

PAR 190-01 Honors: **Freedom, Culture, and Utopia**

Fall 2007

Seminar Mentor: Daryl L. Hale

Office: Stillwell 230

Class Time: 12:35-1:50

Classroom: MK 135

Office Hours: MW 12-2; TR 11:30-12:30, 2:00-3:30

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Utopias are generally understood as ideally perfect places, ones where the social and political conditions work to the advantage of most members of society. Thomas More invented the word, punning on the Greek words, **ou** [English: 'no' or 'not'] and **topos** [English: 'place']. More also played on the Greek adjective **eu** [English: 'excellent' or 'good'] to speak of his **eutopia** as a good place. Since that time, many have taken More to be critiquing his own society, and thus providing us with a description of a **dystopia**, a bad place. So from this brief etymology, we should pay close attention to 3 things connected with utopian thought: a. utopias are ideal societies, i.e. they don't actually exist, though b. they are always combined with a **topos**, some location in time and space other than the present; so, c. utopian schemes are always visions that criticize current socio-political conditions. The earliest utopias are described for us in terms of religio-poetic myths – a Golden Age, an Arcadia, an Eden, or an Isle of the Blest; more recent ones envision constructive (or, destructive) changes brought about by current science and technology.

This course will examine, from a historical-philosophical perspective, several utopian visions in Western thought – one from the classical Greek, one late medieval Christian, and one from the early modern Enlightenment periods. As we study each utopian scheme, we will also reason critically about these utopian visions. We will begin with Plato's philosophical vision in the *Republic*. Next, we will briefly consider Thomas More's *Utopia*, then peruse Andreae's vision of a *Christianopolis*. In our study of scientific utopian visions, we will read Condorcet's vision of the inevitable progress of the human mind, and B. F. Skinner's more recent expansion of that vision, as well as Jonathan Swift's critique as presented in *Gulliver's Travels* and letters. Finally, we will conclude with an ecologically sustainable utopia that entertains lots of interesting schemas for the good life.

Some of the questions that will arise as we read these sources are: How does human freedom get impacted by utopian idealism? What roles are permitted historically disadvantaged groups or minorities in such utopias? What roles do religion, ethics, law, the arts & sciences, play in such schemes? Are such idealistic schemes feasible? What sorts of restrictions must occur to some people in society so as to insure unity or community in such ideal societies?

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

- 1. Diligent Reading:** Improved ability in reading for pivotal points or passages of texts; learning to detect ambiguities, irony both dramatic and Socratic, core ideas and arguments of complex texts.
- 2. Critical Reasoning:** Increased ability at analyzing and assessing arguments; uncovering hidden assumptions, faulty reasoning, logical organization of ideas and theories.
- 3. Moral Reflection:** Increased recognition of diverse moral and political assumptions, theories, and ethical implications of those ideas, assumptions, & theories.
- 4. Historical Discernment:** Sensitivity to historical forces, changes influencing utopian thinkers; learning how utopian schemes unfolded historically.

List of Daily Reading Assignments

August 21 – Utopia: Is Quest for Justice, Equality, Perfectionism a Jest?

I. Ancient Greek Ideal Society: Plato's *Republic* as Well-Ordered *Kallipolis*

23 -- Socrates: in Plato, *Apology* [find at **socrates.clarke.edu**]

28,30 -- Plato: *Republic* [Claeys,Sargent 27-56]

September 4 -- Paul Cartledge: *The Spartans* [DVD in class], but READ a.

Ch.5: "Women and Religion" [at <http://paws.wcu.edu/dhale>, click **PAR 190-02**, then **Spartans on Women and Religion**], and

b. Solon, Lycurgus: Lawgivers [CS 15-27]

- 6 -- *The Republic: Plato's Utopia* [DVD in class]; but READ
Plato: Republic, Bk. X [found on my website at
<http://paws.wcu.edu/dhale>, then click on **PAR 304-01**, then
Plato: Republic, Bk. X]

Final Analysis Q: Is Plato an Enemy of Democracy (Karl Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Vol. I) or a Moral Critic of Imperialism/Commercialism?

II. Medieval Christian Utopian Ideal: Thomas More's Utopia, Andreae's Christianopolis

A. More: Utopia

11-- More: *Utopia* [CS 77-93]

11-- Quiz on Ancient Greek Utopias, More (Sections I, IIA)

B. Andreae: Christianopolis

13,18 -- Andreae: *Christianopolis* [142-174]

20,25 -- *Christianopolis* [175-205]

Sept 27, Oct 2 -- *Christianopolis* [205-247]

Final Analysis Q: Is Andreae's *Christianopolis* the Ravings of a Religious Neo-Conservative or the Remedy of a Christian Reformer?

III. Scientific Utopian Ideal Societies: Bacon, Condorcet, Skinner

A. Enlightenment Utopias

October 4 -- Francis Bacon: *New Atlantis* [CS 118-125]

9 -- Condorcet: *Progress of the Human Mind* [CS 176-9]

[also, see www.historyguide.org/intellect/lecture10a.html]

Swift: *Gulliver's Travels* [CS 141-51]; Letter to Alexander Pope

[www.ourcivilisation.com/smartboard/shop/swift/letters/chap2.htm]

9 -- **MIDTERM EXAM: Review Readings, Notes, Terms**

October 11-14 -- **Fall Break**

B. Scientific Socialist Utopias

16 -- Robert Owen: *New Moral World* [CS 207-218]

Marx & Engels: *Communist Manifesto* [CS 227-8]

C. Contemporary Utopia: B. F. Skinner's Walden Two

18 -- B. F. Skinner: *Walden Two* [CS 372-390]

Skinner: "Walden Two Revisited" [CS 390-398]

25 -- Orwell: *Nineteen Eighty-Four* [CS 398-407]

Final Analysis Q: Do the Scientific Utopias of Bacon, Condorcet, Marx & Engels, or Skinner Promise a Brave New World or a Fragile Freedom?

IV. Ecologically Sustainable Utopia: Ernest Callenbach's Ecotopia

October 25,30 -- Callenbach: *Ecotopia* Streets, Food, Economy [1-59]

November 1 -- *Ecotopia* Nature, Population, Plastics [60-90]

6 -- *Ecotopia* Women, Workers, Race, Press [91-125]

8 -- *Ecotopia* Education, Research, Arts [126-154]

13 -- *Ecotopia* Health Care, Challenges [154-172]

15 -- *Ecotopia* Work & Play [172-181]

20 -- Gore: *An Inconvenient Truth* [DVD]; but READ

Gore: "Dysfunctional Society" (LP 702-713; from *Earth in the Balance*)

Final Analysis Q: Is Callenbach's (and/or Gore's) Ecotopia Realistic and Desirable?

21-25 -- **Thanksgiving Break**

27,29 -- Jacoby: *Picture Imperfect*, Anarchic Breeze [1-36]

Picture Imperfect, on Anti-Utopianism [37-82]

December 4 -- *Picture Imperfect*, World off its Hinges [83-112]

6 -- *Picture Imperfect*, Unuttered Longing [113-149]

Final Analysis Q: Is Jacoby right in his claim that not all Utopian Visions breed Dystopian Nightmares?

Thursday, December 13 -- **FINAL EXAM, 3:00-5:30 MK 135**

COURSE REQUIREMENTS: Texts

A. Rental: *The Utopia Reader*, edited by Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent (readings are signified by 'CS' followed by page numbers).

B. Supplemental: The 3 required supplementary texts are Johann Valentin Andreae, *Christianopolis* (1619); Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia* (1975); and Russell Jacoby, *Picture Imperfect: Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age* [2005]

1. Homework Assignments: I expect all members of the class to keep current on assigned class readings; accordingly, I will expect you to be prepared to discuss the daily reading, to raise some questions about how we are to interpret the text, the author's claims (thesis, argument), or the cultural context which produced this text & author. If you are having trouble with the reading, then our class discussions should help to illuminate those dim spots in your understanding. As the semester proceeds, you will be writing outlines of textual arguments or critical analyses (1-2 pages each) of the texts we are reading; so, your attendance is imperative. These assignments will count for 10% of your grade.

2 & 3. Midterm and Final Exams: there will be a midterm examination on October 9, so your attendance in class is necessary to ready yourself for that exam. In an historical and conceptual course (such as this one), everything builds on previous thinkers we have studied; so if you miss a class, it will hurt your comprehension of the overall trends of philosophical thought. Also there will be a final examination at the end of the semester. Both the midterm and the final, individually, will count for 20% of your grade; both together will comprise 2\5 of your grade. Your critical review of the final book, *Picture Imperfect*, will constitute the take-home portion (25%) of the final exam.

4. Critical Analysis Papers: Each student will turn in a critical review of both Andreae's *Christianopolis* and Callenbach's *Ecotopia*. In these reviews, I expect to see signs of critical engagement with the text, some awareness of other utopian visions that we have read throughout the semester, and towards the end of the semester, you should offer your own alternative utopian vision. Do not download some cheesy Internet review of Andreae's or Callenbach's work – plagiarism will earn you an F for the course, and will be reported to the Office of Judicial Affairs. To prevent such mistakes, you can visit my office, or the University Writing Center, to present drafts of your paper. Each paper is worth 20% of your grade: the *Christianopolis* paper is due Oct. 4, and the *Ecotopia* paper is due November 20.

5. Participation: The university allows us to keep these seminars small in size, with the goal of there being much discussion of academic topics. So, following the ancient Greek model of democracy, I will treat this class as a **polis** – a self-sufficient, self-governing community of citizens who directly participate in the affairs of state. Thus, class attendance, quizzes on assigned readings, and written questions on daily readings demonstrate your active participation as a citizen – **politês**. I will require you to submit 1-2 questions per week on the readings. Accordingly, anyone who misses class 4 times or more can expect their cumulative grade lowered one letter grade. These assignments will not be graded individually (though anyone who fails to turn in at least 5 sets of questions, at assigned times, will fail the course), but taken cumulatively they will count for 10% of your grade.

PLUS/MINUS GRADING SYSTEM The plus/minus grading system is in effect at Western Carolina University, and will be utilized in computing grades for this course. Your papers and exams will be returned with numerical grades on them, but the following scale will make it easy for you to determine your standing in the course by simple conversion from the numerical grade to the corresponding letter grade.

<u>Numerical Grades</u>	=	<u>Letter Grades</u>	=	<u>Quality Points</u>
93 - 100		A		4.00
90 - 92		A-		3.67
87 - 89		B+		3.33
83 - 86		B		3.00
80 - 82		B-		2.67
77 - 79		C+		2.33
73 - 76		C		2.00
70 - 72		C-		1.67
67 - 69		D+		1.33
63 - 66		D		1.00
60 - 62		D-		0.67
0 - 59		F		0.00