



Spring 2014
HIST 1978U
Prof. Jo Guldi

Thursdays, 4:30-6:30pm
Smith-Buonanno Hall 207

Office hour: Monday 11am-12 and
by appointment
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Syllabus

Utopias and Other Wastelands

In a world full of dystopia, utopia represents the initiative to take other possibilities seriously. It's the beginnings of collective agency, of rekindled hope of transformation. In a sense all social and political experiments, ancient and modern, depend upon imagining utopias. Some are first formulated as works of fiction, experimented upon in particular geographies; others go on to transform nations and national discourses, whence we know them and their failures merely as the face of modernity. In the 1960s with the expansion of public housing and welfare and the growth of an optimistic youth movement bent on social justice, syllabi on utopia filled the universities of modern America, and treatises traced the theme of alternative habitable heavens from medieval monasteries through the skeptical imagination of Thomas More through reckless Diggers and Shakers up to a present world, that the students might better understand the prospects of movements like the Black Panther Party or Students for a Democratic Society around them. Since that moment, both historians and students have become more cautious. In the years since the 1970s, agrarian communes have disappeared and the welfare state has been pruned. We are now more likely to observe the failures of the contemporary world than to plot for its alternatives. In national history traditions, it has become routine to hold as successful only those movements that took the nation-state as their form of intervention.

These reversals leave observers with a conundrum: have lone historical exceptions ever mattered, and are the failed and defeated movements of the past in any way still relevant? Professors assign Michel Foucault's

dystopian panopticism with religious observation. We learn suspicion of reformers and the exclusions of everyday democracy.

At the base of these questions are concerns about how possible it is to transform a system. Radical thought has urged upon us a return to utopias and alternative geographies both in the form of living movements like the MST, World Social Forum Occupy, or StrikeDebt, as they proclaim, “Another World is Possible” and in the form of intellectual treatises affiliated with this movement that explore the agency of “heterotopias” or “Temporary Autonomous Zones” as geotemporal sites of utopian agency. In looking at particular historical cases, we will examine the claims of possibility and influence raised by these movements. What factors are necessary for a social movement to grow? Where have international coalitions of reformers or rebels exempted themselves from the contemporary world system, or forged tools for reform and resistance, or carved out a temporary autonomous zone for critique? We will look at the international Progressive movement, appropriate technology, trade unions and cooperatives as examples of modern movements that, doomed in one nation, occasionally flourished elsewhere.

This course will review the most striking versions of utopia in the Anglo-American world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a prelude to understanding twenty-first century utopianism, its patterns of exclusion, and its realistic prospects. Themes will include the esoteric and geographically isolated examples like back-to-the-land movements and psychological/sexual reform movements, as well as mainstream movements that began as utopian plans for remaking the world: democratic reform, scientific collection and curation of a more abundant or sustainable agriculture, Fabian socialism, and the welfare state. Twentieth-century stories will trace the fates of these utopias through the rise of organic farming, cooperativism, civil rights, Gandhi’s *Satyagraha*, the Green Revolution, and human rights. We will be looking into the alliances of professionals, experts, national legislators, capitalism and the organs of world government, trying to understand the alignments of power that caused some of these movements to flourish and others to falter. We will consider the conservative utopias of Ayn Rand and Milton Friedman alongside the radical utopias of Theosophists.

Utopianism offers a bridge between intellectual and social history: what is the coincidence between an isolated group of people and an idea, such that a movement is formed capable of transforming society at large.

Books to purchase at bookstore:

Chris Wilbert & Damian F White, eds., *Autonomy, Solidarity, Possibility: The Colin Ward Reader* (2011)

Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged* (1957)
Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture* (2006)

Books to purchase online (out of print):

Witold Rybscynski, *Paper Heroes* (1980)

Books available free online through the library:

Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market*

John Curl, *For All the People*

Log into OCRA course reserves with the password “land”

Important websites

- **Class dropbox**, home to many articles and excerpted readings:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/de9l8ehdb4lsil7/nyGUQXP18H>
- **Zotero.org**: our medium for sharing citations and notes. Zotero is required in this class for the "section leader" assignment when you annotate the readings for the week and share the results with the rest of the class. Zotero will be handy when you write your final paper for this class (and others), as it works inside your web browser (Chrome, Firefox, etc.) to download a citation when you look at an entry in a cooperating library catalogue. The citation can then be dragged to a Word Document where it gives you a well-formatted footnote (for this class, please use the University of Chicago footnote style, and press shift while dragging). Please set up an account and install it onto your computer. You will find citations related to the class after logging in and asking to join this group: **<https://www.zotero.org/groups/24275/>**
- Please sign up as soon as possible

Assessment

Participation (10%)

In a seminar, one demonstrates one's work by the ability to speak in paraphrase, to cite concrete details, to extrapolate, and to ask good questions. Every effort will be made on the part of the instructor to offer a climate amenable to participation by shyer students.

General expert for a section (10%)

Sign up for one week of class to be our official note-taker and general expert. Before class, add each of the required readings to the class folder in Zotero. Under each of the citations, add a one-paragraph abstract to summarizing the basic points of the book as you would explain it to someone outside of the class. Come to class prepared to open the

discussion with a ten-minute summary of the themes shared in the reading. **Due in class, Meetings 2-12**

External expert for a section (20%)

The extended readings below each class in the syllabus list books that contain important counter-examples – for instance, feminist utopias that diverge from the patriarchal tradition established by More, or the story of the *Mutiny on the Bounty* from the Tahitian rather than the western perspective. In class you will act as the unique expert representing that view from the outside, commentating on the successes and failures of this particular version of utopia from your extended knowledge of a tradition unknown to the others. Knowing that no one else has read the text except you, you should feel able to summarize the book or article in question, talk about its author, state its major points, and offer particular suggestions about how the evidence in your hands might change the point of view arrived at by someone who only read the main text. It may be helpful to begin by reading a few book reviews in order to understand what other people took away from the text. Write a 2-page, single-spaced summary of this text and its relevance to the utopian tradition, pulling out keywords and short, in-line quotations as appropriate. Add your summary as an annotation to a citation inside the class folder in Zotero. Come to class with copies to hand out. **Due in class, Meetings 2-7**

Group intensive study on the history and effectivity of a utopian system (35%)

The class will divide into groups of 4. Each group will be responsible for researching and presenting on the history of a utopian category, answering the question, how successful was this utopia? And, Did this utopia matter? The presentation should include one map and one timeline with at least 40 facts documented in each. Preliminary meetings will be required to effectively think through the project and divide up possible research tasks in such a way as to come to a rational justification of which times and places have been surveyed. The presentation itself, timeline and map should make this justification clear, and highlight 3-4 turning points or most critical examples – the most-connected place or individual in the network, the most influential or often-cited book or example – marshaling footnotes and evidence to support why this utopia is important or meaningful by some historically-clear measure of understanding. **Due in class, Meetings 8-12**

Post-study research report (25%)

Groups may decide to submit one 20-page research report or four separate 5-page reports. These reports will be the written, footnoted version of the timeline and map presented in class, documenting and analyzing the nature of one utopian system.

Each student will also turn in a one-page summary of the cooperation process with any appropriate rants or raves about the collaboration process itself, which within reason will factor into how grades are distributed to the in-class presentations. **Due 4pm May 1.**

Schedule of Readings

Week 1 -- Jan 23 – THE UTOPIAN TRADITION

The Utopian Tradition from Plato to Augustine, from More to Buber. Failed utopias, successful utopias in time and space. Introduction of the assignments.

Week 2 – Jan 30: THE MODERN UTOPIAN TRADITION

Thomas More, *Utopia*, via “The Open Utopia”:

<http://theopenutopia.org/home/>

Presentations:

- Margaret Cavendish, *The Blazing World*
- Christine de Pisan, *The City of Ladies*

Week 3 – Feb 6: CONSTITUTIONAL UTOPIA

Franklin W. Knight, “The Haitian Revolution,” *The American Historical Review* 105, no. 1 (February 1, 2000): 103–115. (dropbox)

Watch: *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935), available for streaming at

<http://www.amazon.com/Mutiny-Bounty-Clark-Gable/dp/B004RL58RS>

(also on order for free streaming through library at OCRA)

Presentations:

- Thomas Paine, *The Rights of Man*
- Anne Salmond, *Aphrodite’s Island*, Intro, Ch 7-8, Conclusion
- Sibylle Fischer, *Modernity Disavowed*, section on Haiti
- Robespierre treatises here:
<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/modsbook13.asp>

Week 4 – [date must be rescheduled] – UTOPIAS OF LEARNING

Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation.” (dropbox)

Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation.” (dropbox)

Louis Marin, *Utopics*, pp 1-12 (dropbox)

Ross Douhat, “Does Meritocracy Work?,” *Atlantic Monthly* 296, no. 4 (2005): 120 (dropbox)

Decca Aitkenhead, “Peter Higgs: I Wouldn’t Be Productive Enough for Today’s Academic System,” *The Guardian*, December 6, 2013, sec. Science (dropbox)

Presentations:

- Richard Ely, *The Labor Movement in America* (1886)

- Theron F. Schlabach, "An Aristocrat on Trial: The Case of Richard T. Ely," *The Wisconsin Magazine of History* 47, no. 2 (December 1, 1963): 146–159, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4633931>
- Nicholas Cullater, *The Hungry World* (introduction, choose any 3 chapters)
- David Barber, *A Hard Rain Fell: SDS and Why It Failed* (2008) (introduction, choose any 3 chapters)

Week 5 – Feb 20 -- UTOPIAS OF THE IMAGINATION

Lewis Mumford, *The Story of Utopias*, Chapters 7, 9-12 (dropbox)

Arthur V. Woodworth, *Christian Socialism in England* (dropbox), Chapter 1

B. W. Bateman, "Clearing the Ground: The Demise of the Social Gospel Movement and the Rise of Neoclassicism in American Economics," *History of Political Economy* 30, no. Supplement (January 1, 1998): 29–52, (dropbox)

Presentations:

- Mumford Chapters 1-6
- Anne Taylor, *Annie Besant: A Biography* (1991)
- William Leach, *True Love and Perfect Union: The Feminist Reform of Sex and Society* (1980)
- Elizabeth Ann Danto, *Freud's Free Clinics: Psychoanalysis & Social Justice* (2005)

Week 6 – Feb 27: BACK TO THE LAND

Brian J. L. Berry, Intro. (dropbox)

Harrison and Judd, eds., *A Landscape History of New England*, Chapter 9 (dropbox or online course reserves, coming)

Dennis Hardy, *Utopian England: Community Experiments, 1900-1945*, Studies in History, Planning, and the Environment (London: E & FN Spon, 2000), Chapters 3-4. (dropbox or online course reserves, coming)

Presentations:

- Wendy Wolford, *This Land is Ours Now* (2010)
- Armytage, *Heavens Below* (introduction, choose any 3 chapters)
- Alistair McIntosh, *Soil and Soul* (2004)

Week 7 – Mar 6: SELF ORGANIZATION

David Graeber, "A Practical Utopian's Guide to the Coming Collapse," *The Baffler* No. 22, 2013 (dropbox)

Damien White, ed., *Autonomy, Solidarity, Possibility: The Colin Ward Reader*. Chs 2.2, 2.8, 4.2, 5.1, 5.7

M. Marien, "The Two Visions of Post-Industrial Society," *Futures* 9, no. 5 (1977): 415–431. (dropbox)

Presentations:

- John F. C. Turner, *Housing By People*
- Ananya Roy, *Poverty Capital* (2010)
- Robert Goodman, *After the Planners*
- Colin Ward, *Tenants Take Over*

Week 8 – Mar 13: TECHNOTOPIA

Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*

Hamish McKenzie, "Occupy Democracy: Loomio attempts to re-invent group decision-making... as a co-op":

<http://pando.com/2013/05/02/occupy-democracy-loomio-attempts-to-re-invent-group-decision-making-as-a-co-op/>

Group Presentation

Week 9 – Mar 20: ECOTOPIA

Martin Mulligan, *Ecological Pioneers*, Chapter 8 (dropbox)

James Howard Kunstler, *The Long Emergency*, final chapter (dropbox)

Gregg Easterbrook, "Global Warming: Who Loses–And Who Wins?,"

Atlantic Monthly 199 (2007): 52–64,

<http://msuweb.montclair.edu/~lebelp/geasterbrookglobwarmatlantic200704.pdf>.

Group Presentation

SPRING BREAK – no class Mar 27

Week 10 – Apr 3: APPROPRIATE TECHNOLOGY

Dudley Seers et al., "The Sussex Manifesto" (dropbox)

Witold Rybscynski, *Paper Heroes* (1981)

Listen: Gibby Zobel, "Alfredo Moser," BBC World Service 12 August 2013:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-23536914>

Group Presentation

Week 11 – Apr 17: CAPITALIST UTOPIAS

Jennifer Burns, *Goddess of the Market*, Chs 6-7. (OCRA)

Ayn Rand, *Atlas Shrugged*, Part 2 Chapter 6 Section 1; Part 3, Chapter 2;

Video: Kevin Jones, "Accelerating the Good Economy,"

[http://socialcapitalmarkets.net/2013/09/05/socap13-video-](http://socialcapitalmarkets.net/2013/09/05/socap13-video-accelerating-the-good-economy-with-kevin-jones/)

[accelerating-the-good-economy-with-kevin-jones/](http://socialcapitalmarkets.net/2013/09/05/socap13-video-accelerating-the-good-economy-with-kevin-jones/)

Group Presentation

Week 12 – Apr 24: WORKER-OWNED COOPERATIVES

Michael Schmidt and Lucien van der Walt, *Black Flame*, Ch 5 (OCRA)

John Curl, *For All the People*, Chapters 2-3, Conclusion (OCRA)

Group Presentation

Week 13 – May 1 (Reading Period) – Casual seminar: Revisiting the utopian tradition. **Final papers due.**