

EGMT 1530: Engaging Differences  
Jasmine Hu

## Im/possible Worlds

The Greek origins of the word “utopia” embed a pun and a paradox: a good place (eu-topos) that’s also a no-place (u-topos). Are utopias, then, too good to be true? Across time and space, statesmen, philosophers, poets, and visionaries have used possible and impossible worlds to imagine refuges from tyranny and subjugation, or to register anxieties surrounding social and technological change. This course will consider concepts of difference and equality in utopianism and anti-utopianism, with particular attention to roles of class, race, gender, religion, and technology. We will explore how alternate worlds restructure distinctions of nature and nurture, public and private, alien and citizen to question and negotiate between existing forms of human difference. From the earliest origins of utopian thought, to contemporary strains of sentiment both utopic (as expressed in political, technological, and corporate idealisms) and dystopic (as depicted in popular media like *The Handmaid’s Tale* and *Black Mirror*), we will study how worlds possible and impossible interrogate existing institutions and values, imagine extensions and reversals of hegemonic power, and present alternate visions of what our world could be.

W Mar 16  
First class

### **Week 1: The Kallipolis**

M Mar 21  
Plato, *The Republic* Part 4, 5, 7 (skim the summaries for Part 6) pg 149 - 201, pg 237 - 301

W Mar 23  
Plato, *The Republic* Part 9 pg 332-402

### **Week 2: Alternate Worlds**

M Mar 28  
*The Zhuangzi* (tentative— “Discourse on Smoothing Things Out,” “In the Human Realm,” “Autumn Floods,” “Rifling Trunks,” “Robber Zhi”)

W Mar 30  
Thomas More, *Utopia*  
Book 2— Excerpts (“Their Magistrates,” “Their Social Relations,” “Their Philosophies,” “Their Slaves,” “Their Laws and Punishments,” “Their Religion”)

### **Week 3: Modernity and its Discontents**

M Apr 4

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (Prologue, On the Despisers of the Body, On Love of the Neighbor, On Child and Marriage, On Free Death, On the Tarantula, On Self-Overcoming)

W Apr 6

Susan Sontag, "Fascinating Fascism"

### **Week 4: Uncanny Futurisms**

M Apr 11

Fritz Lang, *Metropolis* (Moroder Cut)

W Apr 13

Jorge Luis Borges, "Library of Babel," "Lottery in Babylon," "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius"

### **Week 5: Virtual and Hyperreal - Dystopia in Utopia**

M Apr 18

Jean Baudrillard, *Simulation and Simulacrum*

W April 20

Jia Tolentino, "The Age of Instagram Face"

Rachel Hawley, "Don't Worry, These Gangly-armed Cartoons Are Here to Protect You From Big Tech"

Franklin Foer, *World Without Mind*, "Prologue"

### **Week 6: Entanglements, Complicities**

M Apr 25

Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism* Chapters 1, 3, 4

W Apr 27

Ursula LeGuin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"

Octavia Butler, "Bloodchild"

### **Week 7 The No-Place of Home?**

M May 2

Joan Didion, "Slouching Towards Bethlehem"

Website and Reddit AMA of Twin Oaks Community in Louisa, VA