

Summer 2016

ENGLISH 6700

Thematic Title: *Utopia in America*

MTWTh 5:30-7:05 PM

Johnston Hall 416

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Office Hours: before and after class, or by appointment

2016 marks the 500th anniversary of Sir Thomas More's *Utopia*, which inaugurated a literary genre of political and social speculation that continues to structure our imagination of what is possible. We will read *Utopia*, as well as consider utopian critical theory from thinkers like Fredric Jameson, Carl Freedman, Mark Bould, Derrick Bell, and Herbert Marcuse. But the major task before us will be exploring the role utopian, quasi-utopian, dystopian, and downright anti-utopian figurations have played in the work of several key canonical writers of the 20th century: Vladimir Nabokov, Flannery O'Connor, Toni Morrison, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Philip K. Dick.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- Investigate major concepts, methods, and theoretical movements that have shaped the practices of contemporary literary studies;
- Study and critically analyze major works of 20th century American literature;
- Explore the relationship between the concept of utopia and interrelated ideas of history, futurity, race, and the nation;
- Produce cogent academic writing in a variety of modes and media forms;
- Hone pedagogical skills for teaching literature at the college level.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at the Book Marq on 16th Street)

- Thomas More, *Utopia* (Norton Critical Edition)
- Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Lucky Strike*
- Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire*
- Flannery O'Connor, *The Complete Stories*
- Toni Morrison, *Sula*
- Philip K. Dick, *The Man in the High Castle*.

Selected additional texts will be made available through D2L, as well as during class.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Participation	25%
D2L	15%
Thinkpieces	10% each
Mapping Exercise	10%
Lesson Plan	10%
Sample Syllabus	10%
Book Review	10%

ASSIGNMENTS

I do not believe it would be realistic for you to produce a graduate-level seminar paper in six weeks alongside the regular reading schedule of the course. As such, I will ask you instead to produce a number of smaller assignments that link the themes of the course to your professionalization as an academic.

These assignments are organized around three primary goals:

1. developing significant knowledge of literary trends in American literature of the 20th and 21st centuries;
2. developing your skills as a critic and interpreter of such texts;
3. developing your skills for teaching literature in the undergraduate classroom.

I will therefore ask you to produce the following over the course of the semester:

1. **Two “thinkpiece” length articles** (approximately 1000-2000 words) on a utopia- or American-literature-related topic of your choosing, one devoted to each “half” of the course, appropriate to the model of digital publication employed at such outlets as *Slate*, *Salon*, *The New Inquiry*, *Jacobin*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, etc. (due at midterms and at finals);
2. A **book review** (approximately 2000 words) on a recent critical text regarding utopian studies or literary scholarship, appropriate for publication in an academic journal (due anytime by Aug. 13);
3. A **sample syllabi** for a course appropriate for the teaching portfolio of an entry-level scholar, pitched at a level of your choosing, preferably with *some* relationship to the themes of this course (due Thursday, August 11);
4. A **lesson plan** for teaching a Flannery O’Connor story from *The Complete Stories* other than the ones we studied in class (due Thursday, July 28);
5. A **“cognitive map”** of the major concepts and critical debates in scholarship on More’s *Utopia*, as registered by the supplemental essays in the Norton Critical Edition (due Monday, July 11);
6. **Two “discussion inauguration” days** (variable dates);
7. **Five D2L posts** (variable dates).

Samples for the syllabi, thinkpiece, and book review assignments are available on D2L. I leave the form of the lesson plan and the “cognitive map” in your hands.

Please feel free to see or write me if you would like more direction on any of these assignments.

GRADING

Grades will follow the following rubric:

* To earn a **C**, you must clearly restate the meaning or project of a text in your own terms. A **C** essay may volunteer an original argument, but will likely lack evidence or analysis of its sources. **C** essays are clearly written, though they might display some grammatical weakness.

* To earn a **B**, you must begin to raise important questions about the text under consideration and to use those questions to drive your own interpretive agenda. A B essay typically advances an original argument and provides solid analysis of the text(s) under consideration. B essays are clear, concise, and free of grammatical errors.

* To earn an **A**, you must construct an essay that does more than simply comment on the work of others; you must forward, counter, or transform what they have to say. An A essay advances an original argument that builds toward a climax and makes a persuasive case for its own significance. A essays are clearly written, and often eloquent.

* A **D** means that you have not written in clear prose or that you seem to have deeply misunderstood the text. An **F** means that you did not fully or seriously engage the assignment.

* **AB, BC, and CD** grades fall squarely in the gaps between the above categories.

FORMAT OF WRITTEN WORK

Your final paper should be typed in twelve-point font, double-spaced with one-inch margins, saved in a format Microsoft Word can open. Your filename should contain *your name* in it, for example, yourlastname-firstpaper.docx.

I expect you to *edit* and *proofread* all written work, even blog posts and blog comments. Drafts that contain excessive typos or grammar mistakes may be returned to the author for correction before I offer comments.

Please give each piece of writing an original title, and include your name, assignment, and due date in a header on the first page. Insert page numbers if your work spans more than one page.

All sources relied upon for the writing of your paper, including the primary text, must be appropriately cited.

WRITING SUBMISSION

Your work should be submitted via D2L's Dropbox by the time listed on the syllabus. **Late work will be penalized a full grade for each day that it is late.** Except in very unusual circumstances, work will not be accepted by email.

Much of your work in this class has **flexible due dates** driven by your own interests and responses. **It is thus your responsibility to make sure you are properly keeping up with this portion of the course.**

TECHNOLOGY IS TERRIBLE: PLAN AHEAD!

The Internet goes down. Files become corrupted. Computers crash. These are predictable facts of twenty-first century life, not emergencies. For this course, for all your courses, for the rest of your career and your life in this world you need to develop work habits and strategies that take into account the basic, inescapable unreliability of computers. Start your assignments well in advance of the due date; save them often; save backup copies of essential documents, including copies off-site using a service like Carbonite, Dropbox, or Google Drive.

ATTENDANCE AND CLASS PARTICIPATION

Class discussion is an essential component of this seminar; class discussion, not lecture, will be the primary means by which we will investigate these texts together. It is therefore crucial that you come to class every day having read the required material and prepared to discuss it.

Consequently, attendance in this class is absolutely mandatory. You should plan on attending every class. Please talk to me (in advance if possible) if you ever find you will need to miss a class meeting.

The course adheres to Marquette University's attendance policy, which can be found on the Internet at <http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/#attendance>.

You are allowed **two absences** over the course of the summer semester. **After that, your class participation will drop by a letter grade for each additional absence.** Upon the fifth absence, you will receive a WA (Withdrawn—Excessive Absences) for the semester.

Merely being present is insufficient to earn an “A” for class participation. Each student is expected to *participate in* and *contribute to* our discussions. Just being in the room is not enough.

DISCUSSION INAUGURATOR

Each member of the class will have two days in which they are expected to inaugurate our discussion by articulating a detailed, five-to-ten-minute response to the day's reading. The requirements for this are necessarily very loose, as each day of the course will have a very different type of text to be discussed; in general, however, the discussion inaugurator will be asked to (1) articulate a thoughtful and critical response to some aspect of the material and (2) direct our collective attention to one or two problems in, questions about, or particularly important moments from the reading for that day. A signup sheet will be distributed in class.

D2L FORUMS

This course will also make extensive use of the D2L forums at <http://d2l.mu.edu>. In addition to being a place where you can find electronic copies of the syllabus and other course handouts, D2L also features an online forum where you can express your response to the material before class begins and where we can continue our discussions after class is over.

The D2L discussion forums are an excellent place for people who may feel inhibited by in-class discussion to share their opinions with the class. I will be reading the discussion forum regularly and I recommend you do the same. You may choose either to begin a discussion thread on a new topic or to respond to a post composed by one of your classmates.

Before class *this* Thursday, every student is required to take the following actions:

- * **upload a picture of their face to their D2L profile;**
- * **write a short, 200-400-word response to some aspect of More's *Utopia*.**

After that, students must write **at least four substantive (200-400-word) posts (approximately one per week with one week off)** responding to **any four texts** across the remainder of the

course. These posts should be completed either by 4 PM before one of the class discussions devoted to that text or by 4 PM before the following class. At least half of the posts should be completed before the midterm.

EMAIL

Students in this class are required to check their official Marquette email account—whatever account D2L sends its emails to—at least once the afternoon before a scheduled class meeting, in case there are any last-minute announcements or disruptions.

I endeavor to respond to all emails within 24 hours, usually much less—but please do not send me urgent emails regarding your assignments on the night they are due and expect an immediate reply.

LAPTOP POLICY

In-class use of laptops, Kindles, iPads, etc. is permitted for access to electronic versions of our texts and for notetaking. However, students *must* refrain from non-class-related computer use, including email, instant messaging, Facebook, Twitter, and the like. I reserve the right to ban individual technological devices if this becomes a problem. No use of cell phones will be permitted during class time; please turn off your ringers and put them out of sight.

FLEXIBILITY

If it will benefit the class, changes may be made to the above.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Students with disabilities who believe they will require accommodations in this course should contact me early in the semester so your learning needs can be appropriately met. Per university policy, you are required to provide documentation of your disability to the Office of Disability Services.

If you are unsure of what you need to do to qualify for services, you can begin by visiting the Office of Disability Services in Marquette Hall, Lower Level, Room 05, or by visiting their website at <http://www.marquette.edu/disability-services.index.shtml>.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students are expected to abide by the academic honesty policy outlined in your undergraduate bulletin. I urge you all to examine this material and consult me with any questions you may have about plagiarism or academic integrity *before* it becomes an issue.

Ignorance of what constitutes plagiarism is not an acceptable excuse for plagiarism. **Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the course.** No exceptions or special dispensations will be made.

Full details of Marquette's academic integrity policy are available on the Internet at <http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/#academichonestypolicy>.

On a personal level, I (like everyone) hate being lied to. Please, do not feel you need to concoct elaborate stories. Simply be honest with me about whatever is going on and we will work it out.

ACADEMIC FREEDOM

We all enter this classroom with preexisting political, ethical, philosophical, and intellectual commitments. You are all required to engage the material—but you are absolutely *not* required to agree either with any of the writers we will discuss, or with me, in whole or in part.

RESPECT

This classroom is a community. It is crucial that we treat each other with the appropriate level of courtesy and respect. No one should be made to feel unwelcome here.

Failure to treat other students with the respect they deserve will **severely** negatively impact your class participation grade.

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE UNUSUAL NATURE OF SUMMER SCHOOL

College courses that take place during the summer session are, by their nature, quite different from classes that take place during the fall or spring semesters. That situation is compounded, in our case, by the fact that ours is a class that meets daily for ninety minutes at a stretch.

I have endeavored as best I can to schedule the course so that the readings will not be onerous. (I have also attempted to select material that I hope will be interesting and engaging, so that it never *feels* onerous.) I have also—as a pedagogical experiment—eliminated long papers in this class in favor of extended D2L forum posts, daily in-class presentations, mini-articles, and pedagogical preparation. In doing all this I am trying to be realistic about what is possible for us to achieve together within a six-week summer course, and to develop the richest intellectual experience possible within those constraints.

Despite all of the above, however, I must stress that this is course is still *serious business*: it is meant to be the equivalent of a fall or spring fifteen-week course. The fact that the course has been paced for summer should *not* be mistaken for an excuse for you to blow this class off or fail to take it seriously. I hope, instead, that you will embrace the unique opportunity this course's unusual pacing offers for close consideration of the texts under discussion and intense scholarly engagement with your peers. What will make this class both most fun and most useful to you as emerging scholars is a collective commitment to diving into this experience and getting the most that we can get out of it, together.

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

Any changes to this schedule will be announced in class as they become necessary.

Students should come to class prepared to discuss the listed texts or chapters.

DATE		READING AND ASSIGNMENTS
T	July 5	INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE Ursula K. Le Guin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” (in class)
		PART ONE: UTOPIA
W	July 6	Thomas More, <i>Utopia</i> (“Concerning” and Book One)
Th	July 7	Thomas More, <i>Utopia</i> (Book Two)
M	July 11	<i>Utopia</i> Scholarly Debate Assignment Due Fredric Jameson, “Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture” (first half; second half optional) [D2L] Mark Bould, “The Futures Market: American Utopias” [D2L]
T	July 12	Fredric Jameson, “Utopia as Replication” [D2L] Fredric Jameson, “An American Utopia” [YouTube] <i>extremely optional</i> : Gerry Canavan, “‘I’d Rather Be in Afghanistan’: Antinomies of <i>Battle: Los Angeles</i> ” [D2L]
W	July 13	Kim Stanley Robinson, “The Lucky Strike” Kim Stanley Robinson, “A Sensitive Dependence on Initial Conditions”
Th	July 14	<i>Star Trek</i> : “The City on the Edge of Forever” [Netflix] Carl Freedman, “Marxism, Cinema, and Some Dialectics of Science Fiction and Film Noir” [D2L] Ursula K. Le Guin, “American SF and the Other” [D2L] <i>optional</i> : Iain M. Banks, “A Few Notes on the Culture”; H. Bruce Franklin, “ <i>Star Trek</i> in the Vietnam Era” [D2L]
M	July 18	Vladimir Nabokov, <i>Pale Fire</i> (Foreword and “Pale Fire”)
T	July 19	<i>Pale Fire</i> (Commentary, Canto I and II)
W	July 20	<i>Pale Fire</i> (Commentary, Canto III and IV)
Th	July 21	<i>Pale Fire</i> whole book and interpretations
S	July 23	FIRST “THINKPIECE” DUE BY THIS DATE!

		PART TWO: ...IN AMERICA
M	July 25	Flannery O'Connor, "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" [CS] and "The Fiction Writer and His Country" [D2L]
T	July 26	Flannery O'Connor, "Everything That Rises Must Converge" and "The Artificial N*gger" [CS] Ralph Ellison, "Twentieth Century Fiction and the Black Mask of Humanity" [D2L]
W	July 27	Flannery O'Connor, "Good Country People," [CS] "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," [CS] and "Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction" [D2L] <i>optional:</i> Simi Linton, "What Is Disability Studies?" [D2L]
Th	July 28	Flannery O'Connor Lesson Plan Workshop
M	Aug 1	Toni Morrison, "Recitatif" [D2L] Toni Morrison, excerpt from <i>Playing in the Dark</i> [D2L]
T	Aug 2	Toni Morrison, <i>Sula</i> (first half)
W	Aug 3	Toni Morrison, <i>Sula</i> (second half)
Th	Aug 4	Derrick Bell, "The Space Traders" [D2L] Mark Bould, "The Ships Landed Long Ago" [D2L] Tommie Shelby and Paul Gilroy, "Cosmopolitanism, Blackness, and Utopia" [D2L] #BlackLivesMatter Syllabus [Web] Janelle Monáe, "Many Moons," "Q.U.E.E.N.," "Dance Apocalyptic" [YouTube]
M	Aug 8	Philip K. Dick, <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> (first half)
T	Aug 9	Philip K. Dick, <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> (second half)
W	Aug 10	Philip K. Dick, <i>The Man in the High Castle</i> (whole book and 2015 Amazon pilot) Herbert Marcuse, "The End of Utopia" [D2L]
Th	Aug 11	Syllabus Workshop Day and Closing Thoughts
S	Aug 13	SECOND "THINKPIECE" DUE BY THIS DATE! BOOK REVIEW DUE BY THIS DATE!