**Dystopia On the Page, Stage and Screen**

**GRW 101-30**

Professor Brendon Fox TTH 1:00 – 2:15 pm bfox2@washcoll.edu

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Office hours: Goldstein 117

“It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen.” — George Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four

**WHAT IS THIS CLASS?**

Merriam-Webster defines a dystopia as “an imaginary place where people lead dehumanized and often fearful lives”. If it’s such a horrible place, why does it have such a tight grip on our imaginations? Before there were the books and movies of *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* there was Terry Gilliam’s film “Brazil”. Before that, there was George Orwell’s novel *1984*, and before “1984” there was the 1920 Czech play *R.U.R*., which contains the first known use of the word “robot”. The fascination with the future is long-standing and a global fixation. Why? In this class we will be exploring the many ways the idea of a future-gone-horribly-wrong takes shape in short stories, onstage, and in film. How do different writers, playwrights, and screenwriters over the last one hundred years each find ways to powerfully capture the fear and fascination of a dystopian society? How do their different social, political, feminist, and geopolitical agendas come to light in different works for the public? Is the purpose of dystopian stories to frighten, enlighten, or provoke us into action? Or even at times make us laugh? The global aspect of examining dytopian fiction is crucial to understanding how these issues are not restricted to the United States alone, whether the artist is Canadian (Margaret Atwood), British (Caryl Churchill), South African-born (Neill Blomkamp). Using these ideas (and more), you will learn how to make brief oral presentations, lead group discussions, and how to research and write a college-level paper.

**REQUIRED TEXTS (available in the College Bookstore)**:

*A Writer’s Reference with Writing About Literature* by Diane Hacker

**Publisher:** Bedford/St. Martin's; Seventh Edition edition (December 20, 2010)

**ISBN-10:** [0312601484](callto:0312601484)

**ISBN-13:** [978-0312601485](callto:978-0312601485)

Parable of the Sower by Octavia E. Butler

**Publisher:** Grand Central Publishing; Updated edition (January 1, 2000)

**ISBN-10:** [0446675504](callto:0446675504)

**ISBN-13:** [978-0446675505](callto:978-0446675505)

Bloodchild and Other Stories by Octavia E. Butler

**Publisher:** Seven Stories Press; 2 edition (October 4, 2005)

**ISBN-10:** [1583226982](callto:1583226982)

**ISBN-13:** [978-1583226988](callto:978-1583226988)

The Designated Mourner by Wallace Shawn

(NOTE: You could order either edition, but I'll list them in the order of my preference.)

**Publisher:** Theatre Communications Group (December 21, 2010)

**ISBN-10:** [1559363622](callto:1559363622)

**ISBN-13:** [978-1559363624](callto:978-1559363624)

OR

**Publisher:** Dramatists Play Service, Inc. (January 1, 2002)

**ISBN-10:** [0822218488](callto:0822218488)

**ISBN-13:** [978-0822218487](callto:978-0822218487)

All other required texts are / will be posted to our Canvas site.

Though it seems obvious to state it, you must also bring a pen or pencil to class; use of a computer is allowed with permission of the instructor. Those students without these implements will be asked to leave the class. You should always read with a pen or pencil, marking lines or passages that you find significant and making short marginal notes to record your own thoughts.You should also identify things that are confusing to you, so that you can ask for clarification in class. These practices will help you to focus your attention on what you are reading, and they will prove valuable when you sit down to write your papers.

*\*Please bring all books and assigned materials to class every day.\**

**WHAT ARE WE DOING IN THIS CLASS?**

Students will explore different writers’ / directors’ perspectives on the idea of dystopia, and how they use it to critique social ills in their society. Students will present researched biographical information on writers / directors, as well as lead class discussions on their texts. They will also write their own response papers to novels, short stories, plays, and films. They will develop their own notions of what defines a dystopia, and write a final research paper. In both the response papers and the final research paper, it is imperative that the students will explore how the artist’s particular national or international background affected the text they created. This Global Perspectives Research and Writing (GRW) seminar will help you develop the research, writing and presentation skills needed for upper-level courses and the Senior Capstone Experience in addition to preparing you for writing in all disciplines as you move through your college career.

**Project One: Research Paper**

Students will select an author to focus on based upon early class discussions, consultation with the professor and preliminary research in the library. The paper will focus on three aspects:

1. What was the context / world of the author like at the time the book or movie was written or filmed?
2. What was his / her issue or problem as they see it with that world?
3. How significant an issue was it at the time the book / film was written / produced? Analyze the urgency of the issue then versus the reality of it now. Is it still a pressing or urgent issue? Has the urgency diminished or heightened since the book or film premiered?

Students will then expand their topic to write a research paper of 8-10 pages utilizing proper citation (MLA) methods. Students are encouraged to work with both the Miller Library and the Writing Center (Goldstein 106) during the writing of their research papers. You need to include a minimum of four to six (4-6) sources (your primary source doesn’t count, but it needs to be included in your bibliography). If a student chooses to focus on a film, then they should be prepared to write about the filmmaker and screenwriter, as well as the source material if appropriate.

***Research Paper Timeline:***

Week 1-2: Begin to formulate ideas about possible primary text and research topics

Week 4: Primary text chosen (DUE Tues 9/16)

Week 6: 1st pass on annotated bibliography due (Tuesday 9/30)

Week 4-6: Expand bibliography, develop thesis statement, begin first draft

Weeks 7-9: Students continue to write rough draft

Week 8: Thesis statement (DUE Tues 10/14)

Week 9: Rough draft due (DUE Friday 10/31)

Weeks 10-13: Students revise draft

Week 14: Written projects due (DUE Thursday 12/4)

You are also required to meet with a Writing Center Tutor between Weds 10/2 and 10/23 to discuss your rough draft***. Failure to do so will result in a failure of the rough draft portion of the assignment.***

**Project Two: Oral Presentation / Leading Discussion**

**Oral Presentations:** As a way of strengthening your skills as global communicators, each student (or in some cases, two students together) will give a presentation (8-10 minutes) on the author of the “text” being explored in class. The author may vary – they could be a novelist, short story writer, playwright, filmmaker, and / or screenwriter.

On the night before the day of your presentation, you are to upload to Canvas on the appropriate Assignment page your notes (typed); in addition, you should include a bibliography of sources you used to research your author. You need to use at ***least two (2) sources***. More sources will increase your evaluation. You should seriously consider using video, audio, handouts, and other means to communicate effectively and vividly. Some topics to cover include (but are not limited to):

1. personal life
2. most significant / impactful / controversial works
3. legacy / influence on other artists

These are just some areas you can cover. Please feel free to add to this list. If you are presenting in a pair, make sure you are both covering separate topics regarding the author, and that your presenting “load” is roughly equal.

Take these assignments seriously: you will be given a heavily weighted grade on both your oral presentation and your leading thought-provoking discussions.

***If you are absent on the day that you are scheduled to give a presentation, you will receive a grade of “F.”***

**Leading Discussion**: In most cases, immediately following your oral presentation, you will lead the class discussion on the particular work being analyzed. We will discuss this in more detail in class, but leading a discussion does not mean that you must contribute the most ideas or opinions about the work. It does mean that you actively include everyone’s voice and input, and find ways to keep the class involved and engaged in the topics.

**Project Three: Attending Performances On Campus**

Students are required to see at least *three (3)* of the on-campus productions. Students will then write response papers on the productions. Discussions and writing projects are based on attending these productions; failure to attend three of them will make it impossible to complete the requirements of the course. *You are advised to check your calendar immediately in order to avoid being surprised with a very difficult problem later in the semester.*

On campus productions are as follows:

*Old Times* by Harold Pinter

Directed by Professor Brendon Fox

Lighting Design by Professor Laura Eckelman

10/2/14-10/5/14

Tawes Theatre

*The Bacchae 2.1* by Charles L. Mee

A Senior Thesis directed by Patrick Derrickson

10/17/14-10/18/14

Outdoors (next to the Gibson parking lot)

*Middletown* by Will Eno

A Senior Thesis directed by Rachel Dilliplane

10/24/14-10/25/14

Tawes Theatre

*The Lucky Ladies* by Dominic Finocchiaro

A Senior Thesis directed by Matt Ridge

11/7/14-11/8/14

Tawes Theatre

*The Man Who Turned Into a Stick* by Kobo Abe

A Senior Thesis directed by Tamayo Kamimura

11/14/14-11/15/14

Tawes Theatre

*The Beauteous Majesty of Denmark* by Val Dunn from William Shakespeare

A Senior Thesis directed by Val Dunn

11/21/14-11/22/14

Tawes Theatre

\*\* For reservations call 410-778-7835 or e-mail [drama\_tickets@washcoll.edu](mailto:drama_tickets@washcoll.edu).

The response paper for each on-campus productionis DUE by 5 pm the Monday immediately following the performance weekend of the show. For example, the response paper for *The Lucky Ladies* is due 5 pm Monday November 10th.

**Project Four: Reading quizzes/Viewing Films/Other**

You will be quizzed on the reading or film explored in class. The quiz may be given outside of class; most will be given in class.

As noted in the Class Schedule below and on Canvas, some of the “texts” we will be studying will be films exploring dystopia. I have blocked off a number of *Tuesday night “viewing parties” for these films at 6:15 pm (unless otherwise noted)*. The location of these viewings will be in multiple locations: the viewing room in the basement of Miller Library; the Green Room of Gibson; Norman James Hall. The location will be given to you at least one week in advance of the showing. You are *not* required to attend these group showings; but you *are required to see the film prior to the class discussion* on the film. It will be on reserve at the Miller Library, but you will only be able to take it for 3 hours at a time. Not seeing a film will result in a “0” for the class participation grade. You also be asked to turn in Reading Response Forms for every film and other texts we study. These will be evaluated as complete / incomplete.

**Project Five: Final Exam**

There will be a final exam on the content of the course between Monday December 8 and Friday, December 12. Time and day will be provided soon.

**COURSE POLICIES:**

**Plagiarism**:

A reminder: you are bound by the Honor Code, which you signed as an incoming freshman or transfer student.

“We at Washington College strive to maintain an environment in which learning and growth flourish through individuals’ endeavors and honest intellectual exchanges both in and out of the classroom. To maintain such an environment, each member of the community pledges to respect the ideas, well being, and property of others. Thus, each member of the Washington College community abides by an Honor Code.”

The *Student Handbook* defines the act of plagiarizing as “Presenting the language, the ideas, or the work of another as one’s own, without proper attribution” (12). Plagiarism is a serious academic offense. Understanding how to properly document sources is essential to avoiding plagiarism, and it is your responsibility to consult the *A Writer’s Reference,* and/or me if you do not understand what plagiarism is or how to avoid it.

Sloppy academic investigation hurts not only you, but hurts the artists and scholars who strive to share their insights with the greater community. Turning in someone else’s work as your own is obviously plagiarism. Quoting or paraphrasing someone else’s words or ideas without properly citing your source is also plagiarism. If you ever have any question at all about whether you are using a source correctly, ask me about it to make sure. Submitting a paper for this class that contains all or part of a paper that you submitted in another class, without the permission of both professors involved, is also a violation of the Honor Code. Plagiarism is a most serious offense, and one that I take very seriously. A student found guilty of plagiarism will fail the course automatically, and may be referred to the Honor Board for further adjudication.

In accordance with College policy, please write and sign the Honor Code on all submitted assignments.

**Statement on Students with Learning Differences or Special Needs:** Students with diagnosed learning disabilities or special needs requiring accommodation for this course must first contact the Office of Academic Services at x7883 (2nd Floor, Miller Library). Please do this as soon as possible so that we can have a conversation about your needs and the recommended accommodations. You are welcome to meet with me in my office hours to discuss these accommodations, and I encourage you to do so early in the term.

**\*\*A word about the Internet**: It is a wondrous and sometimes dangerous resource – wondrous because of the sheer volume and ease of information, potentially dangerous because (unlike books or journals) the information has not been mediated by a critic or editor. Information may be inaccurate or misleading. You must utilize a balance of resources in your work.

# Attendance: Your “Class Participation” grade consists of two parts, *Attendance* and *Engagement*. This is not a lecture class – I will not prattle on for sessions at a time. As such, your attendance and engagement is mandatory.

*Attendance*: You are entitled to miss THREE classes. They can be excused or unexcused; they are all the same. ***More than THREE absences constitutes failure of the class***. YOU are responsible for making up the work you missed. Don’t cut class – it is bad for you, for me and for the entire class.

*Engagement*: The other part of your “Class Participation” grade consists of your engagement in class discussion. This is a seminar-style course, based on thoughtful and engaged classroom discussion. Participation is *not* optional. Please come prepared to respond in constructive ways to the assigned readings and to the work of your peers. It is crucial to the structure of the class that you are consistently open and available to receiving others’ work, and that you offer perceptive observations and specific feedback. This does not include phrases such as: “I liked / didn’t like,” “why didn’t you...,” or “I would have done it this way...”. It does include comments and questions such as, “I disagree with the author about this specific point for this reason…,” or, “I noticed that her body language seemed…,” or, “I really appreciated how she took time to listen my feedback.”

Evaluation of your part in class discussions as follows:

**A** = shows thorough reading of all assignments, contributes thoughtfully and creatively to class discussion, brings additional, outside insights and information to the discussion, makes connections between various elements of the material, adds positively to the class's knowledge and understanding of the subject.

**B** = contributes to every class discussion, shows careful reading and thought about the material, listens to others comments and adds or responds to them

**C** = occasionally contributes to discussion, but shows only quick, casual reading of the texts

**D/F** = Rarely or never speaks in class

In addition, you should be on time (or you will be locked out) and cell phones, while a delightful invention, must be turned off.

**Screens in Class**: We will occasionally be consulting something online in the midst of class. Unless otherwise noted, your screens – ipads, laptops, phones, etc. – should be closed and hibernating. I will expect you to take written notes throughout the course. If you are leading a class discussion that day, you should have written notes to yourself, not on your computer. If you are not leading the discussion that day, you should have written notes printed and ready to refer to in class. Not on your computer. Screens constantly open not only tempts us to check Facebook, etc., but also gets in the way of free-flowing conversation, which is what we’re aiming for in our group discussions.

**Due Dates and Late Work**: No late work will be accepted (it’s not that we deduct points for late work; it simply will be rejected) without permission. Permission will be granted only for extreme circumstances, such as serious illness or family loss requiring time away from campus. Please seek permission for extensions as far in advance as possible. This is strict and final: no late papers. They will not be read, commented on, or considered. Due dates are always announced well in advance.

**Format for Written Work**: All written assignments should traffic in exceptional grammar and spelling, and should be submitted in Times New Roman 12 point type (that’s what this is). Your work should be 1 ½ lines spaced, contain a footer, with a page number and your last name; each paper should be given an appropriate title and also include a title page, with your name, the course title and number, the date and the Honor Code with your signature; your papers must be stapled.

**ASSESSMENT**:

Students are expected to acquire and to demonstrate in papers, projects and class discussion an understanding of the dystopian ideas, themes, and analysis explored by each author. Your final grade will be determined by grades received based on an A - F scale.

**Paper grades will be based on the following criteria:**

The A Paper

The A paper has all the good qualities of the B paper, but in addition it is lively, well paced, even exciting. The paper has style. Everything in it seems to fit the thesis exactly. It may have a proofreading error or two, or even a misspelled word, but the reader feels that these errors are the consequence of the normal accidents all good writers encounter. Reading the paper, we can feel a mind at work. We are convinced that the writer cares for his or her ideas, and about the language that carries them.

The sure mark of an A paper is that you will find yourself telling someone else about it.

The B Paper:

The reader of a B paper knows exactly what the author wants to say. It is well organized, it presents a worthwhile idea, supported by sound evidence presented in a neat and orderly way. Some of the sentences may not be elegant, but they are clear, and in them thought follows naturally on thought. The paragraphs may be unwieldy now and then, but they are organized around one main idea. The reader does not have to read a paragraph two or three times to get the thought that the writer is trying to convey.

The B paper is always mechanically correct. The spelling is good, and the punctuation is accurate. Above all, the paper makes sense throughout. It has a thesis that is limited and worth arguing. It does not contain unexpected digressions, and it ends by keeping the promise to argue and inform that the writer makes in the beginning.

The C Paper:

The C paper has a thesis, but it is vague and broad, or else it is uninspired or obvious. It does not advance an argument that anyone might care to debate. "Henry James wrote some interesting novels." "Modern cities are interesting places." (note the use of the word “interesting” in both of these BAD examples)

The C paper rarely uses evidence well; sometimes it does not use evidence at all. Even if it has a clear thesis, a paper with insufficient supporting evidence is a C paper.

The C paper often has mechanical faults, errors in grammar and spelling, but please note: a paper without such flaws may still be a C paper.

The Unsatisfactory Paper:

The D or F paper either has no thesis or else it has one that is strikingly vague, broad, or uninteresting. There is little indication that the writer understands the material being presented. The paragraphs do not hold together; ideas do not develop from sentence to sentence. This paper usually repeats the same thoughts again and again, perhaps in slightly different language but often in the same words. The D or F paper is filled with mechanical faults, errors in grammar, and errors in spelling.

**Presentation grades will be based on the following criteria:**

1. Listeners should refrain from distracting activities; communication involves listening and feedback between the speech-giver and the audience. Anything that interferes with that process impedes communication;
2. Presenters should not be laid back. Take your presentation seriously. Do not sit on the table, do not yawn, do not make the presentation about you but about the information;
3. Focus on the material. Have a theme or central idea about the things you want your audience to learn. Have no more than 3- 5 main points for the time you are given.
4. You are the authorities on the subject. Establish your credibility AND ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR SOURCES.
5. You may use Power Point or other forms of visual and audio enhancement. If you do use Power Point, limit the amount of text on the screen and do not read that text — the audience can read it.
6. You are to upload to Canvas your notes for the presentation; these notes should include:
   1. A short bibliography of sources
   2. An outline of what you will cover in your presentation

**Class Discussion work will be graded based on the following criteria:**

**A:** Initiates and leads, creates an environment for all to participate and explore, on-time and ready to work at every out-of-class session

**B:** Contributes to larger discussion, listens to others comments and adds or responds to them

**C:** Occasionally/rarely contributes to discussion but is not fully engaged; misses many meetings/rarely responds to communication

**D/F:** No contribution to discussion; misses meetings; does not respond to communication

**Course Grading Breakdown**

10% - Class Participation (group activities, discussion, giving feedback, etc.)

15% - Oral Presentation / Leading Discussion Project (preparedness,

documentation, engagement)

10% - Quizzes and Reading Response Papers to Productions, Texts

15% - Final Exam

50% - Final Research Paper

**CLASS SCHEDULE:**

**(\* Please note schedule subject to change)**

Tues 8/26 Introduction to class, each other, policies

Talk about the Big Research Question; assign bios

Thurs 8/28 Intro to the Writing Center visit & resources

What Is Dystopia?

Discussion of “Diaries”

Saunders, “The Semplica Girl Diaries”

Tues 9/2 MV: Writing a thesis statement overview

Discussion/working on a bibliography

**7 pm @ Norman James: WATCH: *The Handmaid’s Tale***

Thurs 9/4 Library visit

Tues 9/9 What makes a good presentation?

Thurs 9/11 Student-led discussion bio of Atwood, *Handmaid’s Tale*

Student-led bio of Churchill, *Number* and *Away*

Caryl Churchill, *A Number* and *Far Away*

Topics DUE to Prof. Fox

Tues 9/16 Student-led bio of Butler, “*Speech*” and “*Morning…*”

Octavia Butler, “Speech Sounds”, “The Evening and the

Morning of the Night”

Primary text(s) DUE

**6:15 pm @ Beck Multimedia Center (basement of library)**

**WATCH *Brazil***

Thurs 9/18 Student-led bio of Gilliam, *Brazil*

Tues 9/23 Student-led bio of Philip K. Dick, “*Do Androids…*”

Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Read*: Introduction* by J. Lenthem and Chapters 1-7

Thurs 9/25 Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Read: Chapters 8-14

Tues 9/30 Library visit – using online databases

Thurs 10/2 MV: writing a rough draft

**Annotated Bibliography due**

Tues 10/7 Dick, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*

Read: Chapters 15-22

Student-led discussion

Thurs 10/9 FALL BREAK

Tues 10/14 Student-led bio of Washburn, *Mr. Burns*

Read Anne Washburn, *Mr. Burns*

**7 pm @ Norman James: WATCH: *District 9***

Thurs 10/16 Student-led bio of Shawn, *Mourner*

Read: Wallace Shawn, *The Designated Mourner.*

Tues 10/21 Student-led bio of Blomkamp, *District 9*

Thurs 10/23 Peer Review Session

Tues 10/28 Library Visit #3

Thurs 10/30 Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

Read: Pages 1 – 85

Fri 10/31 **Rough Draft Due**

Tues 11/4 TBA

**7 pm @ Gibson Green Room: WATCH: *Blade Runner***

Weds 11/5 ADVISING DAY

Thurs 11/6 Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

Read: Pages 86 - 178

Tues 11/11 Student-led bio of Scott, *Blade Runner*

Thurs 11/13 Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

Read: Pages 179-257

Tues 11/18 TBA (MV feedback on rough drafts)

**7 pm @ Gibson Green Room: WATCH: *Children of Men***

Thurs 11/20 Student-led bio of Cuarón, James, *Children of Men*

Tues 11/25 Butler, *Parable of the Sower*

Read: Pages 258-329

Weds 11/26 THANKSGIVING BREAK

Thurs 11/27 THANKSGIVING BREAK

Fri 11/28 THANKSGIVING BREAK

Tues 12/2 What is “dystopian” today?

TBA

Thurs 12/4 Class wrap-up

Research paper DUE

Dec. 8-12 FINALS WEEK

**Reading Response Prompt**

*Create a document template (Word or Excel) with four section headings or columns.*

*As you read the assigned material, make notes about your responses.*

*After you’re finished reading, group your notes as follows:*

**+** What parts of the material did you respond positively to?

What did you like or love? What delighted you? What excited you?

**-** What parts of the material did you respond negatively to?

What did you dislike or hate about it? What turned you off or pushed you away?

What are the challenges you see in what you have read?

**?** What questions you have about the material? (These can be big philosophical questions, small practical questions, or anything in between.)

What information do you need or want to know more about?

What aspects of the reading do you not fully grasp?

**/** What are they ways that YOU find yourself connecting/understanding the material? One way to understand this is as a “crack” – what is the point of entry for you? What is the thread that helps you unravel the material?

**Please sign this page and return on the second day of class:**

I have read this syllabus and understand its intent.

Name (please print):

Signature:

Date: