CAS/GRS New Course Proposal Form
This form is to be used when proposing a new CAS or GRS course.

This form should be submitted to Senior Academic Administrator Peter Law (617-353-7243) as a PDF file to pgl@bu.edu. For further information or assistance, contact Associate Dean Susan Jackson (617-353-2410; sjackson@bu.edu) about CAS courses or Associate Dean Jeffrey Hughes (617-353-2690; hughes@bu.edu) about GRS courses.

DEPARTMENT OR PROGRAM: ENGLISH

DATE SUBMITTED: 9/3/15

COURSE NUMBER: CAS EN 180

COURSE TITLE: Post-Apocalyptic Narratives

INSTRUCTOR(S): DR. THOMAS OTTEN

TO BE FIRST OFFERED: Sem./Year: ___SPRING_ /___2016___

SHORT TITLE: The “short title” appears in the course inventory, on the Link University Class Schedule, and on student transcripts and must be 15 characters maximum including spaces. It should be as clear as possible.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION: This is the description that appears in the CAS and/or GRS Bulletin and The Link. It is the first guide that students have as to what the course is about. The description can contain no more than 40 words.

Why is contemporary culture drawn to stories of zombies, social collapse, and environmental disaster? What fascinates us about dystopia? Stories, novels, graphic novels, film, and television all examined to explore questions of narrative, interpretation, genre, politics, “high” vs. “popular” culture.

PREREQUISITES: Indicate “None” or list all elements of the prerequisites, clearly indicating “AND” or “OR” where appropriate. Here are three examples: “Junior standing or CAS ZN300 or consent of instructor”; “CAS ZN108 and CAS ZN203 and CAS PQ206; or consent of instructor”; “For SED students only.”

1. State the prerequisites:

   No prerequisites needed

2. Explain the need for these prerequisites:

CREDITS: (check one)
Provide a rationale for this number of credits, bearing in mind that for a CAS or GRS course to carry 4 credits, 1) it must normally be scheduled to meet at least 150 minutes/week, AND 2) combined instruction and assignments, as detailed in the attached course syllabus, must anticipate at least 12 total hours/week of student effort to achieve course objectives.

We plan to run the course on a normal Mon/Wed/Friday schedule of 50-minutes classes. The main material in the course consists of novels, short stories, and films, and assessments will include weekly writing assignments and short papers—all of which will certainly require at least 12 hours per week from a student.

DIVISIONAL STUDIES CREDIT: Is this course intended to fulfill Divisional Studies requirements?

☐ No.
☒ Yes. If yes, please indicate which division ____HUMANITIES___________ and explain why the course should qualify for Divisional Studies credit. Refer to criteria listed here and specify whether this course is intended for “short” or “expanded” divisional list.

This course would be appropriate to the “short” Divisional Studies list. No prior experience with the topic will be presupposed, and it has the kind of inter-disciplinary breadth that would help provide a good foundation for a student’s general education. It would also introduce students to some of the methods of literary as well as theoretical analysis, and ask them to communicate their learning through a variety of assessments, including formal papers and exams.

HOW FREQUENTLY WILL THE COURSE BE OFFERED?

☐ Every semester ☐ Once a year, fall ☒ Once a year, spring ☐ Every other year
☐ Other: Explain:

NEED FOR THE COURSE: Explain the need for the course and its intended impact. How will it strengthen your overall curriculum? Will it be required or fulfill a requirement for degrees/majors/minors offered by your department/program or for degrees in other departments/school/colleges? Which students are most likely to be served by this course? How will it contribute to program learning outcomes for those students? If you see the course as being of “possible” or “likely” interest to students in another departments/program, please consult directly with colleagues in that unit. (You must attach appropriate cognate comments using cognate
comment form if this course is intended to serve students in specific other programs. See FURTHER INFORMATION below about cognate comment.)

The English department’s curriculum currently includes relatively few courses on contemporary literature and culture—essentially just EN 347 and EN 547, which have come to run in alternating year. It has even few courses designed to explore the longstanding—yet increasingly contentious—line between “high” culture (poetry, fiction, drama) and “low” culture (film, television, graphic novels).

“The Arts of Apocalypse” will help correct both of these weaknesses. It will consider narratives that have been pervasive in the post-9/11 culture that today’s students have been raised in: social cataclysm and the threat of lawlessness; the parallel fear of authoritarianism and fundamentalism; the looming sense of environmental catastrophe; worries about conspiracy and the possibility of meaningful collective action. An examination of such stories, drawn from various media, can provide a glimpse of how we contemporaries understand a host of crucial moral and political topics: goodness, evil, heroism, character, political power, and the grounds of our shared social life. Such an examination will also allow us to probe a number of challenging yet unavoidable questions about aesthetics: how one distinguishes a superior work of art; what combination of emotion and intellect are at work in our encounters with art; how the composition of a work—its techniques and structures—impacts the way that we understand it.

At the more structural level, EN 180 will be an important and attractive addition to our repertoire of introductory courses, which are essential for drawing students toward the English department and, with luck, into our major.

ENROLLMENT: How many undergraduate and/or graduate students do you expect to enroll in the initial offering of this course?

20

CROSS-LISTING: Is this course to be cross-listed or taught with another course? If so, specify. Chairs/directors of all cross-listing units must co-sign this proposal on the signature line below.

No cross-listing is planned.

OVERLAP:

1. Are there courses in the UIS Course Inventory (CC00) with the same number and/or title as this course?
   □ No.
   ☒ Yes. If yes, any active course(s) with the same number or title as the proposed course will be phased out upon approval of this proposal.
   NOTE: A course number cannot be reused if a different course by that number has been offered in the past five years.
2. Relationship to other courses in your program or others: Is there any significant overlap between this course and others offered by your department/program or by others? (You must attach appropriate cognate comments using cognate comment form if this course might be perceived as overlapping with courses in another department/program. See FURTHER INFORMATION below.)

In the configuration proposed by Dr. Otten, the course includes a certain amount of television and film, alongside the novels and stories that are the main focus of the course. Though we are not proposing to cross-list the course with CIMS, on the grounds that the course includes too little of this visual material, we have sought cognate comment from that program in order to clarify what both sides view as the relationship between them.

FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT: What, if any, are the new or special facilities or equipment needs of the course (e.g., laboratory, library, instructional technology, consumables)? Are currently available facilities, equipment, and other resources adequate for the proposed course? (NOTE: Approval of proposed course does not imply commitment to new resources to support the course on the part of CAS.)

No new equipment will be needed.

STAFFING: How will the staffing of this course, in terms of faculty and, where relevant, teaching fellows, affect staffing support for other courses? For example, are there other courses that will not be taught as often as now? Is the staffing of this course the result of recent or expected expansion of faculty? (NOTE: Approval of proposed course does not imply commitment to new resources to support the course on the part of CAS.)

No new staffing would be needed.

BUDGET AND COST: What, if any, are the other new budgetary needs or implications related to the start-up or continued offering of this course? If start-up or continuation of the course will entail costs not already discussed, identify them and how you expect to cover them. (NOTE: Approval of proposed course does not imply commitment to new resources to support the course on the part of CAS.)

No special budgetary considerations.
EXTERNAL PROGRAMS: If this course is being offered at an external program/campus, please provide a brief description of that program and attach a CV for the proposed instructor.

FURTHER INFORMATION THAT MUST BE ATTACHED IN ORDER FOR THIS PROPOSAL TO BE CONSIDERED:

- A complete week-by-week SYLLABUS with student learning objectives, readings, and assignments that reflects the specifications of the course described in this proposal; that is, appropriate level, credits, etc. (See guidelines on “Writing a Syllabus” on the Center for Excellence & Innovation in Teaching website.) Be sure that syllabus includes your expectations for academic honesty, with URL for pertinent undergraduate or GRS academic conduct code(s).

- Cognate comment from chairs or directors of relevant departments and/or programs. Use the form here under “Curriculum Review & Modification.” You can consult with Susan Jackson (CAS) or Jeffrey Hughes (GRS) to determine which departments or programs inside and outside of CAS would be appropriate.

DEPARTMENT CONTACT NAME AND POSITION: Rob Chodat

DEPARTMENT CONTACT EMAIL AND PHONE: RCHODAT@BU.EDU

DEPARTMENT APPROVAL: ___________________________ 9.5.15

Department Chair

______________________________

Other Department Chair(s) (for cross-listed courses) Date
CAS/GRS CURRICULUM COMMITTEE APPROVAL:

☐ Approved Date: ________________
☐ Tabled Date: ________________
☐ Not Approved Date: ________________

Divisional Studies Credit:
☐ Endorsed
☐ Not endorsed

______________________________________________________________
Curriculum Committee Chair Signature and Date

Comments:

PROVISIONAL APPROVAL REQUESTED for Semester/Year ________________

______________________________________________________________
Dean of Arts & Sciences Signature and Date

Comments:

CAS FACULTY: Faculty Meeting Date: ________________ ☐ Approved ☐ Not Approved

______________________________________________________________
Curriculum Administrator Signature and Date

Comments:
Concerning CAS EN 180 New Course Proposal

Response from the instructor of the course, Dr. Thomas Otten:

Dear Sanjay,

Thank you for relaying the queries and suggestions from the HUCC. I was delighted to find the questions and suggestions match my own sense of the course as it stands right now: it needs some more theoretical or historical readings that situate the narratives, which in the current version sometimes seem to float isolated from context. I will add something by Joseph Stiglitz on inequality, some pages from Lawrence Levine’s *Highbrow/Lowbrow* that show where the distinction between mass and refined culture came from, and some pages from John Frow’s *Cultural Studies and Cultural Value* that show how that distinction works (or used to work) in the present moment. This is a course I will keep working on between now and the beginning of next term; the syllabus will become less skeletal as I do so.

The title “Post-Apocalyptic Narratives” comes as close as any concise title can to naming what the course is about, and so the Associate Chair and I have adopted it.

The attendance/participation grade will include short writing assignments and so will be based on something less subjective than merely my sense of which students were really involved in the course; in other words, there will be marks in my grade book that make that percentage an objective measure. I will change the percentage if the committee still has misgivings, but I want to underscore that there was a reason behind it. I will add brief descriptions of the other requirements, particularly the papers.

Many thanks to you and the committee for this input.

Best from
Tom Otten
Arts of the Apocalypse

If you were to predict the future based on contemporary fiction, film, and television, you would feel confident in forecasting a world where small bands of survivors cope with the aftermath of planetary disaster as they stand up either to a totalitarian regime or to pure lawlessness. What can we learn about the nature of narrative if we take these stories seriously? Where does this basic plot come from? What can we learn about the twenty-first century from close-reading these fictions?

This is a course, then, on apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narrative, one that uses the current preoccupation with zombies (The Walking Dead), dystopias (Hunger Games), and environmental disaster (Odds Against Tomorrow) to introduce students to the techniques of genre analysis (what do these stories hold in common?) and cultural studies (what do these stories mean politically, economically, socially?).

One of the virtues of the topic is that it allows students and the instructor to ask some really basic and hard questions about literature, narrative, and the arts; the course will need to address before the term is over the question of whether and how, say, Colson Whitehead's critically admired novel is somehow more sophisticated or artistically serious than the graphic novel that was adapted into The Walking Dead. Ideally, the course will tap into our enthusiasm for these texts and use that energy to think critically both about narrative and about the contemporary moment.

Required texts (print)

Required texts (video) (see note below on viewing these materials)
Course Requirements

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<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Paper #1 (due Feb. 19)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper #2 (due April 29)</td>
<td>25%</td>
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<td>Midterm exam</td>
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<td>Final exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Short Writing Assignments: Once a week I will ask you to answer a specific question or to perform some focused analysis on a given passage; these assignments, which do not appear on the syllabus, will serve as the basis for our discussions on the day they are due. Some of these assignments will be ungraded, while some will be loosely evaluated (check plus, check, check minus) but in any case I will give you enough feedback on them so that you will be well-prepared to write a strong first paper and so you will know where you stand in the course. Your work on these assignments will be part of your attendance and participation grade.

Attendance and Participation: Regular attendance is crucial. You may miss up to three classes over the course of the term; further absences will lower your final grade and may even result in an F for the course. Additionally, participation counts toward your final grade: strong participation will usually bump a B+ up to an A-, particularly if the average is in between those two grades. Conversely, a lack of participation, attendance, interest, etc. will mean that the final grade gets lowered one notch. Excellent participation does not mean that those members of the class with a more reserved style are penalized, but it does mean that everyone is ready to contribute when called on.

Academic Conduct: It is your responsibility to know and understand the provisions of the CAS Academic Conduct Code, available at bu.edu/academics/resources. (This needs to be corrected.) I will refer cases of suspected academic misconduct to the Dean’s Office. I will assign a grade of F to any assignment judged by the Dean to be plagiarized. Please keep in mind throughout the term that I welcome questions about matters of documentation and the honest citing of sources.

A Word About Viewing the Films and Television Programs
All video materials listed below are available in the Krasker Film Collection as well as on iTunes and from Netflix; we will watch brief excerpts together in class for the purpose of discussion, but we will not spend class time watching whole episodes or films. Plan in advance how and when you will view these materials, and ask me questions about procedures if you encounter any problems.
Schedule
(*) denotes materials distributed in class. Please bring the current text with you to class every day!

An Introduction: The Genre of Apocalyptic Narrative in the Twenty-First Century

W Jan. 20 The Walking Dead ("Days Gone Bye") (short scene viewed in class)
F Jan. 22 Cormac McCarthy, The Road
M Jan. 25 McCarthy, The Road
Some tools for analyzing narrative:
Seymour Chatman, Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (excerpt) (*)

W Jan. 27 McCarthy, The Road
F Jan. 29 McCarthy, The Road
M Feb. 1 McCarthy, The Road
Revelation 1, 4-8 (King James Version)

The Evolution of Zombies

F Feb. 5 George A. Romero, dir., Night of the Living Dead
M Feb. 8 Robert Kirkman and Tony Moore, The Walking Dead, Volume 1, “Days Gone Bye”
W Feb. 10 Hillary Chute, “Graphic Narrative” (*)
F Feb. 12 The Walking Dead, “Days Gone Bye,” Season 1, Episode 1
Tu Feb. 16 Marie-Hélène Huet, Monstrous Imagination (excerpt) (*)
Stephen Marche, “How Genre Fiction Became More Important Than Literary Fiction” (*)
Colson Whitehead, Zone One
W Feb. 17 Whitehead, Zone One
F Feb. 19 Whitehead, Zone One
Paper #1 due
M Feb. 22 Whitehead, Zone One
W Feb. 24 Whitehead, Zone One
F Feb. 26 Whitehead, Zone One
Dystopias and Environmental Collapse

F  Mar. 4  Suzanne Collins, The Hunger Games

Spring break

M  Mar. 14  Collins, The Hunger Games
W  Mar. 16  Collins, The Hunger Games
F  Mar. 18  Collins, The Hunger Games

M  Mar. 21  Gary Ross, dir., The Hunger Games (film version)
W  Mar. 23  Seymour Chatman, Story and Discourse (pages on film adaptations) (*)
F  Mar. 25  Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, The Collapse of Western Civilization

M  Mar. 28  Oreskes and Conway, The Collapse of Western Civilization
W  Mar. 30  Karen Tei Yamashita, Through the Arc of the Rain Forest
F  Apr. 1  Yamashita, Through the Arc of the Rain Forest

M  Apr. 4  Yamashita, Through the Arc of the Rain Forest
W  Apr. 6  Yamashita, Through the Arc of the Rain Forest
F  Apr. 8  Yamashita, Through the Arc of the Rain Forest

M  Apr. 11  Nathaniel Rich, Odds Against Tomorrow
W  Apr. 13  Rich, Odds Against Tomorrow
F  Apr. 15  Rich, Odds Against Tomorrow

Tu  Apr. 19  Rich, Odds Against Tomorrow
W  Apr. 20  Rich, Odds Against Tomorrow
F  Apr. 22  Rich, Odds Against Tomorrow

M  Apr. 25  The Invisible Committee, The Coming Insurrection (excerpt)(*)
W  Apr. 27  In-class Workshop on Paper #2
F  Apr. 29  Cormac McCarthy, The Road (reread assigned passages)
            Paper #2 due

Final exam during Exam Period