

# University of North Dakota

## Special Topics in Political Science: Utopia and Dystopia

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POLS 393  
Spring 2006  
MWF 11 a.m.

### **General overview:**

This course provides an introduction to utopian and anti-utopian ideas in political theory. Questions to be addressed include: the political causes and purpose of utopia and anti-utopia, the position of race, gender, religion and technology in utopian and anti-utopian thought, utopian ideals in action, and the possibilities for utopia in the post-modern world.

Seekers after utopia ask many questions. What would the perfect society look like? How should relations among men and women, rich and poor, citizen and alien be organized for the benefit of all? What kind of political system would guarantee peace, prosperity and plenty for all people? In what kind of society would the individual find fulfillment? How can we harness technology for the good of all humanity? In this course we will examine and judge the answers provided across the two-thousand (and more) year history of utopian political thought. We will also consider efforts to actualize utopia in "intentional communities." We will also consider how popular culture in all its many forms reflects the utopian ideal. We will examine how some have recently challenged the utopian idea. "Dystopian" writers have produced a new kind of political literature which examines the dangerous possibilities inherent in the utopian project. Finally we will consider variants of the utopian ideal such as millennialism and "golden ages."

**Important note:** Class discussion will play a central role in teaching and learning in this class. Because of this fact, students should be ready to attend all classes and actively participate in discussion.

Remember: **Silence means assent.** If you sit there and fail to ask questions if something is unclear, I will assume you understand and move on.

### **Grades:**

Grades will be based on:

- (1) Mid-term exam (20% total),
- (2 and 3) Two 5 page papers (20% each for a total of 40%)
- (4) Final examination (20%) and:
- (5) Class participation and quizzes (20%).

Grades will follow the traditional scale.

*\*Note: Over the course of the semester students will be required to provide the instructor with questions for discussion based on the readings. This will count as part of your class participation credit. Further information about the requirement will be provided.*

*\*Note: No extra credit assignments will be given, or accepted.*

### **Attendance Policy:**

Students are expected to attend all classes and be ready to participate in discussions. You are also expected to read the assignments before class. **Students who miss a large number of the semester's classes should expect serious reductions in their grades. Material for the tests will be based on both reading and class discussion. Therefore, if you miss many classes you will surely have problems on the tests. You will also lose a large share of your participation points.**

**Class Participation:** Class participation is defined as:

- 1: attending class,
- 2: participating in discussion,
- 3: demonstrating a knowledge of the readings in discussion,
- 4: showing an understanding that moves beyond the readings, and
- 5: raising and providing questions for class consideration.

To receive full participation credit you should be prepared to meet all of these requirements.

**E-mail Policy:**

Students are strongly encouraged to communicate with the instructor via e-mail. Students are also encouraged to communicate with each other via e-mail.

**Blackboard:**

Additional course readings, announcements and discussion points for each class can be found on the Blackboard site for POLS 393. **NOTE: A few days prior to each class, a set of questions students should consider while reading for discussion will be posted on Blackboard.**

**Papers:**

Papers will cover material discussed in class and in the readings. Students will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of the material and to criticize it in light of other sources.

Paper topics will be passed out two weeks prior to the due date of the paper. Due dates for papers are just that: due dates. **No extensions will be granted without proper cause (as defined by the instructor).** More detailed instructions will be distributed later.

**Important Dates:**

First paper due: February 13

Mid-Term Examination: March 6

Second paper due: April 24

Final Examination: Wednesday, May 10, 2006, 10:15 a.m.

**Texts:**

The following texts are required and are for sale at the Bookstore. If you use a different edition from the one indicated you are responsible for figuring out the comparable passages.

Russell Jacoby	<i>Picture Imperfect</i>	Columbia UP
Edward Bellamy	<i>Looking Backward</i>	Dover
Thomas More	<i>Utopia</i>	Hackett
Ernest Kallenbach	<i>Ecotopia</i>	Bantam
Charlotte Perkins Gilman	<i>Herland</i>	Dover
Aldous Huxley	<i>Brave New World</i>	Harper
Margaret Atwood	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	Anchor Books
George Orwell	<i>1984</i>	Signet

**Topics and Reading Assignments:**

Please note that all reading assignments and dates are subject to change. Assignments marked with \* will be posted on Blackboard. Readings marked with # will be passed out in class. Readings marked with + are optional and are available on request.

**Part I: Defining an Idea. Is Utopia Still Meaningful?**

**January 11:** Introduction: Policies, Definitions, Setting the Stage.  
What is Utopia? Student thoughts.

**January 13 and 18:** The Natures of Utopian Thought/Defining the Terms/The Urge for Utopia  
\*Sargent: "Three Faces of Utopia" (pages 1-11 and 17-24)  
Jacoby: "Preface" and "An Anarchic Breeze" (from *Picture Imperfect*)

**No Class January 16:** Martin Luther King Jr. Day

**Part II: Variations on the Theme, Ancient and Modern**

**January 20:** Ancient Utopias and Golden Ages.  
\*Plato: Selections from *The Republic* (Book V, especially lines 449-480)  
\*Plato: Selections from *Timaeus* and *Critias*  
*Bible*: Genesis 1-9  
\*Hesiod: "The Five Ages" from *Works and Days*

**January 23:** The End of Days: Millennialism and Utopia  
\*"The End of the World: A Brief History" from *The Economist*, December 16, 2004  
*Bible*: Revelation 1, 4-22.  
\*Ghost Dance Songs

**January 25:** Pocket Utopia: The Intentional Community  
\*Sargent: "Three Faces of Utopia" (pages 11-17)  
*The Rule of St. Benedict* <http://www.osb.org/rb/text/toc.html#toc>  
Chapters: Prologue, 1-7, 22-25, 28-37, 48, 54-55, 63, 70, 73  
Twin Oaks: <http://www.twinoaks.org/>  
+Thelen: "Gilligan's Island"

**January 27:** Self-Conscious Utopia: The Planned Community  
#Rybczynski: "Tomorrowland"  
#"Disney Discovers Real Life" from *New York Times Magazine*, December 14, 1997

**January 30:** Utopia and Revolution  
\*Winstanley: Selections from *The Law of Freedom* (1651)

\*\*\*\*\***First paper topics passed out: January 30**\*\*\*\*\*

**Part III: Literary Utopias**

**February 1, 3 and 6:** The Invention of Utopia, or Utopia and the Age of Discovery.  
More: *Utopia* (1516)

**February 8, 10 and 13:** American Socialist Utopia.  
Bellamy: *Looking Backward* (1888)

\*\*\*\*\***First paper due: February 13**\*\*\*\*\*

**February 15, 17 and 22:** Early Feminist Utopia.  
Gilman: *Herland* (1915)

**No Class February 20:** President's Day

**February 24, 27 and March 1:** Ecological Utopia?  
Kallenbach: *Ecotopia* (1975)

**March 3:** Catch up and review.

\*\*\*\*\***March 6: Mid-Term Examination**\*\*\*\*\*

### **Part IV: The Meanings of Dystopia**

**March 8 and 10:** The Advent of Dystopia  
\*Dostoevsky: "The Grand Inquisitor" (from *The Brothers Karamazov*)  
Jacoby: "On Anti-Utopianism: More or Less" (Chapter Two of *Picture Imperfect*)

**No classes March 13, 15 and 17:** Spring Break

**March 20:** Technology as Dystopian  
\*Fukuyama: "Biotechnology and the Threat of a Post Human Future"  
\*Forster: "The Machine Stops"

**March 22, 24 and 27:** Technological Dystopia or Hedonistic Utopia?  
Huxley: *Brave New World* (1932)

**March 29** Language Power and Politics, or Introducing Orwell  
\*Orwell: "Politics and English Language"  
\*Nunberg: "If It's 'Orwellian,' It's Probably Not"

**March 31, April 3 and 5:** Socialist Dystopia.  
Orwell: *1984* (1949)

\*\*\*\*\***Second paper topics passed out: April 10**\*\*\*\*\*

**April 7, 10 and 12:** Feminist Dystopia.  
Atwood: *The Handmaid's Tale*. (1986)

**No classes April 14 and 17:** Easter Holiday

**April 19:** Real World Dystopia: Terrorism, Nuclear Weapons and Nanobots?  
\*Rothstein, Auer and Siegel: "Rethinking Doomsday"

**No class April 21:** Midwest Political Science Association Meeting in Chicago.

**April 24:** Postmodernity and Dystopia

#Lyon: "Introduction: Screen Replicants and Social Realities"

\*\*\*\*\***Second paper due: April 24**\*\*\*\*\*

**April 26 and 28:** Post-Modern Dystopia.

Film: "Blade Runner"

*Note: We will watch the film outside of class time and then discuss it.*

## **Part V: Summing Up: What Does it Mean? If Anything?**

**May 1:** Does Utopia Have a Future? (As Political Theory? As Political Action? In Political Science?)

Jacoby: "Epilogue" (from *Picture Imperfect*)

**May 3:** Catch up and Review

\*\*\*\*\* **Final Examination: Wednesday, May 10, 2006 10:15 a.m.**\*\*\*\*\*

## **Useful Website**

**Society for Utopian Studies:** <http://www.utoronto.ca/utopia/>

A good site to start with. Some decent links are attached.

Be aware that there are lots of strange people engaged in the study of utopian issues. So, if you stumble upon a website and are not sure if it is trustworthy, please feel free to talk to me.

## Reference Materials

### Some scholarly works on utopian and dystopian thought:

Norman Cohn: *The Pursuit of the Millennium*

J. C. Davis: *Utopia and the Ideal Society*

Doayne Dawson: *Cities of the Gods: Communist Utopias in Greek Thought*

Barbara Godwin and Keith Taylor: *The Politics of Utopia*

Krishan Kumar: *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times*

Krishan Kumar: *Utopias and the Millennium*

Melvin J. Lasky: *Utopia and Revolution*

Karl Mannheim: *Ideology and Utopia*

Frank and Fritzie Manuel: *Utopian Thought in the Western World*

Herbert Marcuse: *Eros and Civilization*

Lyman Tower Sargent: *Political Dimensions of Utopianism*

Phillip E. Wegner: *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity*

Tom Moylan: *Scraps of the Untainted Sky: Science Fiction, Utopia, Dystopia*

Frederick Baumgartner: *Longing for the End: A History of Millennialism in Western Civilization*

Jameson, Fredric: *Archaeologies of the Future*

Robert P. Sutton: *Communal Utopias and the America Experience: Religious Communities, 1732 to 2000*

*Utopian Studies*: the journal of the Society for Utopian Studies

### Other utopian/dystopian works:

Francis Bacon: *New Atlantis* (1623)

Edward Bellamy: *Equality* (sequel to *Looking Backward*) (1897)

Tommaso Campanella: *City of the Sun* (1623)

Margaret Cavendish: *New Blazing World* (1666)

James Hilton: *Lost Horizon* (1933)

Aldous Huxley: *Brave New World* (1932), *Island* (1962)

Ursula Le Guin: *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia* (1974)

Jack London: *The Iron Heel* (1908)

William Morris: *News from Nowhere* (1890)

Marge Percy: *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976), *He, She and It* (1991)

B. F. Skinner: *Walden Two* (1948)

Starhawk: *The Fifth Sacred Thing* (1986)

H. G. Wells: *Things to Come* (1890); *A Modern Utopia* (1905)

Gerrard Winstanley: *The Law of Freedom* (1652)

Evgeny Zamyatin: *We* (1924)

Ayn Rand: *Anthem*

Octavia E. Butler: *Parable of the Sower* (1993), *Parable of the Talents* (2000)

### Fun date movies and possible resources for papers:

1984, The 1984 Richard Burton version and the 1950's BBC version are the good ones.

*THX-1138*, George Lucas, pre Star Wars

*Lost Horizon*, 1930's version only

*Brave New World*, the mid-70's TV version is ok.

*The Shape of Things to Come*, with Raymond Massey (1930's)

*Metropolis*, director Fritz Lang (1920's)

*Soylent Green*, with Charlton Heston (1970's)

*Gattaca* (1997)

*A Clockwork Orange* (1972)

The Mad Max series with Mel Gibson

### Important note on movies made from books in this course:

The 1950's version of *1984* is radically different from the book, in both plot and purpose.

The movie version of *The Handmaid's Tale* has a changed ending and different overall tone than the book.

## SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY

Scholastic dishonesty is covered in Section 3-3 of the University of North Dakota 'Code of Student Life.' It states:

Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and collusion. Cases of dishonesty may be handled as a scholastic matter or as a disciplinary matter at the discretion of the instructor. Instructors choosing to treat the case as a scholastic matter **have the authority to decide how the incident of dishonesty will affect the student's grade in the course.** [emphasis added] .... Instructors choosing to treat the case as a **disciplinary** matter will refer the case to the Dean of Students for possible resolution;... (p. 10)

A full explanation and definition is in the code.

### Cheating on a Test:

Cheating on a test includes, but is not restricted to:

1. Copying from another student's test.
2. Possessing or using material during a test not authorized by the person giving the test.
3. Collaborating with or seeking aid from another student during a test without permission from the instructor.
4. Knowingly using, buying, selling, stealing, transporting, or soliciting in whole or in part the contents of an unadministered test.
5. Substituting for another student or permitting another student to substitute for oneself to take a test.
6. Bribing another person to obtain an unadministered test or information about an unadministered test.
7. Collusion means the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing any academic work offered for credit.

While cheating and collusion are relatively clear, the concept of plagiarism is less widely understood. **In this class, anyone guilty of any of these activities will receive an F for the course. If you have any questions on this point, see me before handing in your work.**

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism, i.e., the use of others words or ideas without acknowledgment, is equivalent to theft and should be treated accordingly. Plagiarism is 'the appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work.'<sup>1</sup>

All material which is taken directly from another source must be identified either through quotation marks (for quotes 4 lines or less) or indenting without quotation marks (for longer quotes) (Hacker, 2000). These sources should be identified through the use of footnotes, endnotes or the use of parenthetical references.

Changing a word or two, here and there does not constitute paraphrasing. Either take the direct quote and acknowledge it or reword it extensively so it is clear only the thought is borrowed. If you have borrowed the ideas but put them in your own words, quotation marks or indentation are unnecessary but attribution should be clear. In other words, material obtained from other sources but not directly quoted should also be footnoted or endnoted in the style you are using, e.g. Figures reported in the Grand Forks City Budget, 1989 indicate that spending will increase 5% this year.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Random House Dictionary of the English Language: The Unabridged Edition, (New York: Random House, 1971, p. 1100.

<sup>2</sup>Emma Bjerk, 'Grand Forks Budget Goes for Broke,' Grand Forks Times, 25 August 1989, 1A.

**Examples of Plagiarism taken from Theodore Pappas, "A Doctor in Spite of Himself,"  
Chronicles, January 1991: 25-29.**

**Original Text:**

In a real sense, then, God enters history, God manifests himself in history. This is never complete because God as abyss is inexhaustible. But God as *logos* is manifest in history and is in real interdependence with man and man's *logos*.

**Plagiarized Version:**

In a real sense, then, God manifests himself in history. This manifestation is never complete because God is inexhaustible. But God as *logos* is manifest in history and is in real interdependence with man.

**Analysis:**

Despite the fact that some of the words are changed, the plagiarized version clearly uses the thoughts presented in the original without attribution. Further, even if the original text was cited it would have been better to quote the original by indenting and single spacing with a footnote than by merely changing a few words.

In a real sense, then, God enters history, God manifests himself in history. This is never complete because God as abyss is inexhaustible. But God as *logos* is manifest in history and is in real interdependence with man and man's.<sup>3</sup>

If you already have many quotes, it would be better to restate the idea and clearly footnote the source of the idea. For example:

God is everywhere at all times through His historical presence. His logic provides the controlling principles for mankind.<sup>4</sup>

## Disability Support Statement

If you have emergency medical information to share with me, if you need special arrangements in case the building must be evacuated, or if you need accommodations in this course because of a disability, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible. If you plan to request disability accommodations you are expected to register with Disability Support Services (DSS) (190 McCannel Hall, 777-3425).

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<sup>3</sup>Jack Stewart Boozer, 'The Place of Reason in Paul Tillich's Concept of God,' (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1952), 21.

<sup>4</sup>Boozer, 'The Place of Reason,' 21.