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Thesis Committee—Dr. Gwen Tarbox, Dr. Phil Egan, and Dir. Kim Ballard

Lee Honors College

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## **Emerging Themes in Dystopian Literature: The Development of an Undergraduate Course**

### **Abstract**

Young adult (YA) dystopian literature is a trend that is taking the nation by storm. Since September 11, 2001, the genre has gained a strong backing from academics, authors, and YA readers; after Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* (2008), however, YA dystopian literature has become the forefront of teen reading, especially with the recently adapted film versions of the widely renowned trilogy. In order to keep up with the times, a proposed course—YA Dystopian Literature: A Survey of Modern Book Series—has been created to be taught at Western Michigan University by Dr. Gwen Tarbox in the spring of 2015.

Before the course could be developed, it was necessary to understand the term “dystopia,” recognize how YA dystopian literature has evolved from mainstream adult dystopian literature, and acknowledge the themes and trends that have emerged from the genre. In order to create the course, a study of previous dystopian literature classes was completed and the results are discussed. A brief explanation of the target audience is provided, along with an extensive rationale behind the learning objectives, text selections, in-class exercises and discussion questions, and other assignments. After the conclusion, which details the need for such a college-level course, the course syllabus is included in the appendix.

## **Introduction to YA Dystopian Literature**

Constant surveillance, oppressive ruling regimes, lack of freedom, and forced conformity are all aspects of adolescent life that teenagers deal with on a daily basis. While parental supervision and peer pressure may not be the end of the world, many young adults feel as if they are trapped and need to search for a way out or a way to change their current situation. The pursuits and concerns of adolescents are often varied and minimal in comparison to large-scale world issues; when these issues are heightened to the extreme, however, they exemplify the dimensions of a newly resurged genre of young adult (YA) stories: dystopian literature.

### *Defining Utopia*

To understand the term dystopia, it is necessary to first look at the word utopia. A utopia, which, in Greek, paradoxically means “no place,” was written about by Thomas More in 1516 and marks the first modern utopia (Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash 1). Authors use utopian ideas in their works to set up the ideal world for their characters, even though that world is highly unlikely or, sometimes, physically or socially impossible. An example of a modern YA utopia is David Levithan’s *Boy Meets Boy* (2003). In the novel, all of today’s conservative and unrelenting beliefs surrounding gender roles, homosexuality, and teen and LGBT relationships are diminished and the focus is placed on the experience of young love, rather than the sex of the people who are dating. While this world seems like a pleasant and perfect place for a teenager to grow up, it is highly unrealistic and it would be nearly impossible to have every person accepted without prejudice. Utopias are created for this reason; they present an “imaginary, yet positive” environment in which characters are free to express themselves, share their opinions, and stand out as individuals while imagining and working toward an alternative social order (Gordin, Tilley, and Prakash 1).

### *Defining Dystopia*

On the other hand, citizens in a dystopian world have to deal with “harshly repressive societies” that constrict any free thought or individuality (Bethune 86). Adams traces the roots of the word dystopia to Ancient Greece’s dys- and -topia, meaning “bad” and “place” respectively. “Bad place” is a mild way to describe the denotative meaning of a dystopia; the connotative meaning is much darker and includes multiple facets and implications. A dystopia is a future world that extends and distorts modern day issues into an inexhaustible and dehumanized state in which controls have been forced upon society and its inhabitants through social and physical limitations that restrict many aspects of life (Cart 103; Spisak 55); dystopian literature, then, is part of the category of speculative fiction that depicts a dystopia with hypothetical situations “to motivate a generation on the cusp of adulthood” (Cart 103; Basu, Broad, and Hintz 1). Many dystopian worlds are formulated with utopic ideologies that have seemingly perfect ways of living and running a society, but only for the privileged few in charge. These limitations are significant for any population, but they become increasingly important to overwhelmed, self-searching teenagers.

### *The Development of YA Dystopian Literature*

The concept of a dystopia has been utilized in literature for many decades, dating back to Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932), George Orwell’s *1984* (1949), Ray Bradbury’s *Fahrenheit 451* (1953), and many more texts that influenced the genre of dystopian literature (Ames 3). These mainstream dystopian works—written for adult readers—are centered on surveillance, fear of information and aging, and numbing the realities of life to name a few of the trends. These novels emerged in the middle of the twentieth century as a response to political, economic, and cultural shifts. Anxieties regarding the place of individual freedom within often

repressive and warring nation states led these authors to speculate on how restrictions on the individual might impact the world on a larger scale (“Utopian and Dystopian Literature”).

YA dystopian literature began making an appearance with Monica Hughes’s *The Tomorrow City* (1978). The concept of using an adolescent transitioning into adulthood “to focus on the need for political action and the exercise of political will” was a perfect fit when it came to a creating dystopian society (Hintz 255). As YA protagonists begin to search for their identities, they realize that the world in which they live is neither perfect nor free, recognitions that help to “eschew the easy path of political and social conformity” (255). Shortly after Hughes wrote another YA dystopian novel—*The Dream Catcher* (1986)—one of the most commonly taught pieces of literature at the middle school level was written: Lois Lowry’s *The Giver* (1993). In this novel, everything is controlled and dictated to citizens by the Elders (261). People receive directions on who they will marry, what children they receive, and where they will work. Asserting itself as one of the earliest YA dystopian novels, *The Giver* includes a narrator, Jonas, who can see the flaws in his society and knows that he must unveil his knowledge to the rest of the citizens (Alchive; Hintz 256). Hughes’s and Lowry’s early works started the genre of YA dystopian literature, but it was not until the early 2000s that more authors began to create and write about imagined harsh environments that truly test the protagonist’s will and ability to survive (256).

While Lowry’s *The Giver* (1993) is part of the canon for the genre, there has been a gradual increase in the number of YA dystopian novels since September 11, 2001: the infamous date of the terrorist attack on New York City’s twin towers. When the looming fear of an overt attack to harm and dismantle the United States became more than just a threat, a quasi-dystopian world seemed to be the result (Ames 4). Against this backdrop, contemporary YA authors began

to write texts with heavy emphases on post-apocalyptic settings, controls on sexuality and reproduction, and the increase of technology that pulls people away from the natural world (Sugarman 110). A few dystopias that surfaced post-World Trade Center attacks include M. T. Anderson's *Feed* (2002), Scott Westerfeld's *Uglies* (2005), and Cory Doctorow's *Little Brother* (2008) (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 2). Later in 2008, however, a new YA dystopian series—Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* Trilogy—hit the forefront of the American culture and created a dramatic spike in YA literature as a whole.

The previous trend that focused on the figure of the monster, in the form of vampires and werewolves, as a commentary on young people's attempts to wrestle with identity, was surpassed by a new development: the use of dystopian settings and themes to comment upon the role of the individual in relation to the community (Spisak 55). Collins's trilogy has become one of the biggest franchises in YA history with ticket sales for the first movie reaching \$155 million—the third-best opening weekend for a movie—and Collins herself being the first YA author to sell over a million copies of her novel via Amazon Kindle (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 1; Bethune 84-5). The series is focused on a futuristic United States called Panem, which has been broken up into twelve districts, where each year, a boy and a girl between the ages of 12 and 18 are chosen to compete in the Hunger Games—a fight to the death—while the rest of the country watches and cheers for the victor from their district. Living conditions are terrible and citizens reside in a dehumanized state throughout the districts, not including the Capitol, the area that has total power and controls the rest of Panem (86). The novel calls into question authoritarian states, income disparity, and reality television as the plot emerges at the beginning of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. The depiction of Katniss Everdeen as a strong female protagonist has helped this novel to take the nation by storm and has children and teens all

around the world playing with bows and arrows and sporting her iconic braid in their hair. The global reach of YA dystopian literature is evident in *The Hunger Games*' success because a very similar plot was developed by Koushun Takami in his 1999 publication of *Battle Royale* (Knight). *The Hunger Games* is followed by *Catching Fire* (2009) and *Mockingjay* (2010).

#### *The Allure of YA Dystopian Literature*

The influence of Collins's trilogy has created a desire within teens to start picking up more YA dystopian texts and find connections and solutions within their own lives, which is one of the genre's main purposes (Reeve 35). The depressing and seemingly hopeless futures that are depicted in YA dystopias are not just another source of stress and anxiety for adolescents; they are meant to provide social commentary on current ways of living, which helps teenagers to think about the world if it were to progress on its current track and realize that they can supply the hope that is needed to make a change (Cart 103). YA dystopian literature is didactic in nature in a sense that the "first-person narration, engaging dialogue, or even diary entries imparting accessible messages" not only draws readers in but also encourages them to think critically about injustices in their communities and in the world at large (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 1; Reeve 35). While teens do not usually run to the shelves in search of books that will teach them a lesson, dystopian topics—including ethical issues that span from social control to individuality vs. collectivism to modes of reproduction—tend to make a clear separation from children's literature, positing in adolescents the feeling that by reading these novels, they have crossed over a line that divides the concerns of childhood from those of adulthood (Cadden 307). Further draws to the YA dystopian genre include scenarios that metaphorically represent the hardships that adolescents experience in school and social settings, as well as the "what if" scenarios that make their way into the minds of pondering readers (Sugarman 111; Bethune 85; Reeve 36).

Because emotion is the “driving force in YA dystopian literature,” teenagers are able to identify some of their strife and connect with the characters and events in a well-developed novel (Alchive).

### **Dystopian Trends in YA Literature**

As the popularity of dystopian novels has changed throughout the history of YA literature, so have the topics, themes, and types of dystopias that authors are creating. Some elements, trends, and formats have remained consistent throughout YA dystopias, but *The Hunger Games*' adaptation of a mainstream genre for a YA audience has brought with it increasing warning against the reliance on technology, emphasis on preserving the natural world, focus on post-apocalyptic settings, and recognition and creation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) characters and themes.

#### *Consistent Dystopian Elements*

In every successful and influential YA dystopian novel, readers can count on encountering one or more of these major commonalities: (1) a vivid and well-described setting; (2) individuals of a group in charge with absolute power; (3) a strong protagonist who has been shaped by his or her current situation; and (4) a dismal conclusion that leaves the reader feeling slightly uneasy (Spisak 56). (1) The vivid setting of the dystopian begins with the first word of the novel. Because the reader is not currently living in the world that is being described, it is imperative for the author to paint the picture of the setting using specific dialogue that reflects the story's culture (56). (2) Whether it is the government, a central police force, or overbearing rules imposed on the society, the oppressive force—or antagonist, which can be the society itself—is so strong that most people living in the given story have lost the ability to think for themselves (Adams). It is important, however, that there is some aspect of vulnerability among



the group in charge in order for the protagonist to see a flaw and enact a plan of action to highlight and expose that weakness (Spisak 56). (3) In order to find that fatal flaw, the protagonist of the story oftentimes has a member of his or her family who knows what life was like before its current dystopian state, which encourages the character to spark a new way of thinking (57). Further, this character is able to see things differently and convince others of his or her way of thinking to gather followers; the protagonist does not always have outstanding powers or talents, but his or her ideas and opinions are so extraordinary and different than others that people begin to jump on the bandwagon (58). (4) Finally, the conclusion of many YA dystopian novels leave the reader with some small glimmer of hope, which is what distinguishes the YA variant from the mainstream variant of dystopian fiction, in which endings are not optimistic for the protagonist or affected society (Cadden 307). The endings are not overly positive; the protagonist usually has to give up a vital part of his or her life and/or loses something or someone who is significantly important to him or her (Spisak 58-9).

### *Conformity*

Another common trend within YA dystopian literature is the conformity that almost completely erases any trace of individual thoughts or behaviors. The lack of individual thinking stems from the dystopian society's "embrace [of] their uniformity out of a fear that diversity breeds conflict" (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 3). The oppressive powers within the dystopia posit the fact that if everyone is in consent and there is no contention with one another, then no problems will occur. Once the protagonist discovers that conflict can help to spur change and create positive outcomes, then conformity is compromised and the character becomes viewed by the state as a threat to the society (4). Conformity in YA dystopian literature is used to show the effects that ensue when the government has pushed the boundary between unity and blindly

obeying without question or concern (Alchive). This dystopian element resonates with adolescents as they attempt to “manage personalities, choices, and appearances” through peer pressure and the common push to fit in rather than be unique, the unrelenting “see-saw nature of teenage life” (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 4; Bethune 86).

### *Control and Enslavement*

While conformity traps individuals’ right to expression, there is also physical enslavement and silencing. Physical control is nothing new to mainstream dystopias; totalitarianism is one of the most commonly used elements in many staple texts from the genre, including *1984* (1949) and *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) (Reeve 35). Mind control, economic constraint, and emotional restrictions depict societies that dehumanize the citizens, creating a sense of need that keeps the inhabitants perpetually in debt for an indefinite amount of time (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 4). The restraint even goes so far as control the minds of citizens through government-induced drugs and mind-altering substances (4). The idea of enslavement is familiar to young adults because schools have been “likened to prisons with their emphasis on control,” yet another stress that adolescents must face on a daily basis (Sugarman 111).

### *The Reliance on Technology*

The technological advancements since the beginning of the twenty-first century have not gone unnoticed by authors of YA literature. There has been an “explosion of information” with the new technology, causing a warning to what may happen with a sole reliance on electronics and newfound knowledge and equipment (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 4). Rather than using technology for good, such as the advancement of medicine and new discovery, technology is overused, creating a technology-dependent society that is hopeless without the latest and greatest advancements (Alchive). This dystopian element is one of the most applicable with today’s

society and the United States' dependence on having the next big thing or the most recent model of smartphone, prevalent issues with current teenagers and adults alike.

### *The Importance of the Natural World*

The increase of technology and industrialization “expand[s] human possibility while also threatening it” because of the environmental harm that comes hand-in-hand with increase of construction and creation (Sugarman 110). The ways in which modern day communities mistreat the natural world around them lead to global warming and other hazards that cause “social, political, and economic nightmares that sensitize readers to the dangers of environmental ruin at the same time that they depict young protagonists learning to adapt and survive in altered times” (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 3). Teenagers reading these types of dystopian stories learn that there is a problem with the current trend of harming the world in which they live, yet they still see that there are ways in which they can continue to survive, creating a sense of hope in the worst scenarios (3). There are many consequences associated with the degradation of the natural world, so adolescents can take the warning from environmental dystopias, take a break from their tablets and smartphones, and advocate for changes in the dingy air around them (Alchive).

### *Post-Apocalyptic Dystopias*

Today's television programs and films are filled with zombies and post-apocalyptic settings that force the characters to fight for survival and work their ways through dangerous obstacles and daunting landscapes. This trend has followed suit within YA dystopian literature as well. Rather than environmental hazards causing the decline of the world, post-apocalyptic dystopias are created by plagues, cosmic crashes, and zombies (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 3).

Not all apocalypses are dystopian, however, and the distinction can be depending on the characters' previous lives and ways of living after the cataclysmic incident. If the survivors form

a “messed-up society where freedoms are curtailed in order to protect its citizens from imagined future terrible events,” then the story can be considered a dystopia (Spisak 55). One primary motivation for using post-apocalyptic societies is to band together a previously fearful and controlled society to create a new, powerful one that sees the advantages of fighting back and believing in individual wills (Basu, Broad, and Hintz 3). Using the newly strengthened community to rebel as a whole helps to break down what little social structures remain intact (3); this idea is relatable to teenagers because of their rebellious nature and helps them to work together toward the greater good.

### *Ethnicity and Dystopia*

Multiculturalism has played an increasingly important role in YA literature for the past 50 years (Kaplan 22). As the United States undergoes the biggest culture change of its history, more YA readers are learning to appreciate racial diversity and the new perspectives that it can teach (23). Rather than reading texts that depict Caucasian and European protagonists and settings, teenagers are picking up stories with narrators from all over the world. Now that multiculturalism has a voice in YA literature, “the other has become the norm,” a phenomenon that has carried over to YA dystopian literature as well (23). Because dystopian literature is political in nature, adding characters that represent different ethnicities can help to enact social change and can empower people from those cultures (Smith, et al. 5). If YA dystopian literature features and embraces America’s increasing diversity, then teens will continue to learn about and strengthen their multicultural competencies (Kaplan 23). Some multicultural YA dystopian texts that are taking the market by storm include Ally Condie’s *Matched* series (2010, 2011, 2012), Paolo Bacigalupi’s *Ship Breaker* series (2010, 2012), and Karen Sandler’s *Tankborn* series (2011, 2013, 2014).

### *LGBT Topics in Dystopian Literature*

As communities around the United States are becoming more accepting and understanding of people who identify as LGBT and relate to similar topics, the prevalence is slowly making its way into YA dystopian literature and YA literature as well. Romantic relationships are a commonality in the majority of YA literature, so why are more of those relationships not between same-sex couples? Paolo Bacigalupi answers this question of “overwhelming heteronormativity” by acknowledging the fact that today’s society is, in itself, a dystopian world (“Paolo Bacigalupi”). He suggests that authors build a society in which homosexual relationships are the norm so that people who identify as straight can experience what it would feel like to have their world turned upside down. LGBT topics are slowly making their way into the forefront; there have been recent strides to incorporate diverse relationships into YA dystopian literature. Some of the texts that are helping to make an impression on teenaged readers are Alex London’s *Proxy* (2013), Gennifer Albin’s *Crewel* (2012), and J. Tomas’s *Rebellion* (2013). As indicated by the publication dates, all three of these novels are very recent and are hitting the world of YA dystopian literature with a strong impact as they are all now part of multi text series (“YA Dystopian LGBT Literature”).

### **A Review of Previous Dystopian Literature Courses**

#### *Combined Focus on Utopian and Dystopian Literature*

While there have been a handful of college courses that emphasize the study of dystopian literature, many of those courses also have a combined focus on utopian literature as well. At the University of Maryland, students are exposed to a large number of texts that range from essay, to short story, to novel in a sophomore honors course (Schotland). Similarly, St. Francis College offers an upper level, lecture-based literature course that focuses equally on utopian and

dystopian novels, including More's *Utopia* (1516) and Plato's *The Republic* (380 BCE) ("LIT 5407"). At the University of Oxford, the dual focus remains consistent, but the course is only a week long with an intense reading schedule that only covers five texts ("Utopias and Dystopias"). Another interesting format of a utopian/dystopian class is at the University of California, Berkeley, where students relay information to a student instructor while doing the majority of the reading and assignments on their own in a research seminar ("English 190"). Finally, a student-led survey of utopian and dystopian literature is taught at the sophomore level at Fairhaven College ("Survey of Utopian/Dystopian Literature").

#### *Focus on Mainstream Adult Dystopian Texts*

Of the college courses that focused solely on dystopian literature, most of them placed a strong, if not complete, emphasis on mainstream adult dystopian novels. At Willamette University, five dystopian novels were studied in an Interdisciplinary Studies course ranging from Jack London's *The Iron Heel* (1908) to Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). The most recent dystopian text taught in that college colloquium was *The Plot Against the World* (2004) by Philip Roth (Michel). Vanderbilt University and Amarillo College teach postmodern dystopian texts, but with an added emphasis on the film versions of post-apocalyptic and prophetic dystopias, both in sophomore level courses ("English Department"; "English 2341"). While many of the previously mentioned classes focus on classic texts such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) and George Orwell's *1984* (1949), one course, offered through Mythgard Institute, teaches newer dystopian literature, including M. T. Anderson's *Feed* (2002) and Suzanne Collins's *The Hunger Games* (2008) (Sturgis). While Mythgard is beginning to teach modern dystopias, there has not been a prominent indication of universities that are creating and teaching college-level YA dystopian literature courses.

## **YA Dystopian Literature: A Survey of Modern Book Series**

The information below explains a proposed course that will be taught at Western Michigan University in the spring of 2015. The target audience is addressed and a rationale is provided for all of the information regarding the course: assignments, text list, learning objectives, and in-class activities. A copy of the course syllabus is included in the appendix that details class policies and procedures, learning objectives, the text list, the assignment descriptions, and a detailed, weekly schedule (see fig. 1).

### *Target Audience*

YA Dystopian Literature: A Survey of Modern Book Series is a prospective course that will be taught at Western Michigan University by Professor Gwen Tarbox in 2015. It is intended to be a discussion-based, 5000-level course for upper division undergraduate students and graduate students. Success in the class will be dependent on students' abilities to read, analyze, discuss, and write about YA dystopian novels, so students enrolling in the course should have had previous experience with upper level literature courses. Also, students pursuing a career in teaching—early childhood, elementary, or secondary education—would benefit from taking this course; the novels, themes, and content would greatly help them to understand what students are currently reading and how to connect classroom materials to students' lives.

The learning objectives, text selections, in-class exercises and discussion questions, and other assignments have been chosen based on a goal to familiarize students with the YA dystopian genre and the trends and themes within it. The syllabus is included in the appendix (see fig. 1).

*Learning Objectives*

Obtaining an understanding of the YA dystopian genre is important before beginning to read the texts. Students need to have a solid foundation of information on the history of the genre, including that of YA literature and dystopian literature, the recent progression of YA dystopian texts, the themes that are present in the genre, and the dystopian trends that influence characters' behaviors and relationships. Once students have a working understanding of these elements of the genre, then they can begin to identify and analyze them in a given text.

Students will begin to relate with characters and events and connect aspects of their lives to the novel upon beginning to read texts within the YA dystopian genre. These connections are an especially important part of teenagers' experiences while reading because they are going through the transition between childhood and adulthood. Connecting with dystopian trends such as conformity, rebellion, and personal identity allow adolescent readers to acknowledge that there are others going through similar transitions, and helps them to uncover the truth in their lives and the world. This course will aid students in understanding how teens are connecting with YA dystopian literature and what those connections mean.

It is important that students in this course gain an understanding of the YA genre as a whole, and learn how to analyze different genres of literature. YA dystopian literature is the main focus of the course, but for students to fully analyze the materials, it is essential for them to be able to interpret different themes and elements through in-class discussions and exercises and written responses of many forms. Writing about different pieces of literature will help students to synthesize materials studied in class and will strengthen their writing abilities, which will help them to be successful in future classes and their chosen profession.



*Text Selections*

The texts that have been selected for this course are all YA dystopian novels that are the first in a series. Many of the texts also explore various forms of diversity, including multiculturalism, gender roles, and LGBT topics, and are written in different formats, such as multiple character narration and the use of satire. Each text was selected for a specific purpose and the transitions between the novels are based on similarity of themes or dystopian trends.

***The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins***

In a futuristic, post-war society that has been divided into twelve districts based on economic status and available products, twenty four children are drawn to compete in the Hunger Games—a death match that leaves only one victor. The United States is now known as Panem: a place that is completely controlled by the dictatorship of the Capitol and President Snow. Katniss Everdeen, the female protagonist, lives in District 12, which is the poorest district that is utilized for its coal mining. When her sister, Primrose, is drawn to compete in the Hunger Games, Katniss quickly volunteers to take her place. The story details the cruelty and viciousness of children killing one another in the Hunger Games, and depicts the deplorable behavior of the rest of Panem as they watch the Hunger Games on television to bet and support candidates of their choosing (“The Hunger Games Summary”). *The Hunger Games* (2008) is followed by *Catching Fire* (2009) and *Mockingjay* (2010).

*The Hunger Games* was written by Suzanne Collins and published in 2008. This novel, as detailed earlier, helped to give the genre of YA dystopian literature a new popularity among teen readers. The novel was selected to be taught in the course due to its fame in the United States as both a best-selling novel and a blockbuster movie. Also, the other novels that will be studied in this course were written after *The Hunger Games*, so students will have a thorough

understanding of texts that have developed partly due to this franchise's success. The economic control of the districts demonstrates the authoritarian power of the Capitol and the ways in which each district must conform to survive in desperate times. While in the Hunger Games, the tributes must turn on each other to save themselves, which is a theme that plays a major role in the next novel.

### ***Ship Breaker* by Paolo**

Nailer, a young male working as a scavenger on an abandoned naval fleet, is stuck in a society where every man and woman stands alone. Everyone must live on ships because the ice caps have melted and the sea levels have risen to uninhabitable depths. When Nailer comes across a big find—unheard of oil from an untouched part of the ship—he is betrayed by a fellow scavenger and left to die. He manages to save himself and consults his friend, Pima. The two set out after a wild storm only to find a wrecked ship with a multitude of treasures inside, along with a young, trapped girl, Nita. Opting to save the girl, Nailer falls in love and must fight against the society in which he lives to escape with her to a safe and happier place. Nailer must confront and battle many of his friends and family to save Nita and himself, a task that proves to be strenuous and leaves the reader in constant suspense (“Ship Breaker Study Guide & Plot Summary”). *Ship Breaker* (2010) is followed by *The Drowned Cities* (2012).

*Ship Breaker* will be the second novel of study because of the consistent questions of loyalty and trust that are also presented in *The Hunger Games*. Similarly, Nailer must question other characters' motives and decide whether or not to trust their decisions. The society in which Nailer lives is surrounded by poverty and despair, a vision that is nothing new to citizens in District 12. Studying *Ship Breaker* will help students to understand the dystopian elements of a society that was created by manmade environmental collapse and the consequences of stepping

outside the lines set forth by an all-controlling clan. The ways in which the characters are forced to work specific jobs and explore an unknown world is similar to the next novel of study.

### ***The Maze Runner* by James Dashner**

After solar flares and a widespread disease have caused a drastic change in the world, Thomas, the protagonist of the story, finds himself trapped in a metal box without any recognition of who he is or how he got there. In this new world called the Glade, Thomas is living with all males in a society where someone is sent into the mysterious maze each month to fight off monsters known as Grievers, map the layout of the maze, and attempt to find a way out. One day, Teresa shows up in the Glade, making her the first female. She begins remembering vague ideas of how the world once was and how she got to the Glade; she shares these ideas with Thomas, marking the two as disloyal and untrusted. They band together to try and unfold the truth behind their society, and find themselves entering the maze alone, unprepared, and unsure of what the future will hold (“The Maze Runner Summary”). *The Maze Runner* (2009) is followed by *The Scorch Trials* (2010), *The Death Cure* (2011), and *The Kill Order* (2012).

*The Maze Runner* will be studied after *Ship Breaker* because of the two texts’ ideas that the young should be forcibly placed in a chosen position where they must find a way out or die trying. This story takes place in a society where past environmental degradations have destroyed the previous generation’s way of living, similar to *Ship Breaker*. *The Maze Runner* demonstrates how gender roles play a part in society through an all-male society and then the surprising appearance of Teresa into the Glade. Thomas must decide if he should trust Teresa or the rulers of the Glade, a decision that becomes increasingly difficult as the rulers attempt to burn evidence of Teresa’s story of the way things used to be. Covering up characters’ ideas and beliefs is a way in which the next novel connects with *The Maze Runner*.

***Matched* by Ally Condie**

Cassia Reyes, the protagonist, lives in a society where all major life events, including marriage and death, are planned. Young females are paired with males in what is called the Matching Banquet, a ceremony that leaves no option for the teenagers to choose their own life partners. Cassia is matched with her best friend, Xander, but she is truly in love with Ky, an aberration in society with whom she is not allowed to be; she must keep her feelings secret so that those in control do not find out she is breaking the rules. Cassia's grandfather gives her a letter that challenges her to see beyond the society where she can be happy and free. She must avoid having her letter burned by the rulers so that when he passes and goes through the Final Banquet, Cassia can take control into her own hands. She works as a Sorter where she must decide which workers will get the better, safer jobs, and which workers will get the difficult, more dangerous jobs. She saves Ky by sorting him into the category of safer jobs, but those in charge are suspicious; they send Ky to fight to his impending death. Cassia will not sit back while he dies; she vows to do whatever she can to save him with Xander's help ("Matched Study Guide & Plot Summary"). *Matched* (2010) is followed by *Crossed* (2011) and *Reached* (2012).

The idea of people in control burning documents and evidence of the truth is a connection between *Matched* and *The Maze Runner*. The characters must stay in line and keep their secrets to themselves while they live in fear of being found out and facing various forms of punishment. This novel explores the constant control of society, evident in the Matching and Final Banquets, and the ways in which they force people's fate to be decided by a selected few. Cassia is a Hispanic female, so students will begin to understand how multiculturalism plays a role in YA dystopian literature. *Matched* depicts a society where romance is not an option; this society has

taken out all of the emotions associated with finding a significant other, a characteristic that is true for the next novel as well.

### ***Bumped* by Megan McCafferty**

As a virus has spread through this futuristic society, no one over the age of eighteen is capable of getting pregnant. Because of their inability to have children, adults are now paying teenaged girls to become surrogate mothers and bump—the slang term used for having sex—with personally selected males. On the other side of the spectrum is a strict religious society where having sex before marriage is unspeakable because the marriages are arranged by the parents. Melody and Harmony—identical twins who were separated at birth—live, respectively, in these societies. Melody, who was adopted into a well-educated, progressive family, has been paired to bump with Jondoe so that her parents can take her surrogate money. Harmony, on the other hand, was adopted into a strict religious family, and has been assigned to marry a boy who is not interested in her, or girls at all for that matter. The two sisters' paths cross as they both cope with being stuck in undesired situations, but when Harmony runs away, Melody and Zen, her friend and love interest, set off on a journey to bring her home and to find happiness and freedom in choosing a partner (“Bumped Study Guide & Plot Summary”). *Bumped* (2011) is followed by *Thumped* (2012).

*Bumped* continues the theme of predetermined relationships discussed in *Matched*. This novel, however, is satirical in nature and will help students to understand a different strategy that is used in YA literature. In addition to working with satire, McCafferty vocalizes the narrative through two protagonists, creating a polyvocal text that gives the reader a dual understanding of the events that take place in the story. The dystopian elements in *Bumped* mock the tendency to glorify teen pregnancy through televised dramas, a serious issue in the United States. Also,

controlling whom the adolescent girls can be with and whom they can be in relationships with demonstrates the attempt to control everything in society. *Bumped* introduces the reader to LGBT topics in Harmony's partner's preference for males, a trend that will continue in the next novel.

### ***Proxy* by Alex London**

In a society where the rich never face consequences for their actions and the poor take the fall, a clear caste system has been distinguished. The world has become unfair and unequal for citizens because of drastic climate changes and war; the countries who used to have all of the power are now without a say, and those who could barely support themselves have all of the power. Knox is a Patron; he has all the nice clothes, plenty of money to spare, and the girls cannot get enough of him. Knox can do whatever he wants without being punished for breaking the laws or hurting other people. Syd, however, is a Proxy and faces disadvantages on a daily basis; he is poor, lives in a slum, and must take all of the punishment for Knox's actions. Not to mention even further discriminations toward him because of his dark skin and identification as homosexual in a homophobic world. The Proxies do not know who their corresponding Patrons are, but when Knox kills someone after stealing his dad's car, Syd discovers that Knox is his Patron and seeks repentance for all that he has suffered on his behalf (Thea). *Proxy* (2013) is followed by *Guardian* (2014).

Similar to aspects of *Bumped*, *Proxy* uses two protagonists to disclose the details of the dystopian society. Telling one story from two different perspectives helps the reader to get a complete understanding of what happens and encourages them to think about the events in a different way. Another similar aspect between the two novels is the presence of LGBT characters. Syd is gay, and he is trying to cope with how to fit in a world that is constantly

beating him down for his differences and his poor financial situation caused by his dark skin tone. The world in *Proxy* has been created due to the effects of war and environmental neglect, which demonstrates today's ways of settling disputes through combat and neglecting the environment. The caste system uses the idea of a whipping boy for punishments and mirrors the inequalities that are detailed in the next novel.

### ***Tankborn* by Karen Sandler**

Medical advancements have allowed humans to create Genetically Engineered Non-humans (GENs) who can do all the same things as humans, but do not have the same rights as humans because they gestate in a tank and are born with dark skin tones. Also, each GEN has a DNA print on his or her face so employers can access information related to his or her upbringing, skills, and background; the DNA print also allows employers to reset the GENs brains if they know too much or find out something that was supposed to be a secret. Kayla and Mishalla are both GENs; they become slaves at age fifteen and are taken to different locations. They quickly find themselves falling for boys who are in higher castes than themselves, something that is strictly prohibited in this unequal world. Something fishy is going on at Mishalla's site; children are going missing in the middle of the night. When she and Kayla are reunited, they work together to figure out what is happening to these innocent children and how they can put an end to the unfair treatment (Strider). *Tankborn* (2011) is followed by *Awakening* (2013) and *Rebellion* (2014).

*Tankborn* presents a similar caste system to the one depicted in *Proxy*. There are two sides of society that differ depending on skin color and that determine a person's social standing and rights. Multiculturalism is a very important part of this novel and helps students to see the negative effects of racial inequalities. Kayla and Mishalla also demonstrate the fact that there are

two main protagonists, another similarity to *Proxy*. *Tankborn* creates a society that relies on scientific research to create and control people and their ability to think. DNA manipulation gives those in higher castes the ability to control the lower castes' minds, an aspect that connects to an element in the next novel's plot.

### ***BZRK* by Michael Grant**

Nano technology has taken over the world through mind control; people can now be controlled by microscopic robots that delegate everything they do, which has begun a war of technology and a battle of sanity. There are two different wars unfolding: one on the macro level and one on the micro level. The macro war takes place in real life where characters are physically interacting with one another, and the micro war takes place among the nano technology and controlling people's minds. To try and stop the Armstrong Fancy Gifts Corporation from controlling other people, a teen resistance army named BZRK has been put together to combat the large company. The narration spans between a few of the main characters including: Noah and Sadie, who have similar pasts and use their similarities to band together and fight to become some of the most deadliest warriors; Vincent, who shows no emotion toward or against anyone and is fighting his own war; Bug Man, who is known as the greatest nano fighter; and the Armstrong Twins, who are wealthy and privileged. Which characters are really trying to save the society, and which are trying to control it? Only time will tell who is loyal and who has an alternate agenda (Boche). *BZRK* (2012) is followed by *BZRK: Reloaded* (2013) and *BZRK: Apocalypse* (2014).

The DNA control from *Tankborn* is mirrored in *BZRK*'s use of mind control through nano technology. The technological advancements have gone so far in this futuristic society that it is not only figuratively but literally controlling what people say and do. Using this book to help



students understand how electronics are rapidly developing and taking over communication and social interactions is important and can demonstrate the possible outcome of complete mind control. Also, students can ponder the ethical question embedded within many dystopian texts of whether happiness or freedom is more important based on the characters' actions and relationships. Themes of identity and independence play a large role in how and what the characters do, aspects that are important in the final novel of study in this course.

### ***Divergent* by Veronica Roth**

Futuristic Chicago is looking bleak for Beatrice. Her society has been split up into five different factions: Abnegation, which values selflessness; Amity, which values peace; Candor, which values honesty; Dauntless, which values bravery; and Erudite, which values intellect. Teens must go through a test to determine which faction they should choose; once they choose a faction, however, they must remain in that faction for the rest of their lives. Beatrice is in Abnegation, but she does not quite fit in with the rest of the faction. When she goes through her test, she does not fit in to just one category; she is divergent—able to go between multiple factions—a trait that is highly feared in her society because of its implications of rebellion and nonconformity. Beatrice keeps her test results a secret and chooses Dauntless. She changes her name to Tris, and must compete to remain in the faction. With the help of a couple friends and one of the leaders of Dauntless, Tris begins to uncover a secret plot that enfolded to control Abnegation and take over the governmental control. As a divergent, it is her responsibility to reveal what is happening and to put a stop to it (“Divergent Summary”). *Divergent* (2011) is followed by *Insurgent* (2012) and *Allegiant* (2013).

Beatrice must decide whether it is more important to be free in her original faction of Abnegation or happy in the faction of Dauntless, a question of happiness or freedom that is also

examined in *BZRK*. Also, Erudite uses injected serum to manipulate the Dauntless population to take over Abnegation, another similar plot detail that was used in the previous novel. The idea of forcing a society to decide one trait to focus on for the rest of their life demonstrates a dystopian element that is relatable to teenagers who are in the process of finding themselves and trying to figure out their lives. Being divergent is frowned upon because of the possible rebellious nature that can come with not conforming to society's demands, so teenagers can see the power and potential of being different and standing out as an individual. Finally, *Divergent* has recently been transformed into a feature length film and will be a mandatory viewing in class to help encourage a discussion of the novel's adaptation.

#### *In-Class Exercises (ICEs) and Discussion Questions*

The ICEs will be a combination of guided questions, student-led discussions, and secondary source explorations, depending on the time needed for lectures and student questions. For guided questions, students can choose to work with a partner or by themselves. These questions will explore different trends within the novel being studied and the YA dystopian genre, and they will ask students to write short responses based on the text. Student-led discussions will give the class an opportunity to take a given topic and analyze that topic's development throughout the course of a novel. Students will need to organize their ideas and find passages from the text that either support or demonstrate a portion of their designated topic. Finally, secondary sources will be used to help students further their knowledge about a trend in the genre or details in the novel. Different web blogs, newspaper or magazines articles, or chapters from informative books can be used to supplement students' understanding of different trends and themes in YA dystopian literature.

One specific assignment, ICE 6 on Tuesday, March 3, will teach the students how to write their own version of a dystopian story. Because the dystopias can seem more or less worse depending on personal beliefs of how life should be, students will brainstorm ideas that detail what their dystopia would look like. Some of the specific details that students need include are how the society became the way it is, who is in control of the society, how citizens are oppressed, and what happens if they get out of line. Once students brainstorm the outline for how the society would be controlled and how order would be maintained, they need to create a protagonist and explain how that character would reveal the secret of the society and start to change the current way of living. The students should also include different aspects that are characteristic of the genre, including some sort of coming of age event or a relationship of some sort. Students will not have to write a complete dystopian story because the assignment will be completed in class, but they need to brainstorm and document details that would be used if they were to write a complete story.

The discussion questions detailed on the schedule above are all based on the themes that appear in each of the nine YA dystopian novels. These questions apply to the novel that is being studied, the novels that will be studied, and the genre as a whole. They help to understand what is specifically going on in the story, as well as larger trends that explain the YA dystopian genre. Also, the discussion questions will help students to identify passages within the text and analyze the characters' behaviors in a way that makes the implications for teenaged readers clear and relatable. Discussion questions will be used as a starting point for the class; once students begin answering the questions with evidence from the text, more topics and questions will surface, which gives students control of their own learning. While the professor will begin the discussion,

the students will be the ones who guide where the discussion through personal questions and inquiries.

### *Other Assignments*

Along with ICEs and discussion questions, there will be other types of assignments to assure that students are getting a chance to analyze and synthesize information in many different formats. The other assignments include material checks, reading quizzes, reading responses, comparison essays, the midterm exam, and the final exam.

### **Material Checks**

Material checks will be used to ensure that students are bringing their materials, meaning the novels that are being studied, to class each week. It is essential that students have the texts with them to complete ICEs and to participate in class discussions. During discussion, students will need to consult specific parts of the texts to quote and paraphrase information, so having the book in class is required.

### **Reading Quizzes**

Reading quizzes are a quick check to make sure that students are reading the given novel each week. These quick quizzes hold students accountable for the homework and help them to read carefully and to identify the important facts in the novel. Setting high expectations for the reading assignments is important because students need to come to class with a base knowledge of the text so that discussion can be productive and informative for the entire class. The format of the quizzes will range between fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, short answer, matching, and true or false, and they will be between five and ten questions long. The final quiz on Tuesday, April 14 will be a self-assessment of the students' performances throughout the course.

### **Reading Responses**

Reading responses will give the students an opportunity to begin interpreting the text and commenting on different events or aspects of the novels. Reading quizzes ensure that students are reading the text, but reading responses guarantee that students are reading thoroughly and carefully. Students will need to write a two-page response that comments on any theme, event, character, or other aspects of the given text to work on exploring the details rather than just saying they like or dislike certain parts. Continually writing about novels will allow the students to practice the critical analysis skills that will be learned and developed in the course and that they can apply the knowledge they have obtained. Students only need to write reading responses for five of the nine novels that will be studied, so the workload is manageable.

### **Comparison Essays**

For the comparison essays, students will be writing about the adaptation of a novel into a film version. There will be two comparison essays written during class time: one to explore the similarities and differences between *The Hunger Games* novel and the film version, and one to explore the similarities and differences between the *Divergent* novel and the film version. Before writing the essays, students will need to read “Adaptation Studies at a Crossroads” to guide their writing and to understand the reasoning behind changes between versions (Leitch 63). These essays will help students to understand how the original novel is transformed into a different format. These essays will be completed in class and should include an introduction, at least one paragraph detailing what was similar between the works, at least one paragraph detailing what was different between the works, and a conclusion. Students will have discussed the novel the previous week, so they have an understanding of the novel that will be complicated and furthered through viewing the film. The comparison essays will allow the students to continue practicing

their writing in a low stakes assignment, so that when they write their midterm and final exams, they will have practiced in many different assignments.

### **Midterm Exam**

The first portion of the midterm exam will be an in-class section that will require students to identify specific passages in the first five novels: *The Hunger Games*, *Ship Breaker*, *The Maze Runner*, *Matched*, and *Bumped*. Students will have to identify the novel from which the passage came and write about the significance of the passage in terms of the novel's meaning and the larger implications for the YA dystopian genre. Students will choose three of the five passages about which to write significant paragraphs. The next portion of the test will be a take home essay that requires the students to write an essay exploring a given question; they get to choose one of three questions about which to write their essay. The questions will require the students to cite specific information from the text since they will have the opportunity to use any of the texts. Also, the questions will require that students incorporate multiple texts in their essay to demonstrate their knowledge of the different novels and of analyzing and synthesizing information. The students will turn in their midterm exam on Tuesday, March 3.

### **Final Exam**

The final exam will have the same sections as the midterm exam, but it will all be completed in class on Tuesday, April 28. The students will have two hours to complete the sections. For the first section of the exam, students will be required to identify a passage from one of the last four novels: *Proxy*, *Tankborn*, *BZRK*, and *Divergent*. The students will not be able to use their books for the final exam, but they should be able to identify which novel the passage came from based on the context clues. Once again, students will need to pick three of five passages about which to write a significant paragraph. Finally, students will write an essay based

off of one of the three questions. Students will not be able to use their texts to help write the essay, so they will not be required to directly quote material from the stories. The class before the final will be dedicated to studying for and asking questions about the exam so students will have the opportunity to reinforce what they already know and get any inquiries resolved before taking the test.

### **Conclusion**

YA dystopian literature is a genre that has been on the rise since the appearance of *The Hunger Games* trilogy written by Suzanne Collins. More and more teenagers are picking up dystopian books that help them to connect with characters and themes that relate to the struggles they are dealing with during adolescence. Understanding the genre and what the trends imply for readers is an important part of YA dystopian literature; the course YA Dystopian Literature: A Survey of Modern Book Series will allow future teachers and students of literature to gain an understanding of these concepts and the importance of these novels. Some may question the focus on trendy topics, but it is important to understand what teenagers are currently reading and how that information is helping them to deal with real world issues. While the trends in YA dystopian literature are constantly changing and developing, the underlying themes remain consistent, both of which will be taught in this course. With current YA dystopian novels being transformed into films, teens are more readily exposed to these ideas in their everyday lives, which helps them to relate to the stories on a deeper level. The genre is continually changing, so acknowledging those developments in a genre-specific course will help students to understand and appreciate the workings of YA dystopian literature.

## Appendix

YA Dystopian Literature: A Survey of Modern Book Series  
Course Syllabus

## Information &amp; Course Policies

## Instructor Information

Professor: Dr. Gwen Athene Tarbox, Department of English

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## Course Description

- A survey of modern young adult (YA) dystopian literature. Texts studied are firsts in a series of two or more novels. Emphasis is on critical sensitivity and techniques necessary for interpreting and evaluating works representative of YA dystopian literature.

## Learning Objectives

- Identify distinctive trends and themes in YA dystopian literature
- Understand how YA dystopian literature relates to teenagers' lives and the importance of their connections to the text
- Learn interpretive skills that will enrich students' understanding of YA literature as a whole

## Text List

- Students will need to purchase or rent all of the required texts below for in class discussions and activities and for exams. Checking a book out from the library is not a recommended option as texts will be needed for more than two weeks, and these texts are in high demand among readers.

Author	Title	Publisher	ISBN
Bacigalupi, Paolo	<i>Ship Breaker</i>	Little, Brown and Company	978-0316056199
Collins, Suzanne	<i>Hunger Games</i>	Scholastic	978-0439023528
Condie, Ally	<i>Matched</i>	Penguin	978-0142419779
Dashner, James	<i>The Maze Runner</i>	Delacorte Press	978-0385737951
Grant, Michael	<i>BZRK</i>	Egmont USA	978-1606844182
London, Alex	<i>Proxy</i>	Philomel	978-0399257766
McCafferty, Megan	<i>Bumped</i>	Balzer & Bray	978-0061962752
Roth, Veronica	<i>Divergent</i>	Katherine Tegen Books	978-0062024039
Sandler, Karen	<i>Tankborn</i>	Lee & Low Books	978-1600606625

## Assignments/Grading Policy

- The total possible points to earn in this course is 1000. You can keep a tally of your points as you go along. For students' final grades, the WMU Grading Scale will be used: A=93-100% (930-1000); BA=88-92% (880-920); B=83-87% (830-870); CB=78-82% (780-820); C=72-77% (720-770); DC=67-71% (670-710); D=60-66%; E=59% or lower (590 or lower).



- Your homework assignments will be due on the dates set in the syllabus. For every day that a homework assignment is late, you will receive a 10% deduction on the assignment grade.
- The assignments you turn in will enable you to practice a variety of academic writing skills. Should you require assistance with your writing, you might wish to visit the WMU Writing Center, which is located in 1343 Ellsworth Hall. Call (269) 387-4615 to find out their operating hours and sign-up procedures.

#### Assignment List

Due Date	Assignment	Numbers of Points
Most classes after the first day	Material Checks	50
Two days throughout semester	Comparison Essays	50
Most classes after the first day	Reading Quizzes	100
Various days throughout semester	In-Class Exercises	100
Various days throughout semester	Reading Responses	200
February 3, 2015	Midterm Exam	200
April 28, 2015	Final Exam	300
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1000</b>

#### Assignment Types

- **Material Checks:** The easiest way to earn points is through material checks. You need to bring the text that is being studied to class until we are done studying that text. It will be checked during the reading quiz. You will be responsible for bringing materials on 12 class days and each time will count for 5 points each. Your two lowest scores will be dropped so you can receive a maximum of 50 points.
- **Comparison Essays:** You will be reading two novels that have already been adapted into film versions. Two class periods will be dedicated to watching the two movies. To accompany the movies, you will need to write an in-class comparison essay after watching the film versions. These essays will be completed in class and cannot be made up. Each essay will be worth 25 points for a total of 50 points.
- **Reading Quizzes:** At the beginning of almost every class period, you will take a quiz that will be worth 10 points total. Quizzes will be based upon reading that was assigned the previous class period. Quizzes cannot be made up; if you are absent you will not receive credit. 100 points will be assigned to the quizzes.
- **In-Class Exercises:** On various days in the semester there will be a lecture and in-class exercises, including student-led discussions and problem sets that can be completed with a partner or on your own. Each in-class exercise will be worth 10 points for a total of 100 points. These assignments cannot be made up.
- **Reading Responses:** For five of the nine novels that will be studied in this course, you need to write a 2-page, double spaced reading response. These assignments are designed for you to respond to something in the book that you really liked or disliked by analyzing the material. Reading responses give you the opportunity to write about the novel and demonstrate your understanding of a chosen aspect of the story. You do not need to include outside sources in these responses, but you need to reference the novel that you

are writing about. Some things you can write about are: theme; dystopian trends; character development; plot development; turning points; or any other critical aspect of the text. You get to choose which five texts to focus on for your reading responses. They are worth 40 points each for a total of 200 points.

- **Midterm & Final Exams:** Both of these exams will require you to synthesize information that you have learned during the semester. The midterm exam will be a take-home assessment and will allow you to use your materials, but not a partner. The final exam will be completed in class during finals week and will not allow you to use class materials. They will both involve writing short answers.

### YA Dystopian Literature: A Survey of Modern Book Series

Schedule (MC=Material Check; CE=Comparison Essay; Q=Reading Quiz; ICE=In-Class Exercise; RR=Reading Response)

Date (Tuesdays)	Key Questions	Materials	Homework
<b>Jan. 13</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What will happen in this course?</li> <li>• What is YA literature?</li> <li>• What is dystopian literature?</li> <li>• What is YA dystopian literature?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Course syllabus</li> <li>• Presentation: Introduction to YA Dystopian Literature</li> <li>• Basu, Broad, &amp; Hintz Introduction from <i>Children's Literature and Culture: Contemporary Dystopian Fiction for Young Adults: Brave New Teenagers</i>.</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read Suzanne Collins's <i>The Hunger Games</i></li> <li>2. RR 1</li> </ol>
<b>Jan. 20</b> MC 1 Q 1 ICE 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do economic advantages and disadvantages control Panem?</li> <li>• How do Katniss's relationships with her family affect her behavior with other characters and in the game?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suzanne Collins's <i>The Hunger Games</i></li> <li>• ICE 1: Exploring YA Dystopian Elements</li> </ul>	
<b>Jan. 27</b> CE 1 MC 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does <i>The Hunger Games</i> film affect your interpretation of the novel?</li> <li>• What are the major similarities and differences between the film and the novel?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suzanne Collins's <i>The Hunger Games</i></li> <li>• CE 1: Compare and Contrast <i>The Hunger Games</i> Film and Novel</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read Paolo Bacigalupi's <i>Ship Breaker</i></li> <li>2. RR 2</li> </ol>

<b>Feb. 3</b> <b>MC 3</b> <b>Q 2</b> <b>ICE 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What roles do family and loyalty play in <i>Ship Breaker</i>?</li> <li>• How do different characters come to accept different outlooks on the world?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paolo Bacigalupi's <i>Ship Breaker</i></li> <li>• ICE 2: Analyzing Loyalty in YA Dystopian Literature</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read James Dashner's <i>The Maze Runner</i></li> <li>2. RR 3</li> </ol>
<b>Feb. 10</b> <b>MC 4</b> <b>Q 3</b> <b>ICE 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does gender play a role in the novel and guide the characters' actions?</li> <li>• How does the ending of the novel impose another form of control and manipulation upon the characters?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• James Dashner's <i>The Maze Runner</i></li> <li>• ICE 3: Understanding Gender Roles in YA Dystopian Literature</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read Ally Condie's <i>Matched</i></li> <li>2. RR 4</li> </ol>
<b>Feb. 17</b> <b>MC 5</b> <b>Q 4</b> <b>ICE 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What restrictions are placed on citizens and how do they play a role in characters' relationships and behaviors?</li> <li>• What role do personal decisions play in the novel?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ally Condie's <i>Matched</i></li> <li>• ICE 4: Love and Relationships in YA Dystopian Literature</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read Megan McCafferty's <i>Bumped</i></li> <li>2. RR 5</li> </ol>
<b>Feb. 24</b> <b>MC 6</b> <b>Q 5</b> <b>ICE 5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the purpose of having two main characters, and how are their beliefs persuaded by their upbringing?</li> <li>• How does satire add to the dystopian nature of the novel?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Megan McCafferty's <i>Bumped</i></li> <li>• ICE 5: Manipulation and Stolen Innocence in YA Dystopian Literature</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Take-home midterm exam</li> </ol>
<b>Mar. 3</b> <b>Midterm Exam</b> <b>ICE 6</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does it take to write a good dystopian novel?</li> <li>• How can you write your own dystopian story?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Turn in take-home midterm</li> <li>• ICE 6: How to Write a Dystopian Story</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read Alex London's <i>Proxy</i></li> <li>2. RR 6</li> </ol>
<b>Mar. 10</b>	No Class: Spring Break!		
<b>Mar. 17</b> <b>MC 7</b> <b>Q 6</b> <b>ICE 7</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the concept of a Proxy affect the characters' actions and beliefs?</li> <li>• How are LGBT topics addressed and depicted in the novel?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alex London's <i>Proxy</i></li> <li>• ICE 7: YA Dystopian Trends of LGBT Topics</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read Karen Sandler's <i>Tankborn</i></li> <li>2. RR 7</li> </ol>
<b>Mar. 24</b> <b>MC 8</b> <b>Q 7</b> <b>ICE 8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the caste system represent historical race relations?</li> <li>• How have people lost their identities and freedom?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Karen Sandler's <i>Tankborn</i></li> <li>• ICE 8: Cultural and Historical YA Dystopian Trends of Multiculturalism</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read Michael Grant's <i>BZRK</i></li> <li>2. RR 8</li> </ol>

<b>Mar. 31</b> <b>MC 9</b> <b>Q 8</b> <b>ICE 9</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do multiple perspectives mean for narrator reliability, and how does that impact the readers' understanding?</li> <li>• How does the conflict between freedom and happiness affect the characters' behaviors and relationships?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Michael Grant's <i>BZRK</i></li> <li>• ICE 9: Exploring Narration in YA Dystopian Literature</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Read Veronica Roth's <i>Divergent</i></li> <li>2. RR 9</li> </ol>
<b>Apr. 7</b> <b>MC 10</b> <b>Q 9</b> <b>ICE 10</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do factions predetermine characters' fates, decisions, and behaviors?</li> <li>• How do stereotypes and typecasting play a role in the novel?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veronica Roth's <i>Divergent</i></li> <li>• ICE 10: Categorizing YA Dystopian Literature Characters</li> </ul>	
<b>Apr. 14</b> <b>CE 2</b> <b>MC 11</b> <b>Q 10</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the <i>Divergent</i> film affect your interpretation of the novel?</li> <li>• What are the major similarities and differences between the film and the novel?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veronica Roth's <i>Divergent</i></li> <li>• CE 2: Compare and Contrast <i>Divergent</i> Film and Novel</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. List of questions or passages from texts</li> </ol>
<b>Apr. 21</b> <b>MC 12</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What questions do you have?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Proxy, Tankborn, BZRK, &amp; Divergent</i> to study for final exam</li> </ul>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Study for final exam!</li> </ol>
<b>Apr. 28</b> <b>Final Exam</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5-7 pm</li> </ul>		

Figure 1. Course syllabus created by Devin Ryan for proposed class to be taught by Dr. Gwen Tarbox at Western Michigan University in spring 2015. Course entitled "YA Dystopian Literature: A Survey of Modern Book Series."

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