

ENGL 229: Utopia & Dystopia
Spring 2006
T/TH 1:30-2:50

Instructor: Jennifer Atkinson
Office hours: Tuesdays 3:00 – 4:00, and by appointment
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Required Texts available at the Seminary Coop*:

Thomas More, *Utopia* (trans. Paul Turner; Penguin, 2003)
William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* (Signet Classics, 1998)
Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels* (Signet Classics, 1999)
Karl Marx & Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Penguin, 2002)
H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (Bantam Books, 2003)
Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We* (trans. Clarence Brown; Penguin, 1993)
Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland* (Dover Publications, 1998)
Samuel Delany, *Trouble on Triton* (Wesleyan UP, 1996)
Ursula Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* (EOS: 1994)
Marge Piercy, *He, She, & It* (Fawcett Crest, 1991)
Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.* (Autonomedia, 2003)

*** All other readings are available through e-reserve at the Regenstein Library**

Course Overview:

This course provides students with an introduction to the literature of utopia and dystopia, exploring its theoretical, practical, aesthetic, and generic dimensions. Throughout the quarter we will discuss ways that various texts have negotiated the problems of labor, leisure, the family, property relations, pleasure and desire, class, gender, race, science and technology, nature, primitivism, membership and exclusion, escapism and politics, nostalgia and futurism, anxiety and hope. Within each utopian and dystopian vision we will also examine the underlying assumptions about human nature versus the nature of human institutions: does the text presume the locus of social ills and inequality to be the former or latter? What difference do these assumptions make within its formulations and solutions?

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course Requirements:

- **Attendance is mandatory for every class.** More than three absences will result in point deductions from your class participation grade (5 points – or half a letter grade – deducted for each absence after the third).
- **All students are expected to participate in class discussion and complete each day's assigned readings before class meetings.** A considerable portion of your final grade (20%) will be based on in-class participation. **Please bring all assigned readings with you to class for reference.**
- **Midterm:** choose one of the following:
Option #1: Midterm paper (5 pages) Select one topic from a group of questions to be handed out Thurs,

4/18. Papers are due in class Tues, 4/25. Essays will examine at least two of the primary texts from the first four weeks of class. You will also be expected to incorporate relevant secondary readings from the syllabus.

Option #2: Class presentation. If you would like to prepare an oral presentation instead of a written assignment, you may choose any one of the assigned readings from the quarter and deliver a presentation on the day for which discussion of that text is scheduled (see syllabus). If you choose this option, you must sign up for a presentation day by no later than the beginning of week 3 (please email me with your request). The format for presentations is relatively open-ended. Please see separate instruction sheet for more details. In addition to the presentation, you will also be required to write a **one- to two-page passage analysis** (or close reading) on any text from week 1 thru 4. This analysis will be due on the same day as the midterm paper, 4/25. The presentation is worth 25 points, the passage analysis is worth 5 points.

- **Final paper** (8-10 pages). You may either select a topic from a list of suggestions to be handed out Tues 5/23, or create your own topic. Students will meet individually with instructor to discuss topics and paper writing strategies during week 9. **Final paper due at 10:00 am on Tues, June 5th** (in my box, Walker 413).

Grading:

20% Participation

30% Midterm (Paper or Class Presentation)

50% Final Paper

A NOTE ON THE READINGS:

- It is essential that you complete assigned readings **before** each class. Informed listening and class participation depend on your familiarity with the texts.
- I have placed additional reading on reserve for this course at the Regenstein circulation desk. These texts are meant to supplement the assigned course materials and may be useful to consult while preparing for class presentations or the midterm and final papers. **You are not expected to read these and we will not discuss them in class**; they are simply provided so that you can further investigate topics that interest you.

Suggested Further Reading (available on reserve):

Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*, and *Parable of the Talents*

William Morris, *News From Nowhere*

Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*

George Orwell, *1984*

Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*

Criticism:

Frederic Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future*

Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*

Utopia and Dystopia: Course Syllabus*

* please check course Chalk site weekly for updates and modifications to reading assignments

Week 1

T 3/28: Introduction

Th 3/30: More, *Utopia* (pp 7-113)

***Readings on Reserve:* Tom Moylan, “The Utopian Imagination” and “The Literary Utopia” (from *Demand the Impossible* pp. 1-52); Frederic Jameson, “The Politics of Utopia”**

Week 2

T 4/04: Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, and source materials (pp 3-105). Also, read Ovid’s “The Golden Age” (handout)

Th 4/06: Shakespeare (finish)

Week 3

T 4/11: Swift, “A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms” (Part IV) from *Gulliver’s Travels* (pp xiii-xvi and 227-311)

Th 4/13: Marx & Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (pp 218-258, and “Preface to the English edition of 1888,” pp 199-204)

***Readings on Reserve:* David Harvey, selections from *Spaces of Hope* (pp 3-52)**

Week 4

T 4/18: Wells, *The Time Machine*

(Hand out Midterm Topics)

Th 4/20: (no class)

Evening Film Screening: 6 - 8pm in Stuart 101 (Fritz Lang, “Metropolis”)

Attendance Mandatory

Week 5

T 4/25: Discuss “Metropolis”; finish Wells

MIDTERM DUE (in class)

Th 4/27: Gilman, *Herland*; start Zamyatin, *We*

Week 6

T 5/02: Zamyatin, *We*

Th 5/04: Delany, *Trouble on Triton*

Week 7

T 5/09: Delany (finish)

***Readings on Reserve:* Foucault, “Of Other Spaces”**

Th 5/11: Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*

Week 8

T 5/16: Le Guin (finish)

**Th 5/18: William Gibson, “The Gernsback Continuum”; Eben Moglen, “The dotCommunist Manifesto”
(both on reserve)**

Week 9

T 5/23: Piercy: *He, She, and It*

***Readings on Reserve:* Donna Harraway, “Manifesto for Cyborgs”**

(Hand out Final Paper Topics)

Th 5/25: Piercy and Harraway (finish)

Week 10

T 5/30: Bey, *T.A.Z.*

**Th 5/01: Undergraduate reading day (no class)
(Additional office hours to discuss final paper)**

FINAL PAPER DUE: Tues, June 5th at 10:00 am (my box is in the English Dept, Walker 413)

Guidelines for the Class Presentation

This option is available to students who do not want to complete the written midterm assignment (see syllabus). The criteria for this project are fairly open-ended. Your presentation may focus on the work as a whole, a particular passage, or a scene or set of images; also, you may discuss these independently or in relation to other texts from the syllabus or outside of class (in fact, you are strongly encouraged to use extracurricular sources). Be creative. Pursue your interests. (If you plan to use a projector or other media equipment, please notify me a few days in advance).

- Presentations should run about 15 minutes.
- Students may work in groups, but must include at least as many texts in the presentation as there are members in the group.
- After completing the presentation students may field questions from classmates or present a set of questions to their peers to facilitate further discussion.

Note: Do *not* simply deliver a plot summary; this is an exercise to get you to think critically and analytically about the texts.

Students who choose to give an oral presentation instead of writing a midterm paper will also submit a one- to two-page (double-spaced) passage-analysis for any text from weeks 1 through 4 (More, Shakespeare, Swift, Marx & Engels, or Wells). This assignment is to ensure that everyone engages with the readings from the first half of the quarter. The assignment is rather informal, and there won't be much emphasis on the form of your paper (lack of fancy introductions or conclusions won't be penalized); I'm more concerned here that you work closely with a relatively short passage and engage with the issues relevant to utopianism. If you want to cite secondary materials or compare multiple works, that would be terrific, but do keep in mind that this is a very short assignment and your space will be limited. (This assignment is worth 5 points, the oral presentation is worth 25 points).

- Do not write on the same text you have already used for your presentation.
- Please specify the page number(s) of the passage you are examining.
- The passage-analysis is to be submitted on the midterm due-date, Tues April 25th.