**Lit 99: Utopia/Dystopia: The Political Imagination in Literature and Film**

Spring 2018

TTh 1:15-2:30, Kravis 166

**John Farrell** **Office Hours:**

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The utopian idea...keeps alive the possibility of a world qualitatively distinct from this one and takes the form of the stubborn negation of all that is. –Fredric Jameson

If we only wanted to be happy it would be easy; but we want to be happier than other people, which is almost always difficult, since we think them happier than they are. –Montesquieu, *Maximes*

A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias. –Oscar Wilde

The founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness they might originally project, have invariably recognized it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the virgin soil as a cemetery, and another portion as the site of a prison.

–Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*

When the people are being beaten with a stick, they are not much happier if it is called "[*the People's Stick*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_People%27s_Stick)*.*" –Mikhail Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy*

Men can only be happy when they do not assume that the object of life is happiness.

–George Orwell

**Books:**

Atwood, Margaret, The Handmaid’s Tale (Anchor) 978-0385490818

Bellamy, Edward, Looking Backward, 2000-1887 (Oxford World Classics) 978-0199552573

Bruce, Susan, ed., Three Early Modern Utopias 978-0199537990

Burgess, Anthony, A Clockwork Orange (Norton) B00ES27NDS

Huxley, Aldous, Brave New World and Brave New World Revisited (Harper Perennial) 978-0060776091

Ishiguro, Kazuo, Never Let Me Go (Vintage) 978-1400078776

Orwell, George, 1984 (Signet Classics) 978-0451524935

Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, The Social Contract, A Discourse on the Origins of Inequality, etc. (Digireads) 978-1420926972

Skinner, B. F., Walden Two (Macmillan) B002HANOLS

Shakespeare, William, The Tempest (Folger) 978-0743482837

Swift, Jonathan, Gulliver’s Travels, rev. ed (Penguin, 2003) B00I8Y92T0

**Films**: Stanley Kubrick, A Clockwork Orange; Lana & Lilly Wachowski, The Matrix

**Classes:**

The Garden of Eden, Genesis 1-3[[1]](#footnote-1); Homer, “The Shield of Achilles”\*; Auden, “The Shield of Achilles”\*: Jan 16

Lawgivers: Plutarch, “Lycurgus”\*; Plato’s Republic, Book Seven\*: Jan 18

The Opening of Old World: Thomas More, Utopia (in Bruce): Jan 23 & 25

The Opening of Old World: Montaigne, “Of Cannibals,”\*; Shakespeare, The Tempest:

Jan 30 & Feb 1

The Wonders of Man: Sophocles, *from* Antigone\*; Bacon, The New Atlantis & Neville, The Isle of Pines (in Bruce, Three Early Modern Utopias): Feb 6

The First Dystopia: Gulliver’s Travels: Feb 8 & 13

The Best of All Possible Worlds: Pope, *from* The Essay on Man\*; Adam Smith, *from* The Wealth of Nations\*; Madison, Federalist Papers 51\*: Feb 15

Voltaire, Candide\*: Feb 20

The Loss of Nature: Rousseau, *from* The Social Contract & Discourse on the Origins of Inequality: Feb 22

The Return to Nature: Thoreau, “Were I Lived, and What I Lived For”\*; Wordsworth Poems\*: Feb 27

The Path to Happiness: Marx, The Communist Manifesto\*: Mar 1

An American Utopia: Bellamy, Looking Backward: Mar 6 & 8

SPRING BREAK: MAR 13 & 15

Dystopian Reproduction: Atwood, The Handmaid’s Tale: Mar 20 & 22

The Elimination of Unhappiness: Huxley, Brave New World: Mar 27 & 29

Beyond Freedom and Dignity: Skinner, Walden Two: April 3 & 5

The Nightmare Future: Orwell, 1984: April 10 & 12

The Joys of Dystopia: Burgess, A Clockwork Orange: April 17 & 19

The Experience Machine: Wachowski & Wachowski, The Matrix: April 24

Love in Dystopia: Ishiguro, Never Let Me Go: Apr 26, May 1

**Final Exam for Seniors** (25%): Thursday May 3 at 9AM in Kravis 166

**Final Exam** (25%)**:** Tuesday, May 8 at 2PM in Kravis 166

**Essays:** First Essay (20%): 2000 words due by email Friday, Feb 23 at noon; revision due Sunday, Mar 4 at noon.

Second Essay (30%): 3000 words due by email Friday, April 27 at noon.

**Class Participation** (25%)**:** Students who attend all but one class with book or printout in hand and consistently make A-level contributions to the discussions will receive an A not only for participation and but also on the final exam. Students who attend all but one class with book or printout in hand but participate less often in the discussions will not receive a participation grade lower than their grade on the final exam. Otherwise participation and final exam grades will not be related. Additional assignments will also be included in the participation grade.

Acceptable excuses include documented medical conditions. Unacceptable excuses include pre-scheduled appointments and travel arrangements.

**Links to Additional Resources on Sakai and** [**www.johnfarrellonline.com**](http://www.johnfarrellonline.com)**:**

[Thirteen Steps Toward a Successful Literary Analysis](http://www.johnfarrellonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Thirteen-Steps-toward-a-Successful-Literary-Analysis.pdf)

[Technical Aspects of Writing](http://www.johnfarrellonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Technical-Aspects-of-Writing.pdf).

Punctuation, *from* Johnson, Handbook of Good English

**Electronic Devices:** None will be used during the class unless otherwise stated.

**Further Utopian/Dystopian Reading**

Aristophanes, *The Assembly of Women* (391 BC)

Christine de Pisan, *The Book of the City of Ladies* (1405)

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1496)

Tommasso di Campanella, *The City of the Sun* (1623)

Mary Astell, *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest* (1694)

Samuel Johnson, Review of Soame Jenyns, *A Free Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil* (1757)

Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790)

Marquis de Condorcet, *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Spirit* (1795)

Charles Fourier, *The Theory of the Four Movements* (1808)

Robert Owen, *A New View of Society* (1813)

Henri de Saint-Simon, *The New Christianity* (1825)

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *What Is Property?* (1840)

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850)

Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance* (1852)

Nikolai Chernyshevsky, *What Is To Be Done?* (1863)

Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1861) (to be compared with *Never Let Me Go*)

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *Notes from Underground* (1864) and “The Grand Inquisitor” section from Book Five, chapter five of *The Brothers Karamazov* (1880)

Samuel Butler, *Erewhon* (1872)

Mikhail Bakunin, [*Statism and Anarchy*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statism_and_Anarchy)(1873)

William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (1890)

Oscar Wilde, “The Soul of Man under Socialism,” in *Intentions* (1891)

Vladimir Ilych Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?* (1902)

Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We* (1921)

Franz Kafka, *The Trial* (1925)

Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (1929)

Friedrich von Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944)

Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945)

Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty” (1958), in *Four Essays on Liberty* (1969)

Muriel Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961)—a school novel to be compared with *Never Let Me Go*

Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Lathe of Heaven* (1971)

[Alexander Solzhenitsyn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleksandr_Solzhenitsyn), [*The Gulag Archipelago*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Gulag_Archipelago), vol 1 (1973)

Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed* (1974)

Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976)

Frank E. and Fritzie P. Manuel, *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (1982)

Milan Kundera, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (1984)

Howard Segal, *Technological Utopianism in American Culture* (1985)

Fredric Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (2007)

Barbara Taylor and Keith Goodwin, *The Politics of Utopia: A Study in Theory and Practice*

(2009)

Svetlana Alexievich, *Secondhand Time* (2017)

Chris Jennings, *Paradise Now: The Story of American Utopianism* (2017)

Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent, The Utopia Reader, 2nd ed. (2017)

1. Starred readings available on Sakai. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)