

Political Science 139: Utopian and Dystopian Politics



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Important Dates

First Day of Class: April 2, 2018
Short Paper Due: May 11
Book Reports Due: May 21
Last Day of Class: June 8
Take Home Final Due: June 13 5pm

About This Course

Instructor:
- M. Christopher Sardo, PhD
Meeting Time and Place
- MWF 10-10:50am, SSL 145
Canvas Site
- TBD

About Me

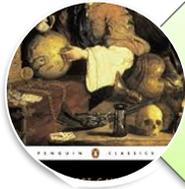
Email:
- msardo@uci.edu
Office Hours
- Wednesdays 2-4pm or by appointment
Office:
- SSPB 2271

READINGS AND RESOURCES

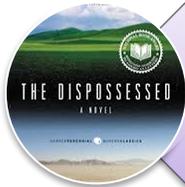
Most of our readings for this class will be drawn from the following books. Please purchase, rent, or borrow the following:



Aristophanes. *Birds and Other Plays*. Trans. David Barrett and Alan Sommerstein. New York: Penguin Press, 2003.



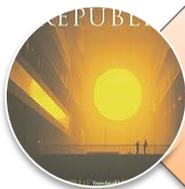
Cavendish, Margaret. *The Blazing World and Other Writings*. Ed. Kate Lilley. New York: Penguin Press, 1994.



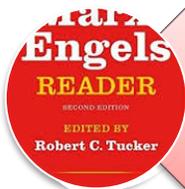
Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Dispossessed*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2014.



More, Thomas. *Utopia*. New York: Verso, 2003.



Plato, *Republic*. Trans. G.M.A. Grube. Revised. C.D.C. Reeve. Indianapolis: *Hackett Publishing Co.*



Tucker, Robert C. ed.. *The Marx-Engels Reader* 2nd edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978.

- The remaining readings are articles or book chapters that will be available on the course canvas site and will be noted with **CR** in the syllabus's reading schedule
- You will also need to purchase, rent, or borrow your assigned dystopian novel.

ASSESSING YOUR SUCCESS

These assignments are used to measure progress towards our learning objectives:

Attendance and Participation: The only way to learn political theory is to **practice political theory**. The classroom is not a place to learn passively but an opportunity to grapple with some of the most pressing and challenging questions of politics with your peers. Bring your **questions, interpretations, criticisms, and analyses** to class.

Participation also requires preparation: please carefully read all assigned readings and bring them to class for a thorough discussion

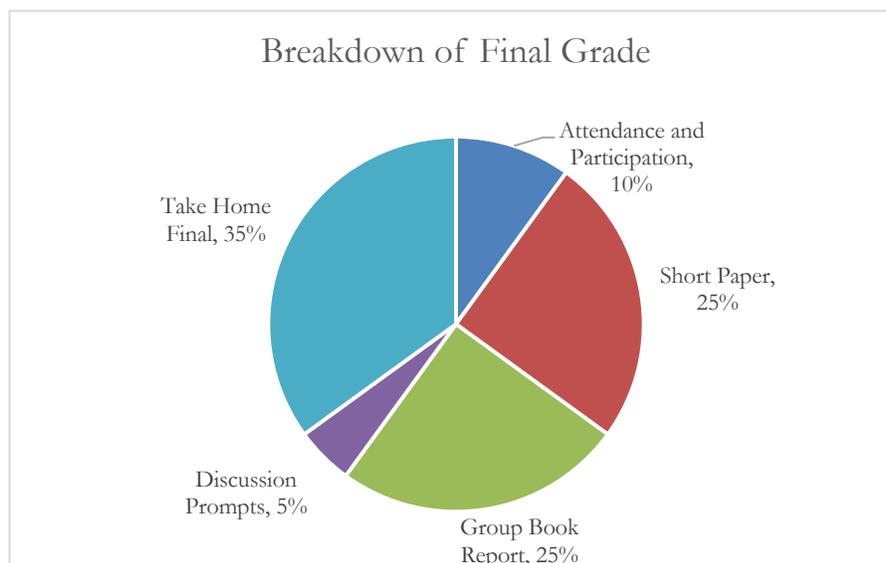
Discussion Questions: Every class, one third of the class will submit discussion questions or passages for discussion on the canvas page. These are intended to **provoke discussion** during class and help us grapple with the course themes. Each student will submit one question per week.

Short Paper: In lieu of a midterm exam, every student will write a short – approximately 4 pages – critical-interpretive paper engaging at least two of the course’s assigned texts, in response to one of the provided prompts. The prompts will be distributed 2 weeks before the due date. These papers will be **argumentative** in nature, **defending** a theoretical, interpretive, or political **claim** using **the course readings as evidence**. You will be evaluated on the strength and coherency of the **argument**, the

level of detail and **analysis** of the texts, as well as the clarity and style of the **prose**.

Group Book Report: Students will be assigned in groups of 4-5 to prepare book reports from an assigned novel. Each group will prepare a 3-4 page book report that **summarizes** the novel, provides an **interpretation** of crucial **passages, characters, and themes**, and makes an argument for its **contribution to our understanding** of utopianism or dystopianism. Groups will present their book reports to the class during Week 8 (about 10-15 minutes) Students are responsible for reading their assigned novel and **working as a group** on the presentation. All members of the group will receive the same grade. The list of potential novels is below.

Take-Home Final: The final will be a take-home final consisting of 2 short essays – approximately 3-4 pages each. The types of questions will mirror the short paper prompts, asking you to develop an **argument** using the assigned **readings as evidence**. There will be two sets of prompts and you will answer one prompt from each set. The first will focus on the **second half** of the course, while the second will be **cumulative** in nature. As with the short paper, you will be evaluated on the strength and coherency of the **argument**, the level of detail and **analysis** of the texts, as well as the clarity and style of the **prose**.



BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE CLASSROOM

Learning is a project that we work on together; success in the classroom requires all of us working together to build an environment where **all of us** are **empowered to learn, contribute, and produce our best work**. Your success in this class is important to me. If there are aspects of this course that prevent you from learning or exclude you, please let me know as soon as possible. Together we'll develop strategies to meet both your needs and the requirements of the course.

Respect in the Classroom

- All members of the UCI community deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. While **well-reasoned, passionate, and contentious** debates and disagreements are **encouraged**, I will not allow **belittling, insulting, or mocking** others based on their race, gender identity or expression, nationality or ethnic background, sexuality, religion, class, or any other aspects of identity.

Accessibility

- If you require accommodations, you have a right to ensure they are met. Please notify me as early as possible so I can ensure you have the resources to do your best work.

Office Hours and Communication

- Office hours are a **resource** to help you achieve your best in this course. Please come to office hours when:
 - You have **questions**, are **excited**, or want to **learn more** about the material
 - You are unsure about an **assignment's expectations** or **grade**
 - You are under **stress** because of a personal matter
 - You were **unable to attend** a class meeting
 - You want to talk to me about **school, life, or anything else**
- If you cannot make my scheduled office hours, please email me to schedule a time.
- Email is a great medium for **clarifying assignment questions** or **scheduling meetings**. Unfortunately, it is not a good medium for **reviewing material**, discussing the **substance of assignments**, or asking questions about **graded material**. We can learn better and more efficiently by meeting in person about these matters.

Scheduling, Emergencies, and Makeups

- Please note the dates and times of all assignments in a planner or calendar app. If you have a **university approved** conflict (religious observance, athletics event, academic competition), please let me know early so we can make arrangements.
- I also know that **things don't always go according to plan**. If an unplanned event or emergency is preventing you from completing an assignment, we can work together to arrange a **makeup**. Please contact me within **24 hours** and provide **documentation** and we can go from there.

Your Health and Success

- I want you to be successful in this **class**, at **UCI**, and in **life**. Your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual **health** are just as important as your academic success. I encourage you to let me know if you are facing **any challenges** precluding you from **doing your best work** so that we can work together to address.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Date	Topic	Reading Assignments
INTRODUCTIONS		
Week 1: Political Theory and Utopia		
4/2	What is Political Theory? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the discipline of political theory? • How does it relate to political science? • Why should we study political theory? 	No Assigned Readings
4/4	The Dilemma of Utopia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What defines a utopia? • What are some of the promises and perils of utopian thinking? • Why should we study utopian thought? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • China Miéville, “The Limits of Utopia” in <i>Utopia</i>: pgs. 11-27
4/6	The Dilemma of Utopia continued <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the relationship between utopian promises and justice? • What are the responsibilities of citizens of utopia? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Le Guin, Ursula K. “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas.” In <i>The Wind’s Twelve Quarters: Stories</i>, 275-284. New York: Harper Perennial, 2004. (CR) (Content advisory: child abuse)
UNIT 1: UTOPIANISM IN POLITICAL THEORY		
Week 2: Plato’s Philosophical Utopia		
4/9	Justice in the Soul and the City <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the relationship between justice and utopia? • What is the role of education and training in the beautiful city? • Does the dialogic form change the way you understand Plato’s utopia? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plato, <i>Republic</i>, Books 2-3 excerpts: pp. 46-59; 84-102
4/11	Justice in the Beautiful City <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is life organized in the beautiful city to promote justice? • How does Plato define Justice? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plato, <i>Republic</i>, Book 4 pp. 103-145
4/13	Organizing the Beautiful City <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What changes does Plato propose to political life? • Why are such radical changes necessary for Plato? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plato, <i>Republic</i>, Books 5 excerpts: pp. 136-158; 165-175
Week 3: Plato’s Allegories and Aristophanes’ Satire		

4/16	<p>The Rule of Philosophy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why must philosophy rule the beautiful city? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plato, <i>Republic</i>, Books 6 excerpts: 176-193
4/18	<p>Escaping the Cave</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the meaning of the allegory of the Cave? What is the form of the Good? How do these ideas ground Plato's theory of politics? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plato, <i>Republic</i>, Book 7 excerpts: 208-214; 229-237
4/20	<p>Utopia is for the birds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the features of this utopian satire? Is his parody effective? What does the satire reveal about utopian thinking? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aristophanes, <i>Birds</i>, all. (Content advisory: explicit sexual humor and sexual harassment)
Week 4: More's <i>Utopia</i> – Communism, Pluralism, and Control		
4/23	<p>The Desire for Utopia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What critiques of early modern politics does Raphael make? What similarities and differences are there between both the form and substance of the <i>Republic</i> and <i>Utopia</i>? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More, <i>Utopia</i>: pgs. 33-72 Short Paper Prompts Distributed
4/25	<p>The Constitution of the Utopians</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is Utopia structured? What are the most important aspects of Utopia's social and political order? Does the form of a "travel narrative" change the way you read the text? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More, <i>Utopia</i>, 72-128
4/27	<p>The Constitution of the Utopians continued</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do the Utopians conduct warfare? What are the religious practices of the Utopians? What function do these aspects of political order play? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More, <i>Utopia</i>, 128-160
Week 5: Cavendish's <i>Utopia</i>: Science, Gender, and Sovereignty		

4/30	<p>Science and Utopia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does Cavendish play with the themes of utopianism? What is the role of fantasy and imagination in utopian thinking? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cavendish, <i>The Blazing World</i>: pgs. 119-203
5/2	<p>A Feminist Utopia?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is there freedom in <i>The Blazing World</i> and <i>The Blazing World</i>? How does Cavendish transform utopian thinking and writing? Is this a feminist utopia? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cavendish, <i>The Blazing World</i>, pgs. 203-225 Trubowitz, Rachel. "The Reenchantment of Utopia and the Female Monarchical Self: Margaret Cavendish's <i>Blazing World</i>." <i>Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature</i> 11, no. 2 (1992): 229-45. (CR)
5/4	<p>Writing Argumentative Essays</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How should argumentative essays be structured? What are effective ways of writing argumentative essays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No assigned readings
Week 6: Marxism: For or Against Utopia?		
5/7	<p>Revolution!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the arguments Marx and Engels give in favor of communism? Is his position utopian or anti-utopian? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marx and Engels, "Manifesto for the Communist Party," <i>ME Reader</i>: pgs. 369-500.
5/9	<p>The Critique of Capitalism and the Freedom of Communism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the principles that underlie Marx and Engels' political thinking? What is the structure of a post-capitalist society? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marx and Engels, <i>The German Ideology</i> in <i>ME Reader</i>: pgs. 146-202
5/11	<p>Utopianism in America</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How have utopian ideas shaped intentional and planned communities in the United States? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short Paper Due No assigned readings
UNIT 2: THE DYSTOPIAN REACTION		
Week 7: Critiques of Utopia: Literary and Theoretical		
5/14	<p>The Nightmare of Rationalism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How does the "Underground Man" critique utopian thinking? How does the "Underground Man" conceive of human behavior? Do you find his account accurate? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dostoevsky, Fyodor. <i>Notes From Underground</i>. Trans. Ralph E. Matlaw. In. <i>Notes from Underground and the Grand Inquisitor</i>. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1960, pgs. 3-36 (CR)

5/16	<p>The Danger of Utopia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What dangers of utopian thinking do these critics identify? • What might explain the turn against utopianism in the 20th century? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hayek, F. A. <i>The Fatal Conceit: The Errors of Socialism</i>, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, pgs. 66-88 (CR)
5/18	<p>Utopia and Responsibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is utopian thinking irresponsible wishful thinking? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jonas, Hans. <i>The Imperative of Responsibility</i>. Trans. Hans Jonas and David Herr. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984, pgs.178-204. (CR)
Week 8: Dystopian Literature		
5/21 5/23 5/25	<p>The Dystopian Novel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do dystopian novels illustrate the limits or dangers of utopianism? • Do are they “anti-utopian,” or do they contain their own utopian hopes? • How do they contribute to our understanding of politics? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group Book Report Presentations
UNIT 3: THE AMBIGUITY OF UTOPIA AND THE PERSISTENCE OF POLITICS		
Week 9: Le Guin’s Ambiguous Utopia		
5/30	<p>Whose Utopia?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the utopian and dystopian features of Anarres and Urras? • Is Odonianism a utopian philosophy? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Le Guin, <i>The Dispossessed</i>, Chapters 1-4
6/1	<p>The Ambiguity of Utopia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do Shavek’s travels complicate our understanding of utopianism? • What are the relationships between scientific knowledge, utopian thinking, and politics? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Le Guin, <i>The Dispossessed</i>, Chapters 5-9
Week 10: The End(s) of Utopia		
6/4	<p>The Possibilities of Utopia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do any utopian possibilities remain for Shavek? • What does Le Guin’s science fiction tell us about our own political lives? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Le Guin, <i>The Dispossessed</i>, Chapters 10-13

6/6	After Utopia? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can utopian thinking survive the horrors of the 20th and 21st century? • What alternative forms of utopian thinking could exist? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Le Guin, “A Non-Euclidean View of California as a Cold Place to Be” in <i>Utopia</i>. pgs. 163-197 • Le Guin, “Utopiayin, Utopiayang” in <i>Utopia</i>. pgs. 195-198 • Final Exam Prompts Distributed
6/8	Learning from Utopia <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Assigned Readings
6/13	Take Home Exam Due	

NOVELS FOR BOOK REPORTS

Each group will be assigned one of the following novels for their group book report. If you have suggestions for this list, I am happy to consider them.

- Atwood, Margaret. *The Handmaid's Tale*. New York: Anchor Books, 1998.
- Atwood, Margaret. *Oryx and Crake*. New York: Anchor Books, 2004.
- Bacigalupi, Paolo. *The Windup Girl*. San Francisco: Night Shade Books, 2009.
- Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012.
- Butler, Octavia. *Parable of the Talents*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 2000.
- Butler, Octavia. *Dawn*. New York: Warner Books, 1987.
- Gibson, William. *Neuromancer*. New York: Ace Books, 1984.
- Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2006.
- Orwell, George. *1984*. New York: Signet Classics, 1961.
- Zamyatin, Yevgeny. *We*. Trans. Clarence Brown. New York: Penguin Books, 1993.