

**Ideas in Transition: Values (Humanities 3375)
Spring 2016**

Instructor: Anne Gessler, Ph.D.

Class Time and Place: W 7-9:50pm, B1213

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Office Hours: Tues. 12-4pm; Wed. 5-7pm; Thurs.12-2pm, and by appointment

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Required Texts

--Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time*

--Mine Okubo, *Citizen 13660*

--Angela Carter, *Nights at the Circus*

--Mikhail Bulgokov, *Heart of a Dog*

--Selected readings on Blackboard website under "Course Readings"

Course Description:

While we as Americans prize our individualism, global intellectual currents celebrating collectivity and community-based cooperation have long influenced social and political thought. Our class examines the cultural history of utopian thought in the United States and across the world. Studying shifting, yet pervasive utopian values reveals the dynamic and concrete ways in which citizens have consistently sought to transform their societies. We will analyze a series of fictional and real utopian case studies, whose philosophical, political, and religious teachings have profoundly influenced likeminded communitarians around the world. For example, we will explore clashing Western and African diasporic visions of autonomy, democracy, and independence embodied in 1780s black Canadian covenant settlements, American abolitionist and fugitive slave communities, and 1970s Third World Left collectives. We will chart the promise of grand utopian experiments embodied in 1960s Cuban art and architecture. However, as we examine the liminal spaces of world's fairs, expositions, circuses, and Wild West shows, we will assess the limits of utopian discourse to fully come to terms with gender, race, and class divides.

To better understand the intellectual currents framing our case studies, we will read selections from influential utopian theorists and novelists. Further, we will study historical and modern songs, novels, manifestos, and films to ground our discussion of utopian ideas in the global imagination. Students will encounter a variety of sources and employ a range of interdisciplinary methods from history, sociology, psychology, women's and gender studies, cultural studies, religious studies, and other disciplines to ask: how are utopian values embedded in the structure of our society, as well as in our everyday lives? How has utopian philosophy intersected social movements such as the Civil Rights Movement and Occupy Wall Street? And, finally, how have utopian experiments altered nations' physical, political, social, and economic landscapes?

Curricular Goals:

1. discuss the historical, political, and cultural context of utopian values in America and around the world.
2. synthesize and analyze primary and secondary sources' arguments about utopian values in research papers, presentations, and in-class discussions.
3. understand that utopian values are evolving ideas that are instantiated in the built environment and our lived experiences, as well as in our political, economic, and cultural landscape.

Assignments and Grading: Over the course of the semester you will develop critical tools to help you evaluate utopian communities through lectures, small group work, discussions, group presentations, in-class writing, films, and essays.

Grade Point System:

Email: UHCL email is the official means of communication, and you will be expected to regularly check it for class announcements. If you have any questions about the course, please visit my office hours or email me through my UHCL address. I will do my best to respond to your email within 24 hours, so if you have emailed me and have not heard back within that time, please email me again. University policy prohibits me from discussing your individual grades via email. We can discuss them in person during my office hours, or by appointment.

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	E
100- 93	92-90	89-87	86-83	82-80	79-77	76-73	72-70	69-67	66-63	62- 60	59 or lower

You will be graded on the following assignments this term:

- Two Papers 40%
- Group Presentations 15%
- Final Essay Exam 25%
- Participation 20%

Papers (40%)

1. *Primary Document Analysis Paper* (5 pgs, due Mar. 2): The goal of this writing project is to develop your ability to pose a research question, conduct primary research, and historically contextualize your findings by applying academic theory and core methods. Identify a utopian case study you would like to know more about. Select a primary source about your utopian case study to analyze. For example, you may choose a photograph, an article, a song, or novel. First, describe it. Second, analyze its significance to the case study by using at least two academic articles that discuss 1) the text itself, 2) the case study, and 3) the general time period. Third, apply a utopian theorist we have discussed in class to aid your understanding of the primary source’s relationship to your case study.

2. *Historiographical Paper:* (5 pgs, due Apr. 6) The goal of this assignment is to map the scholarly debate around your utopian case study, as well as advance your own well-researched argument about the case study’s historical significance. First, pose a research question about your utopian case study. Second, describe the ways in which utopian values have shaped the case study. Third, select and summarize three scholarly readings specifically about your utopian case study. Compare and contrast each argument. What are the articles’ strengths and weaknesses? Also, suggest what scholarly contributions each article makes to the topic. Finally, and most importantly, articulate your own argument that offers a new perspective on the case study.

Presentations (15%)

Once during the semester, you will be placed in a reading group and lead a 10-minute class discussion on the major concepts, questions, and implications you observe in one of the day’s readings. You will also introduce a primary artifact that illustrates or expands on the readings’ key themes. This is not a summary: you will pose thoughtful questions to your peers. Each person in the group will be required to participate, and I expect you to meet or email with each other in order to coordinate roles.

Final Exam (25%)

At the end of the semester, there will be a cumulative essay exam on the course's major themes.

Participation (20%)

You will be graded based on your participation and preparedness in seminar. This includes satisfactory engagement in class discussion, quizzes, and short homework assignments. You are expected to attend class, arrive on time, have completed all readings, and participate in class activities.

Attendance:

Because this is a discussion-based class, your attendance and punctuality is essential. If an unavoidable problem prevents you from attending class, contact me as soon as possible, preferably ahead of time. You are responsible for getting notes and assignments from a classmate. You are allowed **two** absences for any reason. After that, **a full letter grade will be deducted from your semester grade for each absence regardless of the cause.** Students arriving 5 minutes after the start of class will be marked late. **Two tardies equals one absence.**

Late Work: For every calendar day that your assignment is late, you will lose half a letter grade (i.e.: A to A-). If you are unable to complete an assignment on time, please discuss the issue with me at least 2 days before the due date.

Cell Phone Policy: Because active class participation is vital to our discussions, turn your cell phone off during class. Using cellphones during class will result in an unexcused absence.

Laptops, Tablets, Etc.: Please feel free to use them during class. However, if I suspect that you are using your laptop for anything other than class work, I will revoke your laptop privileges in class for the rest of the semester.

Blackboard: Familiarize yourself with Blackboard, especially our course tools. If you have technical difficulties, contact UTC technical support. Support information is on log-on screen or call (281) 283-2828.

Disabilities: If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, contact Disability Services at (281) 283-2648 or disability@uhcl.edu ASAP and complete the registration process. To ensure your accommodations are in place for the entire semester, please request your accommodation letters from Disability Services and give them to me at the start of the semester. The University of Houston System complies with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, pertaining to the provision of reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary aids for students with a disability. In accordance with Section 504 and ADA guidelines, each University within the System strives to provide reasonable academic adjustments/auxiliary to students who request and require them.

Incompletes: A grade of Incomplete ("I") may be given at my discretion to students making satisfactory progress in the course. Incompletes are only given for emergency situations or special circumstances that occur after the withdrawal date but prior to the end of the semester, and which prevent the student from completing course requirements. When assigning the grade of "I," I will provide students with an Incomplete Grade Contract with the work to be accomplished and deadline before the "I" can be converted to a final grade.

Withdrawals: April 12th is the drop date that is the last day to withdraw or drop without a grade penalty. At UHCL, **students are not automatically dropped from classes for absences.** If you need to drop the class, make sure that you take action so that your overall G.P.A. is not compromised.

Career and Counseling Services: Need to talk to someone about life or academic anxieties? Need help deciding on a career direction? Visit Career and Counseling Services. Short-term individual counseling sessions, seminars, workshops, and small group experiences are available to help students meet academic and personal goals. They are located in SSCB 3109 and their phone number is (281) 283-2580.

University Police Contact Information: The UHCL Police Department is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. To reach a dispatcher for on- campus assistance, call (281) 283-2222.

Office of Veteran Services: It is the mission of the CAPT. Wendell M. Wilson Office of Veteran Services staff to help veterans and their dependents flourish in their higher education pursuits. They will act as a liaison between the veteran, the school, and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in order to ensure these goals are reached with success. They are located in SSCB 3.201 and their phone number is (281) 283-3071.

The Writing Center: This is an instructional facility designed to help all university students become better writers. Peer tutors are specially trained to work with students on any type of writing task; however, they do not provide editing service. Students must bring their own papers to their meetings and are responsible for the quality of their final products. Peer tutors will work with students at any stage of the writing process: from idea generation to style, grammar, and editing strategies. They are located in SSCB 2.101 and their phone number is (281) 283-2910.

Six Drop Rule Limitation: Students who entered college for the first time in Fall 2007 or later should be aware of the course drop limitation imposed by the Texas Legislature. Dropping this or any other course between the first day of class and the census date for the semester/session does NOT affect your 6 drop rule count. Dropping a course between the census date and the last day to drop a class for the semester/session will count as one of your 6 permitted drops. You should take this into consideration before dropping this or any other course. Visit www.uhcl.edu/records for more information on the 6 drop rule and the census date information for the semester/session.

Academic Honesty: Academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated in this class. Specific policies are clearly outlined in your student catalog, and will not be reproduced here. Please note that I consider any type of academic dishonesty a very serious offense, and will follow the university disciplinary procedures for any violation encountered. Plagiarism of any type may result in an F in the course, or a zero for a paper, regardless of how much coursework has been completed up to that point. Copying the work of another or paraphrasing another person without proper citation is plagiarism. All UHCL students are responsible for knowing the standards of academic honesty. Please refer to the UHCL catalog and the Student Life Handbook for the University Academic Honesty Policy. The UHCL Library also has helping information on avoiding plagiarism. The UHCL Writing Center also has a statement on plagiarism. Another wonderful source is www.plagiarism.org.

Assignment Schedule **Homework and readings are listed the day they are due.**

Week 1: January 20: What is Utopia? Introduction

Listen: Judy Garland, “Somewhere Over the Rainbow,” Harry McClintock, “Big Rock Candy Mountain,” Staple Singers, “I’ll Take You There”

View: Joseph Cornell

Week 2: January 27: Theory and Practice

View/Listen: Radiolab: “In the Dust of this Planet” episode, *Portlandia*, “Your Logo Isn’t Hardcore” website

Present: Joseph Cornell boxes

Homework Due:

- Make Joseph Cornell box.
- David Harvey, “Spaces of Utopia,” *Spaces of Hope* (Blackboard)
- Fredric Jameson, Introduction and Chapter 1, *Archaeologies of the Future* (Blackboard)

Week 3: February 3: New World vs Old World: Contested Visions of the Future

View: Hudson River School: Thomas Cole; John Gast; George Catlin

Homework Due:

- Thomas More, *Utopia* (Blackboard)
- Lyman Tower Sargent, “Good Places and Bad Places” (Blackboard); “Utopian Practice” (Blackboard); “Utopianism and Political Theory/ Ideology” (Blackboard)

Week 4: February 10: Political Utopias, Inverse Utopias, Anti-Utopias, and Dystopias

Listen: *Criminal*, “No Place Like Home”

Homework Due:

- Mine Okubo, *Citizen 13360*
- Katharine Burdekin, *Swastika Night* (ch 1, Blackboard)

Week 5: February 17: Insiders and Outsiders: Religious Utopias

Listen: *This American Life*: “A Not-So-Simple Majority”

Homework Due:

- Gilbert Seldes, “A Messianic Murderer”; “A Note on Method,” *The Stammering Century* (Blackboard)
- Wendy Chmielewski, “‘Strawberries and Cream’: Food, Sex, and Gender at the Oneida community” (Blackboard)
- Pat Parker, “Jonestown,” from *Jonestown and Other Madness* (Blackboard)

Week 6: February 24: Prophetic Utopian Traditions

Listen: Culture, “When the Two Sevens Clash”; Burning Spear, “Marcus Garvey”

Homework Due:

- Joanna Brooks, “John Marrant and the Lazarus Ideology of the Early Black Atlantic,” *American Lazarus* (Blackboard)
- Lillian B. Jones, “Five Generations Hence,” excerpts (Blackboard)

Week 7: March 2: Citizenship and Technocratic Utopianism

Listen: 99% Invisible podcast episode, “Unbuilt,” Harvey Reed oral history interview *View: Modern Times, Design for Dreaming*

Homework Due:

****Primary Document Paper DUE****

--Mikhail Bulgakov, *Heart of a Dog*

Week 8: March 9: Revolution and the Arts

View: Civil Rights Movement and artistic response; WITNESS: Art and Civil Rights in the Sixties; Guggenheim Museum exhibition on African art

Listen: Radiolab, “Los Frikis”; Gil Scott-Heron, “Bicentennial Blues”; Miles Davis: *Nefertiti, Bitches Brew*; Herbie Hancock: *Mwandishi*; Sonny Rollins, “Camel”; Fela Kuti, *No Agreement*

Homework Due:

--Derek Walcott, *Dream on Monkey Mountain* (Blackboard)
--Lyman Tower Sargent, “Indigenous, Colonial, and Postcolonial Utopianism” (Blackboard); “Utopias in Other Traditions” (Blackboard)

Week 9: March 16: Spring Break: NO CLASS

Week 10: March 23: Entertainment and Utopia

View: The Circus, Spark: A Burning Man Story, images from Circus Amok! and Dismaland Listen: “The Landlord’s Game,” 99% Invisible

Homework Due:

--Angela Carter, *Nights at the Circus*

Week 11: March 30: Environmental Harmony

View: Scott Kellogg and Stacey Pettigrew, *Toolbox for Sustainable City Living*; *Whole Earth Catalog*, excerpts

Listen: episode on Buckminster Fuller homes, 99% Invisible

Homework Due:

--Paolo Bacigalupi, “The People of Sand and Slag,” *Pump Six and Other Stories* (Blackboard)
--Betsy Beaven, *Political Palate* (Blackboard)

Week 13: April 6: Utopian Architecture and Urban Relations

View: Washington Post: “What people in the 1900s thought the year 2000 would look like;” “Paris’s Crumbling Suburban High-rises” (photos); African Modernist Architecture; Freddy Mamani Silvestre (photos); *The Truman Show*; James H. Kunstler’s TED Talk

Listen: 99% Invisible podcast: “Viva la Arquitectura!” episode

Homework Due:

--Dolores Hayden, “Nostalgia and Futurism” (Blackboard)

Week 12: April 13: Evolving Feminist Consciousness

Discuss: Combahee River Collective manifesto; Gloria Anzuldúa, “La Conciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness”; Dolores Huerta exhibit

Homework Due:

****Historiographical Paper DUE****

--Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time* (chapters 1-5)

Week 14: April 20: Utopian Science Fiction

View/Discuss: Adirely Queirós, *White Out, Black In; Born into Flames*; Octavia Butler

Homework Due:

--Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time* (chapters 6-11)

Week 15: April 27: Language and Utopianism

Listen: Radiolab, “Words”

Homework Due:

--Joshua Foer, “Utopian for Beginners,” *The New Yorker*
(<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/12/24/utopian-for-beginners>)
--Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time* (chapters 12-19)

Week 16: May 4: Final Exam

Essay exam held during regular class time.