PHIL 238
Philosophy and Literature: Utopias/Dystopias

FALL 2014
Instructor: Dr. Nina Belmonte
Time: M,W,R: 2:30-3:20
Location: CLE A203
Office: Clearihue B318
Office Hours: Tues. 1:30-2:30
Thurs. 3:30-4:30
Email: belmonte@uvic.ca

Course Objectives:

What is the relation of philosophy to literature – of logos to mythos? How does philosophical expression differ from artistic creation? Is there a wisdom that is unavailable to logic and reason? Is there a clarity of truth not possible in fiction?

These are just some of the questions we will be asking as we explore a topic much visited in the history of philosophy and literature: What is the best society and why? What is the worst? And what do these societies tell us about what is means to be human?

We will read portraits of utopias and dystopias from Plato and Moore to Marx, Huxley, Golding and LeGuin. Throughout these adventures, we will consider how the very mode of our expression governs our understanding.

Class format will be lecture/discussion, with regular class presentations.

Texts: In the Bookstore:

Aldous Huxley, Brave New World
J-J Rousseau, The Social Contract
William Golding, Lord of the Flies
Sir Thomas Moore, Utopia
Karl Marx, The Communist Manifesto
Ernst Callenbach, Ecotopia

Made available in Reserve and on Moodle course site:

Plato, The Republic (selections)
Murray Bookchin, Post-scarcity Anarchism (selections)
Hobbes, Leviathan (selections)
No Gods, No Masters, Daniel Guerin, ed. (selections)
Ursula LeGuin, “The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas”
K. Sale, Human Scale, Selections
Michel Foucault, “Heterotopias”
Assignments:

Five 500-Word ‘Forays’ (10% each): 50%
Class Presentation: 20%
Final Term Paper: 20%
Class Attendance/Participation: 10%

100%

Percentages will convert to a letter grade according to the standard University scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A+</td>
<td>90-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>77-79</td>
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<td>C+</td>
<td>65-69</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>80-84</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>70-72</td>
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Description of Assignments:

Five 500-Word-Forays: Every other Monday I will provide at least three questions/ideas of which you will choose one and write a short essay, due on Friday. These will be evaluated on your engagement with the material, and the clarity and presentation of your argument.

Class Presentation: The class will be divided into groups depending on enrollment. Every Friday will be devoted at least in part to in-class presentations on either:

1) a utopian/dystopian text not covered in the course; or
2) an actual (existing or historical) utopian community.

A list of possible topics will be distributed at the beginning of the course.

Each group will meet with me by Thursday of the week prior to their presentation with a clear idea of the topic and a breakdown of member’s responsibilities. Each member of the group will turn in their notes/outlines for these presentations, describing their role in the presentation and the substance of their work. The presentations will be evaluated on the organization and clarity of analysis, depth of comprehension and the inclusive participation of all members of the group.

Final Project: A substantial (1000-1500 words) philosophical or fictional depiction of your own utopia. These will be evaluated on the basis of clarity, economy of form, level of engagement with crucial ideas, and of course, imagination. Outlines/proposals for these projects will be due as the final ‘Foray’.

Class Attendance:

Attendance is a mandatory course requirement. Please be aware of the academic regulations cited on page 31 of the University Calendar:

“Students are expected to attend all classes in which they are enrolled... Students may be assigned a final grade of N or debarred from writing final examinations if they have failed to satisfy a minimum attendance requirement set by an instructor for lectures... set out in the course outline.”
**Students missing more than 8 classes in this course may be debarred from writing the final examination.** Students may ask for an academic concession regarding missed classes or late work upon providing proper documentation of a personal or medical affliction

**Late Assignments**

Papers will be accepted without penalty *up to one class period* after the deadline. After that, the grade will go down one mark each day (example: an A- will be a B+, etc.). Late papers may be returned with a grade only (no comments). *No papers will be accepted more than 7 days after the deadline.* Exceptions will be made only in cases of illness and personal crisis, a request for which must be received by me in writing before the deadline. Papers turned in on time may be rewritten; rewrites must be handed in by 7 days after the original due date.

**Plagiarism**

Plagiarism is a serious academic offense and will not be tolerated. Please see page 22 of the University Calendar for a description of plagiarism. Please be particularly aware of the temptations of plagiarism offered by the internet.

    The minimum penalty is a failing grade on the assignment produced by plagiarism.

Serious or repeated plagiarism can result in failure of a course and even suspension.

**Diversity**

U Vic is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a supportive and safe learning and working environment for all its members.
Schedule of Classes

Week One: Introduction

Sept.  3 – Logos/Mythos
       4 – Philosophy as Literature – Plato’s City/Soul
            Plato, Republic, Bk II (esp. 369a to end)

Week Two: Plato: Right Rule

8 - Ideal City-Ideal Education
    Plato, Republic, Bk III
10 – City/Soul
    Plato, Republic, Bk IV
11 – Presentation/Discussion

Week Three: Huxley or Plato Revised

15 – Aldous Huxley, Brave New World
17 – Brave New World, Continued
18 – Presentation/Discussion
    **1st Forray Due**

Week Four: Utopia or the Good/No Place

22 – Sir Thomas Moore, Utopia, Bk. II, Ch. 1-5
24 - Utopia, Bk. II, Ch. 6-9
25 – Presentation/Discussion

Week Five: States of Nature


Oct.  1-  Hobbes, Leviathan (selections)
      2 - Presentation/Discussion

Week Six: Natural State

6 – William Golding, Lord of the Flies
8 – Lord of the Flies (Cont.)
9 - Presentation/Discussion
    **2nd Forray Due**

Week Seven: All for One and One for All

13 – Thanksgiving
15 - Marx, Communist Manifesto, Intro; Part I
16 – Communist Manifesto, Part II & IV
Week Eight:  All Are Ones

20 – Communism/Anarchism – Bakunin/ Malatesta (online) and Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., “Harrison Bergeron” (online)
22 – The Medieval Commune
      Kropotkin -- Selections (Moodle)
23 - Presentation/ Discussion

Week Nine:  The Idea of a Utopia - The One and the Many

27 - LeGuin, “Those Who Walk Away from Omelas”
29 – “Omelas” (cont)
30 – Presentation/ Discussion
      ** 3rd Forray Due**

Week Ten:  Ecotopia

Nov. 3 - Callenbach, Ecotopia
5 - Ecotopia (cont.) and Arne Naess, "Ecosophia"
6 - Presentation/ Discussion

Week Eleven:  NOV. 8-12 – READING BREAK

Nov. 13 - Presentation/ Discussion (2)

Week Twelve:  Techno-(dys)-topia

17 – Humanizing Technology
       Bookchin, “Towards a Liberatory Technology” (online)
       Research “Trans-humanism”
20 – Presentation/ Discussion
       **4th Forray Due**

Week Thirteen:  The Place of Utopia

24 - Imagining Place
       K. Sale, Human Scale, Selections (Moodle)
26 - An Other Place
       M. Foucault, “Heterotopias”
27 - Presentation/ Discussion

Week Fourteen:  Final Class

Dec. 1 – Final Project Share
       **5th Forray Due**
3 -  Last Day of Class