

## Utopias and Visions of the Future

Lectures: Monday 10:30—12:00

Tutorials: Wednesday 10:30—12:00

Instructor: Adrian Mioc ([amioc@uwo.ca](mailto:amioc@uwo.ca))

Course supervisor: Calin Mihailescu

### Course Description

In this course, students will explore visions of the “best place” and “worst place” through a diverse selection of texts from antiquity to the twentieth-century, including works of literature, philosophy, political science, and religion. Such imaginative places often involve intricate proposals for political reform, on one hand, and fantastic experiments in social engineering, on the other. We will examine how utopias are constructed and investigate what purposes they serve in the “real” societies that produce them. Key texts include *Genesis*, Plato’s *Republic*, More’s *Utopia*, Voltaire’s *Candide*, Zamyatin’s *We*, Orwell’s *1984* and Voinovich’s *Moscow 2042*.

### Course Content and Aims

This is a survey of major literary, plastic and filmic works dealing with the notion of utopia as imagined by various authors in the past 3000 years. We will consider works describing eutopias (good place) as well as dystopias (bad place). CLC 2110F was designed to offer literary examples that transcend local and temporal boundaries. We will analyze the techniques and themes that appear recurrently in works on utopia from a number of European countries. All works will be available in **English translation**. The course aims to achieve the following:

- show the emergence of utopia as a concept applicable not only to literature but also to political science and religion
- demonstrate the recurrence of utopian scenarios regardless of historical period or civilization
- analyze the conditions in which utopia has evolved (or not) from its early beginnings
- deal with various controversies pertaining to the viability of the concept of utopia
- reflect on the tensions that inevitably emerge in such worlds
- investigate the different historical backgrounds from which such scenarios arise
- illustrate, on the one hand, the differences between eutopias and dystopias and, on the other hand, their common features
- explore key motifs and themes of the genre, e.g., *locus amoenus* (pleasant place), the absence of the idea of property, the image of the leader in such closed communities, imperfections within a perfect world etc.

### Learning Outcomes

It is expected that, upon the completion of this course, the students will have:

- acquired the knowledge of various major works that deal with utopias from outside the English-speaking realm
- understood the common patterns recurring in such utopian scenarios with respect to their different backgrounds

- grasped the way in which utopias still reflect social development over time
- evaluated the discrepancy between the 'good place' and the 'bad place'.
- appreciated the relevance of approaching aesthetic phenomena not only in the context of contemporary literary norms but also from a political, social and even economic point of view
- increased critical awareness of these imaginary places
- gained insight into the differences between various utopian scenarios
- improved their ability to express themselves on these and other related topics orally (through in-class presentations) and in writing (through essays and exams).

### **Course Guidelines**

Students are expected to attend all lectures and to complete all required readings before coming to class. Class presentations (which are not to be longer than 5 minutes) should be articulate, informative and provide personal analytic touch. Essays must be submitted within the deadline.

### **Syllabus**

**Sept 14** Introduction: What is Utopia, Eutopia, and Dystopia?

#### **A. Philosophy of the City**

**Sept 16** Plato, *Republic*, Books 2-5 (357a-476e), 7 (514a-519d; 531d-535a), 9 (571a-583b; 10 (595a-601c); on one-day reserve shelf at Weldon

**Sept 21** Tutorial Plato

#### **B. Beginnings and Endings**

**Sept 23** Hesiod, *Works and Days* (online) <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/works.htm> (from (ll. 109-120) "First of all the deathless gods who dwell on Olympus..." to (ll. 170-201) "and bitter sorrows will be left for mortal men, and there will be no help against evil.")

Old Testament: *Genesis*: 1-11:9

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=genesis%201-11:9;&version=50;>

New Testament: *Revelation*, chapters 1, 4-22

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=revelation%201;&version=50;>

**Sept 28** Tutorial

Supplementary readings:

*Exodus*: 1-6:13, 7:1-14:31, 19:1-20:21, 31:18-32:35

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=exodus%201-20;&version=50;>

*Deuteronomy*: 5:1-8:20, 15:1-19:21, 21:10-26:19

<http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=deuteronomy%205-25;&version=50;>

**Sept 30** Augustine, *City of God* (online)

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.iv.html>

## Oct 5 Tutorial

### C. Eutopias

Oct 7 Thomas More, *Utopia*

Oct 12 Tutorial

Rabelais, "Abbey of Thélème" (excerpts)

<http://www.historyguide.org/intellect/rabelais.html>

Supplementary readings:

Bacon, *The New Atlantis* (excerpts)

<http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext00/nwat11h.htm>

Campanella, *City of the Sun* (excerpts) <http://www.levity.com/alchemy/citysun.html>

Oct 14 **First Paper Due**

Oct 19 Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto* (online)

<http://www.anu.edu.au/polsci/marx/classics/manifesto.html>

Oct 21 Movie time: *Serenity* (2005) dir. Joss Whedon

Oct 19 Tutorial

### D. Dystopias

Oct 26 Voltaire, *Candide*

Supplementary reading:

Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origins of Inequality* (online)

[http://www.constitution.org/jjr/ineq\\_01.htm](http://www.constitution.org/jjr/ineq_01.htm)

Oct 28 Voltaire; Dostoevsky, "The Grand Inquisitor" from *The Brothers Karamazov* (Part Two, Book 5, ch. 5); on one-day reserve shelf at Weldon

Nov 2 Tutorial

Nov 4 Zamyatin, *We*

Nov 9 Tutorial: Zamyatin

Nov 11 Orwell, *1984* (i)

Nov 16 Orwell *1984* (ii)

Nov 18 Tutorial: Orwell

Nov 23 Voinovich, *Moscow 2042* (i)

Nov 25 Voinovich, *Moscow 2042* (ii)

Nov 30 Tutorial: Voinovich

Dec 2 Closing remarks: the contemporary fate of utopianism

Dec 2 **Final Paper due**

## Course Requirements

### A. Class Participation (20%)

As part of the grade for participation, students are expected to participate in class discussions.

Notes on attendance: Attendance will be taken at the *beginning* of each class. If you have a legitimate reason to miss class (sickness, family crisis, religious holiday), please contact me beforehand so that we can arrange for you to make up any missed material. Missed classes and/or lack of class participation can add up and adversely affect your class participation grade.

## **B. Papers (50%)**

### **First paper (20%):** 3-4 pages

Topics will be handed out two weeks before the due date.

### **Second paper (30%):** 6-8 pages

The second paper is to be written on a topic of your choice. All students are expected to have their topics approved during office hours. It would be a good idea to begin thinking about the final paper as early as possible in the semester.

## **C. Final Exam (30%)**

The final exam will consist of essay questions and quote identifications based on assigned readings.

### **Required Texts**

Thomas More, *Utopia* (Dover)

Voltaire, *Candide* (Penguin)

Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We* (Modern Library)

George Orwell, *1984* (York: Harcourt)

Vladimir Voinovich, *Moscow 2042* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich)

### **Books on one-day reserve at Weldon:**

Plato, *Republic*

Fyodor Dostoevsky, "The Grand Inquisitor" (from *The Brothers Karamazov*) (Part Two, Book 5, ch. 5).

### **Recommended Texts**

Bible (New Revised Standard Version)

Marx and Engels, *Communist Manifesto* (Penguin)

Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (Hackett)

### **Definition of Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offense Policy in the Western Academic Calendar). Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's **verbatim** or **paraphrased** text in one's own written work without immediate reference.

Verbatim text must be surrounded by quotation marks or indented if it is longer than four lines. A reference must follow right after borrowed material (usually the author's name and page number). Without immediate reference to borrowed material, a list of sources at the end of a written assignment does not protect a writer against the possible charge of plagiarism. The University of Western Ontario uses a plagiarism-checking site called Turnitin.com.

### **Absenteeism**

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments must apply to the Academic Counseling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department.