UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA
Political Theory 4331
Utopia/Dystopia
SPRING 2026

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Examines political issues, such as justice, economic distribution and social organization by exploring both classic and contemporary utopias and dystopias.

READINGS

The following texts are assigned for this course and are available for purchase at the University of Central Florida bookstore.

1) Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent, *The Utopia Reader*, NYU, ISBN: 0814715710, required
2) Plato, *The Republic*, Dover Thrift, ISBN: 0486411214
3) Thomas More, *Utopia*, Dover Thrift, ISBN: 048629583
4) Edwary Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, Dover Thrift, ISBN 0486290386
5) Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*, Harper, ISBN: 0060850523
6) Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia*, Heyday, ISBN: 159714293
7) Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*, Anchor, ISBN: 038549081X
8) B.F. Skinner, *Walden Two*, Hacket Classics, ISBN: 0872207781

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

- Four (4) exams (35 points each)
- Intentional Community Project (OPTIONAL) (35 points)
  Due via Webcourses, APRIL 23rd
- Class participation (10 points)

EXAMINATIONS

FOUR (4) examinations will be made up of a combination of multiple choice, identification, and essay questions. The first exam will cover reading and lecture material from topics 1-2; the second exam will cover reading and lecture material from topics 3-4; the third exam will cover material from topics 5-7; the fourth exam will cover material from topics 8-10. Each exam is worth a maximum of 35 points.

INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY PROJECT (OPTIONAL)

Students will select a historical or contemporary attempt at establishing an intentional community and analyze the political, economic, and social principles underlying the community, along with the reasons for its success and/or failure. The instructor for the course will provide a list of communities that students can use to complete the assignment. Students will be allowed to select an alternative community not found on the list, but this will be contingent upon permission being granted by the instructor. A student's response must be between 4-6 pages, double-spaced. This assignment is worth a maximum of 35 points and is due on the last day that our class meets. An email will be sent during the term with further instructions/requirements regarding this project.

GRADING

The overall grade for the course will be based on the student's performance on each of the above assignments. The maximum number of points a student can acquire is 150.

The grading scale is based on the following point distributions: 135-150=A, 120-134=B, 105-119=C, 90-104=D, 0-89= F.

Grades will not be based on a curve and will reflect the quality of the work submitted.

No extra credit opportunities will be available for this course.

CLASSROOM POLICIES

ATTENDANCE:

Attendance is strongly recommended. Keep in mind, though, that a significant amount the material used for assessments in this course comes directly from what is introduced during classroom instruction/discussions.

As of Fall 2014, all faculty members are required to document students' academic activity at the beginning of each course. To document that you began this course, please complete the following academic activity by the end of the first week of classes, or as soon as possible after adding the course. Failure to do so will result in a delay in the disbursement of your financial aid.

The assigned activity for this course requires students to access UCF webcourses and complete the assignment labeled "Student Data Sheet." The completed data sheet must be submitted to the instructor via UCF webcourses prior to the deadline of JAN 16th.

MAKE-UP EXAMS:

All students will be expected to take each of the examinations on the scheduled dates. In the event that a student has an excused absence on the date of the exams, he/she will have to take a make-up examination on a date and at a location selected by the instructor. Failure to take the make-up exam on the rescheduled date will result in a score of 0 for the examination.

ACADEMIC HONESTY:

All forms of academic dishonesty are prohibited at the University of Central Florida whether courses are taught online or on campus. Academic dishonesty in any portion of your coursework (such as plagiarism on written assignments or cheating on an examination) will result, at the very least, in your being assigned a failing grade for the course. Students are prohibited from cheating by including, but not limited to: 1) attempting to use, possess, or disseminate unauthorized materials for academic assignments; 2) presenting material obtained through the effort of someone other than the student for the student's assignment credit; 3) buying and selling course materials such as class notes or assigned work to other students; 4) falsifying or misrepresenting one's academic work; and 5) plagiarism, including but not limited to: a) using another's work without any indication of the source, thereby attempting to convey the impression that such work is the student's own, b) submitting work for more than one class without the instructor's approval, or c) use of tools related to Artificial Intelligence (AI). If you're uncertain as to what constitutes cheating or plagiarism or if you have any other concerns related to academic dishonesty, be sure to discuss the matter with the instructor. "Better safe than sorry" is good advice in matters involving academic integrity.

EXPECTED STUDENT CONDUCT:

The University of Central Florida (UCF) is dedicated not only to the advancement of knowledge and learning but is concerned with the development of responsible personal and social conduct. By enrolling at UCF, a student assumes the responsibility for becoming familiar with and abiding by the general rules of conduct. The primary responsibility for managing the classroom environment rests with the faculty. Students who engage in any prohibited or unlawful acts that result in disruption of a class may be directed by the faculty member to leave the class. Violation of any classroom or university rules may lead to disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from UCF. Disciplinary action could include being withdrawn from class, disciplinary warning, probation, suspension, expulsion, or other appropriate and authorized actions.

COURSE OBJECTIVE & FORMAT:

The purpose of this course is to familiarize students with the evolution of the utopia and dystopia cannon, ranging from works developed in antiquity to modern times. The course will thus be organized around this evolution, which is meant to provide students with the tools necessary to

understand the application of these eutopian and dystopian works, both historically and in the contemporary world.

In general, the class will be conducted as a mixture of lecture and discussion and will provide the student with a forum to raise any questions he/she may have concerning the material covered in lectures and in the assigned readings.

COURSE OUTLINE

Here is a week-by-week list of topics, examination dates, and associated readings.

DISCLAIMER: The schedule is subject to change if certain topics prove to require more or less time.

Topic 1: Introduction to Political Utopia/Dystopia: establishing a basis for comparison.

Readings: Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent, *The Utopia Reader,* Introduction

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Topic 2: Evolution of Utopian Thought: Plato, *The Republic*

Readings: Plato, *The Republic* (read entire book)

EXAM 1: 19 FEB

Topic 3: Evolution of Utopia Thought: Thomas More, *Utopia*

Readings: Thomas More, *Utopia* (read entire book)

Topic 4: Evolution of Utopian Thought: Bacon, Campanella, and Harrington

Readings: Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent, *The Utopia Reader,* pp. 106-125, 137-140

EXAM 2: 26 MARCH

Topic 5: Utopian Socialism

Readings: Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent, *The Utopia Reader,* pp. 192-205, 207-219

Topic 6: Marxism and Utopia

Readings: Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent, *The Utopia Reader,* pp. 227-228

Topic 7: Anarchism and Utopia

Readings: Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent, *The Utopia Reader,* pp. 170-175, 407-420

EXAM 3: 23 APRIL

Topic 8: Victorian Socialism

Readings: Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward* (entire book); Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent, *The Utopia Reader,* pp. 273-29, 312-319

Topic 9: Dystopia

Readings: Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (read entire book); Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (read entire book); Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent, *The Utopia Reader,* 398-407

Topic 10: Modern Utopia

Readings: B.F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (read entire book) and Ernest Callenbach, *Ecoptopia* (read entire book)

EXAM 4: Tuesday, 5 MAY, 4-650PM

I hope you enjoy the class and feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

SPECIAL RULES:

In accordance with state and federal law, instructors at the University of Central Florida cannot release information relating to the academic performance of students to persons other than the staff without the student's written consent. For this information to be given out at request of a third party, the student must first sign a consent form to release their educational records.