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PSCI 452.01: Utopianism and It's Critics

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University of Montana
Department of Political Science

PSC 452
Fall 2014
T/TR 2:10-3:30
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Utopianism & It's Critics

*My utopia is actual life pushed to the limits of its ideal possibilities.--
Lewis Mumford*

A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity land there, it looks out, and seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realization of Utopias.---Oscar Wilde

Course Description: With the future looking increasingly uncertain and unpredictable, it seems that the Utopian tradition has entered a period of terminal crisis. This has happened, according to Judith Shklar, because nothing is as simple as it was once —there is so much we don't know, or what we do know, we know can hurt us. Either way, the future looms rather than beckons. There is even speculation that we have arrived at the "end of utopia;" that is, we have reached whatever goal(s) we might realistically wish for, and so no further Utopias need or *can* be conceived.

But what would it mean for political theory if the search for Utopia were called off? Would there not be a loss (as well as a gain) if the habit of playing with ideal alternative societies were to be thoroughly discredited? Perhaps it is time to take stock. This semester we will examine classic and contemporary utopias— from Plato's *Republic* to Barbara Goodwin's *Justice by Lottery* as well as their critics.

Readings:

*Plato, *The Republic*, Chaps. III-V.
ed. Frederic White, *Famous Utopias*
William Morris, *New From Nowhere*
Lewis Mumford, *Story of Utopias*
B.F. Skinner, *Walden II*
Michael Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*
Goodwin's *Justice by Lottery*
C.P. Gilman, *Herland*
Fac Pac: *The Quest for Utopia*
{Works Recommend: see attached list}

Course Objectives: upon successfully completing the course work, the student should be able to:

1. Identify and assess the major themes, works, and political thinkers associated with utopian literature.
2. Develop a coherent position with regards to ethical idealism, political realism, elitism, democratic doctrine, individualism and communitarianism.
3. Orally critique an essay in terms of its analytical clarity, accuracy in its interpretation of primary readings, and the logic of its conclusions, and ethical standards.

Political philosophy. . . “is a complex, imprecise, psychologically demanding, imagination-requiring field of enquiry, in which nothing like certainty can ever be obtained, only, at the most, a high degree of plausibility and coherence and evidence of intellectual power and originality and effectiveness.”

--Isaiah Berlin

To achieve the above objectives— Course Grading:

This course will be taught as a seminar. This means that, as John Dewey observes, the teacher "steers the boat, but the energy that propels it must come from those who are learning." Therefore, each student will submit and orally defend in class **4** critical essays (**46%** of course grade or **11.5 pts max each**), not to exceed **three** double-spaced pages. The essays (see note for those taking this course to fulfill writing requirement) will be assigned weekly and are due *no later* than the class period before you are scheduled to orally defend it. (For topics, see below.) If you are absent the day we are scheduled to discuss your essay, you will not get credit for it.

In addition, each student will complete a **take-home final** (**35%** of course grade.) Each student will be graded on class **attendance** (**9%** of course grade and **participation** (**10%** of course grade). (Note: Students who attend class, but seldom raise questions or participate in discussion usually receive between 15-10 pts out of 19.) See below regarding absences.

Finally since *it does not honor a writer to read him/her without seeking to challenge him/her*, students will be required to submit **two written questions** for the essays discussed (*part of **participation** credit). They should plan on writing questions for all essays distributed in class, and expect to periodically to turn their questions for credit

Cautionary note: if you are absent more than 3xs, three attendance points will be deducted for every absence thereafter. Excused absences require a medical note for illness, injury, family emergency, or letter from instructor for field trips, ASUM service, music/drama performances, intercollegiate athletics, military service. Instructor will also excuse absences for reasons of mandatory public service.

Students taking this course to **fulfill writing the 400 requirements** will be required to revise and *expand their essay into 10-12 pages*. Substantive and grammatical revisions will be expected. The writing grade will be based upon the following writing guidelines and expectations:

- The critical, interpretive essay must provide a **clear thesis** (preferably at the end of the introductory paragraph), indicating the author's main points with regard to the essay question.
- The essay must support the thesis statement with **specific references** to the primary texts, **providing footnotes** for all quoted material and a **bibliography** at the end. Please use Chicago style.
- Students should pay close attention to their **choice of words** in summarizing and clarifying the substance of a political theory (i.e. *the* good state and *a* good state are *not* the same). They must demonstrate awareness of how words can clarify and/or obscure a theorist's principles, illustrations, and, in general, the nature of their political inquiry.
- The first essay draft will be returned with editorial comments. Students are encouraged to talk with me about their essays before revising them.
- Student must include **original essay draft with revised, extended draft**.
- Revised essay will be **graded based upon**: grammar, spelling, appropriate choice of words, transitions between paragraphs, use of quoted material to support their interpretation, accuracy in paraphrasing, logical organization of ideas and points, and clarity.
- Only **one revision** is allowed. Please proof read the final drafts for any grammatical, spelling, or typos before turning it in.

Graduate Students, in addition to completing the above assignments, will submit a 10-15 page research paper on one of the utopian thinkers or their critics which addresses a substantive theoretical topic in consultation with the professor. This paper will be of publishable quality, and will probe more deeply a theoretical issue related to modern thought than those of the undergraduate essays. The paper shall include an introduction that clearly identifies a question or issue and its significance in modern political theory, and will draw upon appropriate primary & secondary literature to support the paper's thesis and analysis.

- Plus/Minus Grades will be used based on the following:
100-93 = A; 92-90 = A-; 89-87 = B+; 86-83 = B; 82-80 = B-; 79-77 = C+; 76-73 = C; 72-70 = C-; 69-67 = D+; 66-63 = D; 62-60 = D-; 59 < = F

Course Schedule:

8/26 *Introduction to the Course*

8/28 *Outopia or Eutopia?*: How seriously are utopian proposals to be taken? What is the value of utopian speculation?
Read: **Plato's *Republic*, Chaps. III & IV {see library editions.}.; Mumford, *Story of Utopias*, Chap. 1.

9/2 * * * * **No class** * * * Plato's *Republic*, Book V; Mumford, *Story of Utopia* Chap. 2 & note down 'utopian' elements of *his* ideal city-state, and what makes it so?

- 9/4 *Plato's Utopia: What are the distinctly utopian features of Plato's ideal state? How convincing is Plato's argument that the justice of the good man and the good state is the same justice?*
Read: *, White's "Introduction" *Famous Utopias*; More's *Utopia*, Book I
Essays (due 9/4 by 9am & leave copies for class in PSCI office LA 352 box): What does Lewis Mumford find problematic with Plato's ideal state? Do you agree? Why, Why not?
- 9/9 *"Philosopher Queens & Women Warriors: Plato: A feminist?"*
Essays (due 9/4): How "radical" is Plato's utopia with respect to Women? Examine the male-female roles in Plato's women.
- 9/11 *Plato's System of Education, Law & Governing*
Read: More's *Utopia*, Book II
Essays (due 9/9): Plato's education system (like ours?) appears to embrace a conflicting set of values. How so?
- Essays (due 9/9):** When looking around Plato's ideal state, one finds few (if any civil laws). In fact, Plato is prepared to argue that only poorly governed states rely on positive laws, courts, and punishments to insure good conduct among its citizens. And yet, might this absence of positive law be possible because Plato (like many libertarians?) is relying upon a particular kind of 'law' to govern us? Discuss.
- 9/16 *Plato's Republic & Its Critics*
Essays (due 9/11): Plato, says one critic, 'is both too pessimistic and too optimistic' in his view of human nature.' How so? Is this yet another 'utopian' paradox? Discuss
- Essays (due 9/11):** What human desires are given free reign and what desires are suppressed when we look around Plato's utopia? How might this influence (positively or negatively) works of art?
- 9/18 *Sir Thomas More's Utopia: Heaven on Earth? {1516 A.D.}: Plato & More,*
Read: More's *Utopia*, finish; Mumford, Chap. 3 & 4
Recommend: John M. Smith, "Eugenics & Utopia," *Utopias & Utopian Thought*, ed. by Frank Manuel
Essay (due 9/16): Compare Plato and More on the role of marriage & childrearing. Is one utopia superior to another? Why, why not?
- 9/23 *More's Legal System: Justice on Earth*
Read: Campanella's *City of the Sun*, in Utopia reader, 155-204;
Essay (due 9/18): More's utopia provides courts without lawyers? Possible? Desirable?
 Or
Essay (due 9/18): Like most utopians, More's ideal state sets up a government without politics. How? Is this desirable? Why, why not?

- 9/25 * * * **No class** * * * *: short writing assignment for bonus points (10pts):
When considering Plato & More's utopian visions, which one requires that we "positively stop being human" and specifically regarding the relationship between men & women? Explain in 500 words or less.
- 9/30 *Illness & Death in Utopia*
Read: Bacon, *New Atlantis*, in Utopia reader, 207-250
Essay (due 9/23): What type of treatment for illness, disease, accident, and death might we expect in More's utopia? What can we learn from this utopian about public health care &/or its limits?
- 10/2 *Relieving Man's Estate: Campanella's Heavenly City* {1623}
Read:; Mumford, Chap. 5
Essay (due 9/30): What is the role/purpose of art in *City of the Sun*? Should art have a social purpose? If so, what? If not, why not?
- 10/7-10/9 *Bacon's New World* {1624}
Read: Morris, *News From Nowhere*, Intro., Chaps. 1-15; Mumford, Chap. 7
Essays (due 10/2): How "scientific" is the management of public and private institutions (i.e. marriage &/or selection of government officials) in Bacon's Bensalem?

Essays (due 10/2): How ethical is Bacon's use of science to improve human life? What are the limitations of science in improving the human and/or social condition that he perhaps fails to acknowledge?
- 10/14 *Socialist Utopians: Cabet, Macnie, Fourier*
Read: •Cabet, *A Voyage to Icaria* {1845}; •Macnie, *The Diothas* {1883}--see FAC PAC; Mumford, Chap. 8; Morris, *News From Nowhere*, Chaps. 16-25;
Essay (due 10/9): How "radical" are the utopias of Cabet and Macnie in regards to equality? Consider the various forms of equality: social, economic, and/or political.
- 10/16-10/21 *Socialist Utopians: Morris* {1890}
Read: Morris, *News From Nowhere*, finish; Mumford, Chaps. 9-10
Essays (due 10/14): There are always certain occupations and professions missing in every utopia. Morris's is no exception. Discuss

Essays (due 10/16) How does Morris defend economic equality? How does his socialist utopia promote it? Critically evaluate it.
- 10/23 *Craftsmen & Artists*
Read: Skinner's *Walden II*, "Walden II Revisited," Chaps. 1-5
Essays (due 10/21): How much of an improvement is Morris' utopia over other utopias we have read regarding the artist & art?

10/28 *Skinner's Utopia of Social Engineering*
Read: Skinner's *Walden II*, Chaps. 15-20
Essay (due 10/23): Who or what determines "crimes & punishment" in *Walden II*? Do Skinner's penal system rely on negative or positive reinforcements? Consequences?

10/30 *Science & Utopia: Plato to Skinner*
Read: Skinner's *Walden II*, Chaps. 21-29
Essays (due 10/28): "At least implicit in all elitist doctrines is the assumption that politics is a true science." Discuss with reference to Plato, Bacon & Skinner's respective utopias. Is one more or less elitist than the other two?

*** * * * * No Class November 4th Election Day * * * * ***

11/6 *Courtship & Childhood in Walden*
Read: Skinner's *Walden II*, Chaps. 30-35
Essays (due 10/30): How innovative and desirable are Skinner's ideas regarding marriage and childrearing? Why the preference of "nurture" over "nature"?

*** * * * * No Class November 11th Veterans Day * * * * ***

11/13 *Men, Women, and Gender-Bending Utopias*
Read: de Foigny, *Terra Australis Incognita* {1696}, in FAC PAC; Gilman's *Herland* {1915}
Essay (due 11/6): Feminist authors (including utopians) have relied upon two divergent strategies for liberating women, either focusing on their unique character/perspective from men *or* eliminating all differences between genders. Discuss the advantages and/or disadvantages of either approach with reference to de Foigny and Gilman (or any of the above).

11/18 *Feminism & Utopia cont.:*
Read: Gilman's *Herland* {1915}; Goodwin, Chaps. 1, 2, & 3.
Essay (due 11/13): It appears that Gilman offers up three male visitors as a way to bridge the gulf between the 'real' world and utopia. If so, then should we remain optimistic or pessimistic about the prospects for realizing her utopia?

Or

Essays (due 11/13): Gilman's utopia shows the same 19-early 20th century biases as her male contemporaries. That is, she's not radical enough in her thinking.' Discuss

- 11/20- *The Lottery Society: Lottery Liberation?*
 11/25 Read: Goodwin, Chaps 6 & 9; Michael Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*.
Essay (due 11/18): What does Goodwin's "job" lotteries presuppose about human nature, talents, characteristics etc?
Essay (due 11/18): What kind of social/political questions would be undesirable to submit to a lottery? Are there many or few issues that ought to be decided in this fashion? Discuss with examples.
Essay (due 11/20): Would the artist and/or scientist flourish more in Goodwin or Young's utopia? Explain
Essay (due 11/20): All things considered, is Goodwin's TLS equitable, fair, and moral?

*** * * * * Thanksgiving Break * * * * * November 26st -30th * * * * ***

- 12/2 *Utopia as Meritocracy*
Read: Michael Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy*.
Essays (due 11/25): Young's meritocratic utopia appears to favor a certain kind of intelligence or merit. Can a meritocracy avoid elevating some talents above others? Discuss.
Essays (due 11/25): Would you support the Chelsea Manifesto? Why, why not?
 12/4 *Utopia & Its Critics*
Read: Mumford, Chaps. 11-12
Essays (due 12/2): Given all of our reasons to despair of modern humanity, why does Mumford remain hopeful? Which is the more *utopian* characteristic: the despair or the faith?
 12/8 Lose Ends: class will meet Monday, Dec. 8th of finals week 3:20-5pm

Final Due: Monday Dec. 9th by 5pm.

Note: The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction by supporting collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students. If you have a disability that requires an accommodation, contact me at the beginning of the semester so that proper accommodations can be provided. Please contact Disability Services for Students <<http://life.umt.edu/dss/>> if you have questions, or call Disability Services for Students (DSS) for voice/text at 406.243.2243. You may also fax the Lommasson Center 154 for more information at 406.243.5330.

*Essay Writing & Grading Guidelines:
Fall 2014*

1st: Please: put the **essay question/statement** on the top of your paper. . .

Thesis & Transitions – 20%

- Clear, thoughtful, and coherent thesis statement that addresses essay question/statement
- Thesis place at end of 1st paragraph
- Stays focused on essay topic

Analysis – 65%

- Strong supporting evidence, drawn from reading material for the **thesis**
- Provides relevant information, clearly presented
- Fully developed, *interesting* arguments and points
- Analysis and conclusions are logical and precise
- Shows that the writer understands the author's argument, logic, and moral reasoning before critiquing or defending his/her argument
- Credit is given to outside sources, where appropriate

Format, Word Choice, Mechanics & Quotations 15%

- Format: 3 typed, double-spaced pages, 10-12 point font
- Grammar: Neatness, spelling, grammar, punctuation, good transition sentences between paragraphs and tight topic organization
- Quotations: Inserted in body with page number, relevant to point, not taken out of context, best summary of thinker's view

Don't editorialize! Give us nothing but your opinion w/no reference to our reading.

Don't give us a book review! No rehashing of lecture notes or quote for the sake of quoting. # (Too much narration/description.)

Don't quote Wikipedia or Dictionary for definitions! Instead provide your own ideas and criteria for the meaning of key political terms.

Some General tips for Good Writing:

1. Good writing stems from good thinking. Clarify your intent & major ideas before you start. Don't expect that your design will materialize during writing. A good outline can help organize your ideas. Sketch out your major points and their logical relationship.

2. Be a master builder. Your building blocks are sentences and paragraphs. Each essay should have a specific theme; each paragraph should have a specific purpose

regarding that theme; and each sentence should have a specific purpose in its paragraph.

3. Good writing results from revision. First drafts are almost always lousy writing. Samuel Johnson said, "What is written in haste is read without pleasure." Please note!

4. Become your own best editor. If you are committed to your ideas, you will be willing to revise and revise until they are expressed clearly.

5. "Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity," Henry David Thoreau admonished. His advice applies to composition as well as to life. Use clear-cut syntax and active voice (passive voice tends to distract & obscure.) Avoid unnecessary verbiage, such as "first and foremost" instead of "first." A good writer, said Thomas Jefferson, can use one word instead of three.

6. Be precise in your diction. Avoid a \$100 word when a \$5 word will do. "Never," said George Orwell, "use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent."

7. And "if it is possible to cut a word out," Orwell added, "cut it out." Carefully selected nouns and verbs rarely require adjectives and adverbs.

8. Don't be a hedger. If you believe in your purpose and conclusions, be positive and bold. Tentativeness undercuts your credibility. Avoid, for example, "it seems," "perhaps," "somewhat," "it appears," etc. I call these 'chicken words.'

9. Keep your reader in mind. Guide the reader through your train of thought. Keep the reader awake by varying the length and beginning of sentences. Keep the reader involved by providing interesting examples, transitions, and conclusions. Use short and apt quotations and paraphrase the rest.

10. Be technically correct. Grammar and spelling errors tell the reader that you are careless. Read your writing aloud to catch your mistakes.

Final Due: Monday Dec. 9th by 5pm.

Final Paper:

Each student will choose one topic to examine with regard to all the utopias read this semester, and write an analysis (**12-15** double-spaced pages). Please sign up with me on the subject.

Final Essay Topics: How will those decisions that we think important be made in utopia? Specifically regarding:

- (1) choosing a mate; male-female relationships & roles, friendship & marriage

- (2) deciding how many children to have; parents & childrearing
- (3) choosing a school/university; purpose & content of education
- (4) a career/job; types & purpose of work: good or bad?
- (5) determining crimes & punishment; administration, purpose, and nature of law/justice
- (6) indulging one's tastes/appetites; houses, gold, and the money economy
- (7) health care treatment/policy; illness, disease, accidents, & death
- (8) joining a church/embracing a faith; spirituality & tolerance
- (9) freedom of artistic expression; the role/purpose of art
- (10) selecting a government/making policy; selection of rulers, citizen participation, and civic obligation

While it is not required, you may wish to read secondary literature to support your final paper, or —better still— just out of curiosity. The following is a good start:

**** REF. Mary Ellen Snodgrass, *Encyclopedia of Utopian Literature***

- Marie Berneri, *Journey Through Utopia*
- Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia*
- R. Dahrendorf, "Out of Utopia: Toward a Reorientation of Sociological Analysis," *American Journal of Sociology* vol. 64, no. 2, 1958: 115-2
- Jacques Ellul, *The Technology Society*
- Barbara Goodwin, *Social Science & Utopia*
- George Kateb, "Utopia & the Good Life," in *Utopias & Utopian Thought*, ed. by Frank Manuel ; *Utopia & Its Enemies*
- Leszek Kolakowski, *Toward a Marxist Humanism: Essays on the Left Today*
- Melvin Lasky, *Utopia & Revolution*
- Thomas Molnar, *Utopia: The Perennial Heresy*
- Lewis Mumford, Utopia, The City & the Machine," in *Utopias & Utopian Thought*, ed. by Frank Manuel
- Popper, Karl, *The Open Society & Its Enemies*
- Peyton Richter, *Utopias: Social Ideals and Communal Experiments*
- Judith Shklar, *After Utopia: The Decline of Political Faith*;
"The Political Theory of Utopia: From Melancholy to Nostalgia," in *Utopias & Utopian Thought*, ed. by Frank Manuel
- Paul Tillich, "Critique and Justification of Utopia," in *Utopias & Utopian Thought*, ed. by Frank Manuel
- Adam Ulam, "Socialism & Utopia," in *Utopias & Utopian Thought*, ed. by Frank Manuel