

The Post Apocalypse on Film

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#: 54 519 DRA 93764 CRA
Time: Fridays, 9:30 a.m. to
12:30 p.m.
Location: The Chosky
Theater, Purnell Center for
the Arts

Course Description

This course will survey cinematic treatments of the end of civilization from a wide variety of filmmakers. We will analyze the cultural, philosophical, mythical and political elements of each film. We will also discuss the technical and artistic aspects in order to better understand the genre and filmmaking in general. The goal is for each student to develop ways to think critically about film.

Procedure:

The class will consist of screenings of the films, discussion and essays/reaction papers. Along with each film listed here, there are one or more links to reviews or essays that you should read before seeing the films. You can also explore more about each film, if you like, but at minimum look at the links provided.

You are expected to contribute to the discussion each class. Your participation in these discussions will be a part of your grade.

Films:

(List subject to change depending on availability and the whim of the instructor)

The Road Warrior (1981)

George Miller's original classic, Mad Max, wasn't really a post-apocalyptic film, but it did set the stage for an even better sequel - one that took the premise of a lone anti-hero wandering the Outback and took it to delirious post-apocalyptic heights. To say that The Road Warrior is an improvement over the initial Mad Max is something of an understatement, then: this is one of the greatest post-apocalyptic pictures ever put to celluloid, not to mention one of cinema's greatest ever action flicks. The action picks up years after the events of the original film, with Gibson's titular hero forced to face off against a gang in the wastelands of Australia after civilization has gone the way of the dodo. The Road Warrior sets up a world heavily influenced by biker culture, which gives Miller the opportunity to render some of the cinema's greatest stunts. The final chase, a relentless action tour de force, is a glorious kinetic spectacle that never gets old.

whatculture.com

<http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=EE05E7DF173BE571BC4051DFB2668389699EDE>

<http://collider.com/mad-max-2-the-road-warrior-review/>

Children of Men 2008

A futuristic society faces extinction when the human race loses the ability to reproduce. England has descended into chaos, until an iron-handed warden is brought in to institute martial law. The warden's ability to keep order is threatened when a woman finds that she is pregnant with what would be the first child born in 27 years.

<https://cinephiliabeyond.org/children-men-alfonso-cuarons-bleak-genious-vision-past-present-future/>

<http://www.vulture.com/2016/12/children-of-men-alfonso-cuaron-c-v-r.html>

<http://thefederalist.com/2017/01/06/ten-years-later-critics-still-love-misunderstand-children-men/>

<http://www.vulture.com/2016/12/children-of-men-blood-splatter.html>

<http://www.avclub.com/review/28-days-later-5570>

Nausicaä Of The Valley Of The Wind (1984)

written and directed by Hayao Miyazaki <http://www.nausicaa.net/miyazaki/miyazaki/>

Far in the future, after an apocalyptic conflict has devastated much of the world's ecosystem, the few surviving humans live in scattered semi-hospitable environments within what has become a "toxic jungle." Young Nausicaä (Alison Lohman) lives in the arid Valley of the Wind and can communicate with the massive insects that populate the dangerous jungle. Under the guidance of the pensive veteran warrior, Lord Yupa (Patrick Stewart), Nausicaä works to bring peace back to the ravaged planet.

<http://nerdist.com/miyazaki-masterclass-nausicaa-of-the-valley-of-the-wind/>

Delicatessen (1991)

A post-apocalyptic future becomes the setting for pitch black humor in this visually intricate French comedy. The action takes place within a single apartment complex, which is owned by the same man that operates the downstairs butcher shop. It's a particularly popular place to live, thanks to the butcher's uncanny ability to find excellent cuts of meat despite the horrible living conditions outside. The newest building superintendent, a former circus clown, thinks he has found an ideal living situation. All that changes, however, when he discovers the true source of the butcher's meat, and that he may be the next main course. This dark tale is played out in a brilliantly designed, glorious surreal alternate world reminiscent of the works of director Terry Gilliam, who co-presented the film's American release. Like Gilliam, co-directors Jean-Pierre Jeunet and Marc Caro hail from an animation background, and have a fondness for extravagant visuals, absurdist plot twists, and a sense of humor that combines sharp satire with broad slapstick and gross-out imagery. This mixture may displease the weak of stomach, but

those attuned to the film's sensibility will be delighted by the obvious technical virtuosity and wicked sense of humor.~ Judd Blaise, All Movie Guide

<http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9D0CEEDF1538F936A35753C1A967958260>
<http://filmconnoisseur.blogspot.com/2012/05/delicatessen-1991.html>

Escape From New York (1981)

In 1997, when the U.S. president crashes into Manhattan, now a giant maximum security prison, a convicted bank robber is sent in to rescue him.

Rotten Tomatoes: Featuring an atmospherically grimy futuristic metropolis, Escape from New York is a strange, entertaining jumble of thrilling action and oddball weirdness.

<http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9505E7DF1E38F933A25754C0A967948260>
<http://mentalfloss.com/article/74776/12-futuristic-facts-about-escape-new-york>

The Last Battle (1983)

Directed by French auteur Luc Besson when he was just 24-years-old, The Last Battle - or Le Dernier Combat, if you want the original language title - stars Pierre Jolivet as the survivor of an unexplained fallout. As "The Man," he spends the sum of the film trying to locate parts for an airplane so that he might escape to a better existence. The Last Battle is made most interesting, perhaps, because it features barely any dialogue across the length of its 80-minute runtime. It's suggested that whatever event caused the end of civilization also resulted in the population being rendered mute, and only two lines are spoken in the whole movie. The low budget should have been a hindrance here, but instead it helps to create the film's unique - and undeniably strange atmosphere. The film also stars Jean Reno, a frequent Luc Besson collaborator, in a prominent role as a villain. Artistic, bleak and very original, it's kind of an underrated gem. whatculture.com

<http://www.timeout.com/london/film/the-last-battle>

<http://www.avclub.com/article/luc-besson-kickstarted-his-career-striking-wordles-205753>

28 Days Later (2002)

Four weeks after a mysterious, incurable virus spreads throughout the UK, a handful of survivors try to find sanctuary.

A group of misguided animal rights activists free a caged chimp infected with the "Rage" virus from a medical research lab. When London bike courier Jim (Cillian Murphy) wakes up from a coma a month after, he finds his city all but deserted. On the run from the zombie-like victims of the Rage, Jim stumbles upon a group of survivors, including

Selena (Naomie Harris) and cab driver Frank (Brendan Gleeson), and joins them on a perilous journey to what he hopes will be safety. [whatculture.com](http://www.whatculture.com)

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/06/27/movies/film-review-spared-by-a-virus-but-not-by-mankind.html>

12 Monkeys (1995)

Traveling back in time isn't simple, as James Cole (Bruce Willis) learns the hard way. Imprisoned in the 2030s, James is recruited for a mission that will send him back to the 1990s. Once there, he's supposed to gather information about a nascent plague that's about to exterminate the vast majority of the world's population. But, aside from the manic Jeffrey (Brad Pitt), he gets little in the way of cooperation, not least from medical gatekeepers like Dr. Kathryn Raily (Madeleine Stowe).

<http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9D03E7DF1239F934A15751C1A963958260>
<http://www.rollingstone.com/movies/reviews/12-monkeys-19950101>

Soylent Green 1973

IMDB Synopses: 🍷 In 2022, Earth is overpopulated and totally polluted; the natural resources have been exhausted and the nourishment of the population is provided by Soylent Industries, a company that makes a food consisting of plankton from the oceans. In New York City, when Soylent's member of the board William R. Simonson is murdered apparently by a burglar at the Chelsea Towers West where he lives, efficient Detective Thorn is assigned to investigate the case with his partner Solomon "Sol" Roth. Thorn comes to the fancy apartment and meets Simonson's bodyguard Tab Fielding and the "furniture" (woman that is rented together with the flat) Shirl and the detective concludes that the executive was not victim of burglary but executed. Further, he finds that the Governor Santini and other powerful men want to disrupt and end Thorn's investigation. But Thorn continues his work and discovers a bizarre and disturbing secret of the ingredient used to manufacture Soylent Green.

- Written by [Claudio Carvalho, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil](#)

<http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9D05EFDD1331EF34BC4851DFB2668388669EDE>
<http://www.matsuyacreative.com/john-matsuya-blog/soylent-green-review-charlton-heston>

The Road 2009 [John Hillcoat](#)

The Road is a 2009 American post-apocalyptic drama film directed by John Hillcoat from a screenplay written by Joe Penhall, based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning 2006 novel of the same name by the American author Cormac McCarthy. [Wikipedia](#)
Shot in and around Pittsburgh. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2010/jan/07/the-road-review> <http://www.filmcomment.com/article/review-the-road-cormac-mccarthy/>

Snowpiercer (2013)

Based on a relatively obscure French graphic novel, *Snowpiercer* clings to a totally absurd and yet completely brilliant premise: after the world has succumbed to an eternal ice age, the remaining humans survive on a reinforced train that never stops moving (and so it never freezes). Separated into cabins according to class, *Snowpiercer* chronicles a rebellion as a group confined to the back of the train - led by Chris Evans - decide to take action. And so the driving narrative powering *Snowpiercer* sees the film's ragtag crew fighting their way from one end of the train to another, encountering a smorgasbord of surprises in the process as they move between carriages, all of which are totally unique and different. Directed by Korean genius Bong Joon-ho, and packed with inventive action scenes, *Snowpiercer* feels influenced by video game series *BioShock*. It's also a wholly weird movie, not completely coherent, featuring a nutty turn by Tilda Swinton as a villain from Yorkshire. <http://whatculture.com/>

<http://www.rollingstone.com/movies/reviews/snowpiercer-20140626>

<http://www.rollingstone.com/movies/reviews/snowpiercer-20140626>

Wall-E (2008)

WALL•E is set in the far future where humans have left [Earth](#) on a giant ship called the [Axiom](#) because of all the garbage pile-up. The only known inhabitants now are a robot named [WALL•E](#), who must keep up the mess and his cockroach friend [Hal](#). However, all that changes when *WALL•E* meets a beautiful robot named [EVE](#) and falls in love with her. Soon the two robots are heading into space and onto the *Axiom* on a mission that could bring humankind back to Earth. <http://pixar.wikia.com/wiki/WALL%E2%80%A2E>
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/27/movies/27wall.html>
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/film/wall-e/review/>

Mad Max Fury Road (2015)

Years after the collapse of civilization, the tyrannical Immortan Joe enslaves apocalypse survivors inside the desert fortress the Citadel. When the warrior Imperator Furiosa (Charlize Theron) leads the despot's five wives in a daring escape, she forges an alliance with Max Rockatansky (Tom Hardy), a loner and former captive. Fortified in the massive, armored truck the War Rig, they try to outrun the ruthless warlord and his henchmen in a deadly high-speed chase through the Wasteland.

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/05/25/high-gear-current-cinema-anthony-lane>

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2015/may/17/mad-max-fury-road-review-mark-kermode>

Grading

Your final grade will be based on your attendance, your class participation and the quality of your papers. Your conduct, attitude and willingness to contribute to the class will also be used to determine your grade.

A = Superior work. The student exhibited excellent attitude, discipline and commitment. The student came to class prepared, having studied the required material with the ability to discuss it as it relates to each film. The student's papers are clear, well argued and original, spelling and grammar-checked, sent using the correct file type and properly labeled as per instructions.

B = The approach to the work is very good. For the most part, the student came to class prepared, having studied the required material with the ability to discuss it as it relates to each film. The student's papers are clear, well argued and original, spelling and grammar-checked, sent using the correct file type and properly labeled as per instructions.

C = Works that falls below the standard described above. This could be in preparation, participation, etc. The papers were not spelling and grammar-checked and the contents not clear, well argued or original.

D = Poor quality of effort, attitude or result.

R/F = Objectives of the course or projects were not realized.

Assignments:

There will be one paper due mid-semester and one final paper at the end of the course. I will give you specifics closer to the dates.

Attendance

We meet once a week. Missing a single class puts you behind a week in the course. The absence policy for this class is: more than one unexcused absence will lower your grade by half a letter grade. To receive an excused absence you must provide a note from a doctor or other official in a position to excuse you from the class.

Late arrival will be penalized as half a full absence.

Important: If you will not be in class for any reason you must let me know as soon as possible via email.

Communication

Please reply to ALL emails so I know you received them. DO NOT REPLY ALL, as that gets annoying to others. If you do not reply to emails, it will effect your grade, so check your email at least twice a day and get back to me when I email you.

You may not use any electronic devices during class. This includes texting, email, etc. THIS IS A RULE. NO USE OF CELL PHONES, IPADS ETC. DURING CLASS. I'M NOT KIDDING. DON'T DISRESPECT YOUR FELLOW STUDENTS AND ME AND THE PROCESS. TAKE NOTES BY HAND.

IF YOU IGNORE THIS RULE AND USE YOUR DEVICE IN CLASS I WILL PENALIZE YOU HALF AN ABSENCE.

The schedule may change at any time. Please stay in touch and check our email regularly for updates and specifics.

And finally... *Take care of yourself.* Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is often helpful. If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) is here to help: call [412-268-2922](tel:412-268-2922) and visit their website at <http://www.cmu.edu/counseling/>. Consider reaching out to a friend, faculty or family member you trust for help getting connected to the support that can help.

If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal or in danger of self-harm, call someone immediately, day or night:

CaPS: [412-268-2922](tel:412-268-2922)

Re:solve Crisis Network: [888-796-8226](tel:888-796-8226)

If the situation is life threatening, call the police:

On campus: CMU Police: [412-268-2323](tel:412-268-2323)

Off campus: 911

Above is the official CMU information. In addition to that, I want to let you know that I am always here if anyone needs help. If I can't help you, I'll find someone who can. Take care of yourselves and reach out if you need to.

If you have questions about this or your coursework, please let me know.