



UTOPIA?

Humanities 260: Utopian Literature,
Thought and Experiment. Winter 2010

Tues/Thurs at 1:00; Classroom CM 104

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The background for this class is the long tradition of writing about alternate worlds, including paradises of the past, utopias set on remote islands or planets, or in the future, and dystopias—alternate worlds which are significantly worse than the present reality. Scholarship in the field of utopianism also includes work on actual intentional communities, related areas such as city planning and consideration of such theoretical constructs as the idea of progress.

The purpose of this class is to examine three utopian texts in relation to some particular historical and cultural contexts.

Looking Backward: 2000-1887, by Edward Bellamy, published 1888.

One question posed by Bellamy's novel is—what is the appropriate role for government? The CCF administration of Tommy Douglas in

Saskatchewan is one example of some of Bellamy's ideas put into practice.

Island, by Aldous Huxley, published 1962. Huxley's utopians, like most utopians, are deeply interested in education. One fundamental question about education is whether it serves the needs of the individual or the needs of the system? The University of Regina Calendar and Course Catalogue is one example of how educational ideas get implemented.

The Year of the Flood, by Margaret Atwood, published 2009. Atwood's recent novel, an example of the dystopian side of the genre, reflects current public concern about the environment. The City of Regina's environmental strategy is an example of how planners attempt to embody environmental concern in policies and programs.

Some historical and contextual materials will be provided as handouts or placed on library reserve.

Work for the class will include mid-term and final exams, a proposal and essay on one of the three novels, and a shorter paper. There will be an option to assign some of the marks for the major paper to an alternative mode such as a fictional utopian sketch, a portfolio of designs, a class presentation, or something else arranged with the instructor.

Feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss the class further.

Note: Humanities 260 counts as an English elective.