

# **First-year Foundation Course 100D-10/11: Utopia and Dystopia in Film and Fiction**

Chapman University  
Course Syllabus

Fall 2021

2:30-3:45 PM (PST) Monday/Wednesday 100D-10

4:00-5:15 PM (PST) Monday/Wednesday 100D-11

Wilkinson Hall 220

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Joint Office Hours: 1:00pm-2:25pm and by appointment

Wilkinson Hall 210

## **Course Description**

The 20<sup>th</sup> 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 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. In so doing, we will also examine utopian visions of environmental harmony as well as dystopian visions of environmental degradation.

3 credits.

## **FFC Course Catalog 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. Some sections of this course may allow students with more than 30 credits earned to enroll. Must be taken for a letter grade. Fee: some sections may require a class fee.

## **Program Learning Outcome**

Students will be able to 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 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.

## **Course Learning Outcomes**

1. Identify and understand the nature of conflicts among differing and often opposing visions of society, morality, and human nature.
2. Comprehend the underlying social, moral, and political ideas conveyed by literary texts and films, as well as by philosophical and historical works, and engage with those ideas critically.
3. Formulate clear, incisive, thought-provoking questions about ideas presented in literary and academic texts as well as films.
4. Develop skill in constructing and presenting arguments.
5. The student critically analyzes and communicates complex issues and ideas.

## **Required Texts & Films**

*Texts* (Bring the text each day to class)

1. Aldous Huxley (1932) *Brave New World / Brave New World Revisited*
2. George Orwell (1948) *Nineteen Eighty-Four*
3. Svetlana Alexievich (1997) *Voices From Chernobyl: The Oral History of a Nuclear Disaster*
4. Chris Jennings (2016) *Paradise Now: The Story of American Utopianism*
5. James Scott (2018) *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States*, Chapter 4 “Agro-Ecology of the Early State” [Available as a PDF on Canvas]

### *Films*

1. *Blade Runner* (1982)
2. *1984* (1984)
3. *Baraka* (1992)
4. *Gattaca* (1997)
5. *Apocalypto* (2006)
6. *The Children of Men* (2006)
7. *The Lives of Others* (2006)
8. *Contagion* (2011)
9. *Her* (2013)

Students are expected to bring the relevant text to each discussion. Some of the texts will be made available as PDFs on Canvas. Students should purchase their own copies of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Brave New World*, *Paradise Now*, and *Voices from Chernobyl*. We recommend getting the versions of the texts listed above to make it easier to follow the discussion in class.

Students are expected to watch the films **before** we talk about them in class and are encouraged to watch them twice. All of the films we will be discussing are available for rental or purchase on various streaming services and all can be streamed directly from either Amazon or Kanopy. Given that we will continue to discuss and compare the films during the entire fall semester, we recommend to all students that they *purchase* (rather than rent) digital/streaming versions of the films.

### **Instructional Methods**

This course uses a combination of lectures, Socratic roundtable discussions of readings, small group discussion, engagement with films, creative projects, and writing exercises.

### **Assessment**

There are five components to your grade. All assessments will use an 100 point scale. These are distributed as follows:

Class Participation	15%
Class Questions/Comments	25%
Project #1	15%
Project #2	15%
Project #3	15%
Final Exam	15%

### **Class Participation (15%)**

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 (real or virtual) 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/Comments (25%)**

Each student will submit one question *and* one comment about the material under discussion that day to an assigned site on Canvas before each class. These questions and comments will be used in the class and will be evaluated according to how well they reflect the student's engagement with the material. The question/comment will be due at 10pm (PST) the night before each class.

### **Projects (15% each, total of 45%)**

There will be three project assignments. The first will consist of an essay of approximately 1,200 words. This paper is 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. The second and third will be creative and will involve the student developing a dystopia and a utopia of their own. For this assignment, students may submit a creative essay, a screenplay, a play, a story, a short film, or any number of other options.

### **Final Exam (15%)**

Students will take an "in-class" online exam during the regularly scheduled exam period.

### **Library Instruction**

In addition to the work directly assigned for this class, students are required to complete the library instruction modules on Canvas before the first essay is due.

### **Attendance Policy**

Attendance is mandatory, without a valid exemption. Four absences will result in the the reduction of one letter grade in the final grade, six absences will result in a fail.

### **Students with Disabilities**

In compliance with ADA guidelines, students who have any condition, either permanent or temporary, that might affect their ability to perform in this class are encouraged to contact the [Disability Services Office](#). If you will need to utilize your approved accommodations in this class, please follow the proper notification procedure for informing your professor(s). This notification process must occur more than a week before any accommodation can be utilized.

Please contact Disability Services at (714) 516–4520 if you have questions regarding this procedure, or for information and to make an appointment to discuss and/or request potential accommodations based on documentation of your disability. Once formal approval of your need for an accommodation has been granted, you are encouraged to talk with your professor(s) about your accommodation options. 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 Academic Integrity Committee, which may impose additional sanctions including expulsion. Please see the full description of Chapman University's policy on Academic Integrity at [www.chapman.edu/academics/academic-integrity/index.aspx](http://www.chapman.edu/academics/academic-integrity/index.aspx)

### **Equity and Diversity**

Chapman University is committed to ensuring equality and valuing diversity. Students and professors are reminded to show respect at all times as outlined in [Chapman's Harassment and Discrimination Policy](#). Any violations of this policy should be discussed with the professor, the [Dean of Students](#) and/or otherwise reported in accordance with this policy.

### **Safety Protocol**

Course format may be subject to change with little to no notice, depending upon state, local, and University guidelines

In response to the current COVID-19 pandemic, Chapman University has developed the [CU Safely Back program \(CUSBP\)](#) and mandatory safety measures. The University's mandatory safety measures may be stricter than local, state or federal guidelines and may be subject to change at any time. Students are expected to adhere to the University's safety measures while attending classes, including when entering and exiting classrooms, laboratories, or other instructional areas. Refusal to abide by the University's mandatory safety measures or to the safety requirements specific to this course will result in your being asked to leave the area immediately, and may result in an administrative dismissal from this course.

The COVID-19 pandemic requires all of us to accept the possibility that changes in how this course is taught may be required and that some changes may occur with little or no notice. For example, some or all of the in-person aspects of a course may be shifted to remote instruction. If this occurs, you will be given clear instructions as to how to proceed. The uncertainty of the situation is not ideal for any of us. We must all try to approach this situation with good-will, flexibility, and mutual understanding.

## Class Schedule and Readings

	Reading / Film	Assessment
<b>Week 1</b>		
M 8/30	Introduction	
W 9/1	Contagion (2011) Film	Question/Comments
<b>Week 2</b>		
M 9/6	<b>No Class—Labor Day</b>	
W 9/8	<i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> Part 1	Question/Comments
<b>Week 3</b>		
M 9/13	<i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> Part 2	Question/Comments
W 9/15	<i>Nineteen Eighty-Four</i> Part 3	Question/Comments
<b>Week 4</b>		
M 9/20	<i>1984</i> (Film)	Question/Comments
W 9/22	<i>1984</i> (Film)	Question/Comments
<b>Week 5</b>		
M 9/27	<i>Lives of Others</i> (2006) Film	Question/Comments
W 9/29	<i>Lives of Others</i> (2006) Film	Question/Comments
F 10/1	<b>First Project Due</b>	
<b>Week 6</b>		
M 10/4	<i>Voices from Chernobyl</i> Part 1	Question/Comments
W 10/6	<i>Voices from Chernobyl</i> Part 2	Question/Comments
<b>Week 7</b>		
M 10/11	<i>Voices from Chernobyl</i> Part 3	Question/Comments
W 10/13	Library Session	Question/Comments
<b>Week 8</b>		
M 10/20	<i>Stalker</i> (1979) Film	Question/Comments
W 10/21	<i>Stalker</i> (1979) Film	Question/Comments
<b>Week 9</b>		
M 10/25	<i>Brave New World</i> Chapter 1-5	Question/Comments
W 10/27	<i>Brave New World</i> Chapters 6-12	Question/Comments

<b>Week 10</b>		
M 11/1	<i>Brave New World</i> Chapters 13-19	Question/Comments
W 11/3	<i>Gattaca</i> (1997) Film	Question/Comments
F 11/5	<b>Second Project Due</b>	
<b>Week 11</b>		
M 11/8	<i>Paradise Now</i> "Oneida"	Question/Comments
W 11/10	<i>Baraka</i> (1992) Film	Question/Comments
<b>Week 12</b>		
M 11/15	1. <i>Apocalypto</i> (2006) Film "The Agro-Economy of the Early States," Scott	Question/Comments
W 11/17	<i>Apocalypto</i> (2006) Film	Question/Comments
<b>Thanksgiving Break</b>		
<b>Week 13</b>		
M 11/29	<i>Paradise Now</i> "New Harmony"	Question/Comments
W 12/1	<i>Children of Men</i> (2006) Film	Question/Comments
<b>Week 14</b>		
M 12/6	<i>Blade Runner</i> (1982)	Questions/Comments
W 12/8	<i>Her</i> (2013)	Questions/Comments
F 12/10	<b>Final Project Due</b>	
<b>M 12/13</b>	<b>Final Exam 8:00-10:30 (FFC 100D-10)</b>	
	<b>Final Exam 4:15 - 6:45 (FFC 100D-11)</b>	