

IHST-249-IH1: Ideas of Utopia and Apocalypse in History

MICA – Fall 2015 - Course Syllabus

T 9-11:45 AM
Bunting 460



4 Horsemen, detail from the *Apocalypse* - Albrecht Dürer, 1498

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“Who could endure a world... without the divine folly of honor, without the senseless passion for knowledge outreaching the flaming bounds of the possible, without ideals the essence of which is that they can never be achieved?”

- Oliver Wendell Holmes, Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court, 1895

Course Description

For thousands of years, possessors of utopian and apocalyptic knowledge have had a tremendous influence on politics and society. Prophecy has always been connected with power; in the modern period this has moved from ecstatic religious beliefs to convictions in the perfect State. Although expressions of apocalyptic and utopian beliefs represent some of the most extreme ideas in Western history, in this course it will be argued that they also constitute a central aspect to Western political cosmology and culture, and in fact may represent its most fundamental and unique feature.

This course will survey the intellectual history of the connected idea of apocalypse and utopia from ancient civilizations to the present day. Most of the emphasis will be on Western civilizations where this idea has been particularly influential, but comparisons with other civilizations will show how apocalyptic and utopian ideas have a broad cultural currency and many meanings and uses. We will read from a wide variety of source material as well as scholarly interpretations of the sources, and also be introduced to the ways that expressions of apocalypse and utopia had an impact outside of the texts that describe them. These connections - between the endless possibilities of the textual world and the contingent realities of the social world - will be one of the recurring concerns of the course.

The course will be structured in 2 parts. The first part of the course will study the foundational texts of utopian and apocalyptic thought in the ancient, medieval and early modern periods. The second part of the course will provide an overview of some of the major examples of the flowering of apocalyptic and utopian thought in the modern period. Unlike most courses on utopia, this course will place particular emphasis on the ancient and medieval foundations of the

concept of apocalypse, arguing that ideas of apocalypse and utopia are intimately connected, particularly in Western intellectual history, and provide an excellent framework for understanding the connections between religion, politics, literature and aesthetics within the culture as a whole.

The course will serve as an introduction to a major theme of Western and World intellectual history, but will also explore how to use art and literature as historical sources, and how art and literature reflect the times in which they are produced. Students will actively engage in such analysis through hands-on projects and discussion. The course will also develop students' critical abilities and their abilities to read a wide variety of sources as historians.

Course Learning Objectives

Requirements in Intellectual history present the history of ideas in their development through and across cultures and historical periods. They focus on major intellectual movements in philosophy, religion, politics, economics, science and mathematics, art and literature, and their social and historical contexts. Intellectual history courses aim to:

- Impart specific intellectual values: intellectual integrity and honesty.
- Develop respect for the materials of historical inquiry.
- Foster a capacity for dialogue with the past.
- Engender an understanding of good scholarly technique and practice.

In addition to these general goals for an Intellectual History class at MICA, this course will:

- Engage in fruitful conversations about lofty ideas with your fellow students.
- Read some foundational texts in Western political and intellectual history.
- Become inspired (and/or revolted) by the lofty imaginations and determined efforts of thinkers and others throughout history to create an alternate reality, as well as the beautiful texts in which they express their ideas.
- Learn to read and interpret primary sources, culminating in an original research paper.

Course Format, Grading and Assignments

As a seminar, this course will emphasize class and small group discussion. **Class participation is crucial to this course, constituting 20% of your grade.**

The **readings** are vital, as they will form the basis of our discussions and activities, as well as the mini-paper assignments (see below). There will be about 50 pages of reading per week, more when we read the novel, *We*. It is important not only that you do the readings thoroughly, but that you **bring them with you to class** to use as a basis for discussion. **Failure to do so will result in a grade of 'F' for your class participation for that day.**

Students will do **one creative/speculative response to the readings** once this semester. I have indicated **three specific times, accompanied by three prompts**, during the semester when you can choose to perform this assignment. They are: **for week 2, describe in writing and/or a visual image your vision of what heaven would look like; for week 6, compose a fictional prophecy** according to the rhetorical guidelines of this genre as discussed in class; **for week 8, write a fictionalized diary or journal of a member of the one of the Yankee Utopian communities** (Oneida, Brook Farm, the Shakers, Amana, etc.). Alternately, you can do a **creative response of your own choosing** with permission from your instructor. Any visual

pieces will need a short (1-2 paragraphs or so) explanation of work. This assignment is **worth 10% of your grade.**

To facilitate discussion, to work on constructing arguments and careful reading of sources, and to encourage flexibility of mind, **2 times during the semester students will be** responsible for being **spokespeople for a utopian movement/text**. This will involve **writing a short (2-3 pp.) paper** advocating for the movement, working from the text(s) assigned, and then **arguing for the movement for a portion of the class**. In writing this paper, you may adopt the stance of someone in the utopian community, a personal reflection, or you may take a more objective and detached stance. Students will **sign up for their 2 spokesperson turns in week 2** of the semester. **Each spokesperson paper will be worth 10% of your grade, so the 2 together will be worth 20%.**

You will be required to write a very **short (1-2 pp.) review** of *We* in week 10 of the course, in which you 1) assess the main themes of the book, 2) describe how it functions as a critique of the concept of utopia, and 3) a short paragraph describing how you felt about the book. **This short review represents 15% of your grade.**

For week 13, you will also imagine yourself to be a founder of a fictional intentional community and draft a **short (1-2 pp.) Community Vision document**, based on the guidelines provided in Diana Leafe Christian's writings as well as writings from throughout the semester. **This short draft of a Community Vision represents 10% of your grade.**

The **most important aspect of your involvement in the class** will be your **final research paper**, the particulars of which will be explained in a separate handout. This will be a formal research paper, with footnotes and bibliography, as well as original research (handouts directing you on proper procedures will be handed out during the semester). This paper will ask you **to describe and analyze historically a particular apocalyptic or utopian text, community, or movement - or a scholarly interpretation of these things** - tying it to the themes of the class. You must **submit a short, informal paper topic proposal to me by Week 9** at the latest. The paper will be graded according to originality and clarity of argument, use of evidence, quality of research, and writing (including footnote and bibliography format). The paper will be due in the last class, where you will be expected to provide a **brief (5 min.) informal presentation** of your paper to the rest of your classmates. **This final project represents 25% of your final grade.**

Late Assignment Policy

In-semester paper assignments will be marked down a grade for each day late (A to A-, B- to C+, etc.) Presentations cannot be late. Normally I do not accept computer submissions of work; however the school is trying new software called Turnitin.com and I may make an exception this semester. Stay tuned!

Attendance Policy

There are only 15 meetings in the semester so we have to make the most of them.

An absence **will only be excused following a class meeting if the student provides a doctor's note or some other legitimate notification**. In some cases I will excuse an absence if a legitimate reason is given and I am notified before class time. In all cases, **I will excuse only 1 absence per term**. Any medical or other issue that requires any more missed time must be

verified by the appropriate MICA adviser, and even then keep in mind that too many absences – even “legitimate” ones – may make earning credit for the course inappropriate.

Any **unexcused absence beyond 1** will result in a decrease of two grades from class participation (A to B+, B- to C, etc.). **2 late arrivals (> 10 minutes) equals 1 absence.**

Classroom Laptop/Cellphone Policy

Because students in previous classes have abused the privilege of having laptops in class, I am going to set limits on their use in our class. **If there are no online or Moodle readings, an open laptop is not permitted in class, unless you receive special permission from me to take notes on it or for some other purpose.** If there are online or Moodle readings, you can have the computer open. However, if you are observed using the computer for anything not related to classroom activity, **you will get an F for the day and your laptop privileges will be revoked.**

Cell phones must be stowed away and turned off for the duration of the class.

Americans with Disabilities Act

Any student who may need an accommodation based on the potential impact of a disability should contact the Learning Resource Center at [410-225-2416](tel:410-225-2416), in Bunting 458, to establish eligibility and coordinate reasonable accommodations.

Health and Safety

It is the responsibility of faculty and students to practice health and safety guidelines relevant to their individual activities, processes, and to review MICA's Emergency Action Plan and attend EHS training. It is each faculty member's responsibility to coordinate with the EHS Office to ensure that all risks associated with their class activities are identified and to assure that their respective classroom procedures mirror the EHS and Academic Department guidelines. Each of these policies and procedures must be followed by all students and faculty. Most importantly, faculty are to act in accordance with all safety compliance, state and federal, as employees of this college and are expected to act as examples of how to create art in a way to minimize risk, and reduce harm to themselves and the environment. Faculty must identify, within each art making process, and require personal protection equipment use, by each student for each class, when applicable. Students are required to purchase personal protection equipment appropriate to their major. Those students who do not have the proper personal protection equipment will not be permitted to attend class until safe measures and personal protection is in place.

Environmental Health and Safety (EHS)

It is the responsibility of faculty and students to follow health and safety guidelines relevant to their individual activities, processes, and to review MICA's Emergency Action Plan and attend EHS training. It is each faculty member's responsibility to coordinate with the EHS Office to ensure that all risks associated with their class activities are identified and to assure that their respective classroom procedures mirror the EHS and Academic Department guidelines. Each of these policies and procedures must be followed by all students and faculty. Most importantly, faculty are to act in accordance with all safety compliance, state and federal, as employees of this college and are expected to act as examples of how to create art in a way to minimize risk, and reduce harm to themselves and the environment. Faculty must identify and require appropriate personal protective equipment for each art making process, for each student, in all of their classes, when applicable. Students are required to purchase personal protection equipment appropriate for their major. Those students who do not have the proper personal protection equipment will not be permitted to attend class until safe measures and personal protection are in place.

Plagiarism

Each discipline within the arts has specific and appropriate means for students to cite or acknowledge sources and the ideas and material of others used in their

own work. Students have the responsibility to become familiar with such processes and to carefully follow their use in developing original work.

Policy

MICA will not tolerate plagiarism, which is defined as claiming authorship of, or using someone else's ideas or work without proper acknowledgment. Without proper attribution, a student may NOT replicate another's work, paraphrase another's ideas, or appropriate images in a manner that violates the specific rules against plagiarism in the student's department. In addition, students may not submit the same work for credit in more than one course without the explicit approval of the all of the instructors of the courses involved.

Consequences

When an instructor has evidence that a student has plagiarized work submitted for course credit, the instructor will confront the student and impose penalties that may include failing the course. In the case of a serious violation or repeated infractions from the same student, the instructor will report the infractions to the department chair. Depending on the circumstances of the case, the department chair may then report the student to the Office of Academic Affairs, which may choose to impose further penalties, including suspension or expulsion.

Title IX Accommodation

Maryland Institute College of Art seeks to provide an environment based on mutual respect that is free of bias, discrimination and harassment. If you have encountered sexual harassment/misconduct/assault we encourage you to report this. Disclosures made to faculty must be reported to the Title IX Coordinator, Title IX Deputy Coordinator, or Title IX Specialist. Disclosures made by students in course assignments are not exempt from mandatory reporting. If you require academic accommodations due to an incident involving sexual harassment or discrimination, please contact Student Affairs at 410.225.2422 or Human Resources at 410.225.2363.

Students with Extended Illness or Cause for Legitimate Absence

In the case of extended illness or other legitimate absences that may keep the student from attending a class for more than three meetings, students must contact the Student Development Specialist in the Division of Student Affairs so that instructors can be notified.

Graduate students must contact the instructor, program director, and the Office of Graduate Studies. Students in art education or professional studies programs must contact the Dean for the Center for Art Education or the Dean of the School for Professional and Continuing Studies, respectively. The appropriate administrator will facilitate a conversation with faculty to determine whether the student can achieve satisfactory academic progress.

MOODLE

MICA USES THE COMPUTER CLASSROOM SITE CALLED MOODLE. EVERYONE ENROLLED IN THE COURSE WITH THE REGISTRAR SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO THE SITE. BE SURE TO HAVE YOUR ENROLLMENT PAPERS AND YOUR LOG-IN AND PASSWORD INFORMATION CORRECT: IF THERE IS A PROBLEM, BE SURE TO SEE THE HELP DESK AT THE ART TECH CENTER ON MOUNT ROYAL AVE.

TO REACH THE MOODLE SITE, GO TO:

WWW.CLASSROOM.MICA.EDU

AND ENTER YOUR LOG-IN INFORMATION. THE REST SHOULD BE SELF-EXPLANATORY.

Readings

- *The Utopia Reader*, ed. Claeys & Sargent (NYU Press, 1999).
- Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We* (Modern Library, 2006).
- Supplementary texts on reserve, on Moodle, or handed out in class.

Course Schedule (Topics and Assignments) - Subject to change if necessary.

Assignments are listed the day they are due, not the day they are assigned.

**** PART I: FOUNDATIONS OF APOCALYPTIC AND UTOPIAN THOUGHT ****

Week 1 – 9/1: Introduction to course

- Go over syllabus; the basics of the meaning of utopia, apocalypse, eschatology, prophecy and other related words; discuss the 2012 apocalypse theories.

Week 2 – 9/8: The Golden Age

- Discuss Classical traditions of the Golden Age, cycle and decay, Hesiod, Ovid, the Garden of Eden and Noah's Flood.
- We will sign up for our SPOKESPERSON papers today.

Reading:

- *Utopia Reader*, pp. 1-9; 12-13 (Introduction, Hesiod's *Work and Days*, Vergil's 4th *Eclogue*, Pindar, Horace *Epode 16*). Ovid will be included in a fuller version below.
- Bible: Genesis: 1-3, 6-8. Use any Bible version you wish: on-line versions can be found at <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/KjvGene.html>
- Moodle: Ovid, *Metamorphosis*, on Ages of Man (6 pp.)
- Moodle: Plato on Atlantis (4 pp.)

Music: Donovan, "Atlantis" (1968) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9AUEjzVQwKo>
Beck, "Golden Age" (2002) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y6zAT15vaFk>

Assignments: **Creative Assignment Option #1:** Describe in words, or depict in an image, your vision of what heaven or the perfect place might look like. If you choose to do an image, please write a 1- or 2-paragraph discussion of your image.

Week 3 – 9/15: Prophets of the Axial Iron Age; the Book of Isaiah and Plato’s *Republic*; Western Apocalyptic Thought and Concepts of Time

- Theory of the Axial Iron Age; Old Testament prophetic tradition in Isaiah; Greek theorizing the political and Plato

Reading:

- Selection from the Bible: Isaiah 24. Use any Bible version you wish: on-line versions can be found at <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/KjvIsai.html>
- *Utopia Reader*, pp. 27-55 (Plato’s *Republic*).
- Moodle: Newell Booth, Jr., “Time and Change in African Traditional Thought”

Assignments: SPOKESPERSON PAPER: PLATO.

Week 4 – 9/22: Christian Apocalypse

- Eschatology in Jesus; the book of Revelation; Augustine’s Christian worldview

Reading:

- Bible: the Book of Revelation. Use any version you wish: an on-line version can be found at <http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/KjvReve.html>
- Augustine, *City of God* (short excerpt): <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/aug-city2.html>

Music: Blind Willie Johnson, “John the Revelator”
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hucTDV1Fvo>

Assignment: None.

Week 5 – 9/29: Judgment and Apocalypse as Applied Theory: the Middle Ages; Ephemeral Utopia: Saturnalia and Cockaigne

- Last Judgment tympana on medieval cathedrals; Joachim di Fiore; Flagellants; on reading scholarly articles; monasticism and the perfect life of God; Concept of the carnivalesque; peasant utopia; ecstatic celebrations.

Reading:

- *Utopia Reader*, pp. 64-66; 68-69; 71-76 (Lucian *Saturnalia*; Benedict’s rule; Cockaigne legend).
- Moodle: excerpts from Joachim di Fiore’s *Letter to the Faithful* (3 pp.)
- Moodle: materials relating to the Drummer of Niklashausen

Music: Harry McClintock, “Big Rock Candy Mountain”
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqowmHgxVJQ>

Assignment: SPOKESPERSON PAPER: THE DRUMMER OF NIKLASHAUSEN

Week 6 – 10/6: Thomas More and Early Modern Utopias

- More: invention or adaptation?; why the explosion in early modern utopias?

Reading:

- *Utopia Reader*, pp. 77-93; 106-118; 128-140 (Thomas More, *Utopia*; Thomas Campanella *City of the Sun*; Margaret Cavendish, *Inventory of Judgements Commonwealth*; James Harrington, *The Commonwealth of Oceana*).
- Moodle: Christopher Columbus, "Sailing to Jerusalem" (4 pp.)

Assignment: - **Creative Assignment Option #2:** Create a prophecy of 2-3 pp. according to the rhetorical features discussed in class. It can foretell anything you wish!

- SPOKESPERSON PAPER: THOMAS MORE; THOMAS CAMPANELLA; MARGARET CAVENDISH.

**** PART II: THE FLOWERING OF UTOPIAN AND APOCALYPTIC THOUGHT IN THE MODERN PERIOD ****

Week 7 – 10/13: Democracy: Utopian?

- The connection between utopian/eschatological thought and democratic revolutions of the 18th Century.

Reading:

- *Utopia Reader*, pp. 170-179 (William Godwin, *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*; Timothy Dwight, *Greenfield Hill*; Antoine-Nicolas de Condorcet, *Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind*)
- Moodle: François Furet, "Democracy and Utopia"
- Moodle: Alphonse de Lamartine 1830 poem, 'Les Révolutions.'
- Barack Obama's Victory Speech (Nov. 2008): Read/listen at <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/speeches/obama-victory-speech.html>

Assignment: SPOKESPERSON PAPER: GODWIN.

***** FALL BREAK 10/20 *****

Week 8 – 10/27: America as City on the Hill: Yankee Utopianism

- Shakers, Oneida, Fourierism and Brook Farm

Reading:

- Excerpt from Winthrop's 1630 sermon "A Model of Christian Charity" (aka: the "City on the Hill" speech): <http://www.historytools.org/sources/winthrop-charity.pdf>
- *Utopia Reader*, pp. 182-202 (Shaker, Amana, Oneida texts; Charles Fourier, *Selections Describing the Phalanstery*; texts on American Fourierism).
- Moodle: Brook Farm testimonials
- Moodle: Nathaniel Hawthorne, excerpt from *The Blithedale Romance* (1852).

Assignment: - **Creative Assignment Option #3:** Write a fictional diary of about 2-3 pp. for a member of one of these "Yankee" utopias in our readings for the day. You can cover one day or several, and adopt any persona you wish.

- SPOKESPERSON PAPER: SHAKERS; AMANA; ONEIDA; BROOK FARM.

Week 9 – 11/3: Socialism, Communism and the Technology Paradise

- Communism, Technological Utopia, Futurism

Reading:

- *Utopia Reader*, pp. 227-228; 240-273 (Marx & Engels, *Communist Manifesto*; Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward, 2000-1887*).
- Necheyev, *Revolutionary Catechism*:
<http://www.spunk.org/texts/places/russia/sp000116.txt>

Assignment: - **Short (1 page) Proposal for Final Paper Project** due today
- SPOKESPERSON PAPER: BELLAMY; NECHEYEV.

Week 10 – 11/10: Dystopia

Readings:

- Yevgeny Zamyatin, *We*
- *Utopia Reader*, pp. 398-407 (George Orwell, 1984 Appendix on Newspeak)

Assignment: Write short review of *We*.

Week 11 – 11/17: Apocalyptic and Utopian Ideas of the Dispossessed: Feminist Utopias, Rastafarian Eschatology

- Rastafarianism; Feminist Utopias

Readings:

- *Utopia Reader*, pp. 319-328 (Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*)
- Kate Bolick, “All the Single Ladies” from the *Atlantic* (Nov. 2011):
<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2011/11/all-the-single-ladies/308654/>
- Moodle: Ray Bradbury, “Way in the Middle of the Air” from *The Martian Chronicles*
- Nancy Woloch, “Frances Wright at Nashoba” in *Women and the American Experience* (approx. 15 pp.)
- GG Maragh, *Promised Key*:
<http://books.google.fr/books?id=tXwe18Ri6EC&printsec=frontcover#PPR5,M1>

Music: Prison Singers from 1930’s, “Ol’ Hannah”:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0qihABs5sQk>

Johnny Clarke, “None Shall Escape the Judgment”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czpk40mlxFE>

The Ethiopians, “Everything Crash” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fc59zo4NQ7w>

The Melodians, “Rivers of Babylon” http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-5E6_qtXAw

Max Romeo, “Chase the Devil” <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uijFctBM47M>

Assignment: SPOKESPERSON PAPER: PERKINS GILMAN; MARAGH.

Week 12 – 11/24: 1960s and New Age; Cults & Communes; Walden 2

- Better living through chemistry: psychedelic utopianism of the 1960's; Walden 2; Cults & Commune movement of 1960s and New Agers of 1970s

Readings:

- *Utopia Reader*, pp. 372-398 (Skinner, *Walden 2 & Walden 2 Revisited*).
- Moodle: Richard Bauman & Neil McCabe, "Proverbs in an LSD Cult"
- Moodle: Rosabeth Moss Kanter, "Retreat from Utopia" (approx. 24 pp.)
- Read and listen to the story on 1960s commune on NPR's website:
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=89422387>

Music: Bob Dylan, "Gates of Eden" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pCUQqyVJ2Bo>
The Byrds, "Mind Gardens" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ViJoQw2tKcY>
Max Frost, "The Shape of Things to Come" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=abfZH2-Iiqc>
Ya Ho Wa 13, "Man the Messiah" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHYwIymHT6w>

Assignment: SPOKESPERSON PAPER: SKINNER; THE SOURCE FAMILY.

Week 13 – 12/1: Intentional Communities

- CLASS ACTIVITIES: conversation with MICA (and of this class) alumna Carla Padvoiskis on her experiences in intentional communities; looking at student "Community Vision" papers.
- Practical experiments in collective living from the 1960s to today; contemporary challenges with communal living

Readings:

- Diane Leafe Christian, "Community Vision: What it is and Why You Need it" and "Creating Vision Documents" from *Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities* (approx. 25 pp.)
- Corrine McLaughlin & Gordon Davidson, "New Patterns of Governance and Leadership" from *Builders of the Dawn: Community Lifestyles in a Changing World* (approx. 30 pp.)
- Chris Carlsson, "A Vastly Better World Awaits" from *Nowtopia: How Pirate Programmers, Outlaw Bicyclists, and Vacant-Lot Gardeners are Inventing the Future Today* (approx. 12 pp.)
- Alex Halberstadt, "Out of the Woods" from the *New York Times Magazine* (Aug. 2015) (on a long-standing LGBTQ commune in rural Tennessee):
http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/09/magazine/out-of-the-woods.html?_r=0
- Read up on the Kibbutz Movement from the official website:
http://www.kibbutz.org.il/eng/081101_kibbutz-eng.htm

Assignment: COMMUNITY VISION PAPER (1-2 pp.) Using the advice and guidelines provided in the reading by Christian, and considering the other readings for today and throughout the semester, write up a fictional COMMUNITY VISION for an intentional community you would found.

Week 14 – 12/8: Millenarianism at the end of the Millennium

- CLASS ACTIVITY: Film from 2000: "Left Behind: the Movie" starring Kirk Cameron
- Christian fundamentalism; Environmental apocalyptic beliefs.

Readings:

- Moodle: Union of Concerned Scientists 1992 “Warning to Humanity” on Environment
- Moodle: Misc. charts, readings and poll data on Fundamental Beliefs (3 pp.)

Assignment: None.

Week 15 – 12/15: Last Class

- BRIEF INFORMAL PRESENTATION OF FINAL PAPERS

Reading: None.

Assignment: FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS TODAY.