

UTOPIANISM AND ITS CRITICS
GATEWAY 100
Fall 2023

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Utopian thinkers like Thomas More and Charlotte Perkins Gilman imagine the good life and create a world to foster it. For utopians, the best of all possible worlds is the goal, and the state exists to put this goal into place. Liberal thinkers like Ursula Le Guin and Rutger Bregman take the opposite approach. They imagine the worst of all possible worlds and structure the state to prevent its occurrence. In this course we evaluate the merits of philosophical, literary, and political works written by utopians and consider objections raised by liberal critics.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Part One. Universal basic income: A contemporary utopian policy

- 8-28 Introduction to the class: get the syllabus and course pack; discuss utopianism
- 8-30 Topic: What is this thing called universal basic income (UBI)?
Assignment: Reading with a question in mind
Reading: Lowrey, *Give People Money*, 1-35
Exercise: Discussion question: What is the problem UBI is intended to solve?
- 9-1 Topic: GiveDirectly and the Mincome experiment in Dauphin, Canada
Assignment: The idea of case studies as evidence
Reading: Bregman, *Utopia for Realists*, 25-47 (course pack)
Exercise: Discussion question: How do case studies support/undermine the case for UBI?
- 9-6 Topic: The reality of crummy or survival work meets the American and Kenyan Dreams
Assignment: Reading with a question in mind
Reading: Lowrey, *Give People Money*, 36-94
Exercise: Discussion question: Would UBI encourage people to stop working?
- 9-8 Topic: From PDS to UBI in India and Portland, Maine
Assignment: The problems with means testing and work fare
Reading: Lowrey, *Give People Money*, 95-131
Exercise: Discussion questions: What is the poverty trap? How would UBI help people avoid it?
- 9-11 Topic: How should labor and leisure be understood?
Assignment: The larger perspective: what was leisure to the ancient Greeks?
Reading: Giamatti, *Take Time for Paradise*, 19-44 (course pack)
Exercise: Bring a list of words and concepts you would like to define to class
- 9-15 Topic: Claims and objections
Assignment: Paying attention to reasons
Reading: Sammeroff, *Universal Basic Income: for and against*, 21-50 (course pack)
Exercise: Making a claim with a “because” clause
- 9-22 Topic: Current examples of guaranteed basic income plans
Assignment: Bring a list of claims and objections (for both sides) to class
Reading: McDonough and Morales, *Universal Basic Income*, 1-18; 59-75 (course pack)
Exercise: Learning to insert your voice and develop objections

- 9-25 Topic: Class debate: Should the US adopt a UBI program?
 Assignment: Bring a list of claims and objections (for both sides) to class
 Reading: Lowrey, *Give People Money*, 185-208
 Exercise: Using the claim-objection-rejoinder tool
- 9-27 **Draft of essay #1 due in class for peer review** (Bring a paper copy of your essay to class)
- 9-29 **No Class Session** One-on-one conferences in CLA 251 (Bring a paper copy your essay to the conference)
- 10-1 **Essay #1 due in Google folder by 5pm (persuasive essay)**

Part Two. Classical utopia: The quest for equality

- 10-2 Topic: The first utopia
 Assignment: Taking notes on a text
 Reading: More, *Utopia*, 57-91
 Exercise: Bring a set of paper notes you took on the reading to class to spur discussion
- 10-4 Topic: Is equality liberating in *Utopia*?
 Assignment: Reading with a question in mind
 Reading: More, *Utopia*, 91-122
 Exercise: Bring a list of passages that bear on the equality question
- 10-6 Topic: Is Utopia meant to be a happy place or no place?
 Assignment: Developing a new perspective on a text
 Reading: More, *Utopia*, vii-xxxiii
 Exercise: Bring a thesis statement and evidence from the text to support it
- 10-9 **Draft of essay #2 due in class for peer review (Bring a paper copy of your essay to class)**
- 10-11 **No Class Session** One-on-one conferences in CLA 251 (Bring a paper copy your essay to the conference)
- 10-13 **Essay #2 due in Google folder by 5pm (interpretive essay)**
- 10-16 Topic: An American utopia
 Assignment: Reading for clues
 Reading: Perkins, *Herland*, 1-52
 Exercise: Bring a list of questions for class discussion of the reading
- 10-18 Topic: What happens to gender when sex is taken out of reproduction?
 Assignment: Using a text to explore the distinction between sex and gender
 Reading: Perkins, *Herland*, 53-102
 Exercise: Bring a list of key passages to discuss
- 10-20 FALL BREAK DAY
- 10-23 Topic: Equality and difference feminists in 1915 America
 Assignment: Using a distinction to build an interpretation and thesis
 Reading: Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, 12-50 (course pack)
 Exercise: Bring a list of gender equality and gender differences to discuss
- 10-25 Topic: The surprising relevance of parthenogenesis
 Assignment: Making connections between science and literature
 Reading: Witt, "Fertile Ground," *The New Yorker*, 18-24 (course pack)
 Exercise: Bring a list of questions for class discussion of the reading

10-27 Topic: What kind of world would an IVG world be?
Assignment: Using a text to spur speculation
Reading: Perkins, *Herland*, 103-124
Exercise: Bring a sketch of your world to class

10-30 **Draft of essay #3 due in class for peer review (Bring a paper copy of your essay to class)**

11-1 Topic: Good writing as a process of endless revision
Assignment: Learning to develop, revise, and refine your ideas
Reading: Ballenger, *The Curious Writer*, 617-642 (course pack)
Exercise: Class exercises on developing and revising essay topics

11-3 **Essay #3 due in Google folder by 5pm (speculative essay)**

Part Three. Your generation, your utopias

11-6 Topic: Utopianism in the post-WWII generation
Assignment: Reading to discover a concept: the generational impulse
Reading: Bess, *Realism, Utopia, and the Mushroom Cloud*, xv-xxvii
Exercise: Discussion question: How did the problem of nuclear destruction drive dreams of peace?

11-8 Topic: The personal essay as a window to generational problems and solutions
Assignment: Encountering a new genre: The personal essay with added research
Reading: Gotto, "Why Schools don't Educate," 1-20 (course pack)
Martin, "Love your Fat Self," 1-14 (course pack)
Exercise: Discussion question: How does the personal essay make research more effective?

11-10 Topic: Developing your "this changes everything" problem and solution
Assignment: Using free writing to generate ideas
Reading: Ballenger, *The Curious Writer*, 642-649 (course pack)
Exercise: Share your generational issue with the class for discussion

11-13 Topic: Who is Louise Weiss? What is *Realpolitik*?
Assignment: Reading to learn the French perspective on world peace circa 1950
Reading: Bess, *Realism, Utopia, and the Mushroom Cloud*, 1-40
Exercise: Discussion question: How did Weiss frame her generational solution?

11-15 Topic: Who is Leo Szilard? From generational problem to generational solution
Assignment: Reading one "this changes everything" response to nuclear destruction
Reading: Bess, *Realism, Utopia, and the Mushroom Cloud*, 41-90
Exercise: Discussion question: How did Szilard frame his generational solution?

11-17 **Essay #4a due in Google Drive by 5 PM (personal essay)**

11-20 Topic: Who is Danilo Dolci?
Assignment: Reading one "this changes everything" response to militarism
Reading: Bess, *Realism, Utopia, and the Mushroom Cloud*, 155-217
Exercise: Discussion question: How did Dolci frame his generational solution?

11-22/11-26 THANKSGIVING BREAK

11-27 Topic: Three responses to a generational problem and their solutions
Assignment: Summarizing the key facts in a reading
Reading: Michael Bess, *Realism, Utopia, and the Mushroom Cloud*, 218-245
Exercise: Analyzing a non-fiction text closely for content

- 11-29 **No Class Session** One-on-one conferences in CLA 251 (Bring a topic and one article to the conference)
- 12-1 Topic: Using search engines like JSTOR
 Assignment: Bring a laptop to class
 Reading: Graff and Birkenstein, *They Say, I Say*, 1-29 (course pack)
 Exercise: How to use search terms, enter a conversation, mix your voice with others
- 12-4 Topic: Working to add depth to your argument without plagiarizing
 Assignment: Summarizing, paraphrasing, and quoting directly
 Reading: *The Allyn & Bacon Handbook*, 581-603 (course pack)
 Exercise: Discussion of plagiarism and other pitfalls of original research
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- 12-6 Topic: The importance of the annotated bibliography
 Assignment: **Bring an annotated bibliography of three sources to class**
 Reading: Read your three articles before coming to class
 Exercise: Summarizing an argument for a peer
- 12-8 Topic: Paying attention to citation form
 Assignment: Learning the APA format style
 Reading: Purdue Owl, sample APA paper (owl.purdue.edu)
 Exercise: Building your “References” page
- 12-11 READING DAY
- 12-12 **Essay #4b due in Google Drive by 5 PM (personal essay with added research)**

CLASS READING

The following texts should be purchased at the IWU Bookstore. **A paper version of each text is required. Note: there are many edition of More’s *Utopia*, we are reading the Baker-Smith translation and introduction.**

- Gilman, C.P. 1915/1998. *Herland*. Mineola, NY: Dover Publications.
- Lowrey, A. 2018. *Give People Money: How a Universal Basic Income Would End Poverty, Revolutionize Work, and Remake the World*. New York: Crown.
- More, T. 1517/2012. *Utopia*. Edited and translated by Dominic Baker-Smith. London: Penguin Books.
- Bess, M. 1993. *Realism, Utopia, and the Mushroom Cloud*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

The class course pack will be handed out to students on the first day of class. It contains selections from the following texts:

- The Allyn & Bacon Handbook*. 2003. New York: Pearson
- Ballenger, B. 2005. *The Curious Writer*. New York: Longman.
- Bregman, R. 2017. *Utopia for Realists: And How We Can Get There*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Cott, N. 1987. *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Giamatti, A. B. 1989. *Take Time for Paradise*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Gotto, J. T. 1990. “Why Schools don’t Educate” *The Sun*. June.
- Graff, G. and Cathy Birkenstein. 2010. *They Say, I Say*. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Martin, C. E. 2007. “Love Your Fat Self” *Utne Reader*. December 20.
- McDonough, B. and Morales, B. M. 2020. *Universal Basic Income*. London. Routledge.
- Sammeroff, A. 2019. *Universal Basic Income: for and against*. Australia: Rational Rise Press.
- Witt, E. 2023. “Fertile Ground.” *The New Yorker*. April 24.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

The grade in this course is based on four essays (85%), and class participation (15%). The precise weight of each requirement is listed below.

Essay #1:	20%
Essay #2:	20%
Essay #3:	10%
Essay #4a:	10%
Essay 4b:	25% (5% for APA format/annotated bibliography due 12/6)
Class discussion:	15%

The class schedule contains many “assignments” that are required as part of the class participation grade. Except for the annotated bibliography, I will not collect assignments but it is important that you do them. At any time before the last class (12/8), students may hand in re-writes of the first three essays. However, re-writes must show evidence of a thorough revision and you must begin with a visit with me during office hours. Re-write grades will be averaged equally with the essay grade to produce a final composite grade.

I will keep a regular attendance record. After more than three absences, I shall begin deducting points from your class discussion grade. It is essential that you attend this class regularly. In addition, deadlines are strict since they often are keyed to the class sessions. **Assignments will be posted on my homepage—see the address below.**

COURSE GOALS

- To develop good habits at all stages of the writing process.
- To learn how to use writing to think and strengthen ideas.
- To learn how to revise writing and to establish the practice of rewriting.
- To learn how to write creatively and to defend a claim clearly.
- To learn to appreciate debate and enjoy contention.
- To learn to use intellectual reflection to focus the process of self-development.

WRITING CENTER

Every gateway student should visit the IWU Writing Center at least once. The better writers will visit more than once. Tutors can be especially helpful when you bring specific issues to their attention and when you bring the class assignment with you. The Writing Center is located in Ames Library Room 105B. The telephone number is 556-3810. Call to schedule an appointment. Be sure to bring a hard copy of your paper and the assignment to your meeting.

OFFICE HOURS

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Illinois Wesleyan University strives to make all learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience academic barriers based on a disability (including mental health and chronic or temporary medical conditions), it is your responsibility to register with Student Accessibility Services. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and accommodations cannot be provided until I receive an email from Accessibility Services. Once the email is sent, please make arrangements with me as soon as possible to discuss your accommodations confidentially so they may be implemented in a timely fashion. For more information contact Accessibility Services by visiting by calling Jasmine Howe at 309-556-1355, or emailing jhowe@iwu.edu.