

## UTOPIAS, DYSTOPIAS AND MANIFESTOS: THE IMAGINATION OF POLITICAL ALTERNATIVES

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Political Science 391/LinC U2 (Moral Life), Fall 2006  
T, Th 2:20 - 3:30, PPHAC 338  
Office Hours: M, W 10:20-11:30; T, TH 3:40-4:40  
and by appointment.

**utopia n** [*Utopia*, imaginary and ideal country in *Utopia* (1516) by Sir Thomas More, fr. Gk an indefinitely remote place 2 *often cap*: a government and social conditions 3: an impractical scheme for social government

**dystopia n** [NL, fr. dys+topia (as in utopia)] (ca. 1950) 1: an imaginary place where people lead dehumanized and often fearful lives 2: ANTI-UTOPIA 2 ↓ **dystopian**

**manifesto n**, pl –tos or –toes [It, denunciation, manifest, fr. *manifestare* to manifest, fr. L, fr. *manifestus*] (1647): a written statement declaring publicly the intentions, motives or views of its issuer.  
*Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, tenth edition.

During the Cold War the discussion of competing forms of political and economic systems thrived. When the Wall between East and West Germany fell and the Soviet Union dissolved, this discussion largely came to a halt. Today considerations of alternatives are often dismissed as utopian. This dismissal suggests that such visions are both needed and feared as all utopias convey a critical perspective on present ideas and practices. Sometimes expressing criticism is safer in the form of a utopia, a story about a place that does not exist (u-topos: no place), or at least not yet (no time). Conversely, manifestos are perceived as more threatening because they signal a prelude to action aimed at rocking the boat. In either case, an author inserts a vision into a world that others may perceive as smoothly or inevitably transitioning from past to future. Such visions multiply the available accounts of what is possible or desirable. Or, in the case of dystopias (the imagination of worst possible societies), we may become aware of dangerous tendencies present in our own experiences. To envision alternatives is to gain a critical distance from familiar and taken-for-granted worldviews such that new thoughts and new actions become possible. In this sense, we will trouble the distinction between “serious” and utopian political thought in order to consider the political significance of writing itself. The point of this course is not to be simply a reader of utopias, dystopias, and manifestos but to participate in these genres by writing. Writing an original political vision (in the genre of your choice) is the organizing goal and final project for this course. The central text in this course is yours.

## UTOPIAS: LOCAL AND LITERARY

M	Tuesday	W	Thursday	F
	8/29  Introduction		8/31  The Moravians as an Intentional Community Old Bethlehem Historic Walk 2:30-3:30, meet at 505 Main Street	
	9/5  Thomas More, <i>Utopia</i> (1516), Book I		9/7  More, <i>Utopia</i> , Book II (41-77)	
	9/12  More, <i>Utopia</i> , Book II (77-end)		9/14  Frederick Jameson, "The Politics of Utopia" (2004)	
	9/19  Tommaso Campanella, <i>City of Sun</i> (1602)		9/21  Michael D'Antonio, <i>Hershey: Milton S. Hershey's Extraordinary Life of Wealth, Empire, and Utopian Dreams</i> (2006), Introduction, Chapters 5 (82-80) and 6 (60-69)	
	9/26  D'Antonio, <i>Hershey</i> , Chapters 7 and 8		9/28  D'Antonio, <i>Hershey</i> , Chapter 9 Hershey, PA as an Intentional Community Tour of town and archives Bus leaves 10 a.m., meet at HUB. Return at 6 p.m.	

## DYSTOPIAS: STALINIST AND ANGELENAS

M	Tuesday	W	Thursday	F
	10/3  Yevgeny Zamyatin, <i>We</i> (1924)		10/5  Zamyatin, <i>We</i>	
	<b>10/10 Fall Recess</b>		10/12  Zamyatin, <i>We</i>	
	10/17  Mike Davis, <i>Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster</i> (1998), Chapter 1: The Dialectic of Ordinary Disaster		10/19  Davis, <i>Ecology of Fear</i> , Chapter 6: The Literary Destruction of Los Angeles	
	10/24  Davis, <i>Ecology of Fear</i> , Chapter 7: Beyond Blade Runners		10/26  7 p.m. movie viewing: Movie TBA	
	10/31  Octavia Butler, <i>Parable of the Sower</i> (1994), 1-102		11/2  Butler, <i>Parable</i> , 103-213	
	11/7  Butler, <i>Parable</i> , 214-329			

## MANIFESTOS: NATION, GENDER, CLASS, AND RELIGION

M	Tuesday	W	Thursday	F
			11/9  <i>Declaration of Independence</i> (1776) <i>Declaration of Sentiments</i> (1848)	
	11/14  Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, <i>Communist Manifesto</i> (1848), 1-50 (including Hobsbawm introduction)		11/16  Marx and Engels, <i>Communist Manifesto</i> , 50-87	
	11/21  Valerie Solanas, <i>S.C.U.M. Manifesto</i> (1967)		<b>11/23</b> <b>Thanksgiving Recess</b>	
	11/28  7 p.m. movie viewing: <i>I shot Andy Warhol</i> (1996)		11/30  Bruce Lawrence (editor), <i>Messages to the World: The Statements of Osama Bin Laden</i> (2005), Chapter III	
	12/5  <i>Bin Laden</i> , Chapter IV		12/7  <i>Bin Laden</i> , Chapter V	
	12/11  Closing discussion			

Calendar	Assignment	Requirement	%
9/14	Paper 1	five pages	20
10/3	Outline	five pages	20
11/2	Draft	fifteen pages	35
12/15	Original Vision	twenty pages	
Ongoing	Engagement		25

We will take approximately ten minutes to write at the start of every class. Below is a proposed sequence of writing exercises (see list of questions). These questions are intended as stepping stones toward your final original political vision. Questions may vary when our work together takes unexpected turns. The checklist is for your convenience. I will collect your in-class writing occasionally during the semester. Please create a thin binder for approximately thirty pages. Your in-class writing counts toward your engagement grade.

Date	#	In-class writing exercises		Assignments
8/29	1	What do you fear and what do you desire?		Five-page paper on Thomas More's <i>Utopia</i> due.
8/31	2	What aspects of life can be ordered? What is the role of imagination in political discourse?		
9/5	3	What is a utopia? (genre)		
9/7	4	What does your utopia need to achieve? What is the highest value of the society you imagine?		
9/12	5	What is the frame of your utopian account? How do we progress from reality to fiction?		
9/14	6	What is the foundational myth or tradition that conveys legitimacy to the arrangements within your envisioned society?	1	
9/19	7	Who is the main or average protagonist of your utopia?		
9/21	8	How does a part of your vision relate to the whole? (For example, labor in relationship to the economic arrangements.)		
9/26	9	What is the dark underbelly of your vision? How might this positive vision go wrong?		
9/28	10	To which of our readings is your utopia most indebted?		

10/3	11	What are the collective implications of your worst fear?		2	Five-page outline of your final project due.	
10/5	12	Are there current political arrangements that strike you as dystopian?				
10/12	13	Are there dystopian aspects of everyday personal behavior? How do political imagination and visionary writings become persuasive?				
10/17	14	What is the crisis or event that frames the decline into your dystopian vision?				
10/19	15	What is the role of language in your dystopia?				
10/24	16	What is the role of technology in your dystopia?				
10/26	17	What is the timeline of your dystopia?				
11/2	18	What is a dystopia? (Genre)		3	Draft of final project due.	
11/7	19	What lesson must your dystopian vision teach? How does your dystopia attempt to normalize dysfunction or injustice?				
11/9	20	What is a manifesto? (Genre)				
11/14	21	Who is the audience?				
11/16	22	Does a manifesto seek to transform the audience? If so, how?				
11/21	23	How does a manifesto invoke the past, the present, and the future?				
11/28	24	Can we distinguish between a manifesto and a call to action?				
11/30	25	What is the central goal or project of your manifesto?				
12/5	26	What is the assumed philosophy of history that informs the manifesto's vision?				
12/7	27	What aspect of someone else's liberty would you sacrifice in pursuit of your own idea(s)?				
12/15	28	After end of classes, no meeting.				

## ***Engagement***

**A** - Critical, innovative and careful readings; substantial and consistent notes or written preparations for discussion; frequent and illuminating text-based contributions; contribution of discussion-shaping questions; careful engagement of the arguments of others; support and promotion of positive discussion dynamics.

**B** - Complete and careful readings; consistent notes or written preparations for discussion; lively, substantial, and argumentative text-based contributions; contribution of independent questions, engagement of the arguments of others.

**C** - Incomplete or superficial readings; minimal notes or written preparations for discussion; regular (at least once per meeting) discussion participation.

**D** - Incomplete or missing readings; lack of notes or written preparations for discussion; mostly passive presence.

**F** - Persistent vegetative state; low-level trance; slightly elevated body temperature.

- Political theory relies heavily on close readings of texts. Always bring your book or article.
- Analysis, not summary, is the point of our reading. Underline important passages, take notes, ask questions, and come to class prepared to participate in discussions. A good question is an excellent contribution.
- What does the text say? What does it not say? What does it imply? When we read political theories we are looking for arguments, implications, and complications. Do not regard the text as a smooth surface.
- Don't be afraid to change your mind. Discussion is generative when it allows all participants to voice a position, to receive feedback from others, to reconsider, and to possibly revise the initial claim.
- If you're finding it difficult to participate in discussions, please contact me. I am happy to help you strategize. You should know that I consider e-mail exchanges, discussions in office hours, and other forms of engagement when determining final grades.

## ***Nota Bene***

1) I invite you to visit my office hours. Please be in touch with any questions and thoughts you may have about our work together. You can also contact me by e-mail at [haddad@moravian.edu](mailto:haddad@moravian.edu).

2) We will discuss all assignments two weeks in advance of a given due date. I am happy to help you with outlines. All assignments must be completed.

3) Expect to work six hours on average outside of class per week. Some weeks the reading load will be lighter, some weeks it will be considerably heavier.

4) Students with a documented learning disability who desire accommodations for this course must first visit the Office of Learning Services (ext. 1510) and follow college procedures on receiving accommodations.

5) I do not accept late assignments, except in appropriately documented emergency situations. For the sake of equity, please do not ask for special treatment.

6) Plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment in this class. Please see Moravian College Student Handbook for an account of academic honesty. See <http://www.moravian.edu/studentlife/handbook/academic2.htm>

7) Do not miss class. Undocumented absences beyond the first will harm your engagement grade at the rate of 5% per absence.

8) No food in the classroom, please. *And, turn your cell phone off before class.*

## ***Readings***

The following books are available for purchase at the Moravian College Bookstore:

- 1) Octavia Butler, *The Parable of the Sower* (Warner Books, 1993)
- 2) Michael D'Antonio, *Hershey: Milton S. Hershey's Extraordinary Life of Wealth, Empire, and Utopian Dreams* (Simon and Schuster 2006)
- 3) Mike Davis, *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster* (Vintage, 1998)
- 4) Bruce Lawrence (editor), *Messages to the World: the Statements of Ossama Bin Laden* (Verso, 2006)
- 5) Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Verso, 1998)
- 6) Thomas More, *Utopia* (Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- 7) Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We* (Modern Library Classics, 2006)

Other readings will be available on reserve at Reeves Library.