

Carleton University
Winter 2016
Department of English

ENGL 4709B: *Studies in American Lit. I*
Utopia USA

Prerequisite(s): fourth-year standing in Honours English

Mondays / 14:35pm – 17:25pm

Location: Please confirm location on Carleton Central

Instructor: Prof. Brian Greenspan

Email: brian.greenspan@carleton.ca

(N.B. please include "4709" in the subject line of all e-mails)

Office: Dunton Tower 1812

Phone: (613) 520-2600 ext. 2360

Office Hours: Mondays 14:00-16:00

This is a preliminary syllabus subject to change and further development.

A survey of the utopian impulse within American culture.

Long portrayed as a land of both plenty and desolation, America has inspired expressions of undying hope and insurmountable despair. This seminar will explore the wide varieties of utopian and dystopian thought in America in historical context. We will examine utopian and dystopian narratives in relation to intentional communities, social movements, progressive politics, popular subcultures and technological change, in order to determine how the principle of hope and communal identities continue to shape the ideals of nationhood.

Prerequisite: fourth-year standing in Honours English.

Primary Texts

* **N.B.** The reading list below is provisional, and subject to change depending on the availability of primary texts. Please be sure to check back before the start of class before buying your texts. **Only the latest version of the syllabus posted on the course CULearn site is the official version.**

Thomas More, *Utopia*

Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*

Max Brooks, *World War Z: An Oral History*

Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*

Lauren Groff, *Arcadia*

Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*

Alfred Bester, *The Stars My Destination* (available by request from Octopus Books:

courseorders2011@gmail.com

2K Games, *Bioshock* (any platform)

plus a film screening (TBA) *and* various secondary and supplemental readings.

All titles except *Bioshock* will be available at **Octopus Books**, 116 Third Avenue (at Bank St.). The Bester novel is print-on-demand, and must be ordered separately through Octopus. Most secondary and supplemental readings can be found through MacOdrum Library, although some must be ordered in advance through Interlibrary Loans (ILL).

Assignments

Seminar	20 minute presentation + discussion	15%
Critical Response	5 minutes	5%
Participation	in class and online	20%
Term Paper	3750 words (15 pages), DUE March 25	50%
Small Group Project	15-minute presentation + discussion, DUE in class April 1	10%

Seminar (20 minutes including discussion, 15%)

For your seminar, you might choose any combination of approaches, but should be sure to include a close, theorized and well-researched analysis of our primary text for the week, with a précis and discussion of one or more key points in utopian theory occasioned by our weekly readings.

In your seminar, be sure to address the week's Selected reading in detail. You are welcome to consider additional articles from our Supplemental readings, and any other works of literary or cultural theory that inform your topic. In other words, I want you to both explain and demonstrate to the class a given critical approach to utopian studies--its methods, applications, contradictions, limitations, and relevance to your topic.

Of course, feel free to draw upon additional literary or critical texts of your own choosing, providing that you can contextualize them adequately for the class. Remember, you'll be graded on both the depth and originality of your research, as well as the success with which you present your material. A provocative and engaging seminar, solidly grounded in research, is better than one that is overly recondite and jargon-laden. Your ultimate goal is to raise questions and generate critical discussion.

Since utopias are a communal form of symbolic expression, research into utopian literature could also benefit from a collaborative approach. I encourage you to collaborate on your research and/or presentations to ensure that you complement rather than repeat your classmates' presentations. To help prevent redundancy, be sure to clear your topic and approach with me well beforehand.

N.B. Your in-class presentation should be accompanied by a legible transcript of (or notes for) your seminar presentation, one for me and one for your weekly respondent (see Critical Response, below), provided at the beginning of your presentation. You should also provide a handout for the class including the following information:

- an outline of your key points and examples, with any salient quotations and page references;
- a list of any key theoretical terms you use, with definitions;
- a selected Works Cited and Consulted, detailing your primary and secondary sources.

It's up to you whether to present your material conversationally, reveal it Socratically, or read it in the form of a conference paper. Whatever the mode of presentation, be sure to indicate all sources during your oral presentation. A good approach is to foreground a particular literary issue, critical problem or theoretical argument as the focus of your presentation.

You're welcome to use audio-visual materials (e.g. music, video clips, or digital presentations), but be sure to consult with me first to ensure a seamless presentation. Above all, please stay within your time limit to allow your classmates enough time for their presentations. Failure to scope your presentation appropriately may result in a penalty.

You should be prepared to lead and guide the class in a discussion following your seminar, so come prepared with plenty of provocative questions. Think of the class as a test group for bouncing around ideas that will help guide your final research paper. Be prepared to take notes, as the class will doubtless have some excellent ideas for you.

Critical Response (5 minutes, 5%)

The Critical Response offers you the opportunity to take five minutes to respond to one seminar presentation (assigned by lottery) at the next class meeting (usually the week following the original presentation). Your response should address both the strengths and the potential oversights or contradictions of the seminar.

In your response, refrain from making ad hominem remarks; instead, you should marshal further textual, critical and/or theoretical evidence that might expand upon, complicate or problematize your classmate's position. The goal of your response should be to stimulate dialogue and productive conversation by bringing new material or perspectives to light, and to help your classmates develop their own critical approaches.

Critical Responses are to be submitted through the Critical Forum on CULearn before class begins on the day they're due. In addition, you'll be asked to read your Critical Responses at the start of class.

Participation (20%)

Please notify me of any anticipated or unavoidable absences from class due to emergency or illness. Regular attendance at seminars is expected, but that alone won't win you full marks for participation. For full marks (and your added enjoyment) you're expected to keep up with our reading schedule, participate actively in our weekly seminars, and contribute to our discussions, both in-class and online through CULearn.

Please remember that CULearn is a virtual extension of our classroom, and therefore, subject to the University's conduct regulations. At all times, you must respect your fellow classmates, and try to keep the discussion relevant to our course goals. When in doubt, follow The Golden Rule of Netiquette: Don't post any comment you wouldn't read aloud in class.

Small Group Project (10%, DUE in class April 1)

These speculative and critical projects, to be presented on the last day of the course, will be undertaken collaboratively by groups of three or four students, to be assigned at random. The subject matter will be assigned in class, though the particular approach and style of presentation will be up to each group's members. Students are expected to work together toward a common goal, and will be graded according to their collaborative approach to the project as well as the outcome.

Term Paper (3750 words [15 pages] for undergrads, 5000-6000 words [20-25 pages] for grads, 50%, DUE March 25)

You can write on pretty much any topic relating to our primary or secondary readings, providing you can justify it to me beforehand. It's a good idea to run your topic by me before you begin researching in earnest. Your term paper can certainly expand upon your seminar topic, providing it also takes in any early feedback from me, your respondent, and the class. All essays must conform to the latest MLA format and style of parenthetical citation.

Your paper should provide an original close reading of your primary text(s), carefully researched, theorized and documented, and contextualized within a broader awareness of the kinds of literary and theoretical issues we discuss in class.

You might have to do some digging to secure primary and secondary research materials, especially those with limited distribution. MacOdrum Library has respectable holdings in utopian studies, as a quick subject search will reveal. Moreover, many of these works in turn contain bibliographies that will point you to further sources. The Ottawa University Library and Ottawa Public Libraries are also at your disposal, along with Interlibrary Loans, J-STOR, LION, and Project Muse. But effective research (not to mention interlibrary loans) takes time, so don't leave it to the last minute.

If you need help getting started, or are having difficulty locating sources, check with me.

Submitting Assignments

Term papers must be submitted twice, both in hard copy and uploaded through the course website.

Term papers not submitted both on paper and digitally will not be graded, and will score 0.

Hard Copy Submission:

Please don't slip essays under my office door. Instead, either submit your hard copy in class, or write both our names and the course number on the front page, and hand them into the English Department Drop Box (Dunton Tower 1812).

To prevent the loss of assignments, it's a good idea to set the preferences of your word processor to save backup copies periodically, and to e-mail drafts to yourself. Responsibility for submitting assignments rests ultimately with you. I am not in the habit of losing student work; however, should your assignment become misplaced, you will be required to resubmit another copy upon request, or you will score 0. Be sure to retain a photocopy or print-out of all your work, including all research notes and rough drafts, until your final grade is registered.

Digital Submission

In addition to a hard copy, all students must submit a digital copy of each essay through CULearn on or before the essay deadline. Please don't e-mail assignments to me. It is important that you submit each assignment through CULearn, as doing so provides proof that you have submitted it on time. Assignments not submitted through CULearn will not be considered for grading, and will score 0.

* N.B. To avoid potential sanction, please retain all rough work. The instructor reserves the right to request all rough work, and to withhold the grade for any given assignment pending a supplemental oral examination by two professors.

Extensions, Late Assignments and Special Accommodations

- All assignments are expected to be submitted on time, unless you have: i) a medical note from a doctor explaining that you could not complete the assignment; ii) an explanatory note from the Paul Menton Centre (See Academic Accommodation, below); or iii) special permission for an extension from me.
- You may submit essays up to 3 days late without penalty; however, late papers will not receive extensive comments.
- Essays submitted more than 3 days late will be docked 5%/day, up to a maximum of 15%. Essays handed in more than 6 days past the due date will not be accepted, and will score 0. In other words, plan ahead, develop a work schedule, and stick to it. Any request for an extension beyond 3 days must be submitted by email to the instructor at least one week before the due date.

Delays do sometimes occur as a result of computer errors. However, responsibility for your work rests ultimately with you. Be sure to back up your work and print out hard copies regularly as you write. That way, if your computer fails, you can always locate another computer at the University to finish your work.

Documentation

You are expected to document any and all primary and secondary sources referred to (directly or indirectly) in your assignments, including sources for websites, musical, visual and electronic information. The MLA style of parenthetical references with a Works Cited page, as detailed in the MLA Handbook (7th ed.), is the only acceptable method of documentation (see <http://www.mla.org/style>).

It's your responsibility to educate yourself on how to avoid plagiarism through careful research habits and the proper documentation of sources. Any failure to document sources, whether deliberate or inadvertent, will carry heavy sanctions, and may result in a failing grade or expulsion (see Academic Integrity, below), so please double-check your Works Cited before submitting assignments. Make sure you know both the University's policies on plagiarism, and the MLA Handbook guidelines for referencing sources. If you're still in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism or about the legitimacy of a citation or reference, please ask me or your T.A., or check with the Academic Writing Centre and Writing Tutorial Service (See Helpful Student Services, below).

To avoid potential sanction, please retain all rough work. The instructor reserves the right to request all rough work, and to withhold the grade for any given assignment pending a supplemental oral examination by two professors.

Academic Integrity

Carleton University has a clear policy on academic integrity, including procedures to address academic misconduct (cheating, plagiarism, and other activities that violate academic integrity standards). Full information is in the Undergraduate Calendar under “Academic Regulations of the University” Section E14: <http://www.carleton.ca/cu0809uc/regulations/acadregsuniv14.html>.

It is particularly important in this class that students understand and meet academic integrity standards, and are sure they do not violate these standards through plagiarism. The following definition of plagiarism is taken from Carleton’s Academic Integrity Policy, Part VI (this definition also appears in the Undergraduate Calendar):

Plagiarism is presenting, whether intentional or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own. Plagiarism includes reproducing or paraphrasing portions of someone else's published or unpublished material, regardless of the source, and presenting these as one's own without proper citation or reference to the original source. Examples of sources from which the ideas, expressions of ideas or works of others may be drawn from include but are not limited to: books, articles, papers, literary compositions and phrases, performance compositions, chemical compounds, art works, laboratory reports, research results, calculations and the results of calculations, diagrams, constructions, computer reports, computer code/software, and material on the Internet.

Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to:

- submitting a takehome examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, paraphrased material, algorithms, formulae, scientific or mathematical concepts, or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- submitting a computer program developed in whole or in part by someone else, with or without modifications, as one's own;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks.

For more helpful information visit the Student Academic Success Centre page on academic integrity and citation: <http://www2.carleton.ca/sasc/advising-centre/academic-integrity>

Any secondary sources incorporated into your papers, including essays that I put on Reserve, must be cited appropriately. If you have any questions about when and how to cite sources, do not hesitate to ask either me or your T.A. If we suspect that an essay has been plagiarized either deliberately or inadvertently, we are required to submit the essay to the Dean, who will conduct a thorough investigation into the case and administer penalties. The penalties for plagiarism are very severe, ranging from failure in the course to expulsion from the university. It’s not worth the risk!

Carleton has other important policies regarding tests, examinations, and unauthorized resubmission of your work (that is, handing in the same paper in more than one class). Be sure you understand the standards so as to avoid any academic misconduct.

N.B. To avoid potential sanction, please retain all rough work. The instructor reserves the right to request all rough work, and to withhold the grade for any given assignment pending a supplemental oral examination by two professors.

Academic Accommodation

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term because of disability, pregnancy or religious obligations. Please review the course outline promptly and write to me with any requests for academic accommodation during the first two weeks of class, or as soon as possible after the need for accommodation is known to exist.

Students with disabilities requiring academic accommodations in this course must register with the Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) for a formal evaluation of disability-related needs. Documented disabilities could include but are not limited to mobility/physical impairments, specific Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/psychological disabilities, sensory disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and chronic medical conditions. Registered PMC students are required to contact the PMC, 613-520-6608, every term to ensure that your Instructor receives your Letter of Accommodation, no later than two weeks before the first assignment is due or the first in-class test/midterm requiring accommodations. If you only require accommodations for your formally scheduled exam(s) in this course, please submit your request for accommodations to PMC by Nov. 9, 2012 for the Fall term and March 8, 2013 for the Winter term. You can visit the Equity Services website to view the policies and to obtain more detailed information on academic accommodation at <http://carleton.ca/equity/accommodation>.

Helpful Student Services

Academic Writing Centre and Writing Tutorial Service (<http://www2.carleton.ca/sasc/writing-tutorial-service/>) provides one-on-one tutoring, free of charge, to help even the strongest writers improve their work. Book appointments online well before essay due dates. 4th floor MacOdrum Library (go to Learning Support Services Desk).

Student Academic Success Centre (SASC) (<http://www2.carleton.ca/sasc/>) offers academic advising for students, including educational planning, registering changes in your program or major, transfer credits, and scholarships and international exchange programs. 302TB.

Learning Support Services (LSS) (<http://www.carleton.ca/learningsupport>) offers many free programs and services to support student learning, including academic skills development workshops and info sessions, peer helpers, drop-in sessions on study skills, study rooms, etc. Learning Commons, 4th Floor MacOdrum Library.

Carleton Health and Counselling Services (<http://www.carleton.ca/health/>) offers comprehensive health care, including counselling of personal problems and emotional distress. 2600 Carleton Technology & Training Centre.

For other services go to Academic Writing Centre and Writing Tutorial Service (<http://www.carleton.ca/studentsupport/>).

Contacting your Instructor

I am available during my office hours to discuss issues directly related to the course, either in person or by phone. You can also send me a message by e-mail or leave a message on my office voice mail, any time of day or night, and I will respond in good time (usually within 3 working days).

E-mail is the most reliable means of contacting me. For a timely response, be sure to include the course number ("4709") in the subject line of your message.

Course Website <http://culearn.carleton.ca/>

The course website includes a glossary, supplemental readings, a tool for submitting your essays in digital form, a message board for scholarly discussions, and the definitive version of the course syllabus. Please remember that this space is a virtual extension of our classroom, and therefore subject to the University's conduct regulations. Respect your fellow classmates at all times. When in doubt, follow The Golden Rule of Netiquette:

Don't post any message you wouldn't read aloud in class.

To access the course site, you will first need a Student Computing Account (SCA). For account information, <http://www2.carleton.ca/ccs/services/accounts-and-passwords/student-computing-account>. For answers to general questions about CULearn, write to edc@carleton.ca. For general computing questions, visit <http://www2.carleton.ca/ccs/getting-help>. You can also visit the CCS Service Desk in 509 MacOdrum Library, or contact them at: 613-520-3700; ccs_service_desk@carleton.ca.

Copyright and ownership of class lectures remains vested with the instructor, and cannot be recorded, loaned, copied, reproduced, published, uploaded, or disseminated in any way.

Community Respect

If utopia teaches us one lesson, it's that respect for individual rights can exist only within the context of community rights. Please help to ensure the rights and comfort of all members of the class by respecting these guidelines:

- 1) Don't come to school or office hours if you're ill: you won't learn effectively, and you will make others sick. Presenteeism is a growing workplace issue, as it impairs overall productivity. It's a myth that once you are presenting symptoms, you are no longer contagious. Stay home and take care of yourself; then, once you're completely cured, ask me, your T.A. or a classmate about what you missed.
- 2) Avoid wearing strong perfumes or colognes. Strong scents are outlawed in some municipalities, as they can cause powerful allergic and asthmatic reactions that interfere with the health and learning of others.
- 3) Don't disturb the learning of others around you. Please avoid loud typing, texting and dining, and refrain from holding private conversations.

Course Schedule

January 11th Introduction

Supplemental:

John Winthrop, "City upon a Hill" (online)

Kenneth M. Roemer, "Defining America as Utopia," in Roemer, ed., *America As Utopia* (ILL)

Northrop Frye, "Varieties of Literary Utopias" (JSTOR)

Krishan Kumar, "Aspects of the Western Utopian Tradition" (SAGE)

Tom Moylan, "The utopian imagination" & "The literary utopia," from *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* (RSV)

January 18th Thomas More, Utopia

Supplemental:

David Halpin, "Utopianism and Education: The Legacy of Thomas More" (JSTOR)

Philip E. Wegner, "Utopia and the Birth of Nations," from *Imaginary Communities* (RSV)

Fredric Jameson, "Morus: The Generic Window," from *Archaeologies of the Future* (RSV)

Joel Nydahl, "From Millennium to Utopia Americana," in Roemer, ed., *America As Utopia* (ILL)

January 25th Edward Bellamy, Looking Backward

Selected: William Morris, "Bellamy's Looking Backward"

Supplemental:

Jean Pfaelzer, "Introduction," *The Utopian Novel in America, 1886-1896* (RSV)

Kenneth M. Roemer, "Utopia and Victorian Culture: 1888-99," in Roemer, ed., *America As Utopia* (ILL)

Sylvia Strauss, "Gender, Class, and Race in Utopia," in Patai, ed., *Looking Backward, 1988-1888:*

Essays on Edward Bellamy (RSV)

Howard P. Segal, *Technological Utopianism in American Culture*

Louis Marin, "Utopic Degeneration: Disneyland," in *Utopics: or, Spatial Play*

February 1st Alfred Bester, *The Stars My Destination*

Selected: Fredric Jameson, "Progress versus Utopia, or; Can We Imagine the Future?" (JSTOR)

Supplemental:

Tom Moylan, "The Dystopian Turn," from *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* (RSV)

Lyman Tower Sargent, "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited" (JSTOR)

Bloch, Ernst, and Theodor W. Adorno. "Something's Missing: a Discussion Between Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno on the Contradictions of Utopian Longing" (CULearn)

Darko Suvin, "SF and the Novum," in Lauretis et al., eds., *The Technological Imagination*

February 8th Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*

Selected: Jean Pfaelzer, "A State of Her Own; or, What Did Women Want?," from *The Utopian Novel in America, 1886-1896*

Supplemental:

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "A Woman's Utopia," in Kessler, ed., *Daring to Dream* (RSV)

Barbara C. Quissell, "The New World That Eve Made: Feminist Utopias Written by Nineteenth-Century Women," in Roemer, ed., *America As Utopia* (ILL)

Nan Albinski, "Utopia Reconsidered: Women Novelists and Nineteenth-Century Utopian Visions" (JSTOR)

Michael Gardiner, "Bakhtin's Carnival: Utopia as Critique," in *Utopian Studies* (MUSE)

February 15th Winter Break

February 22nd Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

Selected: Lisa Yaszek, "Afrofuturism, Science Fiction, and the History of the Future"

Supplemental:

Joanna Russ, "Recent Feminist Utopias," in *Future Females*

Maria Varsam, "Concrete Dystopia: Slavery and its Others," in *Dark Horizons* (RSV)

Michel Foucault, "Of other places" (JSTOR)

Lucy Sargisson, *Contemporary Feminist Utopianism* (MyiLibrary)

February 29th Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*

Selected: Tom Moylan, "The Critical Dystopia," from *Scraps of the Untainted Sky* (RSV)

Supplemental:

Ursula K. Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" (ILL)

Samuel R. Delany, "To Read The Dispossessed," in *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw* (ILL)

Herbert Marcuse, "Phantasy and Utopia," from *Eros and Civilization*

Peter Seyferth, "Anarchism and Utopia," in *Contemporary Anarchist Studies* (MyiLibrary)

Fredric Jameson, "World Reduction in Le Guin," from *Archaeologies of the Future* (RSV)

Ruth Kinna, "Anarchism and the Politics of Utopia," in *Anarchism and Utopianism* (ILL)

March 7th Lauren Groff, *Arcadia*

Selected: Lucy Sargisson, "Strange Places: Estrangement, Utopianism, and Intentional Communities" (Art Full Text)

Supplemental:

Lisa Garforth, "Green Utopias: Beyond Apocalypse, Progress, and Pastoral" (Art Full Text)

Mark Kruger, "The Concept of Individualism at East Wind Community" (Art Full Text)

Karl Mannheim, "The Second Form of the Utopian Mentality: The Liberal-Humanitarian Idea," from *Ideology and Utopia*

Isaiah Berlin, "The Pursuit of the Ideal," in *Four Essays on Liberty*

Slavoj Žižek, "The Secret Clauses of the Liberal Utopia" (Springer)

March 14th In-class Screening, Title: TBA

Selected: Fredric Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture" (JSTOR)

Supplemental:

Raymond Williams, "[Utopia and Science Fiction](#)" (online)

Peter Fitting, "Unmasking the Real: Critique and Utopia in Recent SF Films," in Dark Horizons (RSV)

March 21st Max Brooks, World War Z

Selected: Raphael Baccolini, "The Persistence of Hope in Dystopian Science Fiction" (MLA)

Supplemental:

Bill Ashcroft, The Ambiguous Necessity of Utopia: Post-colonial Literatures and the Persistence of Hope" (Social Sciences Full Text)

Philip Couton, "Movement as Utopia" (SAGE)

Aalya Ahmad, "Gray is the New Black: Race, Class, and Zombies". In Generation Zombie: Essays on the Living Dead in Modern Culture (RSV)

Ruth Levitas and Lucy Sargisson, "Utopia in Dark Times: Optimism/Pessimism and Utopia/Dystopia," in Dark Horizons (RSV)

Susan Sontag, "The Imagination of Disaster". <http://www.commentarymagazine.com/article/the-imagination-of-disaster>.

March 28th 2K Games, Bioshock

Selected: Ralph Pordzik, "The posthuman future of man: anthropocentrism and the other of technology in Anglo- American science fiction" (Gale)

Supplemental:

Alexander Galloway, 'Warcraft and Utopia,' in Critical Digital Studies

Ben Hourigan, "[The Utopia of Open Space in Role-Playing Videogames](#)" (online)

Donna Haraway, "A Manifesto for Cyborgs" (T&F)

McKenzie Wark, "Atopia: on Vice City," in [Gam3r The0ry 2.0](#) (online)

April 4th Symposium: Group presentations

. . . . and After the End?