

Professor Haddad, haddad@moravian.edu, Comenius Room 112, (610) 861-1559
Office hours: Tuesdays and Wednesdays 3:30 – 4:30 p.m. and by appointment

UTOPIAS, DYSTOPIAS AND MANIFESTOS: THE IMAGINATION OF POLITICAL ALTERNATIVES

Moravian College/Political Science 355 (U2)/Fall 2011
Wednesdays/ 1:00-3:00 p.m./PPHAC 338

From Merriam Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary*, tenth edition:

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.

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 in the present. 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 investigate 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.

Readings

- 1) Octavia Butler, *The Parable of the Sower* (Warner Books, 1993)
- 2) John de Graaf, *Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic* (Berrett-Koehler, 2005)
- 3) Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Verso, 1998)
- 4) Thomas More, *Utopia* (Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- 5) Judith Shulevitz, *The Sabbath World: Glimpses of Another Order of Time* (Random House, 2010)

Texts are available for purchase at the Moravian College Bookstore. Additional required texts may be available on reserve at Reeves Library.

Wednesday, August 31	1 p.m. Introduction 2 p.m. Guided tour of Historic District
Wednesday, September 7	1) Moravian <i>Women's Memoirs</i> (1997), "Mariana Höht (1737-1772)" (copies) 2) <i>The Bethlehem Diary</i> , Vol. 11, (January 1744) (copies) 3) Beverly P. Smaby, <i>The Transformation of Moravian Bethlehem</i> (1988), Chapter 1 (copies) 4) "The blessed Brother Andrew..." (copies) 2 p.m. Guided tour of Moravian Archives, Dr. Paul Peuker
Wednesday, September 14	Thomas More, <i>Utopia</i> (1516)
Wednesday, September 21	<i>Utopia</i> , continued Frederick Jameson, "The Politics of Utopia" (2004)
Wednesday, September 28	Tommaso Campanella, <i>City of Sun</i> (1602)
Friday, September 30	Paper 1 due by 4 p.m. to Mrs. Ortiz in Comenius 206
Wednesday, October 5	Judith Shulevitz, <i>The Sabbath World: Glimpses of Another Order of Time</i>
	Fall Recess
Wednesday, October 12	Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i>
Wednesday, October 19	<i>The Communist Manifesto</i>
Wednesday, October 26	John de Graaf, <i>Affluenza: The All-Consuming Epidemic</i>
Friday, October 28	Outline due by 4 p.m. to Mrs. Ortiz in Comenius 206
Wednesday, November 2	<i>Affluenza</i>
Wednesday, November 9	Octavia Butler, <i>Parable of the Sower</i> (1994)
Wednesday, November 16	<i>Parable of the Sower</i>

Friday, November 18	Draft due by 4 p.m. to Mrs. Ortiz in Comenius 206
Wednesday, November 23	Dystopian film and reading
	Thanksgiving Recess
Wednesday, November 30	Dystopian film and reading
Monday, December 19	Original vision due by 4 p.m. to Mrs. Ortiz in Comenius 206

<i>Calendar</i>	<i>Requirement</i>		<i>% of final grade</i>
9/30	Paper 1,	5 pages	20
10/28	Vision Outline	5 pages	20
11/18	Vision Draft	10 pages	NG
12/19	Vision Final	20-25 pages	35
Ongoing	Engagement		25

All assignments are due by 4 p.m. to Mrs. Ortiz in Comenius 206. Late papers cannot be accepted.

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.

Nota Bena

- 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.

Ten-minute in-class writing questions

- What do you fear and what do you desire?
- What aspects of life can be ordered? What is the role of imagination in political discourse?
- **What is a utopia? (genre)**
- What does your utopia need to achieve? What is the highest value of the society you imagine?
- What is the frame of your utopian account? How do we progress from reality to fiction?
- What is the foundational myth or tradition that conveys legitimacy to the arrangements within your envisioned society?
- Who is the main or average protagonist of your utopia?
- How does a part of your vision relate to the whole? For example, labor in relationship to the economic arrangements.
- What is the dark underbelly of your vision? How might this positive vision go wrong?
- To which of our readings is your utopia most indebted?
- What are the collective implications of your worst fear?
- Are there current political arrangements that strike you as dystopian?
- **What is a dystopia? (genre)**
- Are there dystopian aspects of everyday personal behavior? How do political imagination and visionary writings become persuasive?
- What is the crisis or event that frames the decline into your dystopian vision?
- What is the role of language in your dystopia?
- What is the role of technology in your dystopia?
- What is the timeline of your dystopia?
- What lesson must your dystopian vision teach? How does your dystopia attempt to normalize dysfunction or injustice?
- **What is a manifesto? (genre)**
- Who is the audience?
- Does a manifesto seek to transform the audience? If so, how?
- How does a manifesto invoke the past, the present, and the future?
- What is the central goal or project of your manifesto?
- What is the assumed philosophy of history that informs the manifesto's vision?

- What aspect of someone else's liberty would you sacrifice in pursuit of your own idea(s)?

General Course Information

- 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. I am happy to help you with difficulties relating to your reading of our texts as well as challenges that may arise with regard to assignments. In general, please make use of my office hours. It is my pleasure to help you improve your enjoyment of and performance in this course.
- 2) Be diligent in your studies and attend class. Undocumented absences beyond the first will harm your engagement grade at the rate of 5% of your total course grade (per absence).
- 3) This is an academic setting in which the goal is thoughtful discourse. Neither food consumption, nor mobile phone noise, nor phone activity (including texting or searching) of any kind is permitted. Students who disturb the contemplative and discursive atmosphere of learning will be asked to leave the room for the rest of class.
- 4) Expect to work six hours on average outside of class per week. The workload varies, and the texts can be challenging. Give yourself plenty of time to read, review, and take notes on texts. Our interest is in deep readings and in gaining a solid toolkit of political theory questions, concepts, and arguments.
- 5) In order to pass this course, you must submit all assignments.
- 6) We will discuss written assignments two weeks in advance. I will offer instructions on how to prepare for examinations in the class preceding the examination date.
- 7) I strongly discourage late assignments, except in appropriately documented emergency situations. For the sake of equity, please do not ask for special treatment. Late work is penalized at 50% of the assignment grade.
- 8) 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>
- 9) Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a learning disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.
- 10) Please also note that this syllabus is subject to change.

Please support a culture of intellectual discussion.

Course objectives

To create an original political vision

To understand utopias, dystopias, and manifestos as types of political writing

To imaginatively consider political alternatives and criticism

To pursue a writing-intensive approach to political theory

To engage in close readings and argumentative discussions

To get out of the box



Bethlehem, Moravian settlement, circa 1800

To look around and know where you are

To think about where you want to be in the future