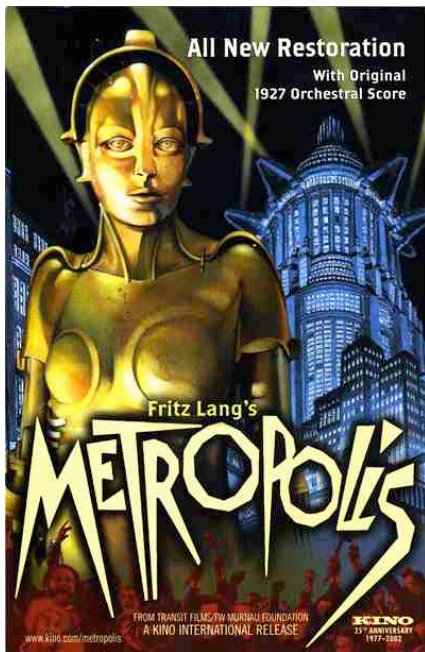


## SPECIAL TOPIC: **IMAGES OF UTOPIA IN MEDIA AND CULTURE**



### SUMMARY

Have you ever looked around and wondered why the surrounding society — the material world we have inhabit — is structured the way it is? Why are there skyscrapers and highways? Why are there satellites and the internet? Why are there suburbs and malls, theme parks and national parks? Why is there environmentalism and a green movement? *What will the future be like, for myself and society?*

Such questions cannot be answered by references to money or politics, for these questions address the underlying structure of technology and civilization, which have been deeply shaped by the dominant models of “utopia.” The concept of “utopia” is much more than an impossible ideal tainted by an imperfect humanity, for models of utopia have shaped and transformed much of the modern world, for better and worse together. This course explores the key models of utopia that have shaped technological civilization over the past century, focusing on how utopia (and dystopia) and the future have been imagined and realized in media and culture — from industrialism to consumerism to environmentalism, from atomic age to space age to information age, from Burning Man to Grunge to Ecology, *Metropolis* to *Easy Rider* to *The Hunger Games*.

### GOALS AND OUTCOMES

The essential goal of this course is for students to comprehend the role of utopia (and dystopia) in shaping the modern world, as visualized in media and culture. By the completion of this course, students will:

- understand that “utopia” reflects the human desire for a better world, a vision of an improved or ideal society.
- learn how these media images of utopia have shaped and reflected the design of cities and nations, while mirroring the dreams and anxieties about the human condition in modern life.
- be able to critique the various cultural roles of utopia and its opposite, dystopia (the undesirable society).
- learn how writers/directors have used media to create or convey images of utopia and the future, to convey their model for society and/or critique the existing society, especially the overall cultural and technological conditions.
- be able to critique media images and cultural ideals at deeper and broader levels than economic or politics.
- compare and critique the models of utopia in the new millennium, which exist on the fault lines of those that seek to progress into a “scientific” future and those that seek to preserve an “idyllic” past.



### INSTRUCTOR

Dr. Barry Vacker, Associate Professor

Office: Annenberg 224 Office Hours: 10:30 – 12:00 on T-TH; or by appointment.

bvacker@temple.edu Office Phone: 215.204.3623

Preferred methods of contact — interpersonal: 1) come up to me before or after class; 2) drop by during office hours  
electronic: 1) send an email; 2) call on the office telephone  
Email response time: Please give me 24 hours to respond to your email.

### REQUIRED READINGS

Reading Packet, available online from University Readers. The link to purchase will sent to the class via email.

## GRADING, EXAMS, PAPERS

Students must complete the following list of projects to successfully complete and pass this course. Grades will be determined according to the following breakdown:

Exam 1 =	15%	(September 22)
TV-Film Critique/Presentation =	25%	(due dates throughout semester)
Video Summaries =	15%	(due dates throughout semester)
Video Project =	15%	(December 8)
Final Exam =	20%	(December 15)
Attendance =	<u>10%</u>	
Total =	100%	

The dates for the Final Exam cannot be changed. NO reasons are acceptable. This is only fair to those fellow students who take the exam as scheduled. The Final Exam will be essay-based (it may have a few multiple-choice questions) and is designed to test your comprehension of all materials — including readings, films, and class discussion. The dates for the Critiques and Presentations will be set once the class enrollment is finalized. All late projects will earn the grade of 0 (zero) points. If you miss the final exam, you will earn the grade of 0 (zero) points. Grades will be assigned as follows:

100-93 = A	89-86 = B+	79-76 = C+	69-66 = D+	59-0 = F
92-90 = A-	85-83 = B	75-73 = C	65-63 = D	
	82-80 = B-	72-70 = C-	62-60 = D-	

**Note:** Regarding any questions you have about a grade on a paper or presentation, you have one week (7 days) from the date you receive the grade to discuss the questions with your professor. After that, the grade is final. You have until December 8 to discuss any questions regarding your attendance records. **All paper, presentation, and attendance grades are final after December 8. All total grades are final after December 17, the date the grades are submitted to the online system.**

## Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty is not tolerated in any form. Plagiarizing or cheating of any kind on papers and exams will be rewarded with the grade of 0 (zero) on that assignment or exam — NO exceptions. Plagiarism may warrant receiving an F for the course and cause the student to face additional disciplinary actions from Temple University (see below). Signing another student's name on the attendance sheet will cause both parties to forfeit all of their attendance points. Further, this class will abide by the rules and regulations of Temple University pertaining to academic dishonesty. The Temple Student Handbook states the following:

*Temple University strongly believes in academic honesty and integrity. Plagiarism and academic cheating are, therefore, prohibited.*

If you are not certain that you are using or citing materials properly, then please check with Professor Vacker. There is nothing wrong with citing other's work, just make sure you give them credit. In return, you get credit for doing so, and citing them can enhance your learning. Below is a summary of academic honesty and plagiarism:

*Academic honesty and plagiarism*

*Adapted from the Temple University policy statement on academic integrity, passed by the Academic Senate on April 19, 1989.*

*Plagiarism is the unacknowledged use of another person's labor: another person's ideas, words, or assistance.*

*There are many forms of plagiarism: repeating another person's sentence as your own, adopting a particularly apt phrase as your own, paraphrasing someone else's argument as your own, or even presenting someone else's line of thinking in the development of an idea as though it were your own. Academic writing is built upon the use of other people's ideas and words — this is how ideas are developed — but appropriate credit must always be given to the originator.*

*In general, all sources must be identified as clearly, accurately, and thoroughly as possible. When in doubt about whether to identify a source, either cite the source or consult your instructor. Here are some specific guidelines to follow:*

*a. Quotations. Whenever you use a phrase, sentence, or longer passage written (or spoken) by someone else, you must enclose the words in quotation marks and indicate the exact source of the material, including the page number of written sources.*

*b. Paraphrasing. Avoid closely paraphrasing another's words. Substituting an occasional synonym, leaving out or adding an occasional modifier, rearranging the grammar slightly, or changing the tenses of verbs simply looks like sloppy copying. Good paraphrasing indicates that you have absorbed the material and are restating it in a way that contributes to your overall argument. It is best to either quote material directly, using quotation marks, or put ideas completely in your own words. In either case, acknowledgment is necessary. Remember: expressing someone else's ideas in your own way does not make them yours.*

*c. Facts. In a paper, you will often use facts that you have gotten from a lecture, a written work, or some other source. If the facts are*

well known, it is usually not necessary to provide a source. (In a paper on American history, for example, it would not ordinarily be necessary to give a source for the statement that the Civil War began in 1861 after the inauguration of Abraham Lincoln.) But if the facts are not widely known or if the facts were developed or presented by a specific source, then you should identify that source.

d. Ideas. If you use an idea or ideas that you learned from a lecture, written work, or some other source, then you should identify the source. You should identify the source for an idea whether or not you agree with the idea. It does not become your original idea just because you agree with it.

Penalties for violation of Temple University's academic honesty policies can range from a failing grade for the assignment or the entire course to referral to the university disciplinary committee.

### **TV/Film Critique and Presentations: 25% of your grade**

These will occur over the course of the semester. You will choose the topic and your presentation will occur during the week of the topic — as listed on the semester. Handouts will provide all the details.

### **Video Project: 15% of your grade**

For the video project, you and your partner will produce a 3-5 minute video based on theories and themes from this course. You will receive a handout detailing the video project. *Due date — December 8.*

### **Video Documentary Summaries: 15% of your grade**

These summaries function to help you understand the reading and *visual materials*. All summaries are due at the beginning of class; late summaries will receive a zero. There are five video summaries; each one will be worth 3% of your grade for a total of 15%. Handouts will provide all the details.

### **Class Attendance: 10% of your grade**

This class relies on class discussion and student participation. To encourage attendance, I have created an attendance plan. Simply put, the more classes you attend, the more points you earn toward your final grade. There will be a total of 14 class meetings. Attend all 14 and get the full 10 points.

Classes <u>Attended</u>	Points <u>Earned</u>	Classes <u>Attended</u>	Points <u>Earned</u>	Classes <u>Attended</u>	Points <u>Earned</u>
14	10	12	6	10 or less	0
13	8	11	3		

**Note:** It is your responsibility to insure that your name is on the sign up sheet. If your name is not on the sheet when the class is over, you will be counted absent. If you need to miss class for a religious holiday, please let the professor know in writing and verbally (before or after class, or in office hours). If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to get notes from a classmate and watch the film on your own time. If you miss a film and discussion, then you will likely miss questions on the final exam about the video. Film or videos will not be replayed at a later date; videos will not be loaned out for private viewing. Anything said in class will be assumed to have been heard by everyone.

### **SLACKERS**

If you miss many classes or fail to do the readings and assignments, then you will have difficulty passing this course. You are expected to actively participate in this course! If you turn in a late project or fail to fully participate in the Critique & Presentation, then you will not pass this class. Late projects = zero points. For lack of participation with your partner, you will receive one friendly warning, followed by a final warning, then a zero for the project. All projects must be turned-in as scheduled.

### **EMAIL PROTOCOL**

Since your prof teaches well over 200 students each semester, he receives a huge volume of emails. To insure efficient responses and clear communication, he has two requests:

- Please provide him at least 24 hours to reply to your email; it is much better for all concerned that when you get an email response, he has had time to think about it and gather additional information, if necessary.
- Please compose your emails in clear, concise sentences, keeping the length of the email as brief as needed.

It should go without saying that you should use proper grammar and form in composing your email and addressing your professors. Emails should be written as a brief letter, not a text message. Short, clear emails make for clear communication and help everything to run smoother!

## **TEXT MESSAGING, EMAILING, AND WEB SURFING DURING CLASS**

Instant access online is surely a permanent feature of digital media on college campuses. Obviously, there are many benefits to these technologies. However, text messaging, emailing, and web surfing in class are too often a *detriment to concentrating and learning in a college classroom*. First, you cannot concentrate on class material when you are texting and surfing; this will hinder your understanding of complex class material and reduce your performance on the exams and projects. Second, the imagery on your laptop or cell phone screen is a distraction to others around you, especially when we are screening film clips. So, do yourself and your classmates a favor: avoid texting, emailing, and surfing during class. Your mediated world and friends will still exist when the class is over!

## **SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS**

Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact Professor Vacker privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Contact Disability Resources and Services at 215.204.1280 in 100 Ritter Annex to coordinate reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities.

## **CONDUCT CODE**

Individuals enrolled in this course are expected to conduct themselves in a civil and respectful manner, both toward their instructor and fellow students. In accordance with Temple's Student Conduct Code (Policy Number: 03.70.12), acts of misconduct for which students are subject to discipline include, but are not limited to, intentional interference with or disruption of class as well as behavior or conduct which poses a threat to the mental, emotional, or physical well being of self or others. Non-compliance, interference or resistance to this code is considered actionable when a student fails to comply with a reasonable verbal or written instruction or direction given by a University employee (e.g. instructor, teaching assistant or staff member). In such cases of violation, it is the University employee's right and responsibly to seek out the appropriate sanctions (e.g. suspension, separation, probation, enrollment restrictions, or expulsion from the University) pursuant to the conduct code policy.

## **ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

Temple University has requested that the following information be included on all course syllabi: *Freedom to teach and freedom to learn are inseparable facets of academic freedom. The University has a policy on Student and Faculty and Academic Rights and Responsibilities (Policy #03.70.02) which can be accessed through the following link: [http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy\\_no=03.70.02](http://policies.temple.edu/getdoc.asp?policy_no=03.70.02).*

## **HOW TO DO WELL IN THIS CLASS**

The best way to do well in this class is simple: come to class, stay up on the readings, turn in well-researched and well-written papers, don't plagiarize, give interesting class presentations, study hard for the final, and have an open mind. It is important to attend all classes, as this class is structured in a sequence, so each week's film and discussion builds upon the information in previous weeks. If you miss a week or two, you will likely not fully understand the following weeks. Also, please let your professor know if you have any questions about the films or class topics!

## **CLASS PROTOCOL**

In general, I am an easy-going guy and prefer my classes to be open forums for ideas and discourse related to the class topics. However, a few rules are needed:

- Please arrive to class on time; screenings and discussion will begin promptly.
- Timely arrivals to class are not only courteous to classmates, but many of these films and shows have very important openings, which are important to understanding the meanings and messages to be discussed in class and in your papers.
- Silence or turn off all cell phones and PDAs.
- Show respect and courtesy to fellow students at all times.
- Eloquence is the most persuasive form of discourse; insults and "in your face" dialogue persuades no one of anything.
- I want all of you to do well in this class, so feel free to approach me with questions before or after class, or during office hours.

## COURSE OUTLINE

### PART 1 — UTOPIAN MODELS & THE MODERN WORLD

- Week 1**  
August 25  
**Introduction: the cultural and cosmic role of utopia and dystopia; models for the fate of the future.**  
Film clips: *The Hunger Games* (2012).  
Reading 1: Green, “Repressive Regimes and Rebellions: Could The Hunger Games Really Happen?”  
Reading 2: Vacker, “The Utopian Moment, Now.”
- Week 2**  
**Week 3**  
September 8  
**From Atlantis to Chaco Canyon**  
The human instinct and need for creating utopian models of their civilizations.  
Film clips: *The Mysteries of Chaco Canyon* (2000).  
Reading 3: Roemischer, “The Utopian Propensity.” Reading 4: Sofaer, “Chaco Astronomy: Introduction”
- Week 4**  
September 15  
**Metropolis and the 20th Century Utopian Models of “New Worlds”**  
garden to machine, yesterday to tomorrow; industrial age, space age, information age; skyscrapers, highways.  
film clips: *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang, 1926).  
Reading 5: Herwig and Holzherr, “Paradise Lost,” “Pre-Fabricated Dreams” and “Ideal Cities.”  
Due Video 1 answers: *Visual Acoustics* (Eric Bricker 2010).
- Week 5**  
September 22  
**1950s: the post WWII Utopias of Suburbia and the Atomic Age**  
the Big Bang, the Bomb, the nuclear family, the Cold War.  
clips: *Day the Earth Stood Still* (R. Wise 1951), *Rebel w/o Cause* (N. Ray 1955).  
September 22. Exam 1: Readings 1-5 plus all class discussion and powerpoints.
- Week 6**  
September 29  
**1960s: Nature, the Small Town, and Something in the Skies**  
nature turns against humans; environmentalism; the small town utopia.  
film clips: *The Birds* (Alfred Hitchcock 1962); *The Daisy Girl* (President Johnson political ad, 1964).  
Due Video 2 answers: *Earth Days* (PBS and Robert Stone 2010).
- Week 7**  
October 6  
**1960s: the Metropolis enters the Information Age and Space Age Utopias (and Dystopias)**  
computers, outer space meets cyberspace, modern meets premodern, Apollo 8 & 11 broadcasts.  
films: *2001* (Stanley Kubrick 1968); *Planet of the Apes* (Franklin Shaffner 1968).  
Due Video 3 answers: *In the Shadow of the Moon* (Ron Howard and David Sington 2007)
- Week 8**  
October 13  
**1960s: The Lost Highway, Return to Nature, Drugs as Expanded Consciousness**  
modernity skidding off the highways; experimental utopias; communes.  
clips: *Weekend* (Jean-Luc Godard 1967); *Easy Rider* (Dennis Hopper 1969); *Zabriskie Point* (M. Antonioni 1970)  
Due Video 4 answers: *Summer of Love* (PBS 2007).
- Week 9**  
October 20  
**PART II — THE EMERGENCE OF POSTMODERN WORLDS**  
**1970s: The Theme Park; Simulation as Utopia**  
Disneyland and Las Vegas as extensions of television; signs of postmodernism.  
film clips: *Westworld* (Michael Crichton 1973).  
Reading 6: Herwig and Holzherr, “Disney World,” “Las Vegas,” “E=MC2.”
- Week 10**  
October 27  
**1970s: The Sports and Consumer Utopias**  
the rise of sports, consumerism, and TV; sports as spectacle, simulated conquest, and city identity.  
Reading 7: “Southdale Mall and Mall of America.”  
film clips: *Rollerball* (Norman Jewison 1975).
- Week 11**  
November 3  
**1970s: The Energy Utopia?**  
Where are we going to get the energy to power our metropolises? What is the role of the media?  
Film clips: *The China Syndrome* (James Bridges 1979).  
Due Video 5 answers: *Who Killed the Electric Car?* (2006).
- Week 12**  
November 10  
**1980s: Burning Man and the DIY Desert Theme Park? Or Premodern + Postmodern Spectacle?**  
living in harmony through art, nature, and technology; is it possible? a utopia of personal expression?  
film clips: *Burning Man: Beyond Black Rock* (2006).  
Reading 8: Kozinets & Sherry, “Welcome to the Black Rock Café.”
- Week 13**  
November 17  
**1990s: Clone the Future: The Genetic Utopia**  
genetics, cloning, personal success, and social control; the human genome project.  
film clips: *Gattaca* (Andrew Niccol 1997); *The Twilight Zone* (1960).  
Reading 9: Goetz, “23AndMe Will Decode Your DNA for \$1,000.”  
**Nov 24-30, Fall Break, Thanksgiving Holiday**
- Week 14**  
December 1  
**PART III — THE FIRST DECADES OF THE NEW MILLENNIUM**  
**2000s: Is This the Future of the Space Age ... or Spaceship Earth ... or Cyberspace**  
Technology and ecology; Gaia hypothesis and global networks; the beauty of free and open networks.”  
Film clips: *Avatar* (James Cameron 2009); *TRON: Legacy* (Joseph Kosinski 2010).
- Week 15**  
December 8  
**2010s: Future Models for Society?**  
The future for utopias and dystopias. Review for final exam.  
Reading 10: Phipps, “Dreams of a Digital Utopia.”  
Video project: December 1. We will screen the videos in class.

**FINAL EXAM** Monday, December 15. The Final Exam is comprehensive and mandatory — No exceptions.

**CLASS QUESTIONNAIRE** — (Completing this is 100% voluntary)

To help me get to know this class better, we would like some information about your background, life, goals, film and TV preferences, etc. It will help me teach the class and understand you as individual human beings.

The book that most *influenced* my life is:

\_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_

The two *greatest* films I have ever seen are: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

My favorite female actor is: \_\_\_\_\_ My favorite male actor is: \_\_\_\_\_

My 2 favorite musicians, or bands, or composers are: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

My 2 all-time favorite TV shows are: \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

Which city would be your ideal or perfect city in which to live? \_\_\_\_\_

why? \_\_\_\_\_

Hometown: \_\_\_\_\_

What does the concept of “utopia” mean to you?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe your vision of utopia and/or dystopia:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Have you seen any films that deal with “utopia” or “dystopia”? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, which ones? \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_

Describe your vision of “the future” (for society and/or self)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

BEST EMAIL ADDRESS TO CONTACT YOU: \_\_\_\_\_

OPTIONAL — My name is \_\_\_\_\_