

Dr. Ryan H. Wilkinson  
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Class: **Sever 111**  
Mon/Wed 11-12:00 & 12-1:00

Fall Semester 2016  
Office: 1 Bow St., Suite 250 (Rm. 230)  
Office Hours: Mon 2:30-3:30,  
or by appointment

**Expository Writing 20:  
THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT?  
On the Collapse of Complex Societies**

Course website:

11:00 Section: <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/17547>

12:00 Section: <https://canvas.harvard.edu/courses/17548>

**Please see the course syllabus distributed in class for final information.**

## **I. COURSE OVERVIEW**

Think of Harvard in ruins, its halls picked clean by marauders (like those in *Mad Max*) or by hungry undead (think *World War Z*). But what would it really be like to experience society's collapse? In some artistic visions, Apocalypse offers not just devastation, but a clean slate – room to start over. How bad would the “end of civilization” really be?

Ten years ago, Jared Diamond's book *Collapse* described ancient and modern “ecocides” – social collapses after unsustainable environmental abuse. Diamond warned that “within the lifetimes of the children and young adults alive today,” our environmental problems, if not corrected, would similarly provoke “warfare ... disease epidemics, and collapses of societies.” But many historians and archaeologists have vigorously challenged Diamond's account of the past, fueling an ongoing debate about collapse. What collapse is, what causes it, and whether its consequences might be catastrophic or quite livable for some remain contentious. Whether in our best research or in the latest film, collapse is hard to pin down.

Together, we'll chase collapse through the ruins. In Unit 1, we'll read short fiction by George R. R. Martin, Elizabeth Bear, and John Langan, asking how post-apocalyptic visions balance annihilation and resilience. In Unit 2, we'll then compare leading scholarly models for actual social collapse, and test those models against historical and archaeological evidence from *Rapa Nui*/Easter Island. Finally, in Unit 3, students will write a research paper illuminating the fate of one past society that allegedly collapsed (students choose which society to write about; examples include the ancient Indus Valley civilization, the Late Bronze Age Aegean, the Mayan cities, or the Norse settlements on Greenland). The journey may be sobering – but perhaps the “end of civilization” isn't the end of the world, after all.

Some of our writing goals in this course will change unit by unit, as we focus on different aspects of the academic essay. Other goals will remain constant throughout the course: developing your sense of what you do well and challenging yourself to grow as a writer; expanding your familiarity with effective revision techniques; and increasing the complexity and originality of your analysis as well

as the effectiveness and elegance of your prose. One of the most exciting things to learn in a writing course is that the learning process never stops; one doesn't "arrive" at being a good writer, but rather continually becomes one.

## II. HOW THE COURSE WORKS

### Required Texts and Materials

→ There is ONE required text for this class: John Joseph Adams, ed. *Wastelands: Stories of the Apocalypse*. Nightshade Books, 2008. Copies are on sale at the Harvard COOP Bookstore in Harvard Square. Other required readings for the course will be made available in .pdf form on the course website.

### Communication

The course works best when we treat it as a semester-long conversation about your writing. To make that conversation possible, there are a few important things to remember:

- **Conferences:** In each unit of the course, you will submit a response paper, a draft, and a revised essay. After you have submitted your draft, we will meet to discuss my feedback. These conferences are our chance to work together closely on your writing and to focus your work toward revision.

Being prepared for conference meetings includes having reviewed your essay, considered your questions for me, and begun to think about revision possibilities and strategies. You should bring a copy of your draft with you to our conferences, and you should plan on taking notes. Since the schedule during conference days is so tight, missed conferences may not be rescheduled.

In addition to our formal conferences, you are of course free to come see me during office hours about your developing ideas or to set up another time to meet if office hours aren't convenient. Due to the hectic pace of the week between drafts and revisions, I will *not* be able to provide feedback for "second drafts" leading up to your final revision; however, by the time you are revising your drafts you *will* have received a number of stages of feedback and may also make appointments with the Writing Center.

- **E-mail:** As part of your participation in the course, I ask that you check your e-mail daily. You are responsible for the information I send you, including the feedback to your drafts and revisions. Likewise, I make sure to check my email at least once every weekday for questions from you. I try to answer most questions within 24 hours, except over the weekend.

**Grades**

I will award grades using the following breakdown:

<b>DRAFT Essays, all Units:</b>	<b>Ungraded</b>
<b>Participation:</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Unit 1 Essay Revision:</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Unit 2 Essay Revision:</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Unit 3 Essay Revision:</b>	<b>40%</b>

The standard for each essay becomes more demanding as we progress, since you are building on certain fundamental skills and techniques with each essay.

**Class Participation**

You are responsible for being in class, prepared and on time, each time we meet. Being prepared for class means that you have given careful thought to the reading and writing assignments for our class, and that you are ready to offer ideas and questions to open our discussions about writing and/or social collapse. The Participation portion of your grade represents a serious measure of your completion of assigned readings and exercises, your constructive participation in class discussion and conferences, and the care with which you respond to fellow students' work.

Laptops/portable computers offer many advantages to students, but they also offer many distractions. I reserve the right to ask students to put away laptops, phones, etc. during any class meeting. Although you are welcome to take notes using computers during class, please be aware that research on learning strategies shows that most students learn more effectively when they hand-write their notes.

**Attendance and Lateness**

Because Expos has a shorter semester and fewer class hours than other courses, and because instruction in Expos proceeds by sequential writing activities, your consistent attendance is essential. *If you are absent without medical or religious exemption **more than twice**, you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and given a failing grade.* On the occasion of your second unexcused absence, you will receive a letter warning you of your situation. This letter will also be sent to your Resident Dean, so that the College can give you whatever supervision and support you need to complete the course.

Apart from religious holidays, only medical absences can be excused. In the case of a medical problem, you should contact me before the class to explain, but in any event within 24 hours: otherwise you will be required to provide a note from UHS or another medical official, or your Resident Dean. *Absences because of special events such as athletic meets, debates, conferences, and concerts are not excusable absences.* If such an event is very important to you, you may decide to take one of your two allowable unexcused absences; but again, you are expected to contact me beforehand if you will miss a class, or at least within 24 hours. If you wish to attend an event that will put you over the two-absence limit, you should contact your Resident Dean and you must directly petition the Expository Writing Senior Preceptor, who will grant such petitions only in extraordinary circumstances and only when your work in the class has been exemplary.

Class begins promptly at seven minutes past the hour. I expect you to be on time and will consider your timeliness when calculating your participation grade. A third occurrence of lateness of more than eight minutes (and each subsequent occurrence) will count as an absence.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

Students needing academic adjustments or accommodations because of a documented disability must present their Faculty Letter from the [Accessible Education Office \(AEO\)](#) and speak with me by the end of the second full week of the class, Friday September 23<sup>rd</sup>. Failure to do so may result in my inability to respond in a timely manner. All discussions will remain confidential, although Faculty are invited to contact AEO to discuss appropriate implementation.

## **III. WRITTEN WORK**

### **Submitting Essays**

Essay drafts and revisions will be submitted to the drop box on our course website. **The submitted file must either be in Microsoft Word or compatible format (i.e. within the .doc series of file extensions).** If you use word processing software such as Pages, for example, please be sure that you are saving your work in a .doc, Word-friendly format. This will help minimize potential compatibility issues when we are sharing our writing with one another. It is also your responsibility to ensure that the file you send is not corrupted or damaged. If I cannot open or read the file you have sent, the essay will be considered late until the error is corrected.

*NB: Unless you have made prior arrangements to do so, please do not email me your essays. If your essay is late, please submit it to the dropbox and then send me an email letting me know that it's been posted.*

All work you submit to the course is for public readership – in other words, we will use essays and excerpts from the writers in the class (possibly yours!) as some of our texts this semester. If at any point you submit a draft or revision that you would prefer other students not read, please let me know that – but please don't make that request about everything you turn in this semester.

### **Revision**

Because of the emphasis this course places on revision, the schedule is designed to allow you extensive time for re-writing each essay: usually about two weeks after the draft is due, and about a week (at least) after your draft conference. Since you'll have a significant period of time for revision, the expectations for this aspect of your work in the course are high.

### **Deadlines**

All deadlines in the course are firm. I do not grant extensions, except in the case of medical or family emergency. Any essay drafts (which are not graded) turned in after the deadline may not receive comprehensive feedback prior to or during our draft conference. Any essay revisions (which are graded) not submitted by the deadline will immediately incur a late penalty of a third of a letter-grade (e.g., A to A-); I will further apply an additional one-third grade penalty for each 12-hour period that passes before I receive the completed essay. Failure to submit an essay revision within 24 hours after the deadline may trigger the Completion of Work policy, which can lead ultimately to course exclusion (see below).

If you cannot meet a deadline due to a medical emergency, you should contact me right away; you may be required to produce a note from UHS. In the event of a family emergency, you should

contact me right away; you may be required to ask your dean to contact me by e-mail or phone. In addition, please contact me as soon as possible to work out an alternative schedule.

### **Completion of Work**

Because your Expos course is a planned sequence of writing, you must write all of the assigned essays to pass the course, and you must write them within the schedule of the course—not in the last few days of the semester after you have fallen behind. You will receive a letter reminding you of these requirements, therefore, if you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of an essay by the final due date in that essay unit. The letter will also specify the new date by which you must submit the late work, and be copied to your Resident Dean. *If you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of the essay by this new date, and you have not documented a medical problem, you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and given a failing grade.*

### **Academic Integrity**

Throughout the semester we'll work on the proper use of sources, including how to cite and how to avoid plagiarism. You should always feel free to ask me questions about this material. All the work that you submit for this course must be your own, and that work should not make use of outside sources unless such sources are explicitly part of the assignment and are properly credited. Any student submitting plagiarized work is eligible to fail the course and to be subject to review by the Honor Council, including potential disciplinary action.

### **Policy on Collaboration**

The following kinds of collaboration are permitted in this course: developing or refining ideas in conversation with other students or through peer review of written work (including feedback from Writing Center tutors). If you would like to acknowledge the impact someone had on your essay, it is customary to do this in a footnote at the beginning of the paper. As stated in the *Student Handbook*, "Students need not acknowledge discussion with others of general approaches to the assignment or assistance with proofreading." However, all work submitted for this course must be your own: in other words, co-writing response papers, drafts or revisions with other students is expressly forbidden.

### **Writing Center**

At any stage of the writing process – brainstorming ideas, reviewing drafts, approaching revisions – you may want some extra attention on your essays. The Writing Center (located on the garden level of the Barker Center) offers hour-long appointments with trained tutors. I can't stress strongly enough the benefit of the service they provide; regardless of the "strength" or "weakness" of the essay, any piece of writing benefits from further review and a fresh perspective. Visit the Writing Center's Web site at <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~wricntr> to make an appointment. Tutors also hold drop-in office hours at other campus locations; see the Writing Center website for details.

*A final note...* Please send me an email when you have finished reading the syllabus. If you have any questions or concerns about the course, please let me know, and I'll either address them in an email response or in class. Even if you don't have any questions or concerns, please send along an email—just so I know we're on the same page about the upcoming semester.

#### IV. SCHEDULE OF DUE-DATES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Wed Sep 7	Initial meeting – introduction and course overview.
Mon Sep 12	Unit 1 content and assignment overview  <b>READ</b> Langan and Bear short stories <b>READ</b> Unit 1 assignment prompt <b>READ</b> Williams, “Beyond <i>Mad Max</i> 3” (only pages 301 and 312)
Wed Sep 14	Sampling the Apocalypse  <b>READ</b> Martin, “Dark, Dark Were the Tunnels” <b>READ</b> Sample Unit 1 Paper <b>READ</b> “Elements of Argument”
Mon Sep 19	Thesis Statements and Analytical Questions
Wed Sep 21	Evidence, Analysis, Argumentation  <b>DUE: Students must tell me whether they’ll write about Langan’s or Bear’s short story in the Unit 1 paper. Also, bring to class a draft thesis statement for the Unit 1 paper (<i>students are not bound to the wording of this tentative draft thesis</i>). This counts as RP (Response Paper) 1.1.</b>  RP 1.1 - brief in-class workshop
Mon Sep 26	Argument and counter-argument / Thesis statement workshop continued.  <b>DUE in class:</b> <i>revised</i> RP 1.1 (draft Unit 1 thesis statement), with a brief justification for each significant word choice in the sentence(s). Also identify the most compelling counter-argument a reader might levy against this thesis.
Wed Sep 28	Stakes / Intros and Conclusions / Orienting your reader
<b>Thu Sep 29</b>	<b>Unit 1 DRAFT PAPER DUE, 11:59 pm</b>
Mon Oct 3	In-class Draft Workshop for Unit 1 <b>READ</b> sample draft paper  <b>UNIT 1 DRAFT CONFERENCES THIS WEEK</b>
Wed Oct 5	Intro to Unit 2: Debating Collapse  <b>READ</b> Diamond, <i>Collapse</i> , Introduction only

	<b>READ</b> Diamond, “Easter Island Revisited”
<b>Mon Oct 10</b>	<b>NO CLASS COLUMBUS DAY</b>
Wed Oct 12	<b>READ</b> Ferguson, “Complexity and Collapse” <b>READ</b> McAnany & Yoffee, “Why We Question Collapse” <b>READ</b> Unit 2 assignment prompt
<b>Thu Oct 13</b>	<b>Unit 1 REVISION DUE, 11:59 p.m.</b>  <b>Between the 13<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup>, if not earlier, students should READ through the Unit 2 assignment articles (final list of three or four articles about Rapa Nui/Easter Island, including Diamond’s “Easter Island Revisited,” to be provided with the Unit 2 Prompt)</b>
Mon Oct 17	Macro-Structure & Organization
Wed Oct 19	Micro-Structure: Internal transitions / RP 2.1 workshop  <b>DUE in class: RP 2.1.</b> Turn in a <i>provisional/draft</i> Unit 2 Thesis Statement with an outline of paragraph topic sentences for that paper. Bring a copy of each topic sentence on a separate index card or sheet of paper.
Mon Oct 24	Incorporating Sources A
Wed Oct 26	Incorporating Sources B / Orienting Readers
<b>Thu Oct 27</b>	<b>Unit 2 DRAFT PAPER DUE, 11:59 p.m.</b>
Mon Oct 31	In-class Draft Workshop for Unit 2 <b>READ</b> sample draft paper  <b>UNIT 2 DRAFT CONFERENCES THIS WEEK</b>
Wed Nov 2	Unit 3 overview / More on Citation  <b>READ this week: Harvard Guide to Using Sources (online)</b>
Mon Nov 7	Library Research Orientation - Which sources should you trust?
Wed Nov 9	On fast and effective reading and research / On annotated bibliographies
<b>Thu Nov 10</b>	<b>UNIT 2 REVISION DUE, 11:59 p.m.</b>
Mon Nov 14	Style and Editing

Wed Nov 16	Annotated Bibliography workshop  <b>DUE in class: RP 3.1.</b> Turn in an <b>Annotated Bibliography</b> for your Unit 3 research paper, discussing at least six sources.
Mon Nov 21	In-class workshop of RP 3.2  <b>DUE in class: RP 3.2.</b> Turn in a provisional/draft Unit 3 thesis statement, with an outline of paragraph topic sentences.
Wed Nov 23	<b>NO CLASS THANKSGIVING RECESS</b>
Mon Nov 28	Beyond Expos / Anonymous Course Evaluations  <b>Unit 3 DRAFT PAPER DUE 11:59 pm</b>  <b>UNIT 3 DRAFT CONFERENCES THIS WEEK</b>
Wed Nov 30	In-class Draft Workshop for Unit 3 <b>READ</b> Sample draft paper
<b>TBA</b>	<b>UNIT 3 REVISION DUE, 11:59 p.m.</b>