**BARD EARLY COLLEGE in NEW ORLEANS**

**Course** | First Year Seminar, Fall 2014 ~ What is the Ideal Society?

Mondays 9-10:15am, Thursdays 9-11am

**Professor** | Julia Carey Arendell

**Composition Instructor** | Cassie Pruyn, Wednesdays 9-10:15am

**Contact** | [juliaccarey@gmail.com](mailto:juliaccarey@gmail.com) Please allow 24 hours for response.

cassie.pruyn@gmail.com

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**| Sir Thomas More originated the term utopia in his 1516 book *On the Best State of a Republic and on the New Island of Utopia.* He formed the fictional city’s name by combining the Greek word οὐ (no place) with τόπος (place) so that the city’s name roughly translates to “no place,” but the term also echoes *Eutopia*, which means “good place.” As we will discover in the course, this double meaning resonates through the history of utopian models and experiments. Every utopian concept is a “good place” that exists in theory, but also reflects social and political reality, just as every dystopia is an extrapolation of contemporary social and political trends. This course will explore the history of utopian theory and social experimentation, and its dystopian mirror image through literature, critical theory, case studies, and film. How have the perfect society and the dystopian society evolved from the classical era through modern times? What can these models teach us about their particular social era and about our own moment in history?

**PURPOSE** | The First Year Seminar at Bard College is designed to cultivate close reading and question-asking without the adherence to specialty or traditionally closed subject matter. As a multi-disciplinary course, it exploits the pleasure of not adhering to one school or direction of thought, one path of research, or one department of study. By discovering the connections and overlaps of content, we evoke ideas that are irreducible, growing in richness and diversity, as opposed to drilling down to singular or small sets of finite answers. Our goal is not to focus on canonical content, but a genealogy of ideas. How are things related? What ends and means do they share? Why and how are their divergences important? By reaching into multiple fields, new territory of critical and creative thinking can be developed.

**ATTENDANCE** | Students who miss more than five classes per semester without a valid excuse will be placed on Academic Probation. Please consult the Bard Student Handbook for what constitutes an excused absence. As with most issues in life, communication and organization are key to our joint success in this class together.

**PLAGIARISM** | All written work is expected to be original to each student. It is intellectually and academically dishonest to pass off the words or ideas of others as your own in any graded assignment. While the incorporation of texts and concepts introduced by authors, professors, or fellow students is encouraged, these sources must be appropriately cited. Failure to distinguish your own work from that of others, intentional or otherwise, will be considered plagiarism. Consequences include being placed on Academic Probation, not receiving credit for the assignment or course, and possibly expulsion from the program.

**COMPONENTS** |

Essay #1 10%

Mid-term exam 10%

Essay #2 15%

Final Project 20%

Composition 10%

Participation 15%

Reading Responses (4) 5% each

**GRADING** | The grading scale is in the Bard Student Handbook (i.e. what percentage constitutes an ‘A’). The grades you will receive on written work from me will be a point system, so if the reading responses, for example, are each worth 5% of your final grade, each one will be worth 5 points. A 5/5 would be a perfect score for that assignment. In this manner, you can, at any point, add all of the points earned on your written work and have a clear understanding of exactly what your percentage in the class would be. Yes, I do offer partial points, so it is possible to score a 2.85 (or such) on an assignment.

**ESSAYS** | You will receive essay assignments well in advance of the paper due dates so you have opportunity to draft and develop them in workshop. Quality papers will demonstrate a high level of thought and interaction with the content, not just a summarization. They should be well-organized so a traceable line of reason and scrutiny can be followed, with supporting evidence to back each argument and conclusion. Essay 1 is expected to be between 3 and 5 pages, and Essay 2 should be 6-8 pages, but details will be outlined in printed assignments. Unless arranged in advance, ***no late work accepted, and hard copies only.***

**MIDTERM EXAM** | Written in class, this challenge is designed to help you advance your writing skills under pressure so that you explore your own tendencies for brainstorming, organizing, and synthesizing.

**PARTICIPATION** | Being present means more than physically occupying a space. It is a conscious exercise of deliberation and attention. You are part of something, listening to what is happening around you and within you, documenting what you need to remember, asking questions to gain understanding, and offering your perspective to the group. Being an active and respectful listener is just as important as engaging your voice in the discussion. It is these skills that build meaning, not only in our forum, but in our lives. Limit your distractions and take this opportunity to unplug from devices, and plug into the group. No laptops or phones during class, or unnecessary or frequent departures from the classroom. Be respectful of one another, even in disagreement, and please refrain from eating food in class.

**COMPOSITION WORKSHOP** | The workshop functions in concert with the Seminar and accounts for 10% of your final grade. This is the important mechanical work of writing – learning to revise, organizing your thoughts and material, and utilizing proper grammar and diction. You will draft and workshop all essays with your Composition instructor, with drafts due as noted on the syllabus via e-mail to [cassie.pruyn@gmail.com](mailto:cassie.pruyn@gmail.com) by the Monday night before the Wednesday workshop.

**READING RESPONSES** | Four, one full page, single-spaced responses are due as noted on the syllabus. You have great freedom with these responses, as they are to help you make connections, ask questions, or bring in other reactions we may not have been able to accommodate in our limited class time together. These should not be summaries or “book reports,” but rather the foundation of your engagement with the texts. What moved you? Why were you moved? What does it remind you of? What confuses or troubles you and why? What do you disagree with

and why? Often we have very emotional reactions that are not necessarily appropriate in our intellectual debates, but are quite useful in helping us understand a text’s importance or relevance. This is your place to start in exploring the material. While they may be personal or tangential, they should still make sense as a piece of organized writing that flows. I will be strict about the length, so it is better to go longer than skimp. There is one response due per “section” of the course.

**FINAL PRESENTATION & PROJECT** |You will create your own utopian or dystopian experiment and present it to the class. We are focusing on what makes a society “ideal,” so you will need to be able to define what those ideals are for you, and why you have chosen to exclude others. Your presentation should be no shorter than 8 minutes, no longer than 12. In tandem with your presentation, write a 1200 word (minimum) process paper explaining how you have come to your conclusions, what inspired you, what you expect to be challenges and successes for your ideal society, and how you would convince others that your scenario is, in fact, “ideal.” Your presentation and paper are in concert, but not the same, meaning, you may not spend your 8-12 minutes simply reading the process paper to us. More details will be distributed in class.

**SCHEDULE** | Subject to change depending on our progress

CP = course packet. These readings can be found in the common reader provided to you by Bard.

JCA = packet I have provided to you specifically for our class.

Week One

25 Aug |Welcome & Syllabus, *Bladerunner* discussion

28 Aug |CP: Thomas More

Week Two

1 Sept | No Class, Labor Day Holiday

4 Sept |CP: Plato

JCA: Goodey

Week Three

8 Sept |RESPONSE #1 DUE

JCA: Cartledge

11 Sept |CP: Bible

JCA: Israeli kibbutz

Week Four

15 Sept |CP: Augustine, Winthrop

Drafts of Paper #1 due to Cassie

18 Sept |CP: Wallace Stevens, Coleridge

JCA: Confucius Datong: Liji

Week Five

22 Sept |PAPER #1 DUE

CP: Bacon

25 Sept |CP: Swift, Ameritopias pgs 207-223

Week Six

29 Sept |Tempest Act 1

2 Oct | RESPONSE #2 DUE

Tempest Acts 2&3

Week Seven

6 Oct |Tempest Acts 4&5

8 Oct |MIDTERM EXAM, taken in Composition

9 Oct |JCA: Everett, Cohen

Week Eight

13 Oct |CP: Marx & Engels

JCA: Einstein

16 Oct | Midterm Grades Due

JCA: Le Corbusier

Week Nine, parent/teacher conferences

20 Oct | No Class, Fall Break

23 Oct |RESPONSE #3 DUE

CP: Hayden

Week Ten

27 Oct |JCA: Foucault, Boyer

Drafts of Paper #2 due to Cassie

30 Oct |CP: American Intentional Communities pgs 258-272

JCA: “Sex, Drugs, and Soybeans”

Week Eleven

3 Nov |CP: Vonnegut

JCA: Koenig

6 Nov | CP: Afrofuturism pgs 351-end

JCA: Hurston

Week Twelve

10 Nov |Screening & Discussion: Jonestown documentary

13 Nov |PAPER #2 DUE

CP: Le Guin, Roth

Week Thirteen

17 Nov |*The Giver*

20 Nov |*The Giver*

Pitch final projects

Week Fourteen

24 & 27 Nov, No Class, Happy Thanksgiving

Week Fifteen

1 Dec |RESPONSE #4 DUE

Drafts/Prospectus for Final due to Cassie

*The Giver*

4 Dec |*The Giver*

Week Sixteen

8 Dec |CP: Bellamy, Orwell

10 Dec |Composition In-Class Exit Essay

11 Dec |JCA: “The Last Question”

Week Seventeen

15 Dec | FINAL PROJECT PAPERS DUE

Final Presentations

18 Dec | Final Presentations

19 Dec | Final Grades Due