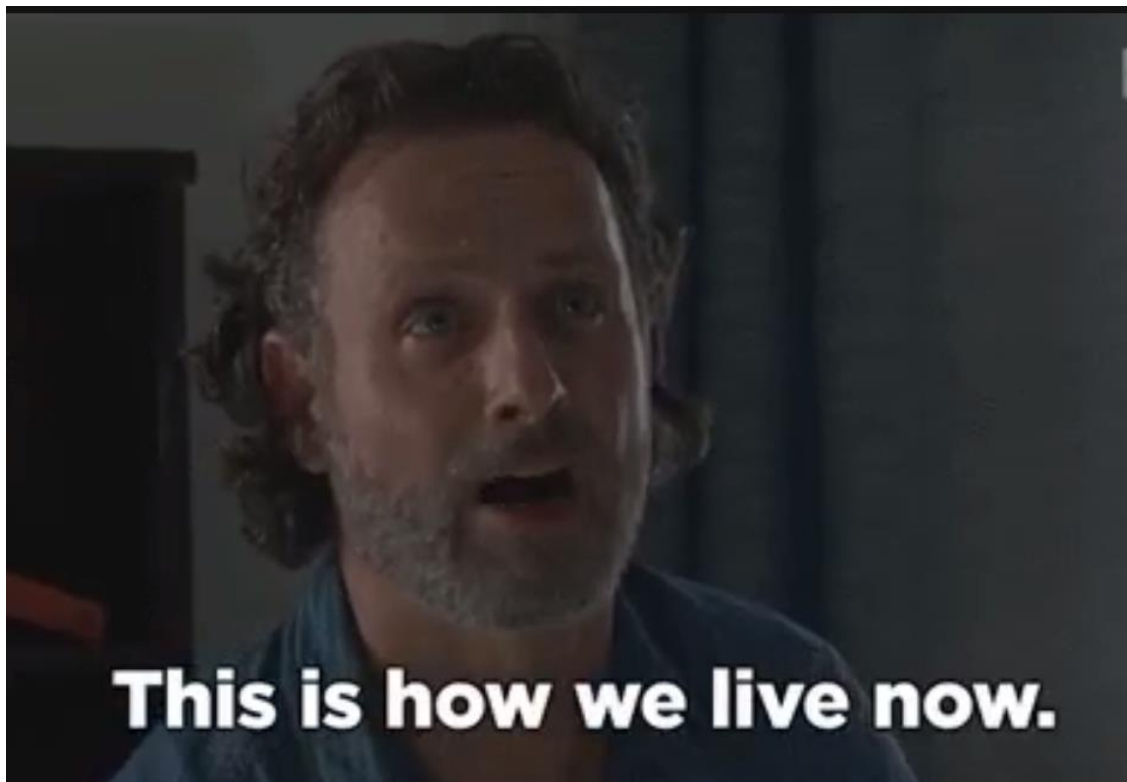


**XIDS 2100-01: ARTS AND IDEAS (CRN )**  
**"THIS IS HOW WE LIVE NOW": CONTEMPORARY CRISES**  
**& SOME WAYS OUT**

**FALL 2018**  
**HUMANITIES 209**  
**9:30-10:45AM**



**DR. PATRICK ERBEN**

**OFFICE: TLC 2239**  
**OFFICE HOURS: TUE/THU 11AM-12PM; 2PM-4PM;**  
**AND BY APPOINTMENT**  
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**COURSE DEN (SYLLABI, READINGS, HANDOUTS)**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** In *The Walking Dead*, all the (human) characters try to live in and adapt in various ways to a hostile, post-apocalyptic landscape—whether it is by building heavily fortified communities or conforming to the whims of a homicidal, brutal psychopath. Though a vision of a dystopian world, the show uses (and, perhaps only slightly, exaggerates) features of our own, familiar world: violence, hate and prejudice, environmental destruction, selfishness, contagion, and loss (of home, family, companionship, even hope...). This class takes a look at various areas of our culture and human-impacted world today, examining how we have created a variety of predicaments while learning to experience them as normal—accepting that “this is how we live now.” In learning about and discussing these predicaments in our lives, we try to disrupt the tendency to declare anything that has gone wrong as “the new normal.” But not to sound too fatalistic: in this course we also look at people and places proposing and working on amazingly creative and hopeful (!) visions of change, progress, and, dare I say, happiness. I am particularly excited about connecting the UWG campus and the Carrollton community to this class theme by incorporating several field trips to visit some special people and places in our area. In fulfilling a Core Curriculum requirement in the Humanities, this course asks what—in areas like food, climate, community, faith—humanity is messing up, and how we are working toward different visions of the future. How do we live now? How could life be different?

**COURSE-SPECIFIC GOALS:** Students will

- Research and discuss creative, journalistic, and documentary texts/films.
- Analyze what these texts/films reveal about predicaments embedded in contemporary culture and society (“how we live now”).
- Critique and discuss elements of contemporary culture we may have stopped questioning or consider normal.
- Create various media, presentations, and texts that communicate observations, research results, new knowledge, and critical/artistic/philosophical insights.
- Understand the central contributions that the Humanities can make to variety of professional and public arenas, including business, journalism, art, politics, science, and faith.
- Appreciate and practice critical thinking, civil conversation, discernment between fact and opinion, and making decisions based on knowledge *and* human empathy.

**Core Area C Goals:** Students will

- demonstrate knowledge of the foundational concepts of artistic, intellectual, or literary achievement.
- recognize and make informed judgments about the fine, literary, or performing arts from various cultures.

**REQUIRED TEXT AND MATERIALS:**

- Paul Feather and Terra Currie, *A Family's Quest to Uproot Hitman Culture*. Carrollton, Georgia: Full Life Farm Publications, 2017.
  - You can purchase the book here: <http://www.sacredviolence.com/book.php> or at Underground Books off the Square in Carrollton: <https://www.undergroundbooks.net/pages/books/2696/paul-feather-terra-currie/sacred-violence-a-familys-quest-to-uproot-hitman-culture>.
- All other texts (readings, films, blogs, etc.) will be either online or made available as photocopies or on Courseden—free of charge—by the instructor. Please note that not all readings and viewings are fully set at this point in the semester. However, everything will be completely manageable.
- A handsome journal (not too small), in which you will enjoy writing (by hand!) throughout the semester. Please use something bound (not spiral bound and no perforated pages; no ring binder)! The journal is for in and out-of-class writing assignments. It is not meant for taking notes, storing handouts, etc. (see below).
- A three-ring binder (1.5 inches best) to store notebook paper (for notes) and handouts.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND ASSIGNMENTS:**

**ATTENDANCE:** Regular and timely attendance is MANDATORY. You have four (4) allowed absences. **Each additional absence will result in a full letter grade deduction from your final course grade (A to B, B to C, etc.).** All absences will be treated the same (i.e. no distinction between excused and unexcused absences). Everyone is responsible for signing an attendance list circulated at the beginning of every class meeting. If you arrive late, it is your responsibility to request the attendance list at the end of class. Failure to sign up on the attendance list may be counted as an absence for that day.

**READINGS/VIEWINGS AND PARTICIPATION:** Active participation is the essence of a lively and productive course. I encourage you to cultivate an engaged reading style, using underlining, marginalia, post-it notes to mark relevant pages, and notes. Classroom discussion will usually involve close readings of texts and videos, and I may ask you to support your comments with evidence from the text/viewing. I evaluate both the quality and quantity of your contributions, so less vocal students may excel through fewer, but thoughtful comments. We can discuss at any point during the semester how you are doing on your participation grade.

**ON-CAMPUS AND OFF-CAMPUS FIELD TRIPS:** The purpose of our fieldtrips is to connect the issues we are discussing in class to our immediate community, our environment, and, in short, the places and ways we live. Field trips may highlight specific problems as well as projects, businesses, groups, and institutions that try to find solutions to these problems (such as the UWG community garden, the UWG recycling facility, etc.). I will require one journal entry for each field trip. More broadly, I would like these trips/visits to inspire and inform your work for the Vlog and the Utopian Research Project. You may, of course, return to these places on your own and incorporate them in your work for these assignments (see detailed descriptions to find out how!).

- All field trips take place during class time.
- Off-campus field trips will require some personal transportation (car-pools to be set up in class); on-campus field trips are on foot or even in class (please let me know if you have any mobility issues).
- Mandatory for all students but not graded (absences count toward your allowed maximum of four total). Bring your journal to all field trips, please!

**JOURNAL:** For each week, I will ask you to write one or two journal entries reflecting on the readings, film viewings, and field trips for that week. Each journal entry should consist of two parts: 1) your responses to the prompts I will provide; 2) your personal thoughts about the readings, viewings, field trips, and overall issues discussed in class. **Each entry should as a minimum be circa 200-250 words long** (more encouraged).

- I check your completed entries at the beginning of class by stamping them.
- I collect your journal for grading twice a semester (at midterm and before finals)
- **DETAILED ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION TO FOLLOW!**

**THE WAY WE LIVE: A DYSTOPIAN RESEARCH PROJECT & PRESENTATION:** Dystopian literature, film, and TV provides us with visions of the future, yet the things that have gone wrong to create these places and societies are often embedded in our own world and thus frighteningly familiar and real. Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (and the Hulu TV series based on the novel) provides a vision of an America where the separation between church and state has been completely erased and women's sexuality is controlled by the government (and its patriarchal representatives); the animated Disney film *Wall-E* asks whether our reliance on technology in every part of our lives could be both a curse and a salvation for humanity; *The Walking Dead* intriguingly pivots between the monstrosity of the walkers and the remaining humans. For this assignment, you will sign up for a group presentation on one *fictional* dystopian text and prepare a 15 minute (max.) oral presentation on this text with your group members.

- **DETAILED ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION AND SIGN-UP TO FOLLOW!**

**STUDENT-SELECTED READINGS/VIDEOS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** I want you all to take an active part in finding resources (such as websites), readings, videos, etc. for our class discussions. Thus, for this assignment (you will sign up to do this one time during the whole semester), I will ask you to find one such source connected to the topic we are discussing at that time and send the source to me electronically along with 3-5 discussion questions. I will make the source available to the rest of the class for viewing/reading. In class, I will call on you very briefly to restate your questions and provide a few references to the text/video/website that would be useful for class discussion. That's it!

- **DETAILED ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION AND SIGN-UP TO FOLLOW!**

**VLOG (VIDEO BLOG):** Much information today is disseminated via video sharing services and websites, especially in the form of vlogs (video blogs) on popular sites such as Youtube. This format/medium allows you to combine your perspective of events, places & spaces, people, human and non-human environments (and their interaction) while providing your own commentary. I would like each of you to create a Vlog that connects a reading/film we discussed in class with your real-world observations. For example, in our section on food and eating, you could create a short vlog (5 minutes max.) about your experience shopping for groceries, trying to make sense of the variety of natural and non-natural ingredients in our food. Or, you could document your experience visiting the Carrollton Farmer's Market on a Saturday morning. Your vlog should combine creativity and critical analysis. I will circulate a schedule for each of you to sign up for a date when your *one* respective vlog to be due. You will upload your vlog to Youtube, and we will discuss your work in class.

- **DETAILED ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION AND SIGN-UP TO FOLLOW!**

**THE WAY WE COULD LIVE: A UTOPIAN RESEARCH GROUP PROJECT:** This will be the biggest assignment of the semester, and therefore it will be stair-stepped (i.e. consist of several smaller steps/assignments due over a few weeks toward the end of the semester). In this assignment, you and your group members will research an institution, organization, community, person, church, business, or even place (town, city, even country) that is pursuing a seemingly utopian project, vision, or plan (NB: utopia means "no place," but the point is that a great vision for the future *could* and *does* exist). This could be a local project/initiative/business (e.g. not one of the places we visited) but it does not have to be.

The point of the research is to 1) find out what problem or issue is addressed and why; 2) find out how the problem is addressed; 3) find out what the vision put into place is; 4) assess whether the project/vision effectively addresses or remedies the problem (here, you could compare what you found to the Dystopian Project you did earlier in the semester).

Here's what I want you to do/produce:

Part 1: A Research File (essentially an electronic folder of research results)

Part 2: An electronic email newsletter (using Mail Chimp or Constant Contact or similar program), including a short "article" written by each individual group member.

Part 3: An Oral Presentation (sharing, in creative ways, the results of your research with the class)

- **DETAILED ASSIGNMENT DESCRIPTION AND SIGN-UP TO FOLLOW!**

### **GRADE BREAKDOWN:**

<b>PARTICIPATION</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>JOURNAL (2 x 10%, COLLECTED BEFORE MIDTERM AND AT END OF THE SEMESTER)</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>THE WAY WE LIVE: A DYSTOPIAN RESEARCH PROJECT &amp; PRESENTATION</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>STUDENT-SELECTED READINGS/VIDEOS &amp; DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>VLOG (VIDEO BLOG):</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>THE WAY WE COULD LIVE: A UTOPIAN RESEARCH GROUP PROJECT:</b>	<b>30%</b>

### **COURSE POLICIES:**

**ATTENDANCE AND DEADLINES:** In case of absence, you are responsible for keeping up with all assignments, readings, and in-class work. I do not make lecture notes etc. available to students who missed class (please get in touch with a fellow student). I can only accept late work if you discussed the issue with me ahead of time. All exceptions and acceptance of excuses are completely at my discretion. (See under "Course Requirements for the allowed number of absences, etc.)

**TARDINESS:** A class roll will circulate at the BEGINNING of class. Everyone who is late will be noted as tardy. Three (3) "tardies" will result in one (1) absence!

**PLAGIARISM:** There are different forms of plagiarism, from blatant theft of entire papers to negligence in acknowledging a source in your writing. However, you will be held responsible for any form of plagiarism—whether intentional or not. Consequences and responses to plagiarism are at the discretion of the instructor. Please pay specific attention to the English Department's site on plagiarism:

[www.westga.edu/academics/coah/english/plagiarism.php](http://www.westga.edu/academics/coah/english/plagiarism.php). I expect all out-of-class work to abide by MLA Format (See: MLA Handbook for the Writers of Research Papers) for proper documentation of sources (primary and secondary).

**CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE:** Before you read the following, keep in mind that I wouldn't have to address these issues if they hadn't caused problems in the past. I expect everyone to be ready to work at the beginning of class. This means in particular having

ALL reading materials assigned for that day as well as any tools for note-taking on hand and ready to use. You MAY bring drinks and/or non-smelly or non-noisy food to class. Most importantly: Be respectful toward the opinions, ideas, and personal identity of all members of our class! The following actions will result in an immediate dismissal from class and result in an absence for that day (and may result in the administrative withdrawal from the course):

- using internet, email, Facebook, etc. on a personal laptop (you may use a laptop for note-taking)
- using any other electronic devices, such as smart phones, etc. In particular, I am extremely allergic to students texting during class. Please turn off any of these devices before class.
- sleeping or even acting like you're sleeping (e.g. putting your head on your desk)
- disruptive behavior, such as interrupting other students or the instructor while they're speaking, insulting or disparaging the opinions of other students, etc.

**UWG EMAIL POLICY:** University of West Georgia students are provided a MyUWG e-mail account. The University considers this account to be an official means of communication between the University and the student. The purpose of the official use of the student e-mail account is to provide an effective means of communicating important university related information to UWG students in a timely manner. It is the student's responsibility to check his or her email.

**DR. ERBEN'S EMAIL ETIQUETTE:**

- All messages must include a subject line
- All messages must include an address line (e.g. "Dear Dr. Erben" or "Dr. Erben")
- Use polite and appropriate language, as well as reasonably edited prose (i.e. complete sentences, correct spelling, etc.)!
- No texting language and abbreviations.
- Always sign your name!

**ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES:** Students with a documented disability may work with UWG Accessibility Services to receive essential services specific to their disability. All entitlements to accommodations are based on documentation and USG Board of Regents standards. If a student needs course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability or chronic illness, or if he/she needs to make special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, the student should notify his/her instructor in writing and provide a copy of his/her Student Accommodations Report (SAR), which is available only from Accessibility Services. Faculty cannot offer accommodations without timely receipt of the SAR; further, no retroactive accommodations will be given. For more information, please contact Accessibility Services.

**CENTER FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS:** The Center for Academic Success provides services, programs, and opportunities to help all undergraduate students succeed academically. For more information, contact them: 678-839-6280 or [cas@westga.edu](mailto:cas@westga.edu)

**UNIVERSITY WRITING CENTER** ([www.westga.edu/academics/coah/writing/](http://www.westga.edu/academics/coah/writing/)): The University Writing Center assists students with all areas of the writing process. For more information, contact them: 678-839-6513 or [writing@westga.edu](mailto:writing@westga.edu). Please also consult the very useful page of student writing resources compiled by the University Writing Center: [www.westga.edu/academics/coah/writing/writing-resources-undergrad.php](http://www.westga.edu/academics/coah/writing/writing-resources-undergrad.php).

**CREDIT HOUR POLICY:** The University of West Georgia grants one semester hour of credit for work equivalent to a minimum of one hour (50 minutes) of in-class or other direct faculty instruction AND two hours of student work outside of class per week for approximately fifteen weeks. For each course, the course syllabus will document the amount of in-class (or other direct faculty instruction) and out-of-class work required to earn the credit hour(s) assigned to the course. Out-of-class work will include all forms of credit-bearing activity, including but not limited to assignments, readings, observations, and musical practice. Where available, the university grants academic credit for students who verify via competency-based testing, that they have accomplished the learning outcomes associated with a course that would normally meet the requirements outlined above (e.g. AP credit, CLEP, and departmental exams).

**UWG HONOR CODE:** At the University of West Georgia, we believe that academic and personal integrity are based upon honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility. Students at West Georgia assume responsibility for upholding the honor code. West Georgia students pledge to refrain from engaging in acts that do not maintain academic and personal integrity. These include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, aid of academic dishonesty, lying, bribery or threats, and stealing. The University of West Georgia maintains and monitors a confidential Academic Dishonesty Tracking System. This database collects and reports patterns of repeated student violations across all the Colleges, the Ingram Library, and the School of Nursing. Each incidence of academic dishonesty is subject to review and consideration by the instructor, and is subject to a range of academic penalties including, but not limited to, failing the assignment and/or failing the course. Student conduct sanctions range from verbal warning to suspension or expulsion depending on the magnitude of the offense and/or number of offenses. The incident becomes part of the student's conduct record at UWG. Additionally, the student is responsible for safeguarding his/her computer account. The student's account and network connection are for his/her individual use. A computer account is to be used only by the person to whom it has



been issued. The student is responsible for all actions originating through his/her account or network connection. Students must not impersonate others or misrepresent or conceal their identities in electronic messages and actions. For more information on the University of West Georgia Honor Code, please see the Student Handbook.

**HB 280 (CAMPUS CARRY):** UWG follows University System of Georgia (USG) guidance: [http://www.usg.edu/hb280/additional\\_information#](http://www.usg.edu/hb280/additional_information#). You may also visit our website for help with USG Guidance: <https://www.westga.edu/police/campus-carry.php>.

### TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

- All changes are at the discretion of the instructor and will be announced in class and through email (please check your UWG email regularly for any updates, and make sure your inbox is not full!).
- Important: All assignments, including readings, are to be completed for the date listed in the schedule!

DATE	THEMES AND READING/VIEWING ASSIGNMENTS	DUE DATES
Thu 8/16	Syllabus & Introductions Inquiry Activity: Your Utopia and Dystopia.	
Tue 8/21	<b>Theme 1: Years of Living Dangerously – The Politics and Science of Climate Change</b> View in class: excerpts from National Geographic Series <i>Years of Living Dangerously</i>	
Thu 8/23	View at home: self-selected videos from <i>Years of Living Dangerously</i> . In-class discussion.	Journal entry due.
Tue 8/28	View at home: <i>Beasts of the Southern Wild</i> . In-class discussion.	Journal entry due.
Thu 8/30	Discussion: Student-selected readings/videos.	Journal entry due.
Tue 9/4	<b>Dystopian Research Projects</b>	<b>Presentations 1-3</b>
Thu 9/6	<b>Dystopian Research Projects</b>	<b>Presentations 4-6</b>
Tue 9/11	<b>Theme 2: Our Life in Plastics – Consumption, Waste, and Where it all ends up</b>	Journal entry due.

	In-class viewing: <i>Wasteland</i> ; Read (at home): TBA (posted on Courseden)	
Thu 9/13	Continue: <i>Wasteland</i> ; discussion.	Journal entry due
Tue 9/18	<b>In-class Field Trip: UWG Recycling facility/meet with director of auxiliary services</b>	
Thu 9/20	Field trip debrief/discussion. Discussion student selected readings/videos.	<b>Due: Vlog 1-6.</b> Journal entry due.
Tue 9/25	View & discuss: Vlog 1-6	
Thu 9/27	<b>Theme 3: Another Brick in the Wall? – Immigration</b> <b>View and read at home: TBA (Courseden)</b>	
Tue 10/2	In-class field trip: Immigration rights advocate	
Thu 10/4	<b>FALL BREAK – NO CLASSES</b>	
Tue 10/9	Field Trip debrief. Discussion student-selected readings/videos.	<b>Due: Vlog 7-12</b> Journal entry due.
Thu 10/11	View & discuss: Vlog 7-12	
Tue 10/16	<b>Theme 4: Guns, Sex, Race, Drugs, and Religion – A World of Violence?</b> In-class viewing: TBA	<b>Journal 1 due at end of class.</b>
Thu 10/18	Read (at home): TBA <b>Introduction to main course assignment: THE WAY WE COULD LIVE: A UTOPIAN RESEARCH GROUP PROJECT</b>	Journal entry due.
Tue 10/23	<b>In-class Field Trip: UWG Police</b>	<b>Due: Vlogs 13-18</b>
Thu 10/25	Field trip debrief; Discussion student-selected readings/videos. View & discuss: Vlogs 13-18	Journal entry due.
Tue 10/30	<b>Theme 5: Media, Knowledge, and Truth</b> Reading/viewing (at home): TBA	Journal entry due.
Thu 11/1	<b>Field Trip: Times Georgian Newspaper, Carrollton</b>	
Tue 11/6	Field trip debrief; discussion.	<b>Vlogs 19-25 due.</b>

Thu 11/8	Discussion student-selected readings/videos. View & discuss: Vlogs 19-25.	Journal entry due.
Tue 11/13	<b>Theme 6: Work, Family, Community, Spirituality, and Happiness—How is it all connected?</b> Read: <i>Sacred Violence</i> (pages TBA)	Journal entry due.
Thu 11/15	Read: <i>Sacred Violence</i> (pages TBA)	Journal entry due.
Tue 11/20	<b>Thanksgiving recess; no class.</b>	
Thu 11/22	<b>Thanksgiving recess; no class.</b>	
Tue 11/27	<b>Field Trip: Full Life Farm or in-class visit by Paul and Terra Feather.</b>	UTOPIAN RESEARCH GROUP PROJECT: <u>RESEARCH FILE DUE</u>
Thu 11/29	Debrief field trip. Discussion student-selected reading/video.	<b>Journal 2 due at the end of class.</b>
Tue 12/4	<b>Workshop: email newsletter</b>	
Thu 12/6	<b>Last day of class; workshop Utopian Research Project—oral presentations.</b>	UTOPIAN RESEARCH GROUP PROJECT: <u>EMAIL NEWSLETTER DUE (BY 11:59PM)</u>
Thu 12/13	<b>8-10am: Final Exam period.</b>	UTOPIAN RESEARCH GROUP PROJECT: <u>ORAL GROUP PRESENTATIONS (due/given in class)</u>