

Utopian Thought, Method, and Social Design

Tom Moylan (Tom.Moylan@ul.ie; 087-989-7221)

Tuesday, 10:30 am to 12:30 pm.

Aims & Objectives:

- to offer a module that studies utopian theory, thought, expression, and practice;
- to develop an advanced understanding of the nature and form(s) of Utopia;
- to develop an advanced understanding of the utopian method in the process of social critique and design.

Books:

Tom Moylan and Raffaella Baccolini, eds. *Utopia Method Vision: On the Use Value of Social Dreaming*. Berne and Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007.

David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*. Berkeley: University of California, 2000.

Utopian novels as assigned.

Syllabus:

Utopianism, social dreaming, can be both a fundamental component and a critical way of understanding the complex totality of economic, cultural, political, social, and personal life. As it projects or interprets social values and practices that are both critical of and better than the status quo, a utopian method can be a dynamic tool in the processes of socio-political transformation.

Week 1, 26 January, introduction to the module, readings, assignments.

Week 2, 2 February, the object of study:

- 1) Utopia as object, function, problematic: definitions, histories of utopianism, examples of utopian expression and practice; reception of utopianism and utopian audiences;
- 2) utopian studies as a scholarly field: the development of utopian studies and silences/gaps in utopian studies.

Sargent, Lyman Tower. "Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited," *Utopian Studies* 5 (1994): 1-38.

Moylan, Tom. "To Stand with Dreamers—On the Use Value of Utopia." *The Irish Review* (summer 2006): 1-20.

Week 3, 9 February, utopia and ideology:

One page response paper due.

Mannheim, Karl, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge* (1936). Trans. Louis Wirth and Edward Shils. London: Routledge, 1997. 173-190, 222-230.

Jameson, Fredric. "The Dialectic of Utopia and Ideology." *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981. 281-301.

Week 4, 16 February, utopia and method:

One page response paper due.

Levitas, Ruth. "The Imaginary Reconstitution Of Society: Utopia As Method," *Utopia Method Vision: On the Use Value of Social Dreaming*. Eds. Tom Moylan and Raffaella Baccolini. Berne and Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007. 47-69. See also, the version in Levitas's Inaugural Lecture:

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/sociology/staff/inaugural.doc>

Bloch, Ernst. *The Principle of Hope*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995. Vol. I: 23-26; 114-123.

Week 5, 23 February, utopia and method:

One page response paper due.

David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*. Berkeley: University of California, 2000. Part 3: 133-199; Part 4: 233-257.

Weeks 6, 7, 8, 9, utopian novel project:

A) read, study, and discuss a novel from the list below.

B) write an individual essay and participate in a group (of three) discussion on the novel's fictional utopia as a holistic social design; discuss its positive and negative qualities; consider its impact and/or usefulness for us today.

List:

Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*.

March Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time*.

Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia*.

Kim Stanley Robinson, *Pacific Edge*.

Week 10, 6 April, group discussions on novel project: groups 1 and 2.

Week 11, 13 April, group discussions on novel project: groups 3 and 4.

Week 12, 20 April, conclusions.

Assignments:

Three one page response papers: due at beginning of class in Weeks 3, 4 5.

- each paper must be no more than *one* typed page, single spaced, with one space between paragraphs;
- each paper must focus on topic assigned for that class meeting and must include commentary on the readings: do not use more than a one sentence introduction and conclusion;
- each must be well-conceived, well-supported, and documented with references from the assigned text(s): references to the text must be paraphrases or short quotations (no more than two lines) and cited with a page reference in parentheses following the reference in question;
- each must be well-written and well-presented, with correct sentence structure, grammar, word usage, spelling, and punctuation;
- late papers are *not* accepted.

Essay: due at the SAUL Office anytime between Tuesday of Week 12 and Tuesday of Week 14.

- the essay must be 2000 words, typed, double-spaced, with an additional bibliography (notes are permitted in excess of the 2000 words);
- the essay must address your chosen novel's fictional utopia as a holistic social design: discuss the portrayal of the utopian society; discuss the use of the utopian process in the society; consider the utopia's impact and/or usefulness for us today;
- the essay must be well-conceived, well-supported, and documented with references from the text and from any secondary sources you use: references as paraphrases or quotations must be cited with a page reference in parentheses following the reference in question;
- the essay must be well-written and well-presented, with correct sentence structure, grammar, word usage, spelling, and punctuation;
- late essays will not be accepted for grading.