This course explores the concepts of Utopia and Dystopia. Sir Thomas More coined the term utopia as a combination of Greek words meaning happy place and no place/nowhere. Far from describing a never never land, utopias often represent cultural protest against unjust institutions or policies and propose political or social reforms. In recent years, there has been increasing attention to dystopic visions representing oppressive totalitarian regimes, environmental degradation, and/or technological oppression.

This is an interdisciplinary course. Students will read literature, watch films, and look at artistic portrayals of utopia and dystopia. The films we will discuss include *Nineteen Eighty Four*, *Blade Runner*, *Gattaca*, *Hunger Games*, and Japanese animation.

A premise of this course is that Utopian Studies is directly relevant to contemporary social problems and important to thinking creatively about solutions. In our discussion of texts and films and in student projects, we will focus on the connection between utopian thought and contemporary challenges such as ethnic and racial conflict, economic inequality, the dehumanizing effect of technological dependence, and alternatives to traditional nuclear family relationships. How can utopian thought or utopian experiments help us address these challenges? What warnings are provided by dystopian literature, film, and art?

Students will be encouraged to explore a particular areas that are of interest to them such as Utopian communities, Utopia and religion, Utopia and gender, Utopia and race, Utopia and political philosophy, Utopia and economics, Utopia and bioengineering, Utopia and the environment, Utopia and animals, Utopia and art, Utopia and music, Utopia and architecture. Students who wish to do so are invited to “construct” their own utopian societies. Students may work individually or collaboratively with other students as they prepare a final paper or project.

**Learning Objectives**

On completion of this course, students will be able to

• Define the terms utopia and dystopia and trace the historical development of these concepts
• Identify recurring questions that are investigated in utopian and dystopian thought such as the optimal means of structuring society and government, economic distribution, gender equality, and coexistence with technology
• Demonstrate how utopian thought fostered social change
• Critically examine the rhetoric embedded in utopian and dystopian literature and film
• Discuss the evolution of significant utopian communities, and evaluate the contributions made by these communities and the obstacles that they faced
• Compare historical utopian communities with similar contemporary social experiments
• Understand the contribution of gender and race-related utopian thought
• Discuss the intersection of utopian thought and justice theory
• Discuss recent dystopian investigation of challenges posed by technology, environmental degradation, and advances in genetic engineering

Readings and Topics for Class Discussion

Class 1 9/4 Introduction: Overview of Course Requirements  Utopia and Dystopia: What’s the Difference?
Shirley Jackson’s “The Lottery” (ELMS)
Ursula Le Guin’s “The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas” (ELMS)
Film: Star Trek: The Justice Episode

Class 2 9/11 Early Visions of Utopia
Plato’s Republic (ELMS excerpts)
Thomas More’s Utopia (ELMS excerpts)
Film: Logan’s Run

Class 3 9/18 Man or Monster?
Jonathan Swift’s Gulliver’s Travels (ELMS excerpts)
Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein (ELMS excerpts)
Film: Blade Runner

Class 4 9/25 Short Essays Due; American Utopias
In class informal presentation of short essays
Charlotte Gilman’s Herland (excerpts ELMS)
Student Presentations: (4)
Film: Shakers

Class 5 10/2 The Challenge of Poverty
Martha Nussbaum’s “Frontiers of Justice” (ELMS excerpts)
Garrett Hardin’s “Lifeboat Ethics and Why We Shouldn’t Help the Poor” (ELMS)
Film: Hunger Games

Class 6 10/9 Dystopia and Genetic Engineering
Aldous Huxley’s Brave New World
Film: 1984

Class 7 10/16 Dystopia and Disability
H.G. Wells’s “The Country of the Blind” (ELMS)
Kurt Vonnegut’s “Harrison Bergeron” (ELMS)
Student presentations (2)
Film: *Gattaca*

**Class 8 10/23 Family Values in Dystopia**
Isaac Asimov’s “Ugly Little Boy” (ELMS)
Ray Bradbury’s “The Veldt” (ELMS)
Student Presentations (2)
Film: *Fahrenheit 451*

**Class 9 1/30 Dystopia and Crime**
Philip Dick’s “Minority Report” (ELMS)
AB Yehosua’s “Flood Tide” (ELMS)
Student presentations (4)

**Class 10 11/6 Dystopia and the Robot**
Philip K Dick’s “The Electric Ant” (ELMS)
George Sauders’s “Semplica Girl Diaries” (ELMS)
Ursula Le Guin, “American SF and the Other” (ELMS)
Student Presentations (2)
Film: *Metropolis the Manga*

**Class 11 11/13 Ecological Disaster**
Nov 19 Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* (excerpts ELMS)
Student Presentations (2)

**Class 12 11/20 Cloning: Means to an End**
Kazuo Ishiguro’s *Never Let Me Go*
Film: *Never Let Me Go*

**Thanksgiving 11/27**

**Class 13 12/4** Begin Student Presentation of Final Projects

**Class 14 12/11** Continue Student Presentation of Final Projects
Class Meeting Times

Thursdays, 2-430

Assignments

Students are asked to prepare (a) one short essay of four pages each (double spaced); (b) one ten minute oral presentation to be posted on ELMS discussion board if you are using PowerPoint; (c) a final power point (original fiction or term paper can be substituted if student prefers) which will be orally presented to the class at the end of the term. Collaborative projects are encouraged.

Students are requested to post essays on ELMS in the assignment drop box before class on the date due and to bring hard copy of their essays to class. Students have an open choice of paper topic but a default list of suggested topics will be posted on ELMS for those looking for inspiration. Research guidance will also be posted on ELMS.

Grades will be determined as follows: 20% first essay, 20% first oral presentation, 40% final paper, 20% participation and course blog postings. Students are expected to attend class regularly and to actively participate in class. Through class participation, you increase your own engagement in the course, improve your presentation skills, and give your classmates the benefit of your thoughts. Students will also occasionally contribute informal thoughts, newspaper items, etc. to a course blog (the discussion board on ELMS). Through blog postings, you can pose questions for class discussion, follow upon points raised in class, and bring to the attention of the class stories, news clips, and movies related to utopia.

Range:

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<th>Grade</th>
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<td>A+</td>
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Academic Integrity & the Honors College

The University is an academic community. Its fundamental purpose is the pursuit of knowledge. Like all other communities, the University can function properly only if its members adhere to clearly established goals and values. Essential to the fundamental purpose of the University is the commitment to the principles of truth and academic honesty. Accordingly, the Code of Academic Integrity is designed to ensure that the principle of academic honesty is upheld. While all members of the University share this responsibility, The Code of Academic Integrity is designed so that special responsibility for upholding the principle of academic honesty lies with the students.

All University of Maryland students are asked to write and sign the following Honor Pledge to all submitted assignments and exams:

I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination.

The University of Maryland honor system is fully described in the Code of Academic Integrity. Please read: www.studenthonorcouncil.umd.edu/code.html. The Code is administered by an all-student Honor Council. The student Honor Council office is located in room 2118 Mitchell Building and can be reached at 301-314-8204.

The Honors College works to enrich its community life by promoting an atmosphere of honesty, trust, and mutual responsibility. In the event that a Honors College student is found responsible for a violation of the Code of Academic Integrity by the Student Honor Council, he or she will be dismissed from the Honors College for the semester in which the violation took place and for all subsequent semesters in which the student is enrolled as an undergraduate at Maryland.

Course Evaluation
Your feedback in the evaluation of courses through CourseEvalUM is confidential and important to the improvement of teaching and learning at the University as well as to the tenure and promotion process. CourseEvalUM will be open for you to complete your evaluations for spring semester courses. You can go directly to the website (www.courseevalum.umd.edu) to complete your evaluations. By completing all of your evaluations each semester, you will be able to access the summary reports for thousands of courses online at Testudo.

**Texts for Purchase**

Attached are preferred editions. However, in view of the high cost of textbooks, alternative editions or on-line versions of the Shelley and Huxley novels are acceptable.
