

# **UTOPIAN THOUGHT: RACE, CLASS, GENDER, DISABILITY**

**Amber Knight, University of North Carolina-Charlotte**

**Justin Mueller, Lesley University**

**Leocadia Diaz Romero, Murcia State University**

**Lee Trepanier, Saginaw Valley State University**

## **Goal**

To create a syllabus resource for a course about utopian thought with attention to the issues of race, class, gender, and disability.

## **Learning Outcomes**

To use utopias as reflective tools to analyze ethical and political values in the world

To use utopias to think of alternative possible futures in the world

To use utopias to think beyond present boundaries of what is considered normal

To use utopias to identify points of overlap and conflict between values systems with respect to race, class, gender, and disability

## **Skills**

To develop students' critical thinking

To develop students' analytical writing

To develop students' effective communication skills

## **Success**

To be familiar with the literature of utopias

To understand how race, class, gender, and disability exist as systems of privilege and oppression in the world

To think, write, and communicate critically, analytically, and effectively

## **Assess Success**

Iterative essay assignments

## **Course Level and Class Size**

Elective

15-20 students

## **Classroom**

Preference for classroom, hybrid optional

## Utopian Academic Literature

- Bahng, Aimee. *Migrant Futures* (Duke University Press, 2018)
- Bell, David M. *Rethinking Utopia: Place, Power, Affect* (Routledge, New York and London, 2017)
- Bey, Hakim. *T.A.Z. The Temporary Autonomous Zone* (Pacific Publishing Studio, 2011)
- Chrostowska, S. D. and James D. Ingram, eds., *Political Uses of Utopia: New Marxist, Anarchist, and Radical Democratic Perspectives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016)
- Claeys, Gregory, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)
- Claeys, Gregory and Lyman Tower Sargent, eds. *The Utopia Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 1999)
- Davis, J.C. *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing 1516-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981)
- Fiamanti, Filio. "The Treatment of the 'Woman Question' in Radical Utopian Political Thought" *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 3 (2000): 2-3, 116-39
- Jameson, Fredric. *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005)
- Jones, Clint and Cameron Ellis, eds. *The Individual and Utopia: A Multidisciplinary Study of Humanity and Perfection* (New York: Routledge, 2014)
- Kumar, Krishan. *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987)
- Leopold, David. *Socialism and (the rejection of) utopia. Journal of Political Ideologies* 12:3 (2007): 219-37.
- Levitas, Ruth. *The Concept of Utopia* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2011)
- Levitas, Ruth. "For Utopia: The (limits of the) Utopian Function in Late Capitalist Society" *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 3 (2000): 2-3, 25-43
- Levitas, Ruth. *The Concept of Utopia* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2010)
- Manuel, Frank E. and Fritzie P. Manuel. *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979)

Moylan, Tom. *Demand the Impossible: Science Fiction and the Utopian Imagination* (London: Methuen, 1986)

Nandy, Ashis. *Tradition, Tyranny and Utopias: Essays in the Politics of Awareness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

Pitzer, Donald E., ed. *America's Communal Utopias* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997)

Russell, Jacob. *Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age* (Columbia University Press, 2007)

Sargisson, Lucy and Lyman Tower Sargent, *Living in Utopia: New Zealand's Intentional Communities* (Aldershot, England: Ashgate, 2004)

Schaer, Roland; Gregory Claeys; and Lyman Tower Sargent, eds. *Utopia: The Search for the Ideal Society in the Western World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

Sargent, Lyman Tower. "Choosing Utopia: Utopianism as an Essential Element in Political Thought and Action", *Utopia Method Vision: The Use Value of Social Dreaming* Vol. 1 of Ralahine Utopian Studies. Ed. Tom Moylan and Raffaella Baccolini (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), 301-17

Sargent, Lyman Tower. *Utopia: A Very Short History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

Sargent, Lyman Tower. "Ideology and Utopia: Karl Mannheim and Paul Ricoeur." *Journal of Political Ideologies* 13.3 (Routledge, October 2008): 263-73

Sargent, Lyman Tower. "In Defense of Utopia." *Diogenes* 53.1 (February 2006): 11-17

Sargent, Lynn Tower. "Utopianism and National Identity" *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 3 (2000): 2-3, 87-106

Sargent, Lyman Tower. "The Three Faces of Utopianism Revisited." *Utopian Studies* 5.1 (1994): 1-37

Sargent, Lyman Tower. "Utopia." *New Dictionary of the History of Ideas* 6 vols. Ed. Maryanne Cline Horowitz (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2004), 6: 2403-09

## Key Works in Utopian Literature

- c. 370–360 Plato, *The Republic*  
c. 100 Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*  
c. 1405 Christine de Pizan, *The Book of City of Ladies*  
1516 Thomas More, *Utopia*  
c.1605 Joseph Hall, *Mundus Alter et Idem*  
1619 Johann Valentin Andreae, *Christianopolis*  
1623 Tommaso Campanella, *The City of the Sun*  
1626 Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis*  
1638 Francis Godwin, *The Man in the Moone*  
1641 Samuel Hartlib, *A Description of the Famous Kingdom of Macaria*  
1648 Samuel Gott, *Nova Solyma*  
1652 Gerrard Winstanley, *The Law of Freedom in a Platform: Or True Magistracie Restored*  
1653–94 François Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*  
1656 James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*  
1657 Cyrano de Bergerac, *Histoire Comique Contenant les États et Empires de la Lune*  
1666 Margaret Cavendish, *The Description of a New World, Called the Blazing World*  
1668 Henry Neville, *The Isle of Pines*  
1675 Denis Vairasse, *The History of the Sevarites or Sevarambi*  
1676 Gabriel de Foigny, *The Southern Land Known*  
1699 François de Salignac de la Mothe Fénelon, *The Adventures of Telemachus*  
1719 Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*  
1726 Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*  
1737 Simon Berington, *The Adventures of Sig. Gaudentio di Lucca*  
1751 Robert Paltock, *The Life and Adventures of Peter Wilkins*  
1756 Edmund Burke, *A Vindication of Natural Society*  
1759 Samuel Johnson, *Rasselas*  
1762 Sarah Scott, *Millenium Hall*  
1764 [James Burgh], *An Account of the First Settlement ... of the Cessares*  
1771 Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred*  
1772 Denis Diderot, *Supplement to Bougainville's 'Voyage'*  
1793 William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*  
1795 Thomas Spence, *Description of Spensonia*  
1798 Thomas Robert Malthus, *Essay on Population*  
1808 Charles Fourier, *Theory of the Four Movements*  
1811 James Henry Lawrence, *The Empire of the Nairs*  
1818 Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*  
1826 Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*  
1827 Charles Fourier, *The New Industrial World*  
1836–44 Robert Owen, *The Book of the New Moral World*  
1840 Etienne Cabet, *Voyage en Icarie*  
1848 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*

1852 Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Blithedale Romance*  
1864 Jules Verne, *Journey to the Centre of the Earth*  
1871 Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *The Coming Race*  
1872 Samuel Butler, *Erewhon*  
1880 Mary Bradley Lane, *Mizora*  
1888 Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward 2000–1887*  
1890 Theodor Hetzka, *Freiland*  
1890 William Morris, *News from Nowhere*  
1890 Ignatius Donnelly, *Caesar's Column*  
1895 H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine*  
1896 H. G. Wells, *The Island of Doctor Moreau*  
1898 H. G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*  
1901 H. G. Wells, *The First Men in the Moon*  
1905 H. G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia*  
1905 Gabriel Tarde, *Underground Man*  
1908 Jack London, *The Iron Heel*  
1915 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*  
1916 Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *With Her in Ourland*  
1923 H. G. Wells, *Men Like Gods*  
1924 Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*  
1930 Olaf Stapledon, *Last and First Men*  
1932 Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*  
1933 H. G. Wells, *The Shape of Things to Come*  
1937 Katharine Burdekin, *Swastika Night*  
1948 B. F. Skinner, *Walden Two*  
1949 George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*  
1953 Ray Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*  
1954 William Golding, *The Lord of the Flies*  
1958 Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World Revisited*  
1962 Aldous Huxley, *Island*  
1962 Anthony Burgess, *A Clockwork Orange*  
1970 Ira Levin, *This Perfect Day*  
1974 Ursula Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*  
1975 Joanna Russ, *The Female Man*  
1975 Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia*  
1976 Marge Piercy, *Woman on the Edge of Time*  
1986 Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*  
1987 Iain M. Banks, *Consider Phlebas*  
1992–6 Kim Stanley Robinson, *The Mars Trilogy*  
1996 Jack Halperin, *The Truth Machine*  
1997 Ronald Wright, *A Scientific Romance*  
2000 Brian Aldiss, *White Mars*  
2003 Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*  
2005 Kazuo Ishiguru, *Never Let Me Go*  
2007 Chuck Palahniuk, *Rant*  
2009 Margaret Atwood, *The Year of the Flood*

## Race and Utopia

### Suggested Race & Utopian Academic Readings

Kilgore, Douglas De Witt. *Astrofuturism: Science, Race, and Visions of Utopia in Space*  
Eric D. Weitz, *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation*

### Suggested Race & Utopia Readings

Brian Aldiss, *Helliconia Trilogy*  
Iain M. Banks, *Consider Phlebas*  
Paul Beatty, *The Sellout*  
James Blish, *A Case of Conscience*  
Edward Bulwer-Lytton, *The Coming Race*  
Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower, Parable of Traveler, Patternist Series*  
Samuel Butler, *Erewhon*  
Katharine Burdekin, *Swastika Night*  
John Brunner, *Total Eclipse*  
Arthur C. Clarke, *Childhood's End*  
Philip Dick, *Man in the High Castle*  
Aldous Huxley, *Island*  
Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*  
Ursula K. Le Guin, *Dispossessed*  
Olaf Stapledon's *The Starmaker*  
Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, *The Mote in God's Eye*  
Mary Doria Russell, *Sparrow, Children of God*  
Norman Spinrad, *The Iron Dream*  
H.G. Well, *The Time Machine, The First Men in the Moon, The War of the Worlds, The Island of Doctor Moreau, Men Like Gods*

### Suggested Race & Multimedia

*Avatar*  
*Black Panther*  
*Janelle Monae*  
*Star Trek*  
*Zootopia*

## **Class and Utopia**

### **Suggested Class & Utopian Academic Readings**

Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*  
Fredric Jameson, *An American Utopia: Dual Power and the Universal Army*  
Peter Kropotkin, *The Conquest of Bread*  
Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto*  
Erin McKenna, *The Task of Utopia*  
Thomas Moylan, *Demand the Impossible*  
Robert Owen, *A New View of Society and other Writings*

### **Suggested Class & Utopia Readings**

Plato, *Republic*  
Ian M. Banks, *The Culture Series*  
Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*  
Suzanne Collins, *The Hunger Games*  
Robert Heinlein, *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress*  
Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*  
Jack London, *The Iron Heel*  
Thomas More, *Utopia*  
William Morris, *News From Nowhere*  
HG Wells, *A Modern Utopia*  
HG Wells, *The Time Machine*

### **Suggested Class & Multimedia**

*Elysium*  
*Hunger Games*  
*In Time*  
*Metropolis*

## **Suggested Gender & Utopian Academic Readings**

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Erin McKenna, *The Task of Utopia*

Oliver, Kelly. "Ambiguity, Ambivalence and Extravagance in *The Hunger Games*" *Humanities* 3 (2014): 675-86

Loobeek, Kristi. "A Feminist Analysis of the Film *The Hunger Games*," *Concordia University, St. Paul* 1.3. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/comjournal/vol1/iss1/3>

Abram Trosky, "Jumping at Our Reflection: American Dystopia and Reaction in Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery," in *Short Stories and Political Philosophy: Power, Prose, and Persuasion* (Lexington Books, 2018)

### **Suggested Gender & Utopia Readings**

M. Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World*

O.E. Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

S. Collins, *The Hunger Games Trilogy*.

R. De Liz, *The Legend of Wonder Woman*

U. Le Guin, *The Left Hand of Darkness*

U. Le Guin, *The Dispossessed: An Ambiguous Utopia*.

Gilman Perkins, *The Herland Trilogy*.

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

### **Suggested Gender & Multimedia**

*The Hunger Games*

*Wonder Woman*



## Disability and Utopia

### Suggested Disability & Utopian Academic Readings

Curtis, Claire P. "Utopian Possibilities: Disability, Norms, and Eugenics in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis*." *Journal of Literary and Cultural Disability Studies* 9.1 (2015): 19-33

Jones, Clint and Jen Rinaldi. "Eutopias and Dis-Topias: Re-Imagining the Citizen of Ideal Societies," in *The Individual and Utopia: A Multidisciplinary Study of Humanity and Perfection*, ed. Clint Jones and Cameron Ellis (New York: Routledge, 2014), 165-78

Kafer, Alison. "Imagined Futures," in *Feminist, Queer, Crip* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 1-24.

Mackey, Peter. "Crip Utopia and the Future of Disability." *Critical Disability Discourse* 1 (2009). Available at <https://cdd.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/cdd/article/view/23383>.

Rice, Carla et al. "Imagining Disability Futurities." *Hypatia* 32.2 (2017). Available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/hypa.12321>.

### Suggested Disability & Utopia Readings

Octavia Butler, *Xenogenesis* in *Lilith's Brood*

Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*

Kurt Vonnegut, "Harrison Bergeron," in *Welcome to the Monkey House*

H.G. Wells, *Country of the Blind*

### Suggested Disability & Multimedia

*Avatar*

*Gattaca*

*Never Let Me Go*

*Pleasantville*

*X-Men* film series

## **Possible Other Topics**

Environment

Science & Technology

War

## Possible Essay Questions

What does the word utopia mean to you?

Why is the word utopia used to reject change?

Is a better world possible? Why, or why not?

Imagine your own vision of a good society. What are the three most important features? Why are they the most important features?

Many dystopias are presented as projections into the future of things in the present that could become the basis of a worse future. What two features of the present do you think are the most likely to produce a bad society in the future?

Would you join a utopian community? Why, or why not?

Are there utopias of anarchism, communism, conservatism, feminism, liberalism, and socialism? If so, how do they differ?

Can there be such a thing as a Nazi utopia?

Why do people move from one country to another? Are there utopian aspects to such moves?

What are the arguments for utopia?

What are the arguments against utopia?

Do utopias differ from country to country? Why, or why not?

What roles do imagined futures play in the political institutions and actions of the present?

Can we explain the significance of the shift in the 19th century utopian to the 20th century dystopian imaginative? Or, can we connect these apparently disparate sets of writings and see them as inherently linked?

Is utopian thought still relevant in contemporary politics?

Much of 19th century utopian literature focuses on class politics, while 20th century dystopian literature deals more with the intersections of class, race, and gender. How can we account for this discontinuity?

Why have free market and capitalist theories of political economy been largely understood as realist while post/anti-capitalist theories (e.g. Marxist, Anarchist) have been routinely dismissed as utopian?

Can we situate utopian or dystopian thought and literature in radical or conservative politics or is such classification erroneous?

What makes utopias and/or dystopias believable or unbelievable?

Why might it be that these projections of the future are radically different (either for good or for ill) than the present? Would a continuance of present political, social, and economic conditions be a utopian or dystopian projection? Or neither?

Are all governments/governing projects/forms of governmentality somehow based on utopian tendencies?