

**Carleton University**  
**Winter 2021**  
**Department of English**  
**DIGH 4002 / ENGL 4125: Digital Culture and the Text I**  
**“Digital Dystopias”**

**Prerequisites:** DIGH 2002 or ENGL 2401 and fourth-year standing, or permission of the Department.

**TIME:** Monday 11:35-2:25

**Location: Online**

**Format: Blended**

**Instructor:** Prof. Brian Greenspan

**Office Hours:** Tuesdays, 2:00-4:00 via MS Teams

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

## **I. Course description**

A survey of utopian and dystopian thinking around media and technology.

The rising popularity of dystopian narratives is hardly surprising, given the daily barrage of news stories about climate change, mass surveillance, digital or biological viruses, and artificially intelligent machines. What is surprising is that even the most disturbing stories of technological apocalypse (both real and imagined) continue to inspire utopian hope, and to shape our identities in ways that are progressive and collective.

This seminar will explore the role of new media and technologies in contemporary fiction. We will read utopian and dystopian narratives alongside studies of technology, social media, progressive social movements, intentional communities, e-literature, digital games, and popular subcultures. We will also explore new digital tools for analyzing texts, authoring stories and games, visualizing data, and building simulations in order to better evaluate the discourses (whether hopeful or apocalyptic) that have always surrounded new media.

Prerequisites: DIGH 2002 or ENGL 2401 and fourth-year standing, or permission of the English Department.

**II. Preclusions:** None.

## **III. Learning outcomes:**

Students will gain exposure to the field of Utopian Studies and the role played by media and technology within the utopian genre. They will learn to analyze media and technology critically, and gain literacy in new media by analyzing digital texts and artefacts in different media, using various tools and platforms. They will learn new approaches to humanities scholarship enabled by digital media, and gain exposure to computational resources and platforms. By delivering seminar presentations, they will acquire skills in presenting their ideas persuasively through spoken, written, visual, and procedural rhetorics. Through ongoing discussion and debate, they will develop strategies for evaluating digital culture critically.

## **IV. Required 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.**

Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*

Nalo Hopkinson, *Midnight Robber*

Alena Graedon, *The Word Exchange*

Tim Maughan, *Infinite Detail*

Cory Doctorow, *Walkaway: A Novel*

Tracey Fullerton, *Walden, a game* <https://www.waldengame.com>

Osmotic Studios, *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You*, “Episode One: The Clocks Were Striking Thirteen” (available at <http://store.steampowered.com>)

*The Electronic Literature Collection* Vol.3 <http://collection.eliterature.org/3>

plus various online, secondary, and supplemental readings, along with various digital tools and platforms.

Printed novels and utopias will be available at Octopus Books, 116 Third Avenue (at Bank St.), and online at: <https://shop.octopusbooks.ca/ENGL4125>. *Walden, a game* can be [purchased online](#), while *Orwell: Keeping an Eye on You* is available through the [Steam platform](#). Other electronic texts are available freely online. Most secondary and supplemental readings can be found online, on Reserve, or through MacOdrum Library’s digital holdings, although a few must be ordered in advance through Interlibrary Loans (ILL).

## V. Blended Instruction:

This is a blended course, meaning some of our classes will take place synchronously online at our regularly scheduled class time, while others may include asynchronous online video seminars, modules, forum discussions, and other activities. Each class, whether synchronous or asynchronous, will have associated readings--usually novels or short stories--that will form the basis of our discussion.

All online Forum Discussions will be linked to our **CULearn** course site. Our synchronous meetings will take place using the **Zoom** platform; an ID Code for each week’s Zoom meeting will be posted in advance on **CULearn**. Those who install the Zoom app are encouraged to create a free Zoom account, **preferably using their [email.carleton.ca](mailto:email.carleton.ca) email account**.

You will not be invited, but not required, to enable your camera or microphone for our Zoom meetings, and will be expected to participate in our discussions verbally and through the Zoom chat window. You can join our Zoom meetings with the current link provided on CULearn either using the Zoom app, or through a standard web browser. You can also dial into any class meeting by phone, using the Zoom ID Codes that will be provided in advance on CULearn and one of [Zooms’ toll-free numbers](#):

+1 647 374 4685 (Ontario)

+1 647 558 0588 (Ontario)

Local numbers for users located outside of Ontario can be found at: <https://zoom.us/j/acKFv2t3c>.

For instructions on installing or running Zoom, please visit Carleton Online: <https://carleton.ca/online>.

For more CULearn support, please visit CULearn Support: <https://carleton.ca/culearnsupport/students>.

## VI. Evaluation

1) Seminars	2 x 20-minute presentations + discussion	30%
2) Critical Response	5 minutes	5%
3) Short Assignment	500 words, <b>DUE</b> March 8	5%
4) Collaboration	in-class and online	20%
5) Term Paper or Project	3750 words (15 pages) or equivalent for undergrads; 5000-6000 words for grads, <b>DUE</b> April 5	40%

Standing in a course is determined by the course instructor subject to the approval of the Faculty Dean. This means that grades submitted by the instructor may be subject to revision. No grades are final until they have been approved by the Dean.

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### **Seminars** (2 x 20-minute presentations + discussion, 30%)

For your seminars, 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. Be sure to address the week's required readings in detail. You are encouraged to address additional articles from our list of *Further Readings*, and any other critical works or projects that inform your topic.

You'll be graded on both the depth and originality of your research, as well as the success with which you present your material and engage the class. A provocative and engaging seminar, solidly grounded in research, is better than one that is overly recondite and jargon-laden. Your ultimate goal is not to provide all the answers, but 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 speak with your classmates, and 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, provided in advance of the beginning of your presentation. You should also provide either a **handout** or **slideshow** presentation 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, including online sources and tools.

It's up to you whether to present your material conversationally, reveal it Socratically, or read it in the form of a conference paper.

You also have the option of preparing an online presentation, to be posted to **CULearn** or **CUPortfolio** **at least 24 hours in advance** of our class time.

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 encouraged 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.

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 a classmate's seminar 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 you choose to respond.** We'll discuss all Critical Responses at the start of class.

### **Short Assignment** (500 words, **DUE** March 8, 5%)

This short, computer-assisted text analysis assignment will be fully explained in class. Students will share their findings with the class on the scheduled due date.

## **Collaboration** (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 collaboration. 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.

**Term Paper or Project** (3750 words [15 pages or equivalent] for undergrads, 5000-6000 words [20-25 pages or equivalent] for grads, **DUE** April 5, 40%)

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 very good idea to run your topic by me before you begin researching in earnest. Your term paper or project can certainly expand upon your seminar topic or group project, providing it also takes in any early feedback from me and the class. All written components must conform to the latest MLA format and style of parenthetical citation.

Your term paper or project should provide an original exploration of a topic relating to class material, and should be researched, theorized, fully documented, and contextualized within a broader awareness of the kinds of literary and theoretical issues we discuss in class. While you are certainly encouraged to include a digital component, it is not required: remember, paper prototypes are often as effective as digital implementations. Full evaluative criteria for the term project will be discussed 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, Project Muse, and other online collections. 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**

All assignments must be submitted through CULearn on or before the 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, including digital files. 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 or extended assignments will not receive extensive feedback.
- Assignments submitted more than 3 days late will be docked 5%/day, up to a maximum of 15%. Assignments 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 one 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 (8<sup>th</sup> ed.), is the only acceptable method of documentation** (see <http://www.mla.org/style>). For quick guidelines and examples, see [https://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/documents/MLAStyle\\_QuickGuide\\_Update\\_Sept\\_2014.pdf](https://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/documents/MLAStyle_QuickGuide_Update_Sept_2014.pdf).

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 are 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.

## **VII. PLAGIARISM AND 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 10.1:

<https://calendar.carleton.ca/undergrad/regulations/academicregulationsoftheuniversity/academic-integrity-and-offenses-of-conduct/#academic-integrity-policy>

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):

The University Senate defines plagiarism as "presenting, whether intentionally or not, the ideas, expression of ideas or work of others as one's own." Plagiarism can include, but is not limited to:

- 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;
- submitting a take-home examination, essay, laboratory report or other assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else;
- using ideas or direct, verbatim quotations, or paraphrased material, concepts or ideas without appropriate acknowledgment in any academic assignment;
- using another's data or research findings;
- failing to acknowledge sources through the use of proper citations when using another's works and/or failing to use quotation marks;
- handing in substantially the same piece of work for academic credit more than once without prior written permission of the course instructor in which the submission occurs.

Plagiarism is a form of intellectual theft. It is a serious offence that cannot be resolved directly with the course's instructor. The Associate Deans of the Faculty conduct a rigorous investigation, including an interview with the student, when an instructor suspects a piece of work has been plagiarized. Penalties are not trivial. They can include failure of the assignment, failure of the entire course, or suspension from a program. For more information please go to:

<https://carleton.ca/registrar/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.

For more helpful information visit the Academic Advising Centre: <http://carleton.ca/academicadvising>.

### **VIII. Request for Academic Accommodation**

You may need special arrangements to meet your academic obligations during the term. For an accommodation request, the processes are as follows:

**Pregnancy obligation:** 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. For more details click [here](#).

**Religious obligation:** 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. For more details click [here](#).

**Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:** The Paul Menton Centre for Students with Disabilities (PMC) provides services to students with Learning Disabilities (LD), psychiatric/mental health disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), chronic medical conditions, and impairments in mobility, hearing, and vision. If you have a disability requiring academic accommodations in this course, please contact PMC at 613-520- 6608 or [pmc@carleton.ca](mailto:pmc@carleton.ca) for a formal evaluation. If you are already registered with the PMC, contact your PMC coordinator to send me your Letter of Accommodation at the beginning of the term, and no later than two weeks before the first in-class scheduled test or exam requiring accommodation (if applicable). After requesting accommodation from PMC, meet with me to ensure accommodation arrangements are made. Please consult the PMC website for the deadline to request accommodations for the formally-scheduled exam (if applicable).

### **Survivors of Sexual Violence**

As a community, Carleton University is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working and living environment where sexual violence will not be tolerated, and where survivors are supported through academic accommodations as per Carleton's Sexual Violence Policy. For more information about the services available at the university and to obtain information about sexual violence and/or support, visit: <https://carleton.ca/equity/sexual-assault-support-services>

### **Accommodation for Student Activities**

Carleton University recognizes the substantial benefits, both to the individual student and for the university, that result from a student participating in activities beyond the classroom experience. Reasonable accommodation must be provided to students who compete or perform at the national or international level. 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. <https://carleton.ca/senate/wp-content/uploads/Accommodation-for-Student-Activities-1.pdf>

### **IX. Helpful Student Services**

**CU Online** has lots of great advice for managing online courses: <https://carleton.ca/online>.

The **Centre for Student Academic Support** (<http://carleton.ca/csas/>) offers valuable support for writing and research,

such as **Writing Services** (<https://carleton.ca/csas/writing-services>).

**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 and support, visit <http://www.carleton.ca/studentsupport>.

## **X. Contacting Your Instructor**

I'm available for telephone or online meetings during my virtual office hours on a first-come, first-serve basis to discuss issues directly related to the course. Office hours will be posted on our CULearn course site.

E-mail is the most reliable means of contacting me. You can send me a message by e-mail from your Carleton account any time of day or night, and I will respond in good time (usually within 3 working days). For a timely response, be sure to use your Carleton e-mail account, and to include the course number ("4002") in the subject line of your message.

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**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, visit the Information Technology Services (ITS) website (<http://carleton.ca/its>). For answers to general questions about CULearn, write to [edc@carleton.ca](mailto:edc@carleton.ca). For general computing questions, visit <http://www2.carleton.ca/ccs/getting-help>.

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