**First-year Foundation Course 100:**

**Utopia and Dystopia in Film and Fiction**

Chapman University

Course Syllabus

Fall 2019 [TIME] [DAYS] [ROOM]

Prof. Michael Valdez-Moses

[mimoses@chapman.edu](mailto:mimoses@chapman.edu)

Dr. John Thrasher

thrasheriv@chapman.edu

# Course Description

The 20th century was an era of bold utopian experimentation. Numerous extraordinary attempts were made to realize in practice radical and competing conceptions of freedom and equality, progress and order, personal happiness and social harmony. Even as many of these utopias became nightmares for those who lived under them, thinkers and artists remained fascinated with the role that technology could play in making possible different ways of living and forms of social control that went beyond what was deemed possible at the time. Focusing on major works of literature, film, and philosophic prose, we will look at some of the most prominent and thought-provoking visions of utopia/dystopia in the 20th and 21st centuries and reflect on what these (mostly) fictional portrayals of society can teach us about the limits (if any) of political thinking in reshaping our conceptions of morality, human nature, and social life. In this course, we will explore the tensions between individual freedom and communal solidarity, between economic prosperity and social equality, between natural limits and human aspirations for an ideal social order, between technological progress and human flourishing. 3 credits.

# Catalogue Course Description

This course engages students in interdisciplinary, university-level critical inquiry and reflection. The FFC course focuses more on critical engagement, exploration, and communication related to complex issues than on mastering a body of material. The section topics vary, and students select a topic according to their academic and personal interests. Must be taken for a letter grade. (Offered every semester.) 3 credits.

# Program Learning Outcome

Students will be able to critically analyze and communicate complex issues and ideas in a variety of genres, modes of presentation, and contexts. They will work independently and collaboratively to explore issues and questions that have engaged thinkers from a variety of fields in the 20th and 21st centuries.

# Course Learning Outcomes

1. Identify and understand the nature of conflicts between differing and often opposing visions of society, morality, and human nature.
2. Comprehend the underlying social, moral, and/or political ideas conveyed by literary texts/films and engage with those ideas critically.
3. Formulate clear, incisive, thought-provoking questions about ideas presented in both literary and academic texts as well as films.
4. Develop skill in constructing and presenting arguments.

# Attendance Policy

Attendance is mandatory. Because of the interactive nature of the class, attendance is an essential component. Excessive tardiness constitutes an absence; six absences may result in failure (Undergraduate Catalog 2018-2019 “[Academic Policies and Procedures](https://www.chapman.edu/catalog/oc/current/ug/content/1474.htm)”). Please keep this in mind.

Required Texts & Films

*Literature*

1. George Orwell, *1984*
2. Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*
3. P.D. James, *The Children of Men*
4. Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go*
5. Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*

*Films*

1. Gattaca (1997)
2. The Children of Men (2006)
3. Never Let Me Go (2010)
4. The Lives of Others (2006)
5. Her (2013)

*Philosophical / Critical Texts*

1. “Two Concepts of Liberty,” Isaiah Berlin (1958)
2. “The Liberty of the Ancients Compared with That of the Moderns,” Benjamin Constant (1819)
3. Excerpts from *The House of Government*, Yuri Slezkine (2017)
4. Excerpts from *Our Post-Human Future*, Francis Fukuyama (2002)

Students are expected to bring the relevant text to each discussion. The philosophical/critical texts, as well as any additional readings will be made available via Blackboard.

# Instructional Methods

This course uses a combination of hands-on learning in Socratic roundtable discussions of readings, engagement with films, and writing exercises.

# Assessment

There are five components to your grade. These are distributed as follows:

Class Participation 25%  
Questions 15%   
Essay #1 10%  
Essay #2 15%  
Essay #3 20%  
Final Exam 15%

**Class Participation (25%)**

Participation in this course offers the opportunity to experiment with and practice formulating questions and responding to other students. Students will develop skill in articulating their ideas, developing support for their positions, and submitting their views to rational scrutiny. The seminar-style conversation in the classroom will facilitate constant engagement and practice. Students are expected to enter discussion in each and every meeting of the class. Comments and questions are expected to be about or grounded in the texts we are reading together and the films we are discussing.

**Questions (15%)**

Each student will submit 2 questions about the material under discussion that day to an assigned site on Blackboard before each class. These questions will be used in the class and will be evaluated on a 3-point scale based on how well they reflect the student’s engagement with the material.

**Essays (10%, 15%, 20%)**  
Each student will submit three essays of approximately 1,500 words. These papers are an opportunity for students to demonstrate the skills they have acquired by writing efficiently and constructing well-supported, well-articulated arguments in relation to the topics covered in the class. One of these (#2) will be creative and will involve having the student develop a dystopia/utopia of their own. For this assignment, students may submit a creative essay, a screenplay, a play, a story, or even a short film.

**Final Exam (15%)**

Students will take an in-class final exam during the official examination period. The exam will consist of multiple essay-questions from which the students will be asked to answer at least two. Answers must be written on a laptop during the exam period and uploaded to a designated location on the course Blackboard site at the conclusion of the examination. Students will be provided “sample questions” a few days in advance of the final exam in order to help prepare them for writing exam answers.

# Students with Disabilities

Disability Services serves as the clearing house for all requested accommodations. It is the responsibility of the student requesting accommodations to make these needs known in a timely fashion and to provide proper documentation and medical evaluations as required ([www.chapman.edu/disabilities](http://www.chapman.edu/disabilities)). Summaries and references to these policies are provided in the University's application and admissions materials and its student handbook. Individuals can also obtain information about these policies, services, documentation requirements, etc. from Disability Services at (714) 516–4520. It is recommended that the student provide these materials prior to the beginning of the academic year or semester so that the University may better serve the student's needs and the student may avoid any irreversible academic consequences. Once notification has been made the University will engage in an interactive process in order to identify our obligation to provide reasonable accommodations. Services provided will be based on the individual needs of the student and may include extended test time, notetakers, etc.**The granting of any accommodation will not be retroactive and cannot jeopardize the academic standards or integrity of the course.**

# Chapman University Academic Integrity Policy

Chapman University is a community of scholars that emphasizes the mutual responsibility of all members to seek knowledge honestly and in good faith. Students are responsible for doing their own work, and academic dishonesty of any kind will be subject to sanction by the instructor/administrator and referral to the University's Academic Integrity Committee, which may impose additional sanctions up to and including expulsion. Please see the full description of Chapman University's policy on Academic Integrity at [www.chapman.edu/academics/academic-integrity](http://www.chapman.edu/academics/academic-integrity).

# Equity and Diversity

Chapman University is committed to providing an environment which is free from any form of harassment and discrimination based upon an individual's race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, age, marital status, physical disability, mental disability, medical condition, sexual orientation, military or veteran status, genetic information or any other characteristic protected by applicable state or federal law, so that all members of the community are treated at all times with dignity and respect. It is the University's policy, therefore, to prohibit all forms of such harassment or discrimination among University faculty, students, staff, and administrators.

View a copy of the entire policy at ([Harassment and Discrimination](https://www.chapman.edu/catalog/oc/current/ug/content/1425.htm), <https://www.chapman.edu/faculty-staff/human-resources/_files/harassment-and-discrimination-policy.pdf)> In keeping with its policies, Chapman University not only fully complies with all local, state, and federal laws concerning harassment and discrimination, but also provided a means to assure fair treatment to any student, employee or member of the University community who believes the policy prohibiting harassment, and discrimination has been violated. For further information, concerning Chapman University's Harassment and Discrimination Policy ([Harassment and Discrimination](https://www.chapman.edu/catalog/oc/current/ug/content/1425.htm), <https://www.chapman.edu/faculty-staff/human-resources/_files/harassment-and-discrimination-policy.pdf>), please contact the University's Equal Opportunity and Diversity Officer at (714) 997–6847.

# Class Schedule and Readings

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|  | **Reading / Film** | **Assessment** |
| Week 1 | *1984* |  |
| Week 2 | *1984* & “Two Concepts of Liberty” |  |
| Week 3 | *Brave New World* |  |
| Week 4 | *Brave New World* & Gattaca |  |
| Week 5 | *Darkness at Noon* | First Essay Due |
| Week 6 | *Darkness at Noon* |  |
| Week 7 | 1. The Lives of Others(Film) 2. Excerpt from *The House of Government* |  |
| Week 8 | *The Children of Men* |  |
| Week 9 | *The Children of Men* |  |
| Week 10 | The Children of Men (Film)  “The Liberty of the Ancients…” | Second Essay Due |
| Week 11 | *Never Let Me Go* |  |
| Week 12 | *Never Let Me Go* |  |
| Week 13 | 1. Never Let Me Go (Film) 2. Excerpt from *Our Post-Human Future* |  |
| Week 14 | Her (Film) | Third Essay Due |