

CAT 3B: How to Survive the Zombie Future

Spring 2025

Course Information

Instructor

Dr. Liz Popko, Associate Director of Writing, Sixth College

Lecture Days & Time

MWF 9:00-9:50 AM

Location

Solis 107

Dr. Popko's Office Hours

MW 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM, and by appointment

Office Location

CTL 160

Email

epopko@ucsd.edu

Course Description

CAT 3 is a 6-unit course and the final course in Sixth's writing intensive sequence. While the topics of CAT 3 range, all invite students to imagine the intersection of culture, art, and technology in the future. The overarching purpose of CAT 3 is to build on those skills developed in CAT 2 (argumentative writing and critical analysis) and teach students how to create new knowledge through research and art/world making.

In this CAT 3 course, you will use your research and analysis skills to speculate about a post-apocalyptic/dystopian zombie future. Specifically, you will use your own areas of expertise to imagine what kind of zombie future awaits us and offer insights into how we might manifest or avoid those destinies. We will look at the ways zombies have been imagined in fiction, film, and other texts, particularly as they are used to signal different anxieties about the past, present, and future world. Some questions that this class will consider include: What counts as a zombie? How does the zombie symbolize different kinds of human relationships and social organizations? What could be done now to prepare us for a world with zombies? What does ethics look like amidst a zombie crisis and catastrophe?

Discussion Section Information

TA Name	Section #	Days/Times	Section Room	TA email
Jess Silbaugh-Cowdin	B01	MW 8-8:50AM	CTL B108	jsilbaug@ucsd.edu
	B10	MW 11-11:50AM	SSB 106	
Gian Gregorio	B02	MW 10-10:50AM	CTL 0179	ggregorio@ucsd.edu
	B03	MW 11-11:50AM	CTL 0178	
Caleb Mertz-Vega	B04	MW 1-1:50PM	CENTER 206	cmertzvega@ucsd.edu
	B05	MW 2-2:50PM	CENTER 206	
	B06	MW 3-3:50PM	CENTER 206	
Radha Ambe	B07	MW 4-4:50PM	CENTER 206	rambe@ucsd.edu
	B08	MW 5-5:50PM	CENTER 206	
Ash Graham	B09	MW 10-10:50AM	SSB 106	egraham@ucsd.edu
	B13	MW 3-3:50PM	SSB 106	
	B14	MW 4-4:50PM	SSB 106	
Doug Osmun	B11	MW 1-1:50PM	SSB 106	dosmun@ucsd.edu
	B12	MW 2-2:50PM	SSB 106	
Bariş Ozkuzey	B15	WF 10-10:50AM	CENTER 206	oozkuzey@ucsd.edu
	B16	WF 11-11:50AM	CENTER 206	

Learning Objectives

After completing CAT 1 and CAT 2, CAT 3 students should be confident in their ability to do the following:

- Understand and practice effective research, including developing research questions and finding and evaluating appropriate sources.
- Use research to make an effective multimodal and/or creative argument towards a specific audience.
- Engage with cultural products, including art and popular culture, as the result of research but also as legitimate objects of research.

- Develop a collaborative research project: find and evaluate appropriate sources, compose research genres (such as annotated bibliographies and literature reviews, etc.), and practice revision.
- Develop independence in the composition process and effectively collaborate with peers in the process of research and development of a multimodal project.

Writing Skills

CAT 3 fosters the following skills:

- Intersectional approaches to research.
- Writing with research and developing a voice.
- Respectful and responsible collaboration (interpersonal communication).
- Multimodal/creative composition.

Core Concepts

By the end of CAT 3, students should be able to understand and define the below terms and ideas:

- Resistance/revolution.
- Interdisciplinarity.
- Art as argument.
- Research as a process.

Materials

- Reliable access to UCSD email, Canvas, and Internet
- 1-month subscription to Netflix, to begin Monday, April 21
- You will also need to rent two movies from Amazon
- Note taking materials

CAT Program Policies

Academic Integrity

All work for this course needs to be original and created by you for this class. This doesn't mean you can't get feedback from friends or work together, but the work you turn in needs

to be your own. If you are not sure if you are committing an AI violation, please talk to me or your TA before submitting your assignment.

If you are planning to use generative AI (including software that checks/corrects your grammar), please ask your TA and/or instructor first to discuss appropriate uses of the technology. That is, don't assume that software like Grammarly is allowed. Anytime you use generative AI, you will need to cite the use of the technology and describe how you used the technology.

Please note: UCSD has a university-wide Policy on Integrity of Scholarship, published annually in the General Catalog, and online <https://academicintegrity.ucsd.edu/>. All students must read and be familiar with this Policy. All suspected violations of academic integrity will be reported to UCSD's Academic Integrity Coordinator, following Academic Senate policy. Students found to have violated UCSD's standards for academic integrity may include suspension or dismissal, and academic sanctions may include failure of the assignment or failure of the course.

That said, at the end of the day I want to encourage you to think about what Russell P. Johnson argues in his piece on Chat GPT: "Whether you get caught or not, I invite you to examine your priorities, and to consider what you will be missing if you bypass the frustrating but rewarding task of writing." I ask that you consider why you are here in college and what you will be missing out if you cheat yourself out of the process of learning, thinking, and creating new thoughts.

If you are found to have committed an academic integrity violation on a major assignment in this course, you will receive a 0 and likely fail the course.

Attendance

Attendance in lecture and discussion are very important. Lecture attendance ensures that you understand and can ask questions about the specificities of your topic and alongside discussion builds community and provides a space to work through the lecture material and your own responses to it. Community is at the center of writing pedagogy! You will see this ethic reflected in our course goals. Please look ahead at the course calendar and make sure that you are able to meet the attendance expectations. If you are not, consider whether or not this is the right term for you to take this class.

For all CAT classes, students may miss up to a week without any penalty (we do not differentiate between excused and unexcused absences). For example, this means in a MWF CAT 3 class, a student could miss a total of 5 classes (including lecture and section) for whatever reason without it impacting their grade. For each additional absence, they will receive $\frac{1}{3}$ of a letter off their final course grade. If they miss a total of two weeks, the student is eligible to fail the course, regardless of numerical grade.

Please speak to your faculty or your TA if you have any concerns about your attendance in this course. If you are experiencing any symptoms (covid or otherwise), please reach out to your instructor and/or your TA and do not come to class. Take care of yourself first! (Keep in mind that if you keep us in the loop, we can always be flexible!)

Communication

In CAT, it is our hope that in this course we will develop a supportive learning community that fosters discussion, engagement, and excitement. Often, we will engage in the course material through the sharing of ideas, questions, and personal experiences. “Honesty, listening for understanding, a willingness to share your ideas, and respect for self and others” are basic guidelines that can help create a positive learning environment. Your participation and feedback is important to the success of the course and I welcome your thoughts throughout the term on how we might improve class processes that will encourage effective communication and dialogue.

Etiquette & Conduct

You are expected to approach your enrollment in this class with respect. This means that when in lecture or section, you will actively listen to whomever has the floor, and avoid behaviors that are a distraction to you and others. You and your classmates have the right to a rich education, which requires that the course instructor, TAs, and subject matter receive thoughtful attention. Any behavior or language that takes away from an instructor’s ability to teach effectively or a student’s ability to learn effectively may result in disciplinary action.

At times you may be asked to discuss issues that you find disagreeable or uncomfortable. You also may have to work with instructors, TAs, and/or other students whom you find difficult. Unless there is a sincere threat to your well being or safety (in which case please alert your instructor immediately), we ask you to approach these challenges with maturity and resilience. How can you make the most of experiences that you find challenging or boring? How can you address specific problems in the classroom with compassion and thoughtfulness? How can you contribute to the most meaningful educational experience for

yourself and your classmates? How can you respectfully raise objections and/or disagreements with your instructor?

CalFresh & Basic Needs Information

If you are facing food insecurity, we encourage you to contact calfresh@ucsd.edu, call (858) 246-5581, or visit the [CalFresh Website](#). For more information on food and housing resources, please visit the [Basic Needs Center](#) or The HUB Basic Needs Center located at the Original Student Center, Building A, Room E-100, to the left of the Triton Food Pantry.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability should (if needed) provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are then required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please make arrangements to contact your professor privately) and to the OSD Liaison, Liz Popko (epopko@ucsd.edu) in the department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged. No retroactive accommodations can be provided.

Discrimination & Harassment

Please see Canvas for [UCSD's Principles of Community](#) for a description of your campus's commitments.

Statement of Inclusion

I believe very strongly that the classroom is a place to expand our knowledge and experiences safely, while being respected and valued. I support the values of UC San Diego to “create a diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus in which students, faculty, and staff can thrive”. I strive to uphold the values articulated by the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: “We believe that true excellence is achieved through productive relationships among people of diverse perspectives. When the collective talents of our students, faculty, and staff at UC San Diego are united in an environment that is open and inclusive, creativity and innovation prospers.” I hope you will join me in creating a class that upholds these values to further enhance our learning as a community. (Sample from Biological Sciences)

For more information:

- https://commons.ucsd.edu/_files/Inclusion-Statements-Handout-4.pdf.
- <http://diversity.ucsd.edu>.

Course Policies

Assignment Submission & Late Work

- In order to receive a letter grade, all assignments must be submitted through Canvas.
- Unreadable files will not be accepted—the work will be marked incomplete and/or as late until a readable file is uploaded.
- In this course (CAT 3B), your assignments are graded out of 10 points, with only whole and half number options. For each day work is late, your grade goes down by ½ point. If the assignment is more than a week late, you will receive no more than a 5.
- If you fail to submit a major assignment, you will automatically Fail the course.

Peer Review, Self Evaluation, and Reflection

Self-assessment, reflection, and collaboration are core components of the first year writing program at UCSD. In this class (and CAT broadly), you will do a fair amount of peer review, revision, working in groups, and reflection on your work. That is, be prepared both to receive and offer constructive criticism and re-work your writing, presentations, etc.

- Peer Review will happen regularly, so be prepared to work with your peers and offer constructive critique and receive feedback.
- Revision will be a crucial component of each major assignment. Failure to revise an assignment and/or participate in peer review will lower your final assignment grade by ½ point (½ letter grade).
- Self-Evaluations and Reflections are also a crucial part of this course. I will ask you to do reflections on your work throughout the term and a final reflective portfolio. If you fail to do a reflection, your final assignment grade will lower by ½ point (½ letter grade).
- [Grade Contesting Policy](#) (Must be done before Monday of Finals Week).

Technology

Lecture

- My strong preference is for students to use only paper materials during lectures. However, I recognize that this may not be ideal for you as a student. Therefore, I

welcome laptops and tablets in lecture as a means to take notes or read/refer to material. However, I reserve the right to prohibit technology for a particular class period, or part of a class period. Be prepared to adapt to the particularities of a given class. Cell phones should never be used unless as part of a specific activity; if you generally use your cell phone instead of a computer to access course material, please inform your TA as soon as the term begins.

- **If your use of technology becomes a distraction to others, or if you are not using technology for the purposes of our course, you will be asked to leave,** which will impact your engagement grade.

Section

- Please refer to your TA's specific policies regarding technology in the classroom. They are within their rights to either ban or allow any/all technology according to their teaching styles.

Expectations

What you can expect of me

- I will be prepared for lecture and invested in the material
- I will be enthusiastic and animated during discussions (probably 95% of the time)
- I will respond to emails within 48 hours
- I will be as invested in your work as you are
- I will treat your work with honesty and compassion
- I will learn as many names as I can
- I will make fun of myself and probably make very cheesy jokes
- I may curse, but I will try not to
- I will be willing to allow for extensions if you demonstrate engagement in the course and come speak with me early about needing one
- I will be a safe sounding board for ideas, whether related to your assignments or not
- I will take earnest feedback about the course seriously

What I expect of you

- You will, when you do, attend lectures **on time**, with a good attitude
- You will attend section **on time**, with a good attitude
- You will take responsibility for your actions and feelings, especially as they manifest within the course
- You will do the work assigned, both readings and writings, to the best of your ability
- You will do your own work with your best effort (See [UCSD Policies on Academic Integrity](#))

- You will read the syllabus and refer to it throughout the quarter
- You will treat your fellow classmates, your TAs, and myself with dignity; you will not engage in racist, sexist, classist, ableist, homophobic, transphobic, ethnocentric, fat-shaming, faith-shaming, or otherwise hateful communication. There is a difference between disrespectful/hateful speech and reasonable disagreement or critique.
- You will offer your fellow writers honest and engaged critique.
- You will speak respectfully to me or your TA if you have any problems with the assignments or teaching methods; you will give us the chance to correct mistakes or address any miscommunication
- You will own your part of class culture (you will recognize that your experience with the class is in part your responsibility)

Grading

- [CAT Writing Rubric](#)
- All assignments and engagement will be assessed using a 10-point scale, following the schema below:
 - 10 - Outstanding
 - 9, 9.5 - High Pass
 - 8, 8.5 - Pass
 - 7, 7.5 - Low Pass
 - 5, 6 - Not Passing
 - 0 - Not Completed
- Limitations on possible points enable more effective holistic grading, as well as discourage “point negotiation.” Do not ask your TA to give you a score of anything other than what is listed above
- For purposes of final course grades as calculated by Canvas’s gradebook, the following ranges will determine letter grades submitted to eGrades:
 - A+ (96.6-100)
 - A (93.6-96.5)
 - A- (89.6-93.5)
 - B+ (86.6-89.5)
 - B (83.6-86.5)
 - B- (79.6-83.5)
 - C+ (76.6-79.5)
 - C (73.6-76.5)
 - C- (69.6-73.5)

- D (60-69.5)
- F (0-59.9)
- All disputes over grades must be conducted according to the following guidelines:
 - Wait 48 hours after receiving a grade before disputing it.
 - Contact your TA for an appointment to discuss the grade.

Engagement & Participation

CAT courses are designed to support and strengthen your communication and thinking skills. Students must earn their participation grade, which they cannot do if they are absent. All absences from, tardiness to, or early departures from class should impact a student's overall participation grade. But, simply being present is not enough to earn a high participation grade. Further, students are responsible for reaching out to other students, and—when appropriate—TAs and instructors for missed material, whether or not the course allows for make-up work.

Your participation in the course is required for the development of these skills and will be assessed according to the following rubric:

Excellent (9.5-10) - You are well prepared for lecture and section, demonstrated by: having all your materials; consistently contributing to discussion; asking productive questions; listening actively and taking notes; engaging in group work; supporting and respecting other students; respecting TAs, the instructor and course material; attending office hours; coming to lecture and section on time and staying for the entire class time; taking responsibility for any work or material missed if absent; overall proactive.

Good (8.5-9) - You are usually prepared for lecture and section, demonstrated by: contributing to discussion; listening actively; engaging in group work; respecting other students; respecting TAs, the instructor, and course material; mostly coming to lecture and section on time and staying for the entire class time; overall responsible.

Adequate (7.5-8) - You are inconsistently prepared for lecture and section, demonstrated by: rarely contributing to discussion; missing materials; managing time poorly; working well with others, but unable to contribute fairly; respecting TAs, instructor, and course materials; mostly coming to lecture and section on time and staying for the entire class time; overall, inconsistent.

Developing (6.5) - You are physically present but mentally disengaged from the course, demonstrated by: never contributing to discussion in lecture or section; consistently coming to class late or leaving early; working well with others, but unable to contribute fairly; failing to develop any relationships with TAs and/or instructor; overall, disengaged.

Unacceptable (0) - You demonstrate through behavior and/or language that you are uninterested in learning; or, alternatively, you are regularly disrespectful of other students, TAs, the instructor, or course material.

Grade Breakdown

Individual Assignments - 55%

- Research Synthesis Papers (3) - 15%
- Research Paper - 15%
- Peer Review - Research Paper - 5%
- Annotated Bibliography - Research Paper - 5%
- Engagement/Participation - 10%
 - Section
 - Lecture - includes any freewrites, activities, and quizzes
- Complete/Incomplete Assignments - 5%
 - Reflection - Survival Guide
 - Evaluation - Survival Guides
 - Reflection - Course
 - Research Activities - Done in Section

Group Assignments - 45%

- Group Presentation - 15%
- Survival Guide - 15%
- Annotated Bibliography - Survival Guide - 10%
- Group Contract - 2%
- Proposal - Survival Guide - 3%