

Fall 2017
ENGLISH 6700-101
STUDIES IN TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

Thematic Title: *Utopia in America*
MW 2:00-3:15 PM
Johnston Hall 416

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Office Hours: MWF 12:50 PM-1:50 PM or by appointment

2016 marked 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. In our course we will consider utopia-infused critical theory from thinkers like Fredric Jameson, Carl Freedman, Mark Bould, Donna Haraway, Margaret Atwood, and Ursula K. Le Guin—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 second half of the 20th century: Kurt Vonnegut, Flannery O'Connor, Vladimir Nabokov, and Octavia Butler.

LEARNING GOALS

At the completion of this course, students will be able to:

- 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, ecology, disability, gender, 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 BookMarq on 16th Street)

Kurt Vonnegut, *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Galápagos*

Flannery O'Connor, *The Complete Short Stories*

Vladimir Nabokov, *Pale Fire*

Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Sower* and *Parable of the Talents*

Note: Any published edition of these texts will do.

Additional readings and course materials will occasionally be made available via D2L.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Class Participation	20%
Discussion Leader	10%
D2L Forums	10%
Jameson Mini-Paper	5%
Flannery O'Connor Lesson Plan	5%
<i>Pale Fire</i> Exegesis	5%
Syllabus (Group Project)	10%
Abstract	5%
Paper Presentation	10%
Final Paper	20%

These assignments break down as follows:

Class Participation: You are expected to attend every class having read the material and ready to discuss it, and to participate actively in our conversation. Please let me know in advance of our meeting if you find you will need to miss a session.

Discussion Leader: Beginning with Week 4, each member of the class will have two days in which they are expected to inaugurate our discussion based on the readings for that day. 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) succinctly describe the project of the text; (2) articulate a brief critical response to the material; and (3) direct our collective attention to one or two problems in, questions about, or particularly important moments in the text. I expect this introductory role to take approximately five to ten minutes. A signup sheet for this role will be distributed in class next week.

D2L Forums: This course will make extensive use of the forums on D2L, where you can express your response to the material before class begins and where we can continue our discussions after class is over. You are asked to contribute a short 500-1000-word response to a text on D2L under each of the five major subheadings of the course: Foundations, Vonnegut, O'Connor, Nabokov, and Butler. I encourage you to think of your blog comments as possible "seeds" for the final paper; feel free to begin to develop your thoughts there. You are also highly encouraged to kill two birds with one stone by posting a forum comment on the days you are scheduled to be the discussion inaugurator. These comments should ideally be completed either by 10 PM before one of the class discussions devoted to that text or by 10 PM the night before the following class. Roughly half of the posts should be completed before Fall Break.

Jameson Mini-Paper: After reading the two Jameson essays for September 6, I ask you to produce a 500-1000-word utopian "reading" of a text or object from contemporary life, along the lines of the way Jameson reads *The Godfather*, *Jaws*, and Wal-Mart.

Flannery O'Connor Lesson Plan: For the last day of our discussion of Flannery O'Connor reach of you will produce a short lesson plan for teaching one of the stories in

The Complete Stories we did not discuss in class. I leave the specifics of the pedagogical situation to your imagination.

Pale Fire Exegesis: For the last day of our discussion of *Pale Fire* everyone will be asked to produce a short 500-1000-word exegesis of the novel, based on your independent research of different approaches different scholars have taken. These approaches will drive our final discussion of the novel.

Syllabus (Group Project): In groups of two or three, you will develop a syllabus for a proposed college-level course in literary studies. (Your group will choose details like the academic level, the historical period or subdiscipline, and the theme.) These syllabi will be brought to class on the last day of class to be presented to and workshopped by the group.

Final Paper: Your final paper will be on a topic chosen and developed by you with some connection (however tenuous) to the material discussed in this class. The project will move through several stages:

Abstract: You will submit an abstract for the paper you plan to me by Wednesday, November 15, alongside a call for papers, a journal special issue, a conference announcement, etc. that you might theoretically write the paper towards. You should get in the habit of watching the CFP clearinghouse for English studies at call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu in order to find a CFP that is a good fit.

Symposium: The last two weeks of our class will be a mini-conference with panels constructed from the abstracts you submit to me. You will all present a conference version of your paper in a conference-style presentation, with each participant having twenty minutes to speak, followed by audience Q&A. Ideally this discussion will help you develop your final paper for submission in the following week.

Final Paper: The final 12-to-25-page paper is due to me by 5 PM on Friday, December 15, via D2L's Digital Dropbox. The final paper should endeavor to be an original scholarly intervention in a contemporary debate about literary studies, with an eye towards conference presentation and eventual publication. This means your final paper should demonstrate both its originality and participation in an existing scholarly conversation through appropriate citation of existing work (both primary and secondary sources). Such sources might include: other fictional or nonfictional works by the author(s) under consideration; secondary criticism of those or other literary texts; relevant cultural or literary theory and criticism; historical research and documents; scholarship from other academic disciplines on related issues and themes; popular criticism; research into patterns in the critical and popular reception of a text; and fan scholarship.

To produce an "A" essay, you must construct an essay that does more than simply summarize or 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.

Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

—Kenneth Burke, “The Philosophy of Literary Form”

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-finalpaper.docx.

I expect you to *edit* and *proofread* all written work, even forum comments.

Given the usual conventions of our discipline, I suggest either MLA bibliography or Chicago footnote style for citation.

DOUBLE SUBMISSION OF PAPERS

I do not object to double submission of papers if that works for your course plan. However, you must ask for permission in advance from both professors and your proposal must satisfy the requirements of both assignments. Your paper should be approximately twice as long as a single-submitted paper to reflect its dual purpose.

INCOMPLETES

Please talk to me, as soon as possible, if you feel as though you will not be able to meet the deadline for the final paper. Of course things happen, but I strongly advise against trying to use incompletes as a task-management strategy in graduate school.

PAPER SUBMISSION

The final paper should be submitted via D2L’s Dropbox by class time on the due date, Friday, December 15, by 5 PM.

Your other written work will be posted either in D2L Dropbox or in the D2L forums. Many of these assignments will have flexible due dates driven by your own interests and

responses. **It is thus your responsibility to make sure you are properly keeping up with your work in this course in a timely fashion.**

Except in very unusual circumstances, work will not be accepted by email.

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 crucial that you come to class every day having read the required material and prepared to discuss it.

Consequently, attendance in this class is 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 **three unexcused absences** over the course of the fall semester. **After that, your class participation will drop by half a letter grade for each additional unexcused absence.** Upon the seventh unexcused absence, you may receive a WA (Withdrawn—Excessive Absences) for the semester.

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

EMAIL

Students in this class are required to check their official Marquette email account—whatever account D2L sends its emails to—at least once a day, 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 before 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. **Please do not abuse this privilege or distract your fellow students.** I reserve the right to ban individual technological devices if this becomes a problem. Except in unusual cases of personal emergency, cleared with me at the start of class, no use of cell phones will be permitted during class time; please turn off your ringers and put them out of sight.

CONFERENCES

All students are asked to meet with me in a short one-on-one conference at my office at least once during the semester to discuss the course and your work within it.

Please know I am very happy to meet with you individually to discuss work-in-progress in excess of this requirement, as many times as you like. Simply come to my weekly office hours, or see or email me to set up an appointment.

FLEXIBILITY

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

ACCOMODATIONS

Students with disabilities who believe they may require accommodations in this course should contact me early in the semester so your learning needs can be appropriately met.

I am of course more than happy to work with you to make sure you are successful in this course and to make this course most accessible for you. However, without documentation, I am limited in what I am able to do. Therefore, in order for me to help you most effectively, I need you to be proactive in contacting Marquette University's Office of Disability Services (located on the fifth floor of the 707 Building).

ODS can be reached by phone at (414) 288-1645 or by email at ods@marquette.edu.

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.

Marquette students now sign an Honor Pledge, which states:

- *I recognize the importance of personal integrity in all aspects of life and work.*
- *I commit myself to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, by which I earn the respect of others.*

- *I support the development of good character, and commit myself to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity as an important aspect of personal integrity.*
- *My commitment obliges me to conduct myself according to the Marquette University Honor Code.*

Full details of Marquette's academic integrity policy are available on the Internet at <http://www.marquette.edu/provost/academic-integrity.php>.

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.

KEEP THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN!

I want this class to be a meaningful and valuable experience for you, both in its own terms and in service of the development of your larger research agenda. If you have any ideas, suggestions, or concerns about the way things are going, my door is always open.

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.

GENERAL COURSE PLAN

WEEKS 1-3: FOUNDATIONS
 WEEKS 4-5: KURT VONNEGUT
 WEEKS 6-7: FLANNERY O'CONNOR
 WEEKS 8-10: VLADIMIR NABOKOV
 WEEKS 11-13: OCTAVIA E. BUTLER
 WEEKS 14-15: CLASS SYMPOSIUM

DAY BY DAY SCHEDULE

M	Aug. 28	FIRST DAY OF CLASS Ursula K. Le Guin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” [D2L]
W	Aug. 30	Mark Bould, “The Futures Market: American Utopias” [D2L] China Miéville, Introduction to <i>Utopia</i> (2017): “Close to the Shore” and “The Limits of Utopia” [D2L]
M	Sep. 4	LABOR DAY HOLIDAY—NO CLASS
W	Sep. 6	Fredric Jameson, “Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture” [D2L] Fredric Jameson, “Utopia as Replication” [D2L] JAMESON MINI-PAPER DUE
M	Sep. 11	<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]
W	Sep. 13	Margaret Atwood, “Time Capsule Found on the Dead Planet” [Web] Ramin Bahrani, “Plastic Bag” [YouTube] Donna Haraway, “Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene” [Web]
M	Sep. 18	Kurt Vonnegut, <i>Slaughterhouse-Five</i> (first half)
W	Sep. 20	Kurt Vonnegut, <i>Slaughterhouse-Five</i> (second half)
M	Sep. 25	Kurt Vonnegut, <i>Galápagos</i> (first half)
W	Sep. 27	Kurt Vonnegut, <i>Galápagos</i> (second half)
M	Oct. 2	Flannery O’Connor, “A Good Man Is Hard to Find” [CS] and “The Fiction Writer and His Country” [D2L]
W	Oct. 4	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]
M	Oct. 9	Flannery O’Connor, “Good Country People,” “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]
W	Oct. 11	Flannery O’Connor Lesson Plan Workshop O’CONNOR LESSON PLAN DUE

M	Oct. 16	Vladimir Nabokov, <i>Pale Fire</i> , “Foreword” and “Pale Fire”
W	Oct. 18	Vladimir Nabokov, <i>Pale Fire</i> (Commentary, Canto I)
M	Oct. 23	Vladimir Nabokov, <i>Pale Fire</i> (Commentary, Canto II)
W	Oct. 25	Vladimir Nabokov, <i>Pale Fire</i> (Commentary, Canto III)
M	Oct. 30	Vladimir Nabokov, <i>Pale Fire</i> , (Commentary, Canto IV)
W	Nov. 1	Vladimir Nabokov, <i>Pale Fire</i> , whole book (including index) and interpretations PALE FIRE EXEGESIS DUE
M	Nov. 6	Octavia E. Butler, <i>Parable of the Sower</i> (first half)
W	Nov. 8	Octavia E. Butler, <i>Parable of the Sower</i> (second half)
M	Nov. 13	Octavia E. Butler, <i>Parable of the Talents</i> (first half)
W	Nov. 15	Octavia E. Butler, <i>Parable of the Talents</i> (second half) FINAL PAPER ABSTRACTS DUE
M	Nov. 20	Octavia E. Butler, <i>Parable of the Talents</i> (concluding chapters) Nisi Shawl, “The Third Parable” [D2L] Gerry Canavan, “God of Clay” [D2L]
W	Nov. 22	THANKSGIVING—NO CLASS
M	Nov. 27	SYMPOSIUM—DAY ONE
W	Nov. 29	SYMPOSIUM—DAY TWO
M	Dec. 4	SYMPOSIUM—DAY THREE
W	Dec. 6	SYLLABUS WORKSHOP AND CLOSING THOUGHTS
F	Dec. 15	FINAL PAPERS DUE BY 5 PM

FOLLOW FAME: FRIENDS AND ALUMNI/AE OF MARQUETTE ENGLISH

On Facebook (page): www.facebook.com/marquettefame

On Facebook (group): www.facebook.com/groups/496438583889194

(search for “Undergraduate English at Marquette”)

On Twitter: @MarquetteFAME

I will also be inviting you to events in the pop culture and pizza series I run periodically during the fall and spring semesters. I hope you can attend!

Further Reading

Students interesting in continuing their study of utopia might be interested in some of the following critical texts:

Sir Thomas More, *Utopia*

Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*

Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* and “The End of Utopia”

Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces”

Raymond Williams, “Utopia and Science Fiction”

Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*

Samuel Delany, “On Triton and Other Matters”

Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Language of the Night*

Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*

Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* and *Archaeologies of the Future*

Tom Moylan, *Demand the Impossible* and *Scraps of the Untainted Sky*

Carl Freedman, *Critical Theory and Science Fiction*

Tom Moylan and Raffaella Baccolini (eds.), *Dark Horizons*

Susan Buck-Morss, *Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West*

Lee Edelman, *No Future*

Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism*

Margaret Atwood, *Learning from Other Worlds*

Mark Bould and China Mieville (eds.), *Red Planets: Marxism and Science Fiction*

Gerry Canavan and Kim Stanley Robinson (eds.), *Green Planets: Ecology and Science Fiction*

Utopia: A Very Short Introduction

Critical Theory: A Very Short Introduction

For fiction recommendations, just ask!