

DESCRIPTION: Reality Through the Utopian Looking Glass

How does vicariously experiencing radically better (or worse) imaginary worlds change our perceptions of the past, present, and future? The seminar will address this question with a highly selective introduction to utopian expression. We begin with the grandfather of the genre, Thomas More's *Utopia*, and its Classical, Arcadian, and religious roots. Next we examine 18th-century unambiguous and satirical spatial and time travel utopias (Defoe, Mercier, Schnabel, Swift) and the paradigmatic 19th-century utopia, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, in the contexts of William Morris's response, the utopian satire of Samuel Butler satiric *Erehwon*, and Black Elk / Neihardt's reconstruction of a Lakota vision. The variety of 20th- and 21st-century utopian and dystopian expression will be suggested in examinations of classic and recent dystopias (Zamiatin, Huxley, Orwell, and Cormac McCarthy), psychological eupsychias (B.F. Skinner and Abraham Maslow), ecotopias (Callenbach and the White Hawk, Texas community vs. Disney World), and feminist utopias (Gilman, Piercy, and Le Guin).

READINGS:

The basic text will be Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent's *The Utopian Reader*. Works not included in this anthology: Johann Gottfried Schnabel's "Isle of Felsenburg," Neihardt's *Black Elk Speaks*, Zamiatin's *We*, McCormac's *The Road*, Maslow's "Eupsychia," Gilman's *Herland*, Callenbach's *Ecotopia*, Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* and *Always Coming Home*.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE: (six, three-hour sessions)

1. Definitions and Origins: More's *Utopia* and precedents (e.g., Virgil's Arcadian visions; Plato's *Republic*; the biblical versions of Eden and the New Jerusalem).
2. 18th-century Spatial and Time Travels: Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Mercier's *An 2440*; Schnabel's *Insel Felsenburg*, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*)
3. A 19th-Century Utopian Paradigm and Satiric and Visionary Alternatives (Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, Butler's *Erehwon*, Morris's *News from Nowhere*, and Neihardt's *Black Elk Speaks*)
4. Classic and "Critical" 20th- and 21st-Century Dystopias (*We*, *Brave New World*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*)
5. Eupsychia and Ecotopia Written and Acted Out: The Healthy Mind and Land Utopias (Skinner's *Walden Two* and Abraham Maslow's "Eupsychia"; Twin Oaks and Los Horcones; Callenbach's *Ecotopia*; White Hawk, Texas vs. Disney World)
6. The Feminist Utopian Revival (Gilman's *Herland*, Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* and *Always Coming Home*)