

GH 301: *Stranger Things*

Course Description: Netflix's blockbuster hit, *Stranger Things*, instantly captured the imagination of *Baby Boomers*, *Generation X* and *Z*, and *Millennials*. For *Baby Boomers*, the series offered a walk down memory lane, romanticizing the 1980s and inducing reminiscence and longing. For newer generations, it combined the best of young adult pop culture: science fiction, horror, the heroes' quest, coming-of-age angst, and pre-adolescent and adolescent friendship. However, the popular series unquestionably glosses over controversial aspects of the 1980s and often misrepresents life in small-town Indiana. This dissonance provides an opportunity for us to learn through the lens of politics, culture, race, gender, and sexual orientation/identity, and to explore the rise of Reagan socio-political culture and the Moral Majority, the history of reproductive rights in the United States and the Women's Movement, race relations in the 1980s, and homosexuality and the devastation of the AIDS epidemic.

The GH 301 **seminar**, *Stranger Things*, will examine the social, cultural, and political themes embedded in the Netflix series *Stranger Things*. **Class discussion** is the primary mode of instruction. The course is reading and writing intensive. Students will respond to journal prompts, write a seminar paper and facilitate a class period as a member of a facilitation group.

Dr. Maule's Course Goals:

- Create a fun but rigorous learning environment where going down a rabbit hole is okay.
- Introduce students to Dr. Maule's favorite great works in the form of novels, series, movies, documentaries, and scholarly works.
- Develop a space where students can take risks, be intellectually courageous, and find an outlet for their creativity (intellectual "stretches" are not just okay; they are encouraged).
- Introduce multiple, intersectional lenses for understanding the world.
- Provide opportunities for students to explore, interrogate, analyze, and apply complex concepts.
- Hone skills for discussing world views, policies, and approaches with civility and openness.
- Give students many opportunities to develop critical thinking, oral communication, and writing skills.

Attendance and Participation: This class moves quickly and covers a substantial amount of material, so attendance at *every* class is essential. Moreover, at the beginning of most class periods I will ask you to respond to a journal prompt over the required reading or the discussion during the previous class. Since this class has no assigned quizzes or exams, your journal responses and participation during class discussion will allow me to assess whether you are reading and fully engaging with the material. You should read the assigned material before the class for which it has been assigned. I will make clear what is assigned reading and that which is complementary or optional reading. Additionally, engagement in the course includes exhibiting behavior that indicates your readiness and willingness to learn. Please note that sleeping, texting, side bar conversations and engagement with social media do not show enthusiasm or a desire to learn. Students who acquire six absences (legitimate or not) should strongly considering dropping the course or risk earning a failing grade.

Important Note: Since *Stranger Things* is a seminar students should not expect lecture or PowerPoints. Additionally, students also should have some basic knowledge about the series, and if they do not, in addition to the reading materials, students should commit to researching the series and perhaps watching the first season during winter break. Moreover, while we will watch a variety of clips of *Stranger Things* and other films throughout the semester, we won't watch an episode each class period and then discuss it. Lastly, I reserve the right to change the syllabus at any time. However, I will never make an assignment due earlier than it was originally assigned.

Course Materials: There are no out-of-pocket expenses for this class. I will post all course materials on the Canvas site.

Civility: I expect you will treat your classmates and me respectfully. Since the discussion is a critical component of this class, you are expected to listen closely to what people say and formulate your answers with the understanding that reasonable people can disagree. I don't expect we will have any issues with civility in this course, as you are all adults engaged in scholarly activity.

Academic Dishonesty (Plagiarism): Our ideas are our currency in academia. Since this is the case, we make sure that we appropriately recognize the work (or ideas) of others we use, and we expect them to do the same when they use our ideas. You, too, are expected to give credit when using another person's ideas. When writing a paper, you must use the provided format. **If you intentionally falsify or contrive sources, lift text directly from a book or website, or submit another person's work as your own, you will earn a 0 on the assignment.**

Plagiarism includes more than simply submitting a paper written by another. It also includes (1) the failure to cite another author when paraphrasing their work and (2) the failure to indicate that language is directly quoted from another source, even when the author is appropriately acknowledged.

Americans with Disabilities Act Policy: "Indiana State University seeks to provide effective services and accommodation for qualified individuals with documented disabilities. If you need accommodations because of a documented disability, you must register with the Accessibility Resource Office at the beginning of the semester.

Statement on Non-Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct: Indiana State University is committed to inclusive excellence. To further this goal, the university does not tolerate discrimination in its programs or activities based on: race, color, national origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, veteran status, or any other protected class. Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 prohibits discrimination based on sex in any educational institution that receives federal funding. This includes sexual violence, sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking. If you witness or experience any form of the above discrimination, report the incident immediately to Public Safety: at 812-237-5555 or to the Equal Opportunity & Title IX Office: at 812-237-8954.

Concerning sexual discrimination, instructors, faculty, and some staff are required by law and institutional policy to report what you share with them to the Equal Opportunity & Title IX Office. You do, however, have the option of sharing your information with the following confidential resources on campus that are not required to share:

ISU Student Counseling Center: 812-237-3939; Gillum Hall, 2nd Floor

Women's Resource Center/Victim Advocate: 812-243-7272 (24 hours a day); HMSU 7th Floor

Associate Dean of Students/Respondent Advocate: 812-237-3829; HMSU 8th Floor

For more information about discrimination and the support resources through the Equal Opportunity & Title IX Office, visit this website: <https://www.indstate.edu/equalopportunity-titleix>. Please direct any questions or concerns to Assistant Vice President for Equal Opportunity and Title IX Director; at 812-237-8954; Parsons Hall 223; ISU-equalopportunity-titleix@indstate.edu.

Course Requirements: 500 hundred total points in the class.

Attendance/Participation/Journal Responses: 250 points

Seminar Paper: 150 points

Group facilitation: 100 points

Grading Scale

465-500 A 93%

450-464 A- 90%

435-449 B+ 87%

400-434 B 83%

385-399 C+ 77%

350-384 C 70%

335-349 D+ 67%

300-334 D 60%

299 and Below F

Course Outline

Section #1: Introduction to *Stranger Things*

Week 1: The Nostalgia of *Stranger Things*

Week 2: The Duffer Brothers and the cast of *Stranger Things*

Section #2: Horror and *Stranger Things*

Week 3: The Psychology of Horror

Week 4: H.P. Lovecraft, *Lovecraft Country* and *Stranger Things*

Week 5: Stephen King, *IT*, Clowns and *Stranger Things*

Week 6: Stephen King, *Evil*, the *X-files*, and *Stranger Things*

Week 7: Steven Spielberg and John Carpenter's horror, and *Stranger Things*

Section #3: The 1980's and *Stranger Things*

Week 8: The 1980's Reagan, the Moral Majority, Reproductive Rights and *Stranger Things*

Week 9: The 1980s, Race Relations and Interracial Dating and *Stranger Things*

Week 10: The 1980s, LGBTQ relations and *Stranger Things*

Week 11: The 1980's, MKB Ultra, and Military Testing

Week 13: The 1980's and Urban Blight

Section #4: Friendship and *Stranger Things*

Week 12: Friendship in *Stranger Things*

Week 13: "The Body" and *Stand by Me*

Week 14: Female friendships

Section #5: Course facilitation

Week 15: Course facilitation

Week 16: Course facilitation

Guidelines for assigned work:

Journal Prompt Guidelines:

1. The rationale behind journal prompts and responses: This exercise is a relatively low-stakes way for students to
 1. Increase their comfort with extemporaneous writing
 2. Share their ideas and unique perspectives
 3. Integrate and synthesize class material
 4. Participate fully in the class (helps introverts and internal processors to get their ideas out before an in-class discussion)
 5. Practice writing essays (e.g., compare and contrast).
 6. Apply theoretical concepts to "real world" situations.
 7. Hone critical thinking skills
 8. Engage with the class more fully
 9. Demonstrate what they are learning and whether they are reading the class material.
1. Evaluation of journal prompts.
 1. In the first quarter of the semester, students will earn a grade for writing the journal prompt and a second grade for the overall quality of the journal prompts. Your overall attendance will affect the writing grade and only minimally affect the quality grade unless you have multiple absences.

2. For the remainder of the semester, students will earn a quality grade. This grade will consider if any of the journal entries were missed and the quality of the journal entries. The quality of the journal entry will play the most significant role in the score.
3. The quality of the journal entries will be evaluated on the following factors.
 1. Did the response follow the structure requested (descriptive, compare and contrast, link concept(s) to contemporary examples, analytical (thesis statement and quality analysis), position or perspective (thesis statement and defense of position)?
 2. Did the response, when appropriate, build upon previous content in the class?
 3. Did the response, when appropriate, demonstrate an understanding of the required reading or the previous discussion or media examples provided?
 4. Did the response demonstrate a willingness to interrogate ideas and take intellectual leaps or risks?
 5. Did the response reflect a medium level of engagement?
4. Scores for quality of journal entry (5 points per journal entry).
 1. Exemplary (5 points)
 2. Above Average (4 points)
 3. Average (3.75)
 4. Deficient (3.50)
 5. Failed to write a journal entry (0)

Seminar Paper Guidelines:

The seminar/research paper is your opportunity to develop further a theme (or themes) embedded in the required materials. Which theme or themes you write about is entirely your choice. This is your opportunity to "play" intellectually. I am not looking for a correct answer or a single way of interpreting or integrating the ideas and concepts of the course. I expect that at the end of the day, each of you will write vastly different—or at least somewhat different—seminar papers.

Requirements

At least six pages in length, not including the work cited page

No more than ten pages in length, not including the works cited page

At least, but not limited to, four more sources in addition to materials provided on the Canvas site

Correctly formatted work cited page following the last narrative page

Correctly formatted in-text citations

The thesis statement is explicated early in the paper (no later than the second paragraph).

The paper is closed with a concluding paragraph.

Plagiarism Warnings:

Unintentional plagiarism (citing but citing incorrectly) will result in a deficient grade (D). Use OWL at Purdue for guidance if you are unsure.

Intentional plagiarism (not citing direct quotes or paraphrasing other people's ideas, fabricating citation information, etc.) will result in an automatic F on the paper and potentially an F out of the class.

Turning in a work exactly alike or very much like the work of another class member will result in an automatic F on the paper.

Writing Tips:

Use active voice (that is, avoid the passive voice)

Avoid overuse of "it is," "there are," "there has been" (etc.)

Do not use language which you are not comfortable using

Avoid verbosity or superfluous language (that is, be plain-spoken and succinct)

Avoid a free flow of consciousness—the structure of your paper should be clear enough that someone could outline it, and the resulting outline would make sense

Craft sophisticated transition sentences to tie the paragraphs together

Italicize titles of texts and place titles of journal articles in quotation marks. Avoid writing overly long or overly short paragraphs

Proofread—Use your spell checker! Use the review option in Microsoft or Grammarly.

Do not wait until the night before the paper is due to begin writing it—"playing" intellectually requires time to ruminate.

Check your paper before submitting it.

1. Use the **"find"** function to determine whether you are overusing: It is, It was, There is, There are, "by" the preposition (replace with subject, verb, object), to be, can be, being, or cannot be.
2. Eliminate contractions (isn't = is not, let's = let us).
3. Remove information from dictionaries and encyclopedias and replace it with scholarly works to define concepts.
4. Alphabetize your work cited entries and ensure you formatted any lines after the first line with a hanging indent.

5. Reread to ensure your tone is not too conversational.
6. Reread to ensure your tone is not too clipped.
7. Rewrite transition sentences that are too elementary; replace them with more sophisticated transition sentences.
8. Consider organizing your paper by concepts, arguments, or themes and then discuss in a more synthesized way the texts within the concept, view, or theme.
9. Check to ensure you have included the author and the year when paraphrasing.
10. Confirm you have cited any knowledge that is not common (really, really, really common).
11. Excise unnecessary language (hint: ask yourself, does the meaning change if you remove the word? Does the word or phrase add clarity? Can you state your idea with fewer words and greater coherency?
12. Go through your paraphrases. Have you represented the concept, idea, or argument in your own words? That is, avoid simply lifting a word and adding a synonym. Additionally, when properly using a synonym, carefully select it. Synonym means similar to, not the same.
13. Proofread for minor mistakes such as double indent to indicate a paragraph.
14. Make rhetorical questions into declarative statements whenever possible, and if you must include a rhetorical question, have only one in the entire paper.

Grading Scale:

Exemplary = A, 93%

Very Good/Very Well Done = B, 87%

Good/Well Done = C, 77%

Deficient = C- or below, 73%

Group Facilitation Guidelines:

The group must facilitate a class session for at least 60 minutes of the 75-minute class. Every group member must participate and participate fully. There should not be unequal participation among the group members. One or two members should not carry the load for the entire group.

Regardless of content or approach, the facilitation should engage the class and be predicated on active or applied learning. The group facilitating the session should enjoy the experience, and the audience should be both challenged and engaged.

The groups should avoid relying on PowerPoints, group members speaking one after another, and jeopardy. Additionally, groups should ensure the facilitation is polished. The only subject matter parameter is that the material should relate at least tangentially to the subject matter of the course (utopia/dystopia). Examples may include, but are not limited to (and more than likely require more development before implementation):

1. Give a brief overview of utopian/dystopian art, and then the class sips grape juice, nibbles on cheese and crackers, and produces their own utopian/dystopian art.

2. Give a brief overview of utopian/dystopian music. Listen to different types of utopian/dystopian music. Students write utopian/dystopian lyrics or rap.
3. Focus on a utopian/dystopian work. Contextualize the work. Provide information about the author, the period when it was written, the response to the work when it was originally published, and whether it continues to resonate with contemporary readers. Give examples of popular culture artifacts that are based on the work, etc.
4. Compare a utopian/dystopian novel to its film depiction. What are the similarities? What are the differences? Ask your peers if they like artistic license regarding their favorite utopian/dystopian novels. How would they change their favorite novel if they were creating a film depiction?
5. Describe the process of writing a short story. Share utopian/dystopian short stories the group members have written before the class facilitation. Ask each class member to write/outline a
6. Give a brief overview of utopia/ dystopian games. Have the class play a utopian/ dystopian game the group has created. Break the course into groups and have them develop a utopian/dystopian game.
7. Create a YouTube over a key dystopian/utopian concept. Share it with the class. Break the class into groups and have them develop YouTubes for key concepts that the facilitation group has identified in advance.
8. Ask the class to read a provocative scholarly article. Provide context to the article. Use visual images, clips from movies, excerpts from novels, historical documents, and other academic papers to help explain the article's main themes.
9. Give a puppet show (use brown paper bags) to illustrate a concept, explain a historical moment, or describe a philosophical debate. Break the class into groups and have them create puppet characters to do the same.

Grading Rubric (Based on instructor evaluation and group member evaluation of each member's contribution).

Exemplary = 100 points

Very Good/Very Well Done = 90 points

Good/Well Done = 85 points

Deficient = 80 points