



The University of Western Ontario

HISTORY 2186B

Zombie Apocalypse: Panic and Paranoia in Human History

Winter 2020

Thursday 10:30-12:30

Instructor: Professor Jonathan F. Vance

Department of History, Office: Lawson Hall 2247

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Course Description:

This course examines the impact of fear, panic, and paranoia in human history. It considers how and why concern changes into panic in some situations and not in others, and the factors that make a descent into panic possible and even likely in some circumstances.

What terrifies you? Financial ruin? Global pandemic? Alien invasion? Zombie apocalypse? Do you feel more frightened when people around you are frightened?

We like to think that the more we understand about the world, the less we have reason to fear – and so the less we fear. But mass panic is just as prevalent today as it has ever been. The object of this course is to explore episodes of mass panic throughout human history. Why do concern and anxiety transform into panic and hysteria in some contexts but not in others? What do panics reveal about the societies in which they occur? Why have panics provided the justification for attacks on immigrants, women, the disabled, minorities, and any other group that could be construed as a threat? Panic, as we will see, has always been about much more than just panic.

The course will consider a number of themes in the context of different panics through history:

Long-term preconditions – Are there underlying forces that need to be in place for mass panic to occur?

Short-term triggers – Is there a single event that sets it off?

How panic is spread – Is panic different in our modern mass-media age than it was in pre-literate societies?

Impacts of panic – Who gets hurt? Who profits?

Panic in popular culture – Why are we so fascinated by mass panic?

Course Syllabus:

By the end of this course, students should:

- understand the impact of fear on human society through history
- be able to see trends in responses to events over time and space
- appreciate how changes in communications over time have affected the spread of panic
- be aware of the challenges that emerge as we try to make rational sense of fundamentally irrational human behaviours
- be familiar with a variety of notable examples of mass hysteria in different societies
- understand how scholars in various disciplines interpret panic in an historical context

Course Materials:

There are no textbooks to purchase for this course. Readings are available on the course website. You should keep up with the readings on a weekly basis, as they will be referred to in lecture. You will be responsible for **ALL** of the course readings for the mid-term and final examinations.

Methods of Evaluation:

In-class primary source assessment (written answer)	20%
Mid-term examination (written short answers)	30%
Final examination (written short and long answers)	50%

Please see the Policy on Accommodation for Illness:

(http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf)

Course Schedule and Readings:

Lectures:

9 January - Introduction

Why do zombies scare us so much?

“You don’t look so good ...” – Threats to the Body

16 January

Disease panics in the old world: the plague, cholera, and smallpox

Reading:

John Kelly, *The Great Mortality: An Intimate History of the Black Death, the Most Devastating Plague of All Time* (2005), chapters 4 & 5

23 January

Disease panics in the modern world: from AIDS to Zika

Reading:

Thomas Abraham, *Twenty-First Century Plague: The Story of SARS* (2004), chapters 3 & 4

“There’s a run on the bank!!!” – Threats to the Home

30 January

Financial panics: from the Tulip Mania to the Global Meltdown

Reading:

Maury Klein, *Rainbow’s End: The Crash of 1929* (2001), chapters 10 & 11

6 February

** in-class primary source assessment

The Enemy among Us – Threats to the Community

13 February

Revolutionaries and rebels: from the Great Fear to the Indian Uprising

Reading:

Kim A. Wagner, *The Great Fear of 1857: Rumours, Conspiracies and the Making of the Indian Uprising* (2010), chapters 8, 9 & 10

20 February - no class - Reading Week

27 February

Communists and terrorists: from Red Scares to the War on Terror

Reading:

Michael Barson and Steven Heller, *Red Scared!: The Commie Menace in Propaganda and Popular Culture* (2001), chapters 5 & 6

“We shall fight on the beaches” – Threats to the Nation

5 March

Invasion scares: from the Spanish Armada to Adolf Hitler

Reading:

I.F. Clarke, “Before and After *The Battle of Dorking*”, *Science Fiction Studies* 24/1 (March 1997): 33-46

12 March

** mid-term examination

“Double, Double, toil and trouble” – Threats from Other Realms

19 March

Witches, dancing mania, and demonic possession

Reading:

Robin Briggs, *Witches and Neighbours: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft* (1996), chapter 5

26 March

Space invaders, Martian attacks and alien abduction

Reading:

You should listen to the original broadcast of Orson Welles’ *War of the Worlds*, available on-line – <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xs0K4ApW14g>

“It’s the end of the world as we know it” – Threats to Existence

2 April

Armageddons and apocalypses: nuclear annihilation, Doomsday cults, and the End of Days

Reading:

Joanna Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (2005), chapter 9

Additional Statements

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Academic Offences:

Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitute a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

[Include this paragraph on plagiarism-checking software only if relevant. If not relevant delete the

paragraph below plus this paragraph as well]

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

[Include this paragraph on computer marked multiple-choice tests if relevant. If not relevant delete the paragraph below plus this paragraph as well]

Computer-marked multiple-choice tests and/or exams may be subject to submission for similarity review by software that will check for unusual coincidences in answer patterns that may indicate cheating.

Accessibility Options:

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html

Medical Issues

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Please go to:

https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_illness.pdf

to read about the University's policy on medical accommodation. In the event of illness, you should contact Academic Counselling as soon as possible. The Academic Counsellors will determine, in consultation with the student, whether or not accommodation should be requested. They will subsequently contact the instructors in the relevant courses about the accommodation. Once the instructor has made a decision about whether to grant an accommodation, the student should contact his/her instructors to determine a new due date for tests, assignments, and exams.

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation.

Please note: Please visit https://www.uwo.ca/univsec/academic_policies/index.html to view all updated academic policies regarding medical accommodations.

Plagiarism:

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted will be

included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com (<http://www.turnitin.com>).

Students are expected to retain all research notes, rough drafts, essay outlines, and other materials used in preparing assignments. In the unlikely event of concerns being raised about the authenticity of any assignment, your instructor may ask you to produce these materials; an inability to do so may weigh heavily against you.

The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of Publication and page number. Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writer's ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source; these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction, your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases, in their suspension from the University.

Scholastic Offences

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www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf

Support Services

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western, http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/ for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Use of Electronic Devices

No electronic devices of any kind may be used during tests and examinations. However, you are welcome to use a combine harvester, a llama, or three cubic yards of gravel, if necessary.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact, Heidi Van Galen, Administrative Officer, Department of History, 519-661-2111 x84963 or e-mail vangelen@uwo.ca.