

## ENGL 4355: Fiction Forms: Bummer Lit.: The Dystopian Experience

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The title for this course promises an epically unpleasant semester, but only in the best way. Did your late night, flashlight-under-the-sheets reading include *Fahrenheit 451* and *Lord of the Flies*? Maybe *The Handmaid's Tale*? *Watchmen*? Dystopian fiction, a.k.a. Bummer Lit. on steroids, has a strange, enduring appeal. It is the lurid spectacle causing all the rubbernecking on the Highway of Literature. In this class we'll pitch our tents on that highway's esplanade and look at novels and short stories that employ dystopian (and at times apocalyptic) premises to showcase their thematic concerns. As we discuss the conventions that define the dystopian, we'll unbolt and examine the inner workings of these fictions from the writer's perspective, learning about the process of creating stunning Bummer Lit.

The reading list may include works by Michael Chabon, George Saunders, Margaret Atwood, Kurt Vonnegut, José Saramago, Cormac McCarthy, Ursula LeGuin, Franz Kafka, Jonathan Lethem, Gary Shtyngart and a host of other bent-minded, gifted depressives.