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ENG 3504-001: The (D)evolution of Disaster in Film and Literature

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English 3504: The (D)evolution of Disaster in Film and Literature

Dr. Robin L. Murray

Fall 2008, Thursday, 6:30-9

Office: CH 3351/314F

Phone: x6985 or 345-7983 before 10 p.m.

Office Hours: T/R 12:30-2 and 3:30-4 or by appointment

Email: cfrlm@eiu.edu or cfrlmgoodgirl@hotmail.com**Course Description:**

According to Maurice Yacowar, “Disaster films constitute a sufficiently numerous, old, and conventionalized group to be considered a genre rather than a popular cycle that comes and goes.” For Yacowar, “the essence of the genre [includes] a situation of normalcy [that] erupts into a persuasive image of death.” Although Yacowar outlines only eight basic types of disaster films that range from natural attacks to the comic, films in every genre and style can be illuminated by the sense of the disaster genre. This section of English 3504 will explore the boundaries of disaster in multiple genres of film and literature.

Texts:Hesse, Karen. Out of the DustTepper, Sheri. The Gate to Women’s CountryVonnegut, Kurt. Slaughterhouse 5Ellroy, Devil in a Blue DressErdrich, Louise. Love MedicineBordwell and Thompson, Film ArtGrant, Barry Keith, Editor. *Film Genre Reader II***Course Requirements:**

1. **Weekly Responses, quizzes, and Participation:** Responses are about two pages typed and reflect careful reading and synthesis of course materials and/or films. Your responses will serve as a source for discussion in class as a whole or in small groups so are part of your participation grade. Responses should analyze, critique, argue for or against, or evaluate—they should not summarize except to make the writer’s point(s). **You must be in class to receive credit for your response or for any in-class work.**
2. **Midterm Exam:** This exam will provide an opportunity to internalize material all students read for class and to carefully read the first four films in the class.
3. **Group Presentation:** More information will be available on the handout
4. **Final Exam:** This exam will not be cumulative. It will provide an opportunity to internalize material read for class as a group and as a class from Midterm forward and carefully to read the last three films in the class.
5. **Final Paper and Presentation:** This paper will expand on the best thoughts of your best response, either to one of the films or to your group’s novel. I will provide a handout to clarify requirements for this paper and comments on your

response to help stimulate best idea development. Presentations will give you the opportunity to share your thoughts with your classmates.

Grades: Grades will be determined as follows for a total of 100%:

Weekly Responses and Participation-----20%

Midterm-----20%

Group Teaching/Presentation-----20%

Final Exam-----20%

Final Paper-----20%

Grading of Responses, Presentation, and Paper:

Response grades will be based on analytical complexity. Each will be worth twenty points. If a response only summarizes a film or novel, the response gets only half credit. Adequate analysis (or argument or critique) will result in 14 points (C level). Good analysis, etc., in 16 points (B level). Great analysis, etc., from 18-20 points, depending on clarity, precision, and sense of voice.

Paper grades will be based on the following areas: Audience awareness, organization, development, sentence structure, word choice, grammar/usage/mechanics. The first three areas will be weighted more heavily than the second three (60% vs. 40%). I will also distribute the English Department's grade analysis in class.

Presentations will be evaluated according to a rubric I will distribute in class. Groups should also turn in any class handouts or visuals with novel responses.

Students with Disabilities: If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Coordinator of the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

Plagiarism: The English Department states, "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism -- 'The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work' -- has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of "F" in the course."

Electronic Writing Portfolio: This class is a writing intensive class, so you may submit your paper as a writing portfolio sample, following the instructions on the CASL Website. Submissions must be made during the course of the class to receive my approval. Please note that the Writing Center is available for help with all writing assignments, as well. Take advantage of this free service.

Fall 2008 English 3504 Tentative Course Calendar, Subject to Change

August

- 28 Introduction to the course, to reading film and to disaster films. Hand-out on form and narrative with Wizard of Oz as example. In-class exercise with Nice-Net. **Read Out of the Dust for September 1 and write a response.**

September

- 4 **Response to novel due.** Discuss Hesse book. Discuss group projects—groups will connect novel to another film. Introduce Tank Girl. Read “A Bug in a Rug...” in FGR for next week and write a response.
- 11 **Response to “A Bug in a Rug” due.** Discuss short essay and watch Tank Girl. Read chapters 6 and 7 in FA for September 18 and write a response. Remember to read Slaughterhouse 5 for October 25.
- 18 **Response due on the shot in relation to Tank Girl.** Discuss “The Shot” and watch Visions of Light. Introduce Slaughterhouse 5. Finish Slaughterhouse 5 for September 25 and write a response.
- 25 **Response due to Slaughterhouse 5.** Discuss novel and view Brazil. Write a response comparing novel to film for October 2. Begin reading Devil in a Blue Dress for October 9. Prepare for first presentation.

October

- 2 **Group I Presentation. Comparative Response due.** Discuss responses and introduce Devil in a Blue Dress. Write a response to the novel for October 9.
- 9 **Response to Devil... due.** Discuss novel and view film. Hand-out Midterm overview.
- 16 **Midterm.** Read Love Medicine for October 30.
- 23 Introduce Love Medicine and Watch Heart of Light and write a response. Finish Love Medicine for October 30 and prepare for group presentation.
- 30 **Response due. Group II Presentation.** Discuss Love Medicine. Read “A Semantic/Syntactic Approach,” “Genre Films and the Status Quo,” and “Social Implications....” In FGR For November 6 and prepare for a quiz.

November

- 6 **Quiz on Genre readings.** View The Ice Storm and write a response. Guest presenters may help here! Read Gate to Women's Country for November 20.
- 13 **Response due to film. Group III Presentation.** Read Gate to Women's Country for October 20 and write a response.
- 20 **Group IV Presentation. Response due.** Discuss Gate to Women's Country. Read selections from FGR for December 4 by group and write a response.
- 27 **Thanksgiving Break—no class**

December

- 4 **Response Due.** Discuss genre readings. Discuss papers due next week.
- 11 **Final Paper Due. Prepare for Final Exam. View Children of Men. This will be on the final!**
- 18 **Final Exam**