

PHIL 3220 - Philosophical and Utopian Literature

W 12:30–3:20 ACE 102

Christopher P. Noble, Ph.D.

Office: PME 221

cnoble@ncf.edu

Office Hours: TBD and by appointment

Course Description:

While philosophy is often thought of as a mode of thinking characterized by clear, logical thinking and rigorous argumentation, there is a rich tradition of using literary fiction to dramatize philosophical ideas. Utopian and dystopian literary experiments have proven particularly fruitful in this respect, allowing authors to explore alternative social, political, and technological possibilities while shedding light on the inadequacy and injustice of their own lived realities. This course surveys examples of utopian and dystopian fiction across different historical contexts to investigate the different ways that such literature has furthered specifically philosophical ends.

Course Objectives and Learning Outcomes:

Develop an understanding of the ways that literature – in particular of a utopian variety – enables the exploration of philosophical themes.

Hone ability to analyze philosophical ideas and conduct original research in the history of philosophy/philosophy in literature.

Practice conceiving of realities (both desirable and undesirable) that are alternative to our own.

Course Evaluation Criteria

Expectations for a “satisfactory” evaluation include regular attendance (no more than 3 absences during the semester), exhibition of an understanding of course material, participation in class discussion, and on-time completion of assignments.

Assignments:

Short written reflections upon reading material (one per week).

Students are responsible for leading a discussion of a particular passage or theme from the reading once during the semester.

1 short paper (5-6 pages) interpreting a passage from a reading of your choice and that helps illustrate a larger theme of interest.

1 longer research paper (8-10 pages) that engages secondary literature. Potential topics can included Students will develop their projects on the basis of feedback from both peers and the instructor.

Disability Services:

New College of Florida is committed to creating a learning environment that meets the needs of its student body. Students are welcome to privately discuss any concerns related to barriers to both fully participating and learning in this course. I highly encourage students with accommodations to meet with me as soon as possible.

If you have a disability, or think you may have a disability, you may contact the office of Student Disability Services (SDS) in order to request official accommodation(s). Students may contact SDS in-person (HCL3), at 941-487-4496 OR disabilityservices@ncf.edu. Additional information regarding SDS can be accessed here: <https://www.ncf.edu/student-disability-services/>

Academic Dishonesty Policy:

Students are expected to be familiar with the college's academic dishonesty policy, as described in the General Catalog. Any violation of this policy may result in academic sanctions, up to and including dismissal from the college.

Required Books:

- 1) Robinson, Kim Stanley. *Red Mars*. 978-0553560732
- 2) Miéville, China. *The City & The City*. 978-0345497529
- 3) Three Early Modern Utopias: *Utopia*, *New Atlantis* and *The Isle of Pines*. 978-0199537990
- 4) Cavendish, Margaret. *The Blazing World and Other Writings*. 978-0140433722
- 5) Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Dispossessed*. 978-0061054884

Additional course materials will be posted in PDF form on the course Canvas page.

Schedule of Readings (Tentative)

Wednesday 1/30 Syllabus Review and Introductory Discussion; Peter Frase: “Four Futures” (Distributed in Class)

Wednesday 2/6 Plato: Selections from *Republic*; *Critias*. (Posted on Canvas)

Wednesday 2/13 Thomas More: *Utopia*

Wednesday 2/20 Francis Bacon: *New Atlantis*, Henry Neville: *The Isle of Pines*; Ibn Tufayl: Selections from *Hayy ibn Yaqzān* (the latter will be posted on Canvas)

Wednesday 2/27 Margaret Cavendish: *The Blazing World*

Wednesday 3/6 Jonathan Swift: Selections from *Gulliver's Travels* (Posted on Canvas)

Wednesday 3/13 Samuel Butler: *Selections from Erewhon* (Posted on Canvas)

First Paper due Friday 3/15

3/18–3/22: Spring Break

Wednesday 3/26 Ursula Le Guin: *The Dispossessed*, Chs. 1-6

Wednesday 4/3 Ursula Le Guin: *The Dispossessed*, Chs. 7-13

Wednesday 4/10 Kim Stanley Robinson: *Red Mars*

Wednesday 4/17 Kim Stanley Robinson: *Red Mars*

Wednesday 4/24 No Class – Baccalaureate/Reading Days

Wednesday 5/1 China Mieville: *The City and the City*

Wednesday 5/8 China Mieville: *The City and the City*/Conclusions

Final Paper Due Wednesday of Exam Week (5/15)