Course overview:
What would a perfect society look like? And how could we create heaven—or hell—on earth? These questions, and many more, will be our focus as we examine fictional texts representing the idea of the utopia (or “ideal society”) as well as its unsettling inverse image: the dystopia. Beginning with Thomas More’s *Utopia*, the book that introduced both the term and the idea of utopia to the English language, we will then move to various representations of life as it should be—and how it should never be. We will also consider the ways utopias and dystopias express desire, horror, and other feelings that so often become wrapped up in this notion of a society that is, above all else, “ideal.”

Required Texts:
- Colson Whitehead, *Zone One*, ISBN 9780307455178
(All other required readings will be provided as free .pdfs on Canvas)

Course Learning Outcomes:
After taking this course, students will be able to:
1. Engage in critical conversations about literary fiction with a knowledge of how literary conventions, forms, and characteristics function
2. Discuss and theorize about the genres and concepts of utopian and dystopian fiction, with the ability to focus on specific texts and representations as well as connect these representations to larger notions of the ideal or chaotic society (including those that we get from our own current society).
3. Demonstrate rigorous literary analysis of the course texts—and any other that are relevant to our course topic—in both class discussion and the final writing project.
4. Exercise imagination and creativity in a project that animates, interprets, questions, re-conceptualizes (or remixes) the core tenets and experiences associated with one or more of the utopian/dystopian societies of these four novels

Course Work and Grading:
- Final Essay: 30%
- Midterm exam: 25%
- Creative Project + Write-up: 25%
- Discussion Boards: 10%
- Participation/Attendance: 10%
Assignments

Reading:
As this is an introductory literature class, reading is paramount to your success in the course. Even if you rush through the other assignments, practicing critical and consistent reading will take you far. Please complete all readings in advance of the class day that we are discussing them. All readings of the texts should be engaged (take notes, annotate, slow down, and re-read whenever possible). Staying caught up with readings is expected as a regular part of class participation. Reading quizzes will be administered on undisclosed days. These are a way for me to track attendance as well as who is and isn’t completing the reading.

Discussion Boards:
For each of the four novels we will read in this course, a discussion board will be posted on Canvas. These boards are designed to be a space for asking questions we didn’t get to in class, as well as for offering theories and new viewpoints, and possibly continuing questions and lines of inquiry that were previously initiated during class discussion. Every student is expected to contribute to each discussion board at least once, and the quality and extent of your engagement will determine the grade on the discussion boards, which is 10% of the final course grade. Students who show active engagement and leadership in discussions will also see this reflected in their final participation grade.

Creative Project:
In lieu of a close reading paper/reading response or other additional formal writing assignment, you may complete a creative project that substantively engages with one or more of the novels and their fictional societies. This assignment is designed to improve the accessibility of the course as well as opportunities for creativity, so this is up to interpretation. All projects must be accompanied by a 1-2 page write-up explaining the rationale and connection to the text. More details to come soon.

Midterm Exam:
This class will have a midterm exam, held on Thursday of Week 5 in our usual classroom. Please arrive on time. The midterm will consist of a combination of multiple-choice, short answer, and essay questions. We will spend at least part of the class period prior to the midterm on exam prep and any questions that people have, in order to help ensure everyone's success.

Final Essay:
For this class, your final assignment will be a critical essay that implements everything you have learned this term about reading and analyzing literature. As such, it must be argumentative, contain an original analysis of a utopian or dystopian work (options are open to discussion), and must engage in some way with the central topic of the course (the ideal or “perfect” society, as well as its perversions and failures). We will have writing workshops in class (including with a rough draft) to help scaffold this work and help everyone avoid last-minute writing marathons.
Course Policies

Participation: 10% of Course Grade
You are expected to be on time and prepared for class with all required materials, and to participate regularly and respectfully in class activities. Participation need not be limited to talking in class; it also includes active listening, asking questions about assignments, taking notes, small group discussion, etc. I reserve the right to mark you absent should you be unprepared, excessively tardy, disruptive in any way, or if I see you on your phone. Final participation grades will be determined by participation in class and on discussion boards as well as by compliance (or lack thereof) with the electronics policy.

Attendance: I assume all reasons for your absence are valid; therefore, I accept none. You may miss the equivalent of one week of class meetings for any reason without any penalty to your grade. Additional absences (with the exception of documented illness, documented religious holidays, and University of Oregon authorized events) will each lower your course grade by 1/3. E.g., the first additional absence after one week of absences will reduce a B- to a C+, the second additional absence will reduce a B- to a C. More than two full weeks of missed class may result in course failure. More than three full weeks of missed class WILL result in course failure. Please notify me ahead of time if you must miss class, will be late, or will need to leave class early. You are responsible for anything you miss if you are not in class.

Electronics policy: Please do not use headphones, your phone, or your laptop in class as they are a distraction to everyone around you. If you have a documented disability or learning condition that requires you to use a laptop for note-taking, please see me in week one.

Late work: You may turn in one assignment to one week late during the quarter for any reason! You must notify me at least 24 hours before the assignment is due (a quick email is fine) and I will grant you one more week to finish it up. Further instances of late work will lower your grade on late assignments by one full letter grade for each day that the assignment is late.

Formatting Guidelines:
All written work should be typed and double-spaced, using 12-point Times New Roman font and 1” margins. Use MLA format for quoting and citing sources. The first page should include a left-hand heading with your name, the instructor’s name, the course title, and the date. Include last name and page number in the upper right corner of each page. Papers should be stapled when handed in. Failure to follow correct format for both the body and the citations will lower the assignment or essay grade.
Course Schedule*
*Please complete all readings in preparation for the class date under which they are listed

Week 1:
Tuesday (1/4) Syllabus, Introductions
Thursday (1/6) What are utopia and dystopia? In-class reading and discussion

Week 2:
Tuesday (1/11) Excerpt from More, *Utopia* (.pdf on Canvas)
Thursday (1/13) LeGuin, chapters 1-3

Week 3:
Tuesday (1/18) LeGuin, chapters 4-8
Thursday (1/20) LeGuin, chapters 9-11

Week 4:
Tuesday (1/25) Whitehead, pp. 1-50
Thursday (1/27) Whitehead, pp. 50-128

Week 5:
Tuesday (2/1) Whitehead, pp. 129-248
Thursday (2/3) **MIDTERM EXAM in class 4-5:20 PM**

Week 6:
Tuesday (2/8) Whitehead, pp. 249-322
Selected reading TBD (will be on Canvas as .pdf)
Thursday (2/10) Lowry, chapters 1-5
Week 7:
Tuesday (2/15)      Lowry, chapters 6-13
Thursday (2/17)     Lowry, chapters 14-17

Week 8:
Tuesday (2/22)      Lowry, chapters 18-23
                    Selections from “Lysistrata” (.pdf on Canvas)
Thursday (2/24)     Ishiguro, chapters 1-5

Week 9:
Tuesday (3/1)       Ishiguro, chapters 6-10
Thursday (3/3)      Ishiguro, chapters 11-15

Week 10:
Tuesday (3/8)       Ishiguro, chapters 16-20
                    In-class peer review: bring rough draft of Final essay
Thursday (3/10)     Ishiguro, chapters 21-23

Finals Week:        No class meetings

Final paper due
on Canvas by Thursday, 3/17, at 11:59 PM