

## Course Syllabus

### Society, Science, Survival: Lessons from AMC's *The Walking Dead*

#### Course Faculty

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#### Course Overview

This course takes an interdisciplinary academic approach to understanding the ways in which human beings survive in a post-apocalyptic world. We will discuss how they organize themselves in an emerging new society and how they build structures to support themselves in a disease-ridden world. Students will explore these themes in the context of the issues raised by AMC's *The Walking Dead*.

Course topics will include...

- Maslow's hierarchy of needs
- Social order and structures
- Social identity, roles, and stereotyping
- The role of public health in society
- The spread of infectious disease and population modeling
- The role of energy and momentum in damage control
- Nutrition in a post-apocalyptic world
- Managing stress in disaster situations

#### Prerequisites and Course Materials

This course does not require any particular academic discipline prerequisites. Only a basic high school level education is assumed for all topics. All instruction is conducted in English, so students should be sufficiently fluent to understand written and spoken English.

You do not have to be an avid viewer of *The Walking Dead* to participate in and learn from this course (though we certainly hope that fans of the show will particularly enjoy the course!) In the weekly modules, references will be made to events from Seasons 1-3 of the show, but all references will either be fully described or depicted through clips from the show. This course is designed to be running in parallel with Season 4 of the show and there will be discussion forum posts related to the new season. There will be measures in place to prevent spoilers before the new episodes air in your region.

There are no required materials for this course other than an internet connection and a desire to learn! Most students will want to be watching Season 4 of *The Walking Dead* in parallel with this course.

### Course Structure

The course takes place over an eight week period with a new module available every Monday. Each module centers on a particular topical theme. The modules will each have a lead instructor and a primary academic field, but will also feature second viewpoint on the material from another academic discipline perspective.

There are no real-time, synchronous meetings in the course. All of the module materials are available at the start of each week and can be studied by the student at any time.

Each weekly module will consist of...

- A short video introduction to the module
- Approximately 20 minutes of video lecture content
- Reading assignments (All available freely online - no required textbook!)
- Optional supplementary readings and other materials
- Prompted discussion forums with specific assignments related to the module content
- A short (~10 question) quiz for you to test your understanding
- A brief "Think about this..." video segment, reading and discussion forum
- Assorted relevant clips from Seasons 1-3 of *The Walking Dead*
- Exclusive *The Walking Dead* cast interviews by the instructor
- Open discussion forums for you to pose your own related topics to discuss with classmates

The modules are largely self-contained, so students are welcome to drop-in and select just some of the modules, though we are hoping many students will be interested and excited to engage with the entire course. Each weekly module is expected to take approximately 2 – 4 hours to complete. There is no required level of activity to stay in the course and all students will have access to all module materials.

### Course Schedule

Week	Dates	Module Topic	Lead Instructor
1	10/14 – 10/20	Foundation of Survival	Christopherson
2	10/21 – 10/27	Deconstructing Society	Christopherson
3	10/28 – 11/03	Public Health and Infectious Diseases	Bic
4	11/04 – 11/10	Social Identity and Survival of the Fittest	Christopherson
5	11/11 – 11/17	Modeling a Zombie Outbreak	Eichhorn
6	11/18 – 11/24	Thriving on a Post-Apocalyptic Diet	Bic
7	11/25 – 12/01	New Materials and the Science of Damage Control	Dennin
8	12/02 – 12/08	The Science of Hope	Bic
	12/09 – 12/20	<i>No new materials. Course remains open for those who would like more time to access previous lessons.</i>	

## **Learning Outcomes**

At the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Describe how infectious diseases—like a zombie epidemic—spread and are managed
- Apply various models of society and Maslow’s hierarchy of needs to existing and emerging societies as a means for understanding human behavior
- Analyze existing social roles and stereotypes as they exist today and in an emerging world
- Debate the role of public health organizations in society
- Describe how mathematical equations for population dynamics can be used to study disease spread and interventions
- Apply concepts of energy and momentum appropriately when analyzing collisions and other activities that either inflict or prevent damage
- Summarize multiple methods for managing stress in disaster situations

## **Course Grades**

Students will not be given any sort of grade or completion certificate for this course. This course does not count for any sort of academic credit at the University of California, Irvine or elsewhere.

There are multiple opportunities for students to self-assess their own knowledge and learning in the course. Each module has a quiz that can be used test understanding the basic principles from the lecture and readings. The quizzes can be taken multiple times. The discussion forums will be used as a space for students to process content and get feedback. The discussion forums are not graded, but will be monitored by the instructors who will occasionally chime in to highlight important points, correct misconceptions and share additional thoughts on the material.

## **Course Policies**

- The course discussion forums will be your primary means for course communication. In this space, you can pose questions, discuss content and respond to questions from other students. You can also use the forums to ask logistical and technical questions about accessing course content.
- Due to the large online nature of this course, individual content and technical help from the instructors will not be possible. No direct email or phone communication will be accepted.
- All students are expected to adhere to the Canvas Network Code of Conduct (<https://www.canvas.net/code-of-conduct>). This includes:
  - Being polite and respectful to your fellow students
  - Respecting the diversity of opinions and cultures that will be present in your course
  - Respecting the privacy of other students and instructors
  - Posting only appropriate content (No profanity, copyrighted content, harmful content, illegal activity, advertisements or adult content)
- Though the course is not graded, academic integrity will be required of all student participants. All coursework and discussion forum posts should reflect the individual efforts of the student.
- Since this course will include students from all over the world who will be watching Season 4 of *The Walking Dead* at various times, all students are expected to adhere to the “spoilers” policies posted in the discussion forums.