

ENG1131: Writing Through Media

PLASTIC PLANET, PLASTIC PEOPLE: WASTE ANXIETY IN A TIME OF APOCALYPSE

Class 12501, Section 18C3, Fall 2023

Lead Instructor:
Brooke Whitaker
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Office Hours & Location:
Thursdays 1:00 PM to 2:00 PM
On Zoom and In-Person Outside WEIL 408E
Zoom Meeting ID: 568 260 1023

Class Meeting Times & Locations:
T Period 4 (10:40 AM to 11:30 AM) at WEIL 408E
R Periods 4 to 5 (10:40 AM to 12:35 PM) at WEIL 408E

Class Screening Time & Location:
T Periods 9 to 11 (4:05 PM to 7:05 PM) at WEIL 408E



COURSE DESCRIPTION

Critical Waste Studies is a growing subfield within Environmental Humanities that necessitates a rethinking of humanity's relationship to its largest legacy: waste. This course serves as an introduction to an important research area by using media-based thought-experiments to help us better conceptualize our intimate connection to pollution, and to assist us in engineering productive approaches towards waste on our planet and in our bodies.

Texts will encompass a range of genres, including novels such as Don DeLillo's *White Noise* and Sandra Steingraber's *Living Downstream: An Ecologist's Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment*; films such as Hayao Miyazaki's *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, Wanuri Kahiu's *Pumzi*, and Ali Tabrizi's *Seaspiracy*; and video games such as *Plasticity* and the *Fallout* franchise.

Assignments will be multimodal. Taking advantage of accessible digital software, you will produce a hypertext document, an A/V video, and a short video game, as well as writing traditional essays. By the end of the semester, you should have not just a stronger theoretical grasp of waste impacts, but an impressive and pertinent digital portfolio.

GENERAL EDUCATION CREDIT

- This course confers General Education credit for either Composition (C) or Humanities (H). This course also fulfills 6,000 of the university's 24,000-word writing requirement (WR).
- Composition courses provide instruction in the methods and conventions of standard written English (grammar, punctuation, usage), as well as the techniques that produce effective texts.
- Composition courses are writing intensive. They require multiple drafts submitted to your instructor for feedback before final submission.
- Course content should include multiple forms of effective writing, different writing styles, approaches and formats, and methods to adapt writing to different audiences, purposes and contexts. Students should learn to organize complex arguments in writing using thesis statements, claims and evidence, and to analyze writing for errors in logic.
- The University Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. To receive Writing Requirement credit, a student must receive a grade of C or higher and a satisfactory completion of the writing component of the course. This means that written assignments must meet minimum word requirements totaling 6000 words.

GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of this course, students will be expected to have achieved the following learning outcomes in content, communication and critical thinking:

- *Content:*
 - Students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the academic discipline.
- *Communication:*
 - Students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline. Students will participate in class discussions throughout the semester to reflect on assigned readings.
- *Critical Thinking:*
 - Students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

REQUIRED TEXTS

We will be reading two novels this semester:

1. *Living Downstream: An Ecologist's Personal Investigation of Cancer and the Environment* by Sandra Steingraber (ISBN: 0306818698)
2. *White Noise* by Don DeLillo (ISBN: 9780143105985)

Additionally, we will have a screening period most Tuesdays during periods 9 to 11. The material is listed in viewing order below:

1. *The Story of Plastic* (2019, Directed by Deia Schlosberg)
2. *There's Something in the Water* (2019, Directed by Elliot Page and Ian Daniel)
3. *Seaspiracy* (2021, Directed by Ali Tabrizi)
4. *The Blob* (1958, Directed by Irvin Yeaworth and Russell Doughten)
5. *Matango* (1963, Directed by Ishiro Honda)
6. *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* (1989, Directed by Shinya Tsukamoto)
7. *Happy Feet* (2008, Directed by George Miller)
8. *Mad Max: Fury Road* (2015, Directed by George Miller)
9. *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984, Directed by Hayao Miyazaki)
10. *Eraserhead* (1977, Directed by David Lynch)
11. *myhouse.wad* (2023, Designed by Steve Nelson [Veddge])
12. *Labyrinth* (1986, Directed by Jim Henson)
13. *Pumzi* (2003, Directed by Wanuri Kahiu)

All other required materials will be provided through Canvas.

ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTIONS

Participation and Individual/In-Class Activities (200 points)

Participation, both inside and outside of the classroom, is an essential aspect of this course. Students are expected to read and view any assigned materials, as well as engage in class analysis and workshops. Attendance is mandatory, as class time will be used for media discussion, sharing tutorials, and explaining the intricacies of each assignment.

Screening Discussion Posts and Responses (1,300 words total, 100 points)

Each week we have a screening, you will be expected to submit a 100 word minimum Canvas post detailing your thoughts and critiques regarding the viewed media. Your discussion post must

be college-level quality in its grammar, structure, and analysis. Additionally, you will need to engage with one of your peer's posts in an equally sophisticated response.

Novel Analysis I (1,000 words; 100 points)

Reflect in a traditional MLA essay on our first novel of the semester, *Living Downstream*. How does the author approach her own story? Does the real-life nature of the novel's subject matter influence your thoughts on her claims? Compare the novel to the documentaries we've watched so far. Are they alike or different in how they approach nonfictional material?

Local Waste StoryMap (1,000 words; 100 points)

Craft a StoryMap researching a local pollution problem. The issue should be state-wide or smaller. Use a minimum of three credible, scholarly sources. Take advantage of the multimodal opportunities available to you through StoryMap to flesh out your research and your central argument.

Global Waste Video Project (500 words; 100 points)

Connect the issue that you chose for your StoryMap to a larger scale. Focus on how local and global issues interlink and feed into each other. Once again, use a minimum of three credible, scholarly sources, and take advantage of the multimodal nature of a video essay.

Novel Analysis II (1,000 words; 100 points)

Now, analyze our second novel of the semester, *White Noise*, in a traditional MLA essay. How does this fictional novel's approach to living with and in pollution change from *Living Downstream*'s? Focus on unpacking the genre, structure, and themes. How does speculative fiction differ from a documentary or a research-based work? Is such an approach more or less effective? Why?

Speculative Bitsy Game (200 words; 100 points)

Using the Bitsy software, craft a speculative fiction story relating to a particular waste issue of your choosing. The genre and specifics of the game are up to you, but it must be a fictional and original concept/narrative.

Final Portfolio (1,000 words; 200 points)

Your final work for this course will be a digital, multimodal portfolio/reflection that encompasses all of your prior assignments. You will host your digital collection on a website created through Wix. You will achieve the word count by introducing and summarizing your work, yourself, and your thoughts on the problems raised throughout this course. While this assignment is cumulative, it is also intended to provide you a professional-caliber representation of your digital and multimodal skills that can be used in applying for scholarships, jobs, and other opportunities. It should ideally form the foundation of or contribute to the continuation of a growing digital portfolio of your work throughout your academic career.

Total Points Possible: 1000

GRADING SCALE

A	4.0	100% to 94%	C	2.0	< 77% to 74%
A-	3.67	< 94% to 90%	C-	1.67	< 74% to 70%
B+	3.33	< 90% to 87%	D+	1.33	< 70% to 67%
B	3	< 87% to 84%	D	1	< 67% to 64%
B-	2.67	< 84% to 80%	D-	0.67	< 64% to 60%
C+	2.33	< 80% to 77%	E	0	< 60% to 0%

GRADING & COURSE CREDIT POLICIES

General Policies

- You must complete all assignments to receive credit for this course. Each assignment must meet the word count required for that assignment. Writing more for one assignment DOES NOT make up for being under word count for another assignment.
- Works Cited pages, title pages, running headers, and Tables of Contents DO NOT count towards the word count of an assignment.

Attendance

- Attendance will be taken. If you miss six class periods, you will automatically fail the course. If you are unable to make it to class and have a documented excuse, please contact me as soon as possible.
- Please be on time to class. Lateness will be considered a partial absence and will accumulate into a full absence with enough instances.

Policy of Respect:

- This course relies heavily on class discussions. All students should feel free to speak their minds, but should likewise be courteous and understanding of others with differing viewpoints. Any form of inappropriate behavior will result in dismissal from class.

UF's Policy on Sexual Harassment:

- 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: <https://titleix.ufl.edu/about/title-ix-rights/>

UF's Writing Studio

- The University of Florida offers a free service aimed at assisting students of all levels and majors with their writing. The Writing Studio provides one-on-one and workshop sessions by appointment. More information can be found at the following link: <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Paper Format & Submission:

- Submit assignments via Canvas by the time and date listed in the course schedule.

Late Papers/Assignments:

- If an extension is needed due to illness or other extenuating circumstances, please contact me as soon as possible.
- I will allow each student ONE unexcused late submission for the semester. The assignment must be submitted within 24 hours after the due date to be eligible for full credit.

Paper Maintenance Responsibilities:

- Keep duplicate copies of all work submitted in this course.
- Save all returned, graded work until the semester is over.

Academic Honesty and Definition of Plagiarism:

- This course will utilize the Turn-It-In feature on Canvas. The percentage of similarity will be variable for assignments. However, you will most likely want to keep your assignments below 25% similarity. If your assignment appears to have a high Turn-It-In Score and you believe this is in error, please let me know.
- UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge:
 - “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: ‘On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.’”
- The Honor Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions.
 - Student Honor Code:
 - A Student must not represent as the Student’s own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to: a. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing. b. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student’s own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student’s own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted. c. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution. d. Submitting a document, assignment, or material

that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.

Students with Disabilities:

- 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.

Students in Distress:

- Students who are in distress or who are in need of counseling or urgent help: please contact umatter@ufl.edu or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to you.
- UF’s Counseling and Wellness Center offers additional support: 352-392-1575, or contact them online: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>

Grading:

- For information on UF Grading policies, see: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>
- 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. Grade appeals may result in a higher, unchanged, or lower final grade.

Course Evaluations:

- Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations. Toward the end of the semester, you will receive email messages requesting that you do this online: <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>

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).

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES AND ASSIGNMENTS

Below is our tentative class schedule, which is subject to change based on extenuating factors.

	<u>Schedule of Classes & Materials</u>	<u>Assignments</u>
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Week One		
R Aug 24	<p>Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Introduction/Welcome • Syllabus <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin <i>Living Downstream</i> 	
Week Two		
T Aug 29	<p>Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is Waste? • Why Waste Anxiety? <p>Screening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Story of Plastic</i> (2019, Directed by Deia Schlosberg) <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ranjan Ghosh, “Plastic Literature” (PDF on Canvas) 	
R Aug 31	<p>Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Story of Plastic</i> Discussion • Discussing Waste: Stereotypes and Public Perception 	Screening Discussion Post/Peer Response Due Before Class Start
Week Three		
T Sep 5	<p>Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scholarly Writing and Research • Waste and Water I <p>Screening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There’s Something in the Water</i> (2019, Directed by Elliot Page and Ian Daniel) <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erik R. Zettler, Tracy J. Mincer, and Linda A. Amaral-Zettler, “Life in the ‘Plastisphere’: Microbial Communities on Plastic Marine Debris” (PDF on Canvas) 	
R Sep 7	<p>Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>There’s Something in the Water</i> Discussion • Waste-Related Individual, Local, and Global Activism • Introduction to StoryMap 	Screening Discussion Post/Peer Response Due Before Class

		Start
Week Four		
T Sep 12	Agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credibility v. Entertainment • Waste and Water II Screening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Seaspiracy</i> (2021, Directed by Ali Tabrizi) 	
R Sep 14	Agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Seaspiracy</i> Discussion • <i>Living Downstream</i> Discussion • Novel Analysis I Peer Review and Workshop 	Screening Discussion Post/Peer Response Due Before Class Start
Week Five		
M Sep 18		Novel Analysis I Due By 11:59 PM
T Sep 19	Agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amorphous Horror Screening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Blob</i> (1958, Directed by Irvin Yeaworth and Russell Doughten) 	
R Sep 21	Agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Blob</i> Discussion • Waste and Fear of the Unstoppable Unknown • Introduction to A/V resources 	Screening Discussion Post/Peer Response Due Before Class Start
Week Six		
T Sep 26	Agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body Horror I Screening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Matango</i> (1963, Directed by Ishiro Honda) 	
R Sep 28	Agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Matango</i> Discussion • Nuclear Fallout and the Transformation of the Polluted 	Screening Discussion Post/Peer

	Body	Response Due Before Class Start
Week Seven		
T Oct 3	Agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body Horror II Screening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tetsuo: The Iron Man</i> (1989, Directed by Shinya Tsukamoto) 	
R Oct 5	Agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Tetsuo: The Iron Man</i> discussion • Industrial Waste and the Transformation of the Polluted Body • Local Waste StoryMap Workshop + Peer Review 	Screening Discussion Post/Peer Response Due Before Class Start
Week Eight		
M Oct 9		Local Waste StoryMap Due By 11:59 PM
T Oct 10	Agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste and the General Public Screening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Happy Feet</i> (2008, Directed by George Miller) Reading: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesley Henderson and Christopher Green, “Making sense of microplastics? Public understandings of plastic pollution” (PDF on Canvas) 	
R Oct 12	Agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Happy Feet</i> Discussion • Effective Waste Education • Waste and Consumption 	Screening Discussion Post/Peer Response Due Before Class Start
Week Nine		

T Oct 17	<p>Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste and the Post-Apocalypse I <p>Screening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Mad Max: Fury Road</i> (2015, Directed by George Miller) <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin <i>White Noise</i> 	
R Oct 19	<p>Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Mad Max: Fury Road</i> Discussion Waste and the General Public II Policy in the Polluted Post-Apocalypse I Introduction to Bitsy 	<p>Screening Discussion Post/Peer Response Due Before Class Start</p>
Week Ten		
T Oct 24	<p>Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste and the Post-Apocalypse II <p>Screening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind</i> (1984, Directed by Hayao Miyazaki) <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stephanie Wakefield, “Anthropocene Back Loop” (PDF on Canvas) 	
R Oct 26	<p>Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind</i> Discussion Policy in the Polluted Post-Apocalypse II Global Waste Video Project Workshop + Peer Review 	<p>Screening Discussion Post/Peer Response Due Before Class Start</p>
Week Eleven		
M Oct 30		<p>Global Waste Video Project Due By 11:59 PM</p>
T Oct 31	<p>Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sick Houses, Sick People I <p>Screening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Eraserhead</i> (1977, Directed by David Lynch) <p>Reading:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> William E. Connolly, “The ‘New Materialism’ and the 	

	Fragility of Things” (PDF on Canvas)	
R Nov 2	Agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eraserhead</i> Discussion • <i>White Noise</i> Discussion I 	Screening Discussion Post/Peer Response Due Before Class Start
Week Twelve		
T Nov 7	Agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sick Houses, Sick People II • Liminality – Wasted Spaces Screening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>myhouse.wad</i> (2023, Designed by Steve Nelson [Veddge]) 	
R Nov 9	Agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>myhouse.wad</i> discussion • <i>White Noise</i> Discussion II • Novel Analysis II Peer Review + Workshop 	Screening Discussion Post/Peer Response Due Before Class Start
Week Thirteen		
M Nov 13		Novel Analysis II Due By 11:59 PM
T Nov 14	Agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garbage and Guilt • Embracing the Ugly Screening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Labyrinth</i> (1986, Directed by Jim Henson) 	
R Nov 16	Agenda: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Labyrinth</i> Film Discussion • Altering the Pollution Perspective • Speculative Bitsy Game Workshop + Peer Review 	Screening Discussion Post/Peer Response Due Before Class
Week Fourteen		
	<i>No Class, Thanksgiving Holiday</i>	

Week Fifteen		
M Nov 27		Speculative Bitsy Game Due By 11:59 PM
T Nov 28	<p>Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up Wix website • Preserving Hope in a Polluted Future <p>Screening:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pumzi</i> (2003, Directed by Wanuri Kahiu) 	
R Nov 30	<p>Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pumzi</i> Discussion • Final Portfolio Workshop + Peer Review 	Screening Discussion Post/Peer Response Due Before Class
Week Sixteen		
T Dec 5	<p>Agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Class • Course Evaluations <p><i>No screening</i></p>	
Week Seventeen		
M Dec 10		Final Portfolio Due by 11:59 PM