Week 1: Intro to Dystopia

Week 2: Character & Plot

Week 3: Setting & Point of View

Week 4: Scenarios – Environmental & Nuclear Disaster

Week 5: Scenarios – Biological & Social Disaster

Week 6: Purpose of Dystopia – Warn, Entertain & Imagine
INTRODUCTION:

Dystopia: Critical of current state

- Change thought and action
- Solutions specific or holistic or both
- Need the right conditions for solution
- Positive, supportive relationships

Examples: A Perfect Day & Staying Afloat
WHAT IS SOCIAL DYSTOPIA?

Fiction concerned with:
“a group in society that has taken control over the lives of the masses and curved it to fit the needs of their beliefs and practices.”
WHAT IS BIOLOGICAL DYSTOPIA?

Fiction focused on:
Disease pandemics that cause social panic and result in extreme control measures or simply the end of the human species.
Focal point = Imbalance exists in social freedom or physical health of a population

- Imbalance is useful to the powerful -> justifies extreme control to contain threat
- Fear fuels control
Solzhenitsyn, author of *Cancer Ward, Gulag Archipelago*:

- Physical disease of cancer = metaphor for social disease of maligned thinking
  - Powerful see cancer as dissenting thought
  - Oppressed see cancer as authoritarian control
Solzhenitsyn, *Gulag Archipelago*:

- If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them.
- But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?”
Materialistic social systems reduce people to one dimension

- But people are multi-dimensional
- Right and left can reduce people to one facet and prevent spontaneous, open thought and action
DYSTOPIA & PLACE

A healthy good place =
- Relationship between bodies in that space
- Balanced, mutually affectionate relationships

Not-good place -> Dystopia =
- Only bodies in a space
- Imbalanced, exploitative relationships
PURPOSE OF SOCIAL/BIO DYSTOPIA

- Use point of view, plot, character and setting
- Build biological/social dystopia scenarios
- Make statement about healthy and unhealthy human relationships
ARGUMENT: SUBLIME/GROTESQUE

- Bio dystopia uses sublime & grotesque images as metaphors for diseased social relationships
- Social dystopia uses romantic values to depict social rebellion/revival
- Dystopia as serious criticism of progress narrative
ROMANTICISM & REBELLION

- Height between 1800-1850
- Anti-modern, anti-Enlightenment, anti-rationalism, anti-industrial revolution
- 5 Is = imagination, intuition, individuality, idealism, inspiration
- Elevate folk, past, spontaneity, heroic individual
ROMANTICISM & REBELLION

Beethoven – 48:25 to 48:43
Excites thoughts, emotions, takes us beyond ourselves = extraordinary experience

Burke: whatever excites ideas of pain and danger, is terrible, induces pain, fear and pleasure simultaneously

View sublime from a safe vantage
ROMANTIC SUBLIME
ROMANTIC GROTESQUE

Strange, mysterious, magnificent
Fantastic, hideous, ugly, unpleasant
Distorted forms – animals/plants
Twins, mixes, transitional creatures
Medieval grotesque is comedic -> 19th c.
Grotesque = pitiable
ROMANTIC GROTESQUE
ACTIVITY: APPLY CONCEPTS

For one reading, discuss how characters/plot/setting/viewpoint are affected by either:

- **Romanticism** = rebel heroism, anti-reason, anti-industry, glorify past, nature
- **Sublime** = Pain, danger, fear pleasure combined, extraordinary experience
- **Grotesque** = Strange, mysterious, hideous, ugly, unpleasant, mixed, pitiable
LAST OF O-FORMS

Theme: grotesque as pitiable & threatening

- Physical disease -> mutation to DNA
- Cold relationship between father and daughter -> Trevin victim to Caprice’s intellect
- Realism vs. romance -> money vs. dream of zoo
- Ambiguous, frightening ending -> Caprice’s future as fake O-form child?
MACHINE STOPS

Theme: romanticism & social rebellion

- Underground, centrally organized, machine-run society
- Isolated individuals with no wants unmet by machine – superficial relations
- Fear of being alone, being in touch with nature, being in physical contact with others
- Rebellion by one romantic hero – anticipates self-destruction of the machine
EIGHTH WONDER

Theme: sublime & social construction

- Social betterment = self-sacrifice for long term
- From fear/inaction to trust/cooperation to improvements
- Creating a society’s history -> record history & future in structures/ poetry/music
- Suffering co-exists with success
- Romantic leader -> cooperative effort
Social dystopia =
- Umbrella scenario for dystopia: other scenarios fall under it
- Based on imbalanced social relationships/fear
- Caused by biological, nuclear, environmental disasters
- Bio dystopia metaphor for diseased social relationships
**Films: Soylent Green/Matrix**

**Matrix** = defeat a system enslaving humans:
- Neo finds reality/motive to resist matrix by joining Trinity’s group – positive bonds

**Soylent Green** = expose a system eating people:
- Thorn survives the NYC prison with friend Sol – comradery/support - friendship