History of the Future: Visions of Utopia and Dystopia Since 1865
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Topics in American History
Fall 2023

Class Location: Conklin 448
Class Meeting Times: Mondays, 5:30-8:10 p.m.

Professor: Dr. Beryl Satter
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My Office: 336 Conklin Hall
Phone: (973) 353-3900
Office Hours: Mondays, 4:00-5:00 p.m. and by appointment

Technology
On how to use Canvas, see. https://canvas.rutgers.edu/students/getting-started-in-canvas-students/

I will be using Announcements on Canvas. Please keep your notifications on for Announcements/ email from Canvas.

Course Themes
This class, primarily an intellectual history, surveys critiques of the current order and dreams of a new future. It starts with utopian/dystopian critiques of the late 19th century, during the heyday of industrial capitalism. It then samples critiques and alternative visions that emerged throughout the twentieth century, usually in response to economic shifts and the political and cultural disruptions they produce. Our readings include historical accounts, and social criticism as well as utopian and dystopian novels.

The intellectual bases from which writers have launched critiques of the present and dreams for the future are complex. For example, since the nineteen century, most modern dystopias and utopias have responded to the new social order created by capitalism and industrialization. The capitalist mode of organizing production, or even the “free market” itself, has been viewed as either the source of or the answer to all social problems. Others have directed their faith (or anger) at technology, as either a panacea bringing material wealth to all, or as a frightening means of social control. Some see the conquest of nature as the solution to human suffering. Others view this very mindset as the source of human and planetary misery. Some have looked to powerful nation states to enact large-scale programs to uplift society; others have expressed profound distrust of the power of the state to manipulate individuals and communities. Some have lauded competition as the key to social improvement. Others have lauded cooperation as the only means of saving the human and natural world.

Some have asserted that changes to the environment or to the social organization of society can change human nature for the better. Others claim that we must first find methods to
change human nature in order to unleash the analytic and emotional insights necessary to change the social organization of society. Most utopias or dystopias have addressed social hierarchies – “Westerners” over Indigenous people, men over women, whites over Black Americans and other nonwhites, heterosexuals over homosexuals, or cis-gendered people over transgendered people – in their analyses, either celebrating these hierarchies as right, natural and necessary, or calling for their subversion or overthrow as a crucial step towards human maturity, happiness, and liberation. Sexuality often plays a complicated role in both utopias and dystopias. It has been viewed as a force to be carefully channeled to prevent chaos, or as a source of resistance to social oppression; as something natural, or as something socially conditioned. Family structure, understood as the forming ground of human identities and sexualities, has been sanctioned as natural or viewed as a site of crucial intervention if lasting change is to succeed. Finally, every utopia or dystopia faces the question of crime, deviance, or dissent. What behavior is understood as deviant and how it is controlled, reformed, punished, or eradicated can reveal the sinister or genocidal edge to utopian dreams.

In short, among other issues, dystopian and utopian writers have addressed concerns about the natural world and ecology; human nature, human social hierarchies, deviance or criminality, sexuality, psychology, adult/child relationships, and the family; capitalism (industrial, corporate, or finance), economic productivity or progress, industry, technology, consumerism, and bureaucracy; and local versus governmental power (the state).

Course Goals
- Introduce students to classic and lesser-known works of utopian and dystopian literature.
- Introduce students to key concepts that have been debated in utopian and dystopian literature (such as those listed above).
- Give students a sense of the history of ideas about capitalism, technology, environmental thought, state interventions to foster economic growth, political and psychological perspectives on human nature, and other key concepts that have informed much twentieth-century utopian and dystopian literature.
- Train students to identify the core theses or arguments of scholarly and popular utopian/dystopian writing.
- Train students how to read literary sources both at literature and as history.
- Train students to analyze and discuss complex historical scholarly arguments.
- Train students to write short, analytic responses to readings; to compare how central themes covered in the class are treated by different authors; and to master a longer paper that compares multiple authors’ treatment of a key concept or theme covered in the course.

Books to buy (books that we are reading in their entirety)

These books are available for purchase at the Rutgers University bookstore. Contact information for the bookstore:
-phone: 973-353-5377
-fax: 973-353-1623
-email: sm409@bncollege.com
-website: newark-rutgers.bncollege.com
-address: Hahne’s Building 42 Halsey Street Newark, NJ 07102

Some of these books are available online through Rutgers Library, with various restrictions around the amount of time that you can use them or the amount of text that you can download. However, it is a great idea to buy books once you are in graduate school.

-I’ve also assigned additional short readings (articles or sections of books). These are on Canvas or in JSTOR or other online databases. They are marked with an asterisk * on the syllabus.

**Grading:**
-Attendance (can lower your final grade if you miss classes)
-Response Papers: 40%
-Weekly Questions and Class Participation: 10%
-Final Exam: 50%

**Course Requirements**
-**Attendance.** Our class is a group process, and that group process won’t happen if you don’t attend. Try not to miss any classes. If you miss three classes, your grade will be lowered. Because participation matters, **if you miss four classes (about 1/3 of the class), you will automatically fail the course.**

-Response papers: 40% of final grade (due seven times over the course of the semester): Because the course depends on thoughtful engagement with the material, students will prepare for seven of course’s fourteen class meetings by writing a response paper of 1 to 4
double-spaced pages addressing the readings assigned for that week (you are free to choose which seven weeks you will write response papers for). Papers must be submitted on Canvas by noon on the day of class in which we are reading the works you’ve written about. Your response should refer to the assigned texts, either by paraphrasing in your own words or by brief quotations. Regardless, you should follow each reference with a parenthetical citation of the page number(s) in the book’s print edition to which you are referring. If you cite works other than the texts assigned for that week, use footnotes in Chicago style (for a basic guide, see http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html). No bibliography is needed.

As you read, try to identify the major argument or thesis of each chapter of every book, as well as the major argument or thesis of the book as a whole. If you do that, you will find it much easier to write a response paper of substance. For the shorter articles or book excerpts, follow the same process. Identify key arguments or theses of both parts of the articles or excerpts, and of the article or excerpt as a whole.

Note that if you are responding to a week in which several works have been assigned, your response paper should indicate knowledge of all of the pieces assigned for that week’s class. To structure your response paper, you could note three ideas, arguments, or concepts of substance (not small factual matters) that you learned from the reading or readings, one of which you can consider at length. You could also write about a few ideas or arguments (or even one idea or argument) that seemed confusing or unclear in the reading or readings. Again, the most important thing is to respond to a major theme or argument of the reading or readings, rather than some small factual statement made in the book.

Important:
- The first response paper can be for the class of Sept. 18. I won’t be collecting response papers for our first meeting on Sept. 11.
- Your response papers should include a brief comparison with a book or article that we have already read for the class. (For the Sept. 18th response, you could refer back to one or more of the readings for Sept. 11). Although this can be a very brief reference, try to go beyond noting that a concept, theme or topic was discussed in more than one reading. Instead, write a few sentences focusing on the differences in how a given theme was treated by two authors.

How Response Papers Will Be Graded
Response papers can be tricky. You will find some books or articles easier to respond to than others. It can take several tries, and a lot of feedback from me, before you master how to highlight key themes and how to write insightful comparisons between books. Therefore,
- I will only count your six highest response paper grades when I calculate your cumulative response paper grade for the course. I will drop your lowest grade when making the grade calculation, in other words.
- Nevertheless, you must hand in seven response papers in total. If you only hand in six, your final response paper grade will be lowered by one full grade (from “A” to “B,” for example). If you only hand in five, your final response paper grade will be lowered by two full grades (from
an “A” to a “C,” for example). If you hand in four or less, you will get an “F” for the response paper section of your grade, even if you got all “A’s” on the four papers that you handed in.

**Components of Class Participation Grade (10% of final grade):**

- Class questions: 50%
- Class discussion/participation: 50%

**Class Questions:** to encourage class participation, every student must bring at least one question about the week’s reading to class every week. Each of you will verbally present your question at the start of class. Your question or questions could come out of your response paper, if you write one for that week (your question could trigger discussion about the issue you write about in your response paper). It could also be a question that is not related to your response paper. You must post your question or questions on Canvas (under “Assignments”) by noon each Monday that we meet for class.

**How to write a good discussion question:** The goal of your discussion question is to stimulate discussion of the most important ideas contained in the book or readings that we have read. Writing a good discussion question is similar to writing a good response paper. In both cases, try to engage with some of the book or readings’ key arguments, so that we can better focus on the authors’ insights. Avoid narrow questions about specific facts, or any questions that elicit “yes or no” answers. Avoid questions that are overly general in nature. Avoid questions that the book’s content or argument could not possibly answer (ones that focus on the future, for example). The best discussion questions **highlight a major theme** of the book or reading.

I will work with you to strengthen your questions over the course of the semester, so expect emails from me with suggestions on how to rethink or rephrase your class questions. I will consider the quality of your questions when the final participation grade is tabulated, taking improvements into account.

A final (and hopefully easy) way for you to raise your participation grade is to mark or copy down a few key lines or key paragraphs that strike you as core to the book’s argument or approach. Please mark such sections in every book we read. You can share the sentences or sections you noted with the class during class discussions. They will count towards “participation/discussion.” These marked sections can also be used in your response paper and your class question.

**-Final exam (50% of final grade), in form of take-home review essay on the course readings. Exam due date to-be-announced.** Past exam questions will be posted on Canvas. If you find a theme you’d like to write about – that is, if you’d like to write your own exam question -- show me the question no later than Dec. 11th (or last class meeting). I may rewrite it for clarity, but I will OK it if it is broad enough to engage the major themes of at least half of the books we’ve read. I will then add it to the list of potential exam questions.
Background for Dystopia  Capitalism, the Destruction of the Commons, the Alienation of Labor, and the Denigration of Nature, the Body, and Women (who represent the body)

Monday Sept. 11: Capitalism and Debates about “Civilization”

* Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,” 70-81, 87-105
* Marx, “The German Ideology,” 148-155
* Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” 469-500,


Part I: Dreams of Evolutionary Perfection

Monday Sept. 18th: Turn of the Century White Utopias


Monday Sept. 25: The Present as Dystopia: Turn of the Century African American Visions

* Omar H. Ali, *In the Lion’s Mouth: Black Populism in the New South, 1886-1900* (University of Mississippi Press, 2010), Introduction and Chapter One

- Sutton Griggs, *Imperium in Imperio* (1899)
Monday Oct. 2: The “Era of Woman” and a Woman’s Utopia
*Beryl Satter, Excerpts from Each Mind a Kingdom, pp. 1-4, 21-56, 111-115, 181-188, 200-205 (section entitled “Ministers and Christian Socialists”)

-Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Herland (1915)

Part II: Dreams of Efficiency and Control

Monday Oct. 9: Early Twentieth Corporate Capitalism, Technology and Scientific Management
-David Noble, America By Design (1977)

-*Excerpt from F. W. Taylor, Principles of Scientific Management (1911) (two pages)

“Metropolis” (1927), directed by Fritz Lang, excerpts shown in class

Monday Oct. 16: Modernist Utopias: Dreams of Control
-James C. Scott, Seeing Like a State

Monday Oct. 23: Behaviorists, Engineers and Utopian Economics: The Dream of Control II


Mon. Oct. 30th: Mid-Century Dystopias: Fascism, Totalitarianism, and Sexuality
-George Orwell, 1984 (1949). (Signet Classics, with afterword by Eric Fromm)


Part III: Dreams of Healing and Wholeness (or Fragmentation)

Monday Nov. 6: Utopian Dreams of Racial Equality


Mon. Nov. 13: Empathy and Healing in a Racist Nation: the 1960s and 1970s

Octavia Butler, Kindred (1979)
Monday Nov. 20: Ecological Thought in the 1970s

Mon. Nov. 27: A 1970s Utopia


Monday Dec. 4: Some Futures of the 1980s and 1990s


*“Black to the Future: Interviews with Samuel R. Delany, Greg Tate, and Tricia Rose” (1994)

*Susan Stryker, “My Words to Victor Frankenstein” (1994)

Mon. Dec. 11: Western Knowledge vs. Indigenous Knowledge

Additional Important Information: See Next Page
Academic and Classroom Environment

Names and Pronouns: An important part of creating a respectful learning environment is knowing and using the name you use, which may differ from your legal name, as well as the gendered pronouns you use (for example, I go by she/her/hers). Please feel free to let me know your name and/or the pronouns you use at any time.

Citizenship and Community: We will be reading and discussing material on which we may not all agree; some of the themes and imagery we encounter in the sources may seem offensive or otherwise controversial. In this context especially, it is crucial for us to combine the free expression of ideas with respect for each other. This is your community and your class; each one of you has a responsibility to that community.

Policy on Academic Integrity (Cheating and Plagiarism): As an academic community dedicated to the creation, dissemination, and application of knowledge, Rutgers University is committed to fostering an intellectual and ethical environment based on the principles of academic integrity. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the University’s educational and research missions, and violations of academic integrity constitute serious offenses against the entire academic community. The entire Academic Integrity Policy can be found here: http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/.

Rutgers University treats cheating and plagiarism as serious offenses. Cheating is both a moral and an ethical offense. It violates both your own integrity and the ethics of group commitment: when you cut corners and cheat, you undermine those students who took the time to work on the assignment honestly. As a standard minimum penalty, students who are suspected of cheating or plagiarism are reported to the Office of Academic Integrity. Pending investigation, further penalties can include failure of the course, disciplinary probation, and a formal warning that further cheating will be grounds for expulsion from the University.

Please learn to resist the urge to cut and paste, either literally or figuratively, by using other people’s ideas. If I find that you have used other people’s ideas (e.g., Wikipedia, Amazon reviews, book jacket descriptions, etc.), I will not accept the assignment because I will not be able to consider it your own work. You will get a failing grade for that assignment and will not be able to make it up.

All students are required to sign the Rutgers Honor Code Pledge. To receive credit, every assignment must have your signature under the following phrase: “On my honor, I have neither received nor given any unauthorized assistance on this assignment.”

Rutgers Learning Center (tutoring services): Room 140, Bradley Hall. You can contact them at (973) 353-5608, or check their website: https://sasn.rutgers.edu/student-support/tutoring-academic-support/learning-center
Writing Center (tutoring and writing workshops): Room 126, Conklin Hall, (973) 353-5847. You can email them at nwc@rutgers.edu, or check their website:

http://www.ncas.rutgers.edu/writingcenter

Accommodation and Support Statement
Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

Covid-related Resources: These two links provide a comprehensive list of available resources: https://www.newark.rutgers.edu/covid-19-operating-status#SupportingOurStudents; and https://myrun.newark.rutgers.edu/covid19.

For Individuals with Disabilities: The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter barriers due to disability. Once a student has completed the ODS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and reasonable accommodations are determined to be necessary and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be provided. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at ods.rutgers.edu. Contact ODS at (973)353-5375 or via email at ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals who are Pregnant: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance at (973) 353-1906 or via email at TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Absence Verification: The Office of the Dean of Students can provide assistance for absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (e.g., illness, personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to University Policy 10.2.7 for information about expectations and responsibilities. The Office of the Dean of Students can be contacted by calling (973) 353-5063 or emailing deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals with temporary conditions/injuries: The Office of the Dean of Students can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (e.g., broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request using the following link: https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu.

For English as a Second Language (ESL): The Program in American Language Studies (PALS) can support students experiencing difficulty in courses due to English as a Second Language (ESL) and can be reached by emailing PALS@newark.rutgers.edu to discuss potential supports.
For Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students who are experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance by calling (973) 353-1906 or emailing TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm. For more information, students should refer to the University’s Student Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence, Relationship Violence, Stalking and Related Misconduct located at http://compliance.rutgers.edu/title-ix/about-title-ix/title-ix-policies/.

Please be aware that all Rutgers employees (other than those designated as confidential resources such as advocates, counselors, clergy and healthcare providers as listed in Appendix A to Policy 10.3.12) are required to report information about such discrimination and harassment to the University. This means that if you tell a faculty member about a situation of sexual harassment or sexual violence, or other related misconduct, the faculty member must share that information with the University’s Title IX Coordinator. If you wish to speak with a staff member who is confidential and does not have this reporting responsibility, you may contact the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance at (973)-353-1918, or at run.vpva@rutgers.edu. Learn more about the office here: http://counseling.newark.rutgers.edu/vpva

For support related to interpersonal violence: The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance can provide any student with confidential support. The office is a confidential resource and does not have an obligation to report information to the University’s Title IX Coordinator. Students can contact the office by calling (973) 353-1918 or emailing run.vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential text-based line available to students; students can text (973) 339-0734 for support.

For Crisis and Concerns: The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a support plan to address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Students, faculty and staff may contact the CARE Team by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNCARE or emailing careteam@rutgers.edu.

For Stress, Worry, or Concerns about Well-being: The Counseling Center has confidential therapists available to support students. Students should reach out to the Counseling Center to schedule an appointment: counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or (973) 353-5805. If you are not quite ready to make an appointment with a therapist but are interested in self-help, check out TAO at Rutgers-Newark for an easy, web-based approach to self-care and support: https://tinyurl.com/RUN-TAO.

For emergencies, call 911 or contact Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD) by calling (973) 353-5111.