

EN 4933/6933 Contemporary Literature
Hy-Flex: Synchronous online & FTF tutorials
Fall 2020 T/TH 9:35-10:50
Dr. Andrea Spain



World War Z (Dir. Mark Foster, Paramount Pictures, 2013)

This course will take up contemporary literature that both constructs and contests cultural imaginaries of “multitudes,” of crowds, and the “masses.” We will see how these cultural imaginaries fuel national and international policy and create radical new realities – some horrific, some liberating.

We'll read novels, novellas, graphic novels, experimental writing and examine moving images in order to grasp historical precursors of what Gayatri Spivak has called “the permanent operation of altered normality” in the postcolony and beyond. We will consider our contemporary “world of camps” as well examine how images organize our responses to particular populations. We will trace how realities – the proliferation of refugee camps, migrant camps, and detainment centers for so-called stateless people – are grounded in a fears produced by long histories of colonization and contemporary images of a contaminating multitude.

As we think about multitudes and crowds, we will be dispersed. This “hy-flex” class will be designed for us to work synchronously online together as a large group. Our only face-to-face interactions will be during “OxBridge” style tutorials, where we will meet in small groups of 3-4 students. Your tutorials will be designed for you to engage in directed, intense, student-based discussions of your work and ideas. We will find safe spaces to meet, with our PPE: on terraces, outside, under tents, and in other spaces that you will explore, find or create. For one or two sessions, pandemic permitting, we will try to meet as a whole, outside at the rose garden, to connect to the ground, and to each other. We will rarely, if ever, meet in a classroom. For students opting to work entirely remotely, one tutorial group will meet over WebEx, scheduled at a mutually agreed upon time.

Texts will include: Abdu Waberi's *In the United States of Africa*, Joe Sacco's *Footnotes in Gaza*, Lidia Yuknavitch's *The Small Backs of Children*, Bhanu Kapil's *How to Wash a Heart*, and NourBeSe Philip's remarkable *ZONG!* We will also read from Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Agier's *Managing the Undesireables*, Mbembe's *Necropolitics*, and Derrida's *Of Hospitality*.

Students will write a series of critical analysis papers, keep a concept/reading notebook, give a formal presentation, and produce a final research project.