

Political Science 292, Spring 2005
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:20-3:30, 338 PPHAC

UTOPIAS, DYSTOPIAS, AND MANIFESTOS: THE IMAGINATION OF POLITICAL ALTERNATIVES

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Office Hours: Wednesday 10:30-12, Thursday 3:45-5, and by appointment

From *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, tenth edition:

utopia *n* [*Utopia*, imaginary and ideal country in *Utopia* (1516) by Sir Thomas More, fr. Gk an indefinitely remote place **2** *often cap*: a government and social conditions **3**: an impractical scheme for social government

dystopia *n* [NL, fr. dys+topia (as in utopia)] (ca. 1950) **1**: an imaginary place where people lead dehumanized and often fearful lives **2**: ANTI-UTOPIA **2** — **dystopian**

manifesto *n*, pl **–tos** or **–toes** [It, denunciation, manifest, fr. *manifestare* to manifest, fr. L, fr. *manifestus*] (1647): a written statement declaring publicly the intentions, motives or views of its issuer.

During the Cold War the discussion of competing forms of political and economic systems thrived. When the Wall between East and West Germany fell and the Soviet Union dissolved, this discussion largely came to a halt. Today considerations of alternatives are often dismissed as utopian. This dismissal suggests that such visions are both needed and feared as all utopias convey a critical perspective on present ideas and practices. Sometimes expressing criticism is safer in the form of a utopia, a story about a place that does not exist (u-topos: no place), or at least not yet (no time). Conversely, manifestos are perceived as more threatening because they signal a prelude to action aimed at rocking the boat. In either case, an author inserts a vision into a world that others may perceive as smoothly or inevitably transitioning from past to future. Such visions multiply the available accounts of what is possible or desirable. Or, in the case of dystopias (the imagination of worst possible societies), we may become aware of dangerous tendencies present in our own experiences. To envision alternatives is to gain a critical distance from familiar and taken-for-granted worldviews such that new thoughts and new actions become possible. In this sense, we will trouble the distinction between “serious” and utopian political thought in order to consider the political significance of writing itself. The point of this course is not to be simply a reader of utopias, dystopias, and manifestos but to participate in these genres by writing – the activity that has long fueled political imagination and practice. Writing an original political vision (in the genre of your choice) is the organizing goal and final project for this course. In other words, the central text in this course is yours.

Evaluation

Assignment	Calendar	Requirement	Final Grade %
Written assignments			
Utopia paper	2/18, 4 p.m.	five pages	15%
Outline of vision	3/17 in class	five pages	15%
Vision (final project)	5/2, 4 p.m.	15-20 pages	25%
Engagement			
Discussion	ongoing		25%
Text presentation	TBA	Consult with instructor.	5%
Vision presentation	4/19 or 4/21	See separate instructions.	5%
In-class writing and notes (journal)	due on the last day of class	See instructions below.	10%

Written Assignments

- 1) Utopia: answer a question of your own choosing (consultation with me in office hours required) on More's *Utopia*.
- 2) Outline: a preliminary description of your final project including an outline and annotated bibliography.
- 3) Final Project: an original political vision composed in one of the three genres (utopia, dystopia, manifesto).

Engagement

- 1) Discussion: This part of your grade includes text-based contributions, answers, questions, arguments, and responses to other students
- 2) Journal: One entry per week required. A complete entry includes: name of the author, title of the text, date, the text of two passages that interest you and a brief commentary on those passages. Journals will be collected sporadically and at the end of the semester. Please purchase a thin folder for this purpose. In-class writing exercises should be collected together with journal entries.
- 3) Text Presentation: Each student will present the reading along with questions once during the semester. Please see separate instructions.
- 4) Vision Presentation: Each student will present his or her final project to the group at the end of the semester. Please see separate instructions.

General Housekeeping

- 1) Expect to work six hours on average outside of class per week. Some weeks the reading load will be lighter; some weeks it will be considerably heavier.
- 2) We will discuss all assignments at least two weeks in advance of a given due date. Please be in touch over e-mail and make use of my office hours with any questions and thoughts you may have about our work together. I am happy to help you with outlines, and I welcome the discussion of drafts.

- 3) I do not accept late assignments, except in appropriately documented emergency situations. For the sake of equity, please do not ask for special treatment.
- 4) Students with a documented learning disability who desire accommodations for this course must first visit the Office of Learning Services (ext. 1510) and follow college procedures on receiving accommodations.
- 5) Plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment in this class. Please see *Moravian College Student Handbook* for an account of academic honesty. See <http://www.moravian.edu/studentlife/handbook/academic2.htm>
- 6) Do not miss class. Undocumented absences *beyond the first* will harm your engagement grade at the rate of 5% per absence.
- 7) Turn your cell phone off before class.
- 8) No food in the classroom, please.

Tuesday, January 11	Introduction
Thursday, January 13	<p>Guided tour of the intentional community of Bethlehem by Karen Huetter, director of educational services for Historic Bethlehem Partnership. Meet at the Museum of Moravian History at 2:20 p.m. (take the shuttle South and see attached map)</p> <p>1) <i>Moravian Women's Memoirs</i> (1997), "Mariana Höht (1737-1772)" (copies)</p> <p>2) <i>The Bethlehem Diary</i>, Vol. 11, (January 1744) (copies)</p> <p>3) Beverly P. Smaby, <i>The Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem</i> (1988), Chapter 1 (copies)</p> <p>4) "The blessed Brother Andrew..." (copies)</p>
Thursday, January 20	<p>Introduction to the Moravian Archives by archivist Paul Peuker. Meet at the archives at 2:20 p.m.</p> <p>1) Gerald and Patricia Gutek, <i>Visiting Utopian Communities</i> (1998), "Moravians or Unitas Fratrum or Church of the Brethren" (copies)</p> <p>2) <i>Moravian Women's Memoirs</i> (1997), translated and introduced by Katherine M. Faull, "Anna Rosina Anders (1727-1803)" (copies)</p>

Tuesday, January 25	“Plato’s Atlantis” in <i>Four Island Utopias</i> compiled and edited by Diskin Clay and Andrea Purvis
Thursday, January 27	1) Thomas More, <i>Utopia</i> (1516), Book I 2) Frederic Jameson, “The Politics of Utopia” in <i>New Left Review</i> (25, 2004) (on reserve)
Tuesday, February 1	1) More, Book II 2) Robert Shephard, “Utopia, Utopia’s neighbors, Utopia, and Europe” in <i>Sixteenth Century Journal</i> (26.4, Winter, 1995) (on reserve)
Thursday, February 3	Tomaso Campanella, <i>City of the Sun</i> (1602)
Tuesday, February 8	Sir Francis Bacon, <i>New Atlantis</i> (1624)
Thursday, February 10	Bacon
Tuesday, February 15	Herzl, <i>The Jewish State</i> (1896)
Thursday, February 17	Herzl
Friday, February 18	Paper #1 due in 206 Comenius by 4 p.m.
Tuesday, February 22	Special library resources class in Reeves Library. Meet at Reference desk at 2:20 p.m.
Thursday, February 24	Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> (1848)
Tuesday, March 1	Marx and Engels
Thursday, March 3	1) Seneca Falls Convention of 1848, <i>Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions</i> (1848) (on reserve) 2) National Organization of Women, <i>NOW Statement of Purpose and Bill of Rights</i> (1966) (on reserve) 3) Valerie Solanas, <i>SCUM Manifesto</i> (1968) (on reserve) 4) <i>Redstockings Manifesto</i> (1969) (on reserve)
Sat (noon)-Mon 7:50am) March 5-14	Spring Recess
Tuesday, March 15	Regular meeting cancelled. Excursion to the Ephrata Cloister in Ephrata, PA. Date and time TBA.

Thursday, March 17	Introduction to dystopias Outline due in class
Tuesday, March 22	Margaret Atwood, <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> (1986)
Thursday, March 24	Atwood
Friday-Monday (6pm) March 25-28	Easter Recess
Tuesday, March 29	Atwood
Thursday, March 31	Regular class meeting is replaced by evening screening of "The Handmaid's Tale", directed by Volker Schlöndorff. Time and room TBA.
Tuesday, April 5	Octavia Butler, <i>The Parable of the Sower</i> (1994)
Thursday, April 7	Butler
Tuesday, April 12	1) Butler 2) Patricia Melzer, "All that you touch you change": Utopian Desire and the Concept of Change in Octavia Butler's <i>Parable of the Sower</i> and <i>Parable of the Talents</i> " (on reserve)
Thursday, April 14	1) Butler 2) Elizabeth Spelman, "Gender and Race: The Ampersand Problem in Feminist Thought" (on reserve)
Tuesday, April 19	Student political vision presentations
Thursday, April 21	Student political vision presentations
Tuesday, April 26	Immanuel Wallerstein, <i>Utopistics – Or, Historical Choices of the Twenty-first Century</i> (1998) (selections on reserve)
Thursday, April 28	Closing discussion and journals due in class
Monday, May 2	Final projects due

This schedule is subject to change.