

ENGL 330
Utopian Fiction: Roads to Nowhere
Fall 2021

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The 'Great' Tower of Babel

The imagination of ideal places and their inhabitants is one of the most powerful, and ancient, literary themes. From the Garden of Eden and visions of a Golden Age to the creation of virtual communities in our own time, the desire to conceive a perfect society has been remarkably persistent and the forms of imagined societies remarkably various. We will read examples of utopias, in whole and in part, with the goal of understanding the nature of the utopian obsession. We'll start with a survey of writings from various periods to establish

the scope of utopian interests and, in the second half of term, focus on three central texts in the tradition: Thomas More's "golden little book," *Utopia*; *The Communist Manifesto* of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels; and *A Wizard of Earthsea* by Ursula Le Guin.

Proposed Assignments:

- Two brief assessments, 1-2 pages, of a utopian policy (20%)
- Research Essay Proposal (10%)
- Research Essay (35%)
- Take-home Final Exam (35%)

Proposed Texts:

- Coursepack with selections from the Bible, Homer, Plato, Montaigne, Bacon, Milton, Swift, Bellamy, Wells, and others
- Thomas More, *Utopia*
- Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*
- Ursula K. Le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea*