

English 449: Special Topics in Contemporary Literature  
**Surviving Dystopia**  
Fall 2020

**Instructor:** Corinne Bancroft  
**Email:** corinnebancroft@uvic.ca



<https://pixabay.com/photos/apocalyptic-trees-forest-buildings-2147936/>

**Course Description:**

Authors across North America have been imagining how we might form community after an environmental, biologic, and/ or political event ends life as we know it. This course will look at novels by Indigenous, Black, Latinx and other authors that are set in a dystopian, but all too familiar futures. Special attention will be paid to the recurring and self-reflexive motif of narrative as a vital tool to surviving these apocalyptic situations. Why does the ability to dream, to share memories, and to tell stories emerge as a threatening, yet sought-after resource for the dystopian state? How do these narrative capabilities prove essential for the resistant groups to survive and form community?

**Proposed Texts:**

Cherie Dimaline *The Marrow Thieves* (2017)  
Louise Erdrich *The Future Home of the Living God* (2017)  
N.K. Jemisin *The Fifth Season* (2015)  
Emily St. John Mandel *Station Eleven* (2014)  
Waubgeshig Rice *Moon of the Crusted Snow* (2019)  
Lilliam Rivera *Dealing in Dreams* (2019)

**Proposed Assignments:**

- Short discussion forum responses to each novel or unit
- 2 essays
- Final assessment – perhaps a survival guide to the apocalypse based on our readings

