

**GENERAL EDUCATION COURSE PROPOSAL**  
UNIVERSITY OF MARY WASHINGTON

Use this form to submit **EXISTING** courses for review. If this course will be submitted for review in more than one category, submit a separate proposal for each category.

<b>COURSE NUMBER:</b>	FSEM 100M		
<b>COURSE TITLE:</b>	THE GOOD SOCIETY: EXPLORING UTOPIA		
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Warren Rochelle	1-26-08	
<i>This course proposal is submitted with the department's approval. (Put a check in the box to the right.)</i> <i>If part of a science sequence involving two departments, both departments approve.</i>			YES

**THIS COURSE IS PROPOSED FOR (check one).**

First-Year Seminar <i>(indicate in the rationale if this will also count for major credit)</i>	<b>X</b>
Quantitative Reasoning	
Global Inquiry	
Human Experience and Society	
Experiential Learning	
Arts, Literature, and Performance: <b>Process</b>	<b>or</b>
	<b>Appreciation</b>
Natural Science <i>(include both parts of the sequence)</i>	

**NOTE:** See the report entitled "General Education Curriculum as Approved by the Faculty Senate," dated November 7, 2007, for details about the general education categories and the criteria that will be used to evaluate courses proposed. The report is available at [www.jtmorello.org/gened](http://www.jtmorello.org/gened).

**RATIONALE:** Using only the space provided in the box below, **briefly** state why this course should be approved as a general education course in the category specified above. *Attach a course syllabus.* **Submit this form and attached syllabus electronically as one document to John Morello ([jmorello@umw.edu](mailto:jmorello@umw.edu)).** All submissions **must** be in electronic form.

Previously taught in Spring 2007; approved by FSEM committee.

Freshman Seminar 100M: The Good Society: Exploring Utopia

TTh 9:30-10:45 AM, Combs 348

Spring 2007

Warren Rochelle

Combs 308, 654-1393

Office Hours (Jan. 15-March 2):

10-11 am MWF and 2-3 TTh, or by appointment

(March 12-semester's end):

1-2 MWF and 2-3 TTh, or by appointment

E-Mail: [wrochell@umw.edu](mailto:wrochell@umw.edu)

**Texts:**

Primary Texts:

Le Guin        *The Dispossessed*  
Star Hawk     *The Fifth Sacred Thing*  
Atwood        *The Handmaid's Tale*  
Piercy         *Woman on the Edge of Time*  
Claeys, ed.    *Utopia Reader*

Film:

*The Handmaid's Tale*

Field Trip:

Twin Oaks, a commune in Louisa County, Saturday, February 24

Handouts, excerpts from selected texts

Library Reserve:

See list at the end of the syllabus.

**Course Description:**

The root myth of utopia is the myth of the Golden Age, when humans supposedly inhabited a perfect world as a gift from the gods. Utopian narratives are human constructs attempting to recapture this mythic perfect world, the ideal human past—each one an argument to convince the reader that *this* is the way to recover lost Eden, and more importantly—and especially so for this course—*this* is what is wrong with things as they are now. The narratives are, in effect, social criticism or arguments against the conditions existing in the real world of the author and the reader. Utopian fiction is thus rhetorical. It is this rhetoric, this argument, which we will be examining in this seminar. To this end we will closely read selected utopian narratives—primarily radical utopias of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also such classical utopias as Plato's *Republic* and More's *Utopia*, and some of the equally radical utopias of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We will also develop some familiarity with the critical conversations on utopian fiction, thus enhancing your abilities as discerning readers of both literature and criticism. Also, given that the utopian impulse is not confined to fiction, we will consider some real attempts at utopia, primarily those in America. We will attempt to place utopian narratives into their sociocultural/historical contexts. If utopian fiction is rhetorical and intended to criticize the world of its writers and readers—what then, is it criticizing and why are these issues and ideas important and worthy of our attention? What, then, is a good society?

**Course Requirements: Grades and Assignments:**

**Participation (20% of semester grade):** As a seminar, this course is designed for students who are ready for intense and active class discussions. Students are expected to raise questions and issues for discussion that reflect careful and thoughtful reading of assigned texts, conduct library research to enhance class discussion, and to respond to the contributions of others. This is a course that demands your contribution in a number of ways. Your class participation will be determined by all of the following:

- class attendance (keep in mind that late arrivals and early departures are disruptive and will affect your participation score);
- your contributions to class discussions (raising good questions, offering honest and insightful observations about reading assignments, responding in thoughtful ways to other students, synthesizing course materials, keeping discussions focused on relevant issues, and so on);
- your ability to collaborate productively with your classmates; and
- your enthusiastic participation in class activities (group work, in-class writing assignments, leading discussions, presentations, and so on);
- coming to class prepared: on the day of a particular reading assignment, you are expected to come to class with the reading complete. This means, for example, on the day class discussion of a novel begins, you are expected to have completed the complete novel by class time on that day.

The class will take a *required field trip* to Twin Oaks, a commune or planned community in Louisa County, on Saturday, February 24. The tour takes about 3 hours and begins at 2 PM. Please wear comfortable walking shoes. Travel time is approximately an hour. The community asks for a \$5.00 donation per visitor. More information about Twin Oaks will be handed out in class. Students will also be asked to thoroughly explore the Twin Oaks website: [www.twinoaks.org](http://www.twinoaks.org). A journal response is required.

This is not a course for the passive student.

**Short Essay: (5-8 pages): 15%**

**Rhetorical Analysis:**

**Option 1: Close-Up of a Fictional Utopia**

Students will examine a particular sociocultural element of utopia as rhetoric in one of the texts on the reading list, such as: race, gender, class, education, marriage, and so forth. Students will be asked to consider how this element is presented, in what context, and how it is critical of the real world, and thus how does it become rhetorical—for what or against what is the author arguing? Students will be expected to go into greater depth in the essays than we do in the class discussions.

**Option 2: Real World Utopias**

Students will examine a real world attempt at utopia, either in America or abroad, such as the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Oneida Community in upstate New York, the Israeli kibbutz movement, 60's communes, Koinonia Farm, the Shakers, Deseret, and so forth. Students will provide historical and philosophical context and a brief summary of how these communities were intended to function and how they actually did. The essay's focus should be, however, on the community's rhetoric: of what were the founders critical and why and how did they intend to change outside practices in their community, and what was their intent, the goal of their community.

For both Option 1 and 2, students must also include, as part of their conclusion, a response that considers this question: could he or she live in this utopia and why or why not?

**Group Oral Presentation: 15%**

In small groups (2-3) students will select a portion of the assigned texts and will be responsible for presenting that portion to the entire class. In effect, the group will be teaching the class on the day assigned their text in the class calendar. Students are expected to have read the entire text before they present and to include critical material in their presentation.

**Journal: 15%**

Students are expected to write in their journals at once a week in response to the assigned text and/or the class discussions and their classmates' journals. Occasionally prompts will be given. Students should bring their journals to class on a regular basis and will, from time to time, be asked to share their writing. I will take up the journal at least twice during the semester. Journal entries should be done in a timely fashion; entries that are written the night before or all at the same time are easily spotted and will lose full credit.

**Final Seminar Project: Composing Utopia (15-20+ pages): 25%**

Students are to design utopian communities of their own, taking into consideration how such a community would function (marriage, education, government), how it survive past the first generation, and what makes it a better alternative to the world in which the student lives. There must be a clear statement of the philosophy or belief system to which a community member must adhere. Students' narrative can follow the traditional conventions of the utopian narrative, with the outsider visitor, the guide, and the expository tour designed to convert the outsider. In addition to the fictional narrative, students are to include a reflective metanarrative in which they defend their community and discuss its sources from class readings.

*An oral presentation of the final project is required.*

**Final Exam: Journal Expansion Essay (5+ pages): 10%**

Using a journal entry as its foundations, students will produce a well developed and thoughtfully written essay due at the final exam period for this class.

**Library Reserve List:**

**Books:**

Rochelle, *Communities of the Heart*

Stillman, Davis, eds., *The New Utopian Politics of Ursula K. Le Guin's The Dispossessed*

Elliott, *The Shape of Utopia*

Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*

Gutek, *Visiting Utopian Communities*

Bellamy, *Looking Backward, 2000-1887*

Fogarty, *Dictionary of American Communal and Utopian History*

Nagley, *The Quest for Utopia*

Jones, Websters, eds., *Feminism, Utopia, Narrative*

**Articles:**

Khanna, "Women's Utopias: New Worlds, New Texts"

Theall, "The Art of Social-Science Fiction: The Ambiguous Utopian Dialectics of Ursula K. Le Guin"

Baker-Smith, "The Escape from the Cave: Thomas More and the Vision of Utopia"

Ferns, "Dreams of Freedom: Ideology and Narrative Structure in the Utopian Fictions of Marge Piercy and Ursula Le Guin"

Widmer, "Utopian, Dystopian, Diatopian Libertarianism: Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*"

Widmer, "The Dialectics of Utopianism: Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*"

## Course Calendar

*This calendar is a work in progress and is not set in stone. It will change as the semester progresses; you are responsible for keeping up with these changes, some of which will be made orally.*

### January

T 16 Introduction: course review, what is utopia and why do we study the concept  
In-class reading: *Utopia Reader* (UT): Genesis 9-11

Th 18 The Golden Age: UT 1-26

T 23 Plato, *Republic* :UT 27-56

Journal 1

Group meeting to decide class presentation topics

Th 25 Discussion of Essay 1

16<sup>th</sup> Century: UT 77-93, Thomas More, *Utopia*

T 30 17<sup>th</sup> Century: UT 106-125, Bacon and Campanella

Journal 2

### February

Th 1 18<sup>th</sup> Century: UT 141-152 and 170-175, Swift and Godwin

TTh 6-8 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Historical Utopias (Dystopias?): Shakers, Oneida, Amana, Brook Farm, Margaret Fuller, the Mormons, Karl Marx

Journal 3

TTh 13-15 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Fictional Utopias and Dystopias: Bellamy, Morris, and London

**Start Reading: *The Dispossessed***

T 20 More on the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, start discussion of Twin Oaks

Th 22 Twin Oaks, Louisa County

Sa 24 Twin Oaks Field Trip

Journal 4

T 27 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Wells and Gilman

### March

Th 1 20<sup>th</sup> Century: Huxley, Skinner, Burdekin, and Orwell

**TTh 6-8 Spring Break**

T 13 Le Guin, "The Day Before the Revolution," UT 407-420

*The Dispossessed*

Journal 5

**Start Reading: *Woman on the Edge of Time***

**Th 15**      *The Dispossessed*  
 Journals 1-5 due  
 T 20      **Short Essay Due**  
             *The Dispossessed*  
             Discussion of Final Seminar Project  
 Th 22      Meet in the library, room 225.  
             You should finish reading *Woman*, and begin *The Handmaid's Tale*  
             Journal 6  
 T 27      *Woman on the Edge of Time*  
 Th 29      *Woman on the Edge of Time*  
             Journal 7  
             Optional Afternoon Conferences on Final Project  
**April**  
 T 3      Video: *Battle of the Minds*  
             *The Handmaid's Tale*  
             **Start Reading: *The Fifth Sacred Thing***  
             Journal 8  
             Optional Afternoon Conferences on Final Project  
 Th 5      No class  
 T 10      *The Handmaid's Tale*  
             Movie: 6:30 pm, 349 Combs (1 hour, 49 minutes)  
             Journal 9  
 Th 12      *The Fifth Sacred Thing*  
 T 17      *The Fifth Sacred Thing*  
 Th 19      *The Fifth Sacred Thing*  
             Journals 10  
 TTh 24-26      Final Project Presentations: either at symposium or in class on Th  
             Journals 6-10  
**Th 26**      **Final Projects due**  
  
**Final Exam**      **Due Thursday, May 3, by 11 AM**