

COURSE OUTLINE

IDS 290—Utopias and Dystopias

Dr. Lucas Carpenter
Spring 2013 Semester

I. Course Description:

This inquiry-driven seminar will examine and explore the opposing concepts of utopia and dystopia as they have found expression in Western literature, religion, philosophy, and history. Beginning with Plato's *The Republic* the seminar will trace the evolution of these two ideas to the present time while asking such questions as: What is a utopia? Is utopia possible or does it conflict with human nature? Why have humans felt compelled to write about and create utopias? What is a feminist utopia? What roles have utopias played in religion, philosophy, and politics? Where have utopias been attempted and what have been the results? How did utopian thinking influence revolutions like those of America, France, Russia, and China? How is the concept of dystopia a reaction or response to the idea of utopia? Is it possible to create a contemporary utopia and what might such a utopia look like? Students will be encouraged to imagine and create their own utopias and present them for class consideration.

II. Student Requirements for Completing the Course

- A. Answering a list of questions prior to the discussion of each book.
- B. Delivering a fifteen-minute Power Point presentation on an American utopian community.
- C. Writing a research paper on a utopia-related topic.
- D. Creating your own utopia.

The class will also create a collective utopia for public presentation.

III. Attendance Policy

You can miss two classes. After that your grade will be adversely affected.

IV. Grading Practices

Grading will generally adhere to the following:

Answers to questions	25%
Presentation	25%
Research paper	25%
Personal utopia	25%

V. Texts

Plato, *The Republic*

Bruce, ed. *Three Early Modern Utopias*

Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward*

B.F. Skinner, *Walden II*

Callenbach, *Ecotopia*

Ursula LeGuin, *The Dispossessed*

Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*

VI. Course Calendar

January 15-18	Introductory
January 21-25	<i>The Republic</i>
January 28-February 1	<i>The Republic</i>
February 4-8	<i>Utopia</i>
February 11-15	<i>Utopia</i>
February 18-22	<i>The New Atlantis</i>
February 25-March 1	<u><i>The New Atlantis/Looking Backward</i></u>
March 4-8	<i>Looking Backward</i>
March 11-15	Spring Break
March 18-22	<i>Walden II</i>
March 25-29	<i>Walden II</i>
April 1-5	<i>Ecotopia</i>
April 8-12	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> Personal Utopia due
April 15-19	<i>The Dispossessed</i>
April 22-26	<i>The Dispossessed</i> Research Paper Due
April 29	Last Class

VII. Office Hours

My office is located Seney Hall, The Thinkery, Room 115B, and my office hours are **Monday-Friday, 2-3 PM**. If these hours are ever inconvenient, appointments can be arranged. Please do not hesitate to see me about anything that is of concern to you.

VIII. Honor Code

I **assume** that you are familiar with the Honor Code and that you know what **plagiarism** is.

Student work submitted as part of this course may be reviewed by Oxford and Emory College faculty and staff for the purposes of improving instruction and enhancing Emory education.