



<https://xkcd.com/1955/>

Dystopias Real and Imagined

PHL388 H1F: Literature & Philosophy, TR 3-6

Instructor

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Email

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Office Location & Hours

TBA

Course Description

Dystopias explore two kinds of questions. The first, looks towards the future: *What are we in danger of becoming?* Should we fear a robot uprising, or should we worry more about humans enslaving conscious AI? Will the world become overpopulated, or will we be decimated by environmental catastrophe? What should we prepare for? What should we prevent?

The second kind of question focuses on the present, and the vestiges of the past: *Are some of us already living in dystopian conditions?* Consider missing and murdered indigenous women, migrant workers forced into slave-like conditions, police violence against people of color and people with disabilities, the disbelief and distrust of rape survivors and the trans/genderqueer/non-binary community. These groups already face the questions that the rest of us fear we might someday have to ask: Will anyone look for us when we disappear? Will anyone mourn us, if we die? If we can't trust the police, the courts, or our fellow citizens, who will protect us? How will we survive?

This course will investigate the imagined futures and the real presence of dystopia in our society. It will also combine the empathic insights of literature with the rigorous argumentation of philosophy. You'll become familiar with intersectional feminism, critical race theory, postcolonialism, and critiques of capitalism. We'll start out faraway, in fiction, but we'll end up here: developing philosophies that apply to Canada 2019.

Evaluation

Assessment	Percentage of grade	Due date
Reading Completion	16%	8 in-class quizzes, 2% each
Critical Question 1	20%	May 9
Critical Question 2	24%	May 20
Paper Proposal	10%	May 30
Final Paper	30%	June 11

All assignments will be turned in on Blackboard by 11:59 P.M. on the marked due date.

The quiz questions will be easy to answer—if you’ve done the reading. My reasoning here is simple. We’ll engage with content that has many different themes and potential take-aways. Class discussion will be guided by your interests, so you need to come prepared.

The other assignments give you the opportunity to develop and refine your critical reasoning skills. The first assignment (500 words) is to summarize one of the articles and ask a question about it. In the second assignment (700 words), you will also suggest an answer to your question. For the paper proposal, you can choose one of the suggested topics or create your own. Either way, your final paper will apply one of the philosophy articles we have read to the novel, *The Parable of the Sower*.

Required Texts

Films Alex Garland, *Ex Machina*
Jordan Peele, *Get Out*

Books Octavia Butler, *The Parable of the Sower*

All other readings will be available on Blackboard. **You are expected to have completed all readings *BEFORE* the class for which they are assigned.**

Course Schedule

Topic	Date	Readings
Introduction	May 1	Ursula K. Leguin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”
Gender Dystopias	May 3	Bonnie Mann, “Creepers, Flirts, Heroes and Allies” Alex Garland, <i>Ex Machina</i>
	May 8	Eva Feder Kittay, “The Ethics of Care, Dependence, and Disability” Paolo Bacigalupi, “Pop Squad”
	May 9: Critical Question 1 due on Blackboard	
Cultural Imperialism	May 10	Patricia Hill Collins, “Learning from the Outsider Within” Ursula K. Leguin, “Solitude”

Topic	Date	Readings
	May 15	Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez, “The Colonization and Decolonization of Indigenous Diversity” Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, <i>The Accident of Being Lost</i> (Selections)
Racial Dystopias	May 17	Lynne Tirrell, “Genocidal Language Games” Deepak Unnikrishnan, “Blattella Germanica”
	May 20: Critical Question 2 due on Blackboard	
	May 22	W.E.B. Du Bois, “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” Jordan Peele, <i>Get Out</i>
Class Dystopias	May 24	Giorgio Agamben, <i>Homo Sacer</i> (Selections) Deepak Unnikrishnan, “Birds”
	May 29	Audre Lorde, “Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference” E. Lily Yu, “The Cartographer Wasps and the Anarchist Bees”
May 30: Paper Proposal due on Blackboard		
All of the Above	May 31	Octavia Butler, <i>The Parable of the Sower</i> (Part 1)
	June 5	Octavia Butler, <i>The Parable of the Sower</i> (Part 2)
	June 7	Octavia Butler, <i>The Parable of the Sower</i> (Part 3)
June 11: Final Paper due on Blackboard		

Course Policies:

Class Attendance:

The in-class quizzes will not be announced in advance, so if you have to miss class (or know you are going to be late), inform me over email. You will be given the opportunity to make up the points.

If you know you will routinely have to miss class—due to work, family obligations, accessibility reasons, religious obligations, prolonged sickness, etc.—please contact me as soon as possible so we can work out an alternative assessment scheme.

Late Assignments:

There will be a 2% penalty for each day the paper is late. Extensions may be granted (at my discretion, for reasons similar to the ones listed in “Class Attendance,” above). Except in exceptional circumstances, you must request an extension at least 48 hours prior to the posted deadline in order to receive an extension.

Contact Policy:

You are required to check your university email accounts regularly. All announcements and grades will be posted on Blackboard, and papers will be returned over Blackboard.

I can be reached at weekly office hours, before class, or over email: emma.mcclure@mail.utoronto.ca

Accessibility:

I am happy to provide any accommodations needed to ensure that all materials and activities are accessible to all students. All readings can be found in PDF form, and many of the stories have audio recordings. Handouts will include QR codes, and I will use a microphone during my lectures. The class attendance and late-assignment policies were constructed with an eye towards making this class as accessible as possible. Please let me know if you require any other accommodations, at any point throughout the term.

Academic Integrity:

The purpose of the assignments is to improve your skills in reading, writing, and critical thinking. The purpose of grades is to reflect your competency in these skills. Plagiarism undercuts these aims. You have plagiarized if you a) include writing that is not your own AND b) do not cite your sources. I will investigate suspected cases of plagiarism and academic dishonesty, in accordance with the procedures outlined in the University of Toronto's Code of Behavior on Academic Matters (available online at: <http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>).

If you have questions or concerns about what constitutes appropriate academic behavior or appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from other institutional resources. (http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QPA_plagiarism.html is a good place to start.)

Mental Health:

Academic work is difficult and psychologically demanding. It's important to work hard and push yourself but it is even more important to be kind to yourself. The University has a number of resources available if difficulties arise:

<http://discover.utoronto.ca/health-wellness>

<http://life.utoronto.ca/get-help/counselling/>

<http://mentalhealth.utoronto.ca/>