all lecture-discussion courses, this one needs you! Use your allotted absences wisely (for emergencies, major illness) as you would for any job. Find a list of UF approved excuses, and certified illnesses here for which alone a make-up option will be applicable (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>) You will fail the course if you accrue six 50-minute absences. You will earn a lowered course grade if you accrue four absences. Note that missing a double session counts as two absences.
3. **Late Policy:** Please be punctual. Arriving late at 3 sessions equal 1 absence. Make sure, however, to contact me through email or Canvas as soon as possible when something prevents you from arriving (on time) to class. Please communicate with me openly and honestly.
5. **Late Papers/Assignments:** No late submissions will be accepted unless an extension has been previously agreed upon with the instructor. I am flexible and empathetic, considering our present circumstances, but, again, clear and prompt communication is essential for this course and elsewhere.
6. **Paper Format & Submission:** All papers will be submitted electronically, via Canvas unless otherwise stated. Each submitted paper must be in .doc or .docx format.
7. **Paper Maintenance Responsibilities:** Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course. Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.
8. Students should be respectful of their peers and different viewpoints on subjects discussed, just as in face-to-face meetings. Disrespectful behavior is unprofessional and will result in lower participation grades or a meeting with the instructor to address the behavior.

Additionally, emails to the instructor must follow professional protocols of subject, grammar, and tone— including proper salutations and signature. Remember that all emails sent through our UFL accounts are Public Records (Florida Statutes, Chapter 119).

9. The University of Florida is committed to providing a safe educational, working, and residential environment that is free from sexual harassment or misconduct directed towards any

and all members of the community: [Statements » UF Office for Accessibility and Gender Equity \(ufl.edu\)](#)

**10. Academic Honesty:** Students are required to be honest in their coursework, may not use notes during quizzes or exams, and must properly cite all sources that they have consulted for their projects. Any act of academic dishonesty will be reported to the Dean of Students and may result in failure of the assignment in question and/or the course. Also, turn-it-in will be used as a plagiarism checker and any document that goes over 50% will receive a grade of zero. For University of Florida's honor code, see <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

11. Students with disabilities who are requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, <https://disability.ufl.edu/>), which will provide appropriate documentation to give your instructor early in the semester.

**12. Counseling and Mental Health Resources:** Students facing difficulties completing the course or who are in need of counseling or urgent help should call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center (352 392-1575; <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>).

**13. Online Course Evaluation:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/>.

**14. Grade Appeals:** In 1000- and 2000-level courses, students may appeal a final grade by filling out a form available from Carla Blount, Program Assistant, in the Department office (4008 TUR). Please contact Ms. Blount at [cblount@ufl.edu](mailto:cblount@ufl.edu). Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

**15. Policy on environmental sustainability:** Whenever possible, I will use paper-sparing electronic media to distribute our course materials. Consider purchasing electronic editions of assigned texts when they are available or used copies of print texts. If you do not elect to keep your print books, consider sharing them with others after the semester ends. (For example, you could donate them to the Alachua County Friends of the Library annual book sale <http://folacld.org/>)

## Grade Distribution:

Assignments	Words	Percentage
Attendance and Participation	NA	10%
Weekly Discussion Posts and Responses on canvas	250words*6posts= 1500 words	2.5*6= 15%
Close Reading	1000 words	10%
Quizzes	NA	2.5*4 quizzes= 10%
Critical Analysis	1500 words	15%
Creative Project	NA	10%
Class Presentation on One Primary Text	NA	10%
Prospectus for Final Paper	250 words	5%
Final Paper	2000 words	15%
<b>Total</b>	<b>6000 words</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Assignment Explanation

### *1. Attendance & Participation (10%)*

**Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory and will be assessed by class roll or sign-up sheet. Students will lose 1% from their final grade for every unexcused absence. Absences will be excused in accordance with UF policy. Acceptable reasons include illness, religious holidays, military obligation, and the twelve-day rule (<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>). Should you miss a class for any reason, you are responsible for informing yourself as to what was covered in class.

**Participation:** Students are expected to review the assigned readings before class. Each week will begin with a series of basic questions on the contents of the assigned readings. If students are unable to answer these questions, it will be assumed that they have not prepared the homework and will lose 1%. Consistent participation in class discussions, demonstrated knowledge of the assigned readings will also contribute to this portion of the final grade.

### *2. Posting Responses and Participating in Discussions on Canvas (15%)*

Before every discussion section, each student is required to post a 250-word response to the text for each week mentioned on the schedule. **They must upload them before the class on Wednesdays.** Students must ensure they engage with their peers' posts and be prepared to discuss the questions/points raised by them in class.

**Description of assignment:** Interpretive (or Critical) questions are open-ended and are concerned with textual meaning. They ask for opinions on themes, figurative language, and symbolism within the narrative— there may well be neither simply "right" nor simply "wrong"

answers; the success of a response is based on the evidence (with citations for the texts) and reasoning you employ to support your analysis and judgment.

### ***3. Quizzes (10%)***

There will be four quizzes set on Canvas corresponding to four clusters. The students must pay close attention to the texts to answer the questions.

### ***4. Close Reading: 1000 words, (10%)***

This assignment will test your skills in close reading, especially as that skill pertains to works of poetry and short fiction. You will be expected to analyze a text carefully and develop an argument regarding the whole of the text through a close reading. No outside sources may be used for this assignment.

**The Close Reading assignment is due during the 6<sup>th</sup> week of the semester.**

All students, whatever their grade, will have the option to rewrite the essay.

### ***5. Creative Project (10%)***

You might create a podcast, video essay, a painting, a scrapbook, a graphic novel or use any other media form for your project, reflecting on some aspect of the outbreak narrative or any of the diseases we are discussing; just be sure to add a 500-word artist's statement on how your interpretation of the topic is original and significant.

### ***6. Critical Analysis: 1,500 words, (15%)***

This assignment will ask you to combine close reading skills with critical concepts or historical information introduced in one of the supplemental readings. The goal is for you to produce a strong conceptual argument supported by textual and contextual evidence.

**The Critical Analysis Assignment is due during the 12<sup>th</sup> week of the semester.**

All students, whatever their grade, will have the option to rewrite the essay.

### ***6. Class Presentation on One Primary Text 10%***

You will be required to select a primary text and prepare a 10-minute presentation with a visual aid. The presenter should research the author's biography and historical-cultural contexts relevant to the text. Consider this as an opportunity to share your thoughts on the text and show how they resonate with larger issues that other people might find interesting. You may use videos, movie clips or any other media references that you consider relevant to your presentation.

*Post your presentation (power-point presentation/ handout) to the appropriate discussion board before your presentation. We will assign primary texts during the first week of class.*

**7. Prospectus 250 words, 5%:**

You will first write a prospectus (**250 words**) presenting your topic, its relevance, and a tentative thesis statement. The prospectus also requires you to identify **three** scholarly, secondary sources with which you will engage to create and support your argument. This is due on **Week 15**.

**8. Final Critical Essay, 1500 words (15%)**

As the final assignment you need to choose a topic, conduct research, and write a 1500 words paper where you propose and substantiate your argument. You need to identify and engage with 3 secondary scholarly sources in your essay. You might build up on your presentation to write the essay by **December 13**.

### **Tentative Schedule**

**Week One:**

**M: 08/23:** Course Introduction; Review Syllabus and Assignments

**W: 08/25:** Defining the Outbreak Narrative

**F: 08/27:** Discussing the scientific and cultural meanings of contagion

#### **Cluster I: Plague**

**Week Two:**

**M: 08/30:** Lecture about the context of the plague pandemic (the Black Death).

**W: 09/01:** Watch *The Seventh Seal* and write a **250-word discussion post** on Canvas **before class**. Lecture on the movie followed by class Discussion.

**F: 09/03:** Class discussion on the movie. Signing up for class presentations

**Week Three:**

**M: 09/06: Labor Day. No Class.**

**W: 09/08:** Read *A Journal of the Plague Year* before class. Page range 1-53. Lecture on Defoe and the historical context

**F: 09/10:** Read *A Journal*, page range: 54-91. Class discussion on Defoe.

**Week Four:**

**M: 09/13:** Read *A Journal of the Plague Year*. Page range 92-144. **Quiz 1.** Lecture on the text followed by discussion.

**W: 09/15:** Read *A Journal*, page range: 148-174. Write a **250-word discussion post** on Canvas **before class**. Class discussion on Defoe.

**F: 09/17:** Read *A Journal* 220-238. **Class presentations begins**, followed by a discussion on the presentation.

## **Cluster II: Cholera**

### **Week Five:**

**M: 09/20:** Lecture on the historical context of cholera pandemic in the Victorian period followed by discussion.

**W: 09/22:** Read “The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes” and write a **250-word discussion post** on Canvas **before class**. Lecture on the text followed by discussion on your responses.

**F: 09/24:** Class presentation followed by discussion.

### **Week Six:**

**M: 09/27:** Lecture on the historical context of the cholera epidemic, followed by discussion.

**W: 09/29:** Read *Love in the Time of Cholera* (Chapters 1-3). Lecture on the text followed by a discussion on your responses.

**F: 10/01:** **Class presentation** followed by a discussion.

**N.B. Close Reading assignment due at midnight on Friday.**

### **Week Seven:**

**M: 10/04:** Read *Love in the Time of Cholera* (Chapters 3-6) before the class. **Quiz 2.**

**W: 10/06:** Write a **250-word discussion post before class**. **Class presentation** followed by a discussion.

**F: 10/08:** **Homecoming. No class.**

## **Writing and Review**

### **Week Eight:**

**M: 10/11:** Discussing components of writing and effective compositional strategies.

**W: 10/13:** Analyzing and discussing common writing errors.



**F: 10/15:** Fielding questions about writing; discussing creative assignment/podcast ideas.

### **Cluster III: Malaria**

#### **Week Nine:**

**M: 10/18:** Read “A Wicked Voice”. Lecture on the historical context and the text followed by discussion.

**W: 10/20:** Write a **250-word discussion post** on Canvas **before class**. Discussion on the posts.

**F: 10/22:** **Class presentation** followed by discussion.

#### **Week Ten:**

**M: 10/25:** Read “An Emissary”. Lecture on the context and the text.

**W: 10/27:** **Quiz 3**. Discussion on the canvas posts.

**F: 10/29:** **Class presentation** followed by discussion.

### **Cluster IV: Flu**

**N.B. Creative Project/Podcast due on Monday before class.**

#### **Week Eleven:**

**M: 11/01:** Read *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* before class. Lecture on the context followed by discussion.

**W: 11/03:** Write a **250-word discussion post** on Canvas **before class**. Lecture on the text followed by discussion.

**F: 11/05:** **Class presentation** followed by discussion.

#### **Week Twelve:**

**M: 11/08:** **Quiz 4**. Class discussion on *Pale Horse, Pale Rider*

**W: 11/10:** Class discussion on the canvas posts.

**F: 11/12:** **Workday**.

**N.B. Critical Analysis Assignment due at midnight on Friday.**

#### **Week Thirteen:**

**M: 11/15:** Watch *Flu* before the class. Lecture on the historical context.

**W: 11/17:** **Class presentation** followed by discussion.

**F: 11/19: Class presentation** followed by discussion. Discussing final paper ideas.

**Week Fourteen:**

**M: 11/22: Class Discussion on Final Projects.**

**W: 11/24: Thanksgiving Holiday**

**F: 11/26: Thanksgiving Holiday**

**Week Fifteen:**

**M: 11/29: Individual Conference for Discussing Final Projects.**

**W: 12/01: N.B. Prospectus (250-words) for the Final Papers due before class.**  
Discussing the key features of the outbreak narrative. **Class Presentation**

**F: 12/03: Class Presentation.**

**Week Sixteen:**

**M: 12/06: Final Discussion. Course Evaluations.**

**W: 12/08: Workday.**

**F: 12/10: Reading Day.**

**Final Papers due Monday, December 13.**

**Grading Scale and GPA Equivalent**

<b>A</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B-</b>	<b>C+</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C-</b>	<b>D+</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>D-</b>	<b>E</b>
100-93	92-90	89-87	86-83	82-80	79-77	76-73	72-70	69-67	63-66	62-60	59-
(4.0)	(3.67)	(3.33)	(3.0)	(2.67)	(2.33)	(2.0)	(1.67)	(1.33)	(1.0)	(0.67)	(0)

**Note:** A grade of C– is not a qualifying grade for major, minor, Gen Ed, or College Basic distribution credit. For further information on UF's Grading Policy, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>

**Grading Rubric:**

Grade	Thesis/Argument	Internal Consistency of Argument	Textual Evidence and Interpretation	Clarity in Writing
A	The entire answer is focused, and thesis/argument driven	The argument follows a consistent logic.	Adequate textual evidence is provided to effectively support persuasive interpretations.	The writing is clear with effective word choice and appropriate syntax
A-	The answer has focus and argument in most parts	The argument follows a logical structure for most parts	Textual evidence is provided to support convincing interpretations	Mostly clear writing, with adequate vocabulary and syntax
B+	The answer has fair bit of focus, and some argument to offer.	The argument follows a logical structure in some parts	Textual evidence is provided to support reasonable interpretation in some parts	The writing has fair bit of clarity, and demonstrates fair grasp over vocabulary and syntax
B	The answer has argumentative structure but without clear focus	The argument offers some ideas without a logical organization	Textual evidence is present, but does not lead to convincing interpretations	The writing is vague, with repetitive words and awkward syntax
B-	The answer mostly summarizes the text with a minimum sense of argument	Some ideas are organized in an inadequate manner	Some textual evidence is given, without viable interpretations	The writing is unclear
C+	The answer summarizes the text without any argumentation	Logical organization of ideas is lacking	Inadequate textual evidence, and lacks interpretation	The writing is faulty, has grammatical and syntactical errors.

C	The answer shows minimum acquaintance with the text	No organizing structure to connect ideas	Little textual evidence, with weak interpretation	The sentences are incomplete and full of errors that confuse the meaning of the answer
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