

Syllabus
ALS 199 / Section 19
Is a Better World Possible? Utopian Thinking in Reality & Fiction
Fall 2018

Dr. Philipp Kneis

Political Science Program, School of Public Policy
310 Bexell Hall, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Oregon 97330-6206

Tel. Office: (541) 737-1325
Office Hours per appointment
philipp.kneis@oregonstate.edu

Syllabus Version 1.00 – 09/25/2018 – living syllabus / subject to change

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1. Course Introduction

The class will analyze examples from history, political theory, literature, film and television to investigate different ideas about creating a better or even perfect world.

The search for the ideal state has occupied political philosophy since antiquity. From Plato’s Atlantis story through More’s utopia and beyond, philosophers, writers and filmmakers have pondered how to create a perfect state with perfect citizens which will stand the test of time. Each week will combine theoretical reflections from antiquity through post-modernity with a selection of examples from more or less contemporary fiction that will ideally already be known to the audience.

We will be looking at Plato’s Atlantis story, Thomas More’s Utopia, Thoreau’s Walden, JRR Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings, and franchises like Star Trek, Star Wars, and other examples.

2. Course Philosophy & Policies

The **main objective** of this course is to foster critical thinking on the basis of increased domain knowledge and advanced theoretical reflections on the topic of the class. The readings offered are academic articles or political documents. **Assignments** in this class are meant to develop student research, and critical reflection and discussion of the topic. Students are required to conduct own research and participate actively in the discussion in order to create a peer learning community.

General Guidelines:

- You are required to **read this syllabus in full**. Please direct any questions directly to the instructor in person or via e-mail. Please also monitor announcements in case the schedule needs to change.
- Typically, **following all instructions** will lead to successful participation in class. For more detail, see below for the schedule, as well as on p. 4 for descriptions of assignments, and p. 6 for student learning outcomes.
- A seminar thrives on the regular participation of every single member of the group. You are expected to participate actively in the discussions, and you should feel free to do so. **This is a place to learn, not a place to be perfect**. You do not need to be intimidated. Everyone is in the same boat.
- **Respect your fellow students**. Everybody should feel safe to be as honest as possible. People are indeed able to **see things differently**, even though they have the same facts. If somebody makes what could be seen a mistake, be patient and understanding. Focus any **critique** on the argument and the issue, not on the person making the statement. We are all learning, and we will never be perfect.
- Language skills should not distract from your message. I do not grade language and style per se, but if writing mistakes distract too much from your argument, so that any reasonable reader would have difficulties understanding it, your grade may be affected. Writing is difficult for everyone, and takes years of practice and skill. Feel free to ask for help if you feel that your writing needs improvement. The **Writing Center** provides students with a free consulting service for their writing assignments, see <http://cwl.oregonstate.edu/owl.php>.
- In the case that I feel **attendance and reading progress** are below reasonable expectations, I reserve the right to do a quiz in order to check on reading progress.

Discussions:

- For every assignment aimed at the group, there is also a mandatory **Q&A** component, which will be considered when grading.
- **Regular participation** in the class is mandatory.

Communication with Instructor:

- **Please let me know in advance** if you cannot complete assignments on time. We will find a way.
- Please feel free to contact me about any aspect of the course, or your performance. Let me know as soon as possible if there are any issues that might need my immediate attention. I'm always willing to learn myself, and improve the class whenever necessary.

3. Schedule

The course consists of topical units that are dedicated to the discussion of required readings, preparing a subsequent discussion of student research on topics of their choice that prepare the final research paper.

	<i>W</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>		<i>Thursday</i>
1	09/25	Introduction (I)	09/27	Introduction (II)
2	10/02	THE IDEAL PAST Eden Ovid & Hesiod, <i>The Golden Age / Ages of Man</i>	10/04	Plato: <i>Timaeus/Critias</i> – The story of Ancient Athens and Atlantis
3	10/09	ETERNAL RETURN Wagner, <i>The Ring of the Nibelung</i> Tolkien, <i>The Lord of the Rings</i>	10/11	<i>Babylon 5</i> <i>Game of Thrones</i>
4	10/16	THE IDEAL STATE Plato's <i>Republic: The Noble Lie</i> <i>Reflection Paper 1: What is an Ideal State? (2 Pages)</i>	10/18	Plato's <i>Republic: The Cave Metaphor</i>
5	10/23	REVOLUTION Spartacus Jesus, Sermon on the Mount	10/25	Karl Marx, <i>The Communist Manifesto</i> <i>The Matrix</i>
6	10/30	ISLANDS Thomas More, <i>Utopia</i> Daniel Defoe, <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> <i>Reflection Paper 2: Revolution or Reform? (2 Pages)</i>	11/01	Tommaso Campanella, <i>The City of the Sun</i> John Winthrop, <i>A Model of Christian Charity</i>
7	11/06	RESISTANCE AND PEACE Immanuel Kant, <i>Perpetual Peace</i> Henry D. Thoreau, <i>Civil Disobedience</i>	11/08	ECOLOGY Henry D. Thoreau, <i>Walden</i> <i>Wall-E</i>
8	11/13	DYSTOPIA George Orwell, <i>1984</i> <i>Minority Report</i> <i>Reflection Paper 3: Are We Heading to Dystopia? (2 Pages)</i>	11/15	Huxley, <i>Brave New World</i> <i>Idiocracy</i>
9	11/20	DYSTOPIA <i>Terminator</i> series <i>Alien</i> or <i>Jurassic Park/World</i> series	11/22	THANKSGIVING
10	11/27	SPACE <i>Star Trek</i> <i>Star Wars</i>	11/29	Conclusion <i>Final Paper Due Dec 3</i>

4. Course Assignments and Grading

General Remarks:

- All these assignments are **submitted in writing**. The two presentations have to be submitted to the entire class via the discussion forum (upload as PDF), the response and research paper are only sent to the instructor via e-mail (if you do not receive a confirmation that I have received it within 2 business days, please tell me).
- You are expected to use **correct English**. If there too many mistakes, text understanding may suffer, and you may also be downgraded for complexity. Perform a spell-check (not just via the computer!).
- Pages have to be numbered.
- Text formatting for **all** assignments except discussion posts: 12 point Times, 1.5-spaced, 1 in. margins. Include your name, assignment type, and date in the first line, second line title in bold, one free line, then the text, then works cited, such as:

Name, First Name: Text Presentation, MM/DD/YYYY

Title of Your Presentation (either a topical title, or “Presentation on the Text by N.N.”)

Text (of the length specified)

Works Cited

List the works you cited, either APA or MLA style

Researching Articles and Books:

- Any materials you find for use in your own research should be coming from **academic journals or books**. You may also use original sources (media examples), but need to find 2 research articles minimum.
- Research articles or books are basically distinguished from other materials in that they do not primarily focus on exposition but on **analysis**, and on commenting on other research. **The articles chosen for this class are supposed to serve as examples.**
- You can find such materials, for instance, through the use of **Google Scholar** (<http://scholar.google.com>). **Library catalogs** will be available to you as well.
- **News sources and statistics** can be used – but only to supplement research articles, not to replace them.
- **Internet sources** are good if they are of a scholarly nature.
- **Wikipedia** can be a good starting point for research – it is never its ultimate end!

Explanation of individual assignments:

❖ **Three (3) 2-page Reflection papers (10 points / 20%).**
Due Regularly

❖ **One Text/Material Presentation (10 points / 20%).**
Present the material assigned for the session, choosing a relevant text, and discuss its utopian and/or dystopian aspects.
Due When Text is Assigned

❖ **1 Final 4-page Paper based on your text presentation (10 points / 20%).**
Week 10

5. Final Grade Distribution

- Maximum possible points: 50 points
1. Reflection Paper 1 10 points
 2. Reflection Paper 2 10 points
 3. Reflection Paper 3 10 points
 4. Text Presentation 10 points
 5. Final Presentation 10 points

A	95% to under or equal	100%	47.5 to under or equal	50 points
A-	90% to under	95%	45 to under	47.5 points
B+	87% to under	90%	43.5 to under	45 points
B	83% to under	87%	41.5 to under	43.5 points
B-	80% to under	83%	40 to under	41.5 points
C+	77% to under	80%	38.5 to under	40 points
C	73% to under	77%	36.5 to under	38.5 points
C-	70% to under	73%	35 to under	36.5 points
D+	67% to under	70%	33.5 to under	35 points
D	63% to under	67%	31.5 to under	33.5 points
D-	60% to under	63%	30 to under	31.5 points
F	0% to under	60%	0 to under	30 points

6. Student Learning Outcomes

6.1. Specific Course Learning Outcomes:

1. Students will learn appropriate ways of engaging in cross-cultural learning and exploration.
2. Students will develop skills to answer questions such as: What are acceptable greetings in some cultures, how can we become global citizens? Is cultural competence a myth?
3. One of the key intended outcomes of the course is to 'Develop awareness of oneself as a cultural being'. That goal is especially significant for the underrepresented communities on campus because they face identity conflicts, struggles with the dominant paradigm and peer pressure to 'assimilate' with the dominant culture.
4. Students are expected to understand the significance of cross-cultural learning, celebrate cultural diversity and lay the ground work for an informed global citizenship.
5. Demonstrate an understanding of diverse interpretations of globalization;
6. Identify the opportunities and benefits of globalization and the ways these can affect the mission and work of the university;
7. Articulate what it means to be a globally competent learner and define cultural competence;
8. Articulate the role of universities in shaping globally competent learners; and

6.2. U-Engage Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of the term you will be able to

1. Explain in your own words the processes, methods, and evidence that a specific community or academic field uses to explore and address a real-world, contemporary problem or answer a compelling question.
Background: *Problem solving methodologies are used by experts in academic disciplines to tackle some of the world's most pressing problems and compelling questions. Engaging in purposeful and guided inquiry within a specific community and/or academic field allows students to explore and practice problem solving in the context of distinct methods, standards, and common practices. This type of inquiry will expose students to the real-world problems and compelling questions being studied by a community or field and the current research being done in that area. In addition, learning to recognize, practice, and apply the methods and standards of a particular field prepares them for lifelong learning and flexibility in a rapidly changing knowledge driven economy. As a result of this exploration, students will acquire greater awareness of their own fit within a community or field and be able to make better informed decisions about future involvement (undergraduate research, leadership opportunities, internships, jobs, careers, etc.) in that area.*
2. Demonstrate strategies to explore real world problems, questions, and challenges inside and outside the classroom;
Background: Academic and personal problem solving skills are among the most critical transferable skills that first year college students can obtain and hone. Students who are allowed to practice their problem solving skills can identify a problem and the information they need to know to work through the problem, obtain necessary content knowledge (most often interdisciplinary and from diverse perspectives), reflect upon what they've learned (making meaning of their learning), come to knowledgeable conclusions, and apply what they've learned. Practice in problem solving is valuable to all students. Developing problem solving skills will assist first year students as they seek answers to the many open-ended, exploratory questions that come with the transition to college, including

“what should I major in?”, “how should I get involved?”, and “what does it mean to be a lifelong learner?”

3. Articulate interests and academic and personal challenges you have as first year student at OSU and identify the appropriate campus resources and opportunities to contribute to your educational experience, goals, and campus engagement.

Background: The first year and first term of students’ college careers offer many new challenges and opportunities. OSU has many resources and support systems for students and through U-Engage students will learn about several of them and how these can enhance their education and overall college experience. Through ongoing, structured and deep reflection upon their experiences both in and outside of the classroom, students will be able to think about and articulate their unique skills, motivations, challenges, resources, and opportunities as OSU students. Using problem solving skills, they will address the academic, social, and personal challenges they are presented with during their first term and develop/practice habits that will be helpful to them in the future.

7. General Argumentation Rules (for Presentations and Papers)

- If you refer to somebody or a text, always provide a detailed source. Never say “As Aristotle has said ...” but provide a concrete source. You will find that many quotes are continually misattributed. Do the research.
- Be respectful of others’ opinions and arguments, no matter how harshly you may disagree. Any criticism must be aimed at the argument or subject matter (“*argumentum ad rem*”), not at the person (“*argumentum ad hominem*”).
- If you disagree with a certain position, make sure you represent it accurately in all its scope, and not as a distorted caricature (“straw man argument”).
- Base your argument on a solid database, not just on your own experiences or things you have heard (“anecdotal evidence”).
- Just because a famous or influential person made a certain argument, does not automatically provide it with legitimacy (“argument from authority”).
- Just because something occurs in nature, does not make it good (“naturalistic fallacy”).
- See also: www.fallacyfiles.org

8. Students with Disabilities

Oregon State University is committed to student success; however, we do not require students to use accommodations nor will we provide them unless they are requested by the student. The student, as a legal adult, is responsible to request appropriate accommodations. The student must take the lead in applying to Disability Access Services (DAS) and submit requests for accommodations each term through DAS Online. OSU students apply to DAS and request accommodations at our Getting Started with DAS page at <http://ds.oregonstate.edu/gettingstarted>.

9. Student Conduct

Please review and adhere to the Expectations for Student Conduct, as posted on <http://studentlife.oregonstate.edu/studentconduct/offenses-0>.

10. Appendix I: Presentation Guidelines

(Some of these just apply to presenting in person – most also to online presentations.)

10.1. When Introducing a Text

These questions need not be answered verbatim or in that order– but address them or be kept in mind.

- What is it about?
- Who is the author? (relevant if important person of history -- but no extended biographies)
- What is the context?
- What is the line of argument?
- What are the theoretical assumptions? Does the text speak to a specific school of thought?
- How is it written? What can you derive from the structure of the text?
- How was it perceived? What has it achieved? (relevant if this text is a historical source or has had a deep impact on a field of research)
- Provide own evaluations and analysis, briefly.

10.2. When Presenting Your Own Analysis or Argument

These questions need not be answered verbatim or in that order– but address them or be kept in mind.

- Be transparent: name your sources, provide a handout with a bibliography and a structure of your presentation.
- Provide a clear line of argument
- Prefer analysis over opinion, personal experiences and anecdotal knowledge
- Be clear to differentiate between your own analysis and someone else's.

10.3. Q&A Rules

- Welcome critique as an opportunity to better yourself.
- When critiquing others, aim the argument at the issue, not the person, and remain respectful.
- When you don't know what to answer, offer to follow up with them later -- don't improvise.

10.4. General Presentation Rules

- Everybody is nervous. EVERYBODY.
- Everybody makes mistakes.
- Preparation always helps.
- Practice.
- A class presentation is supposed to help you to learn, you are not expected to be perfect.

10.4.1. Content

- The presentation is not about you. It is about the content.

10.4.2. Structure

- You are *communicating*, not talking *at* somebody.
- Make sure you do everything to get your message across in the short time you have.
- Tell them what you're about to tell them. -- Tell them. -- Tell them what you've just told them.
- Intelligent redundancy is good.
- Patronizing is bad.

10.4.3. Modes of Presenting

- Do what you feel is most comfortable to you.
- Talk loudly and clearly.
- Make eye contact as much as possible.
- Provide a handout with your most important points, central quotes or data (brief!), works cited, and your contact information.

Reading out a written text:

- pro: safety, you tend to forget less, you can formulate better
- contra: inflexible, less communicative

Speaking freely (without notes):

- pro: flexible, can adapt to audience quickly, communicative
- contra: needs experience, you may forget things, imperfect formulations
- you may compensate with a handout

Speaking freely with notes

- possibly best of both worlds
- you may even write an introduction & a closing to read out

10.4.4. Time

- Time yourself. You have limited time allotted. Test out your presentation beforehand; then add 2-3 minutes. You will always take longer than planned.
- Provide a handout collating your most important findings, central quotes, a bibliography, and your contact information. If you forget to say something important in the presentation, it'll be there.

10.4.5. Technology

- Use technology only if necessary.
- Only use technology that you know how to handle.
- Be sure to have reliable equipment. If possible, bring your own computer. Apple computer owners: bring an adapter cable for VGA. Assume no HDMI compatibility.
- Make backups of your presentation. Make a backup of the backup.
- Be only as fancy as absolutely necessary. Anything flashy that distracts from your message can go.
- Sometimes, a blackboard is enough.
- A paper handout may substitute or supplement a visual presentation. It gives people something to take away.
- Be prepared for tech to break down.

10.4.6. Attire

- Appear professional. This is work, it should look like that. Respect your audience.
- There will always be a question from the audience you won't like. Be cordial. Admit if you don't know something; promise to get back with more information.
- Know how to react: "Never answer the question that is asked of you. Answer the question that you wish had been asked of you." (Robert S. McNamara, *The Fog of War*, 87:11-87:19)

10.4.7. Remember Murphy's Law

- Nothing is as easy as it seems. -- Everything takes longer than expected. -- And if something can go wrong it will, -- at the worst possible moment.
- Well, hopefully not. But be prepared anyway. Presentations are always a test of how to react to unforeseen circumstances, and the more you practice, the more experienced you'll be. Good luck!

10.5. Netiquette: How to Present Yourself Online

- Always remember you are still talking to human beings – it is very easy to lose sight of that online.
- Try to build community with your fellow students by being active in the discussion, by responding to their posts, and by taking part in the Q&A peer critique process after uploaded assignments.
- Check your spelling --- mistakes in writing are unnecessary distractions from what you want to say.
- Name your sources.
- Be concise but substantial. Remember that people tend to read in an F-pattern online: first paragraphs are read, then beginnings oftentimes just scanned (sadly). Make it interesting.

11. Appendix II: Citation Guide MLA

You can use MLA or APA style for citations, see: owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01. The major rules MLA style are summarized here, as follows:

Page/font format:

- Font Size 12 pt (use a normal system font like Times New Roman, Arial, Cambria, etc.)
- Line spacing 1.5
- Footnotes: 10 pt, Line spacing 1
- Indent quotations longer than 3 lines, with 10 pt size font
- Mark omitted parts of a quotation with squared brackets to distinguish them from possible (round) brackets within the quotation:

"Falling Down is a smart film, but it struggles [...] to convince viewers that [the hero] represents an ultimately (mythologically) redundant model of white masculinity." (Kennedy 2000: 122)

Bibliographical reference in parentheses (Author Year: Page):

Blabla blabla (Soja 1989: 37).

When Works Cited holds more than one title of the same author and from the same year, specify text by adding letters to the publication date:

Blabla blabla (Soja 1989a: 37).

Blabla blabla (Soja 1989b: 1).

Footnotes should be used only for further comments, not as bibliographical reference.

The **Works Cited** appears at the end of your paper. The format is the following:

For articles in collective volumes:

Name, First Name. "Article". In: Name, First Name, ed. *Larger Volume*. Publishing Place: Publishing House, Year. Pages.

e.g. Kennedy, Liam. "Paranoid Spatiality: Postmodern Urbanism and American Cinema." In: Balshaw Maria, Liam Kennedy, eds. *Urban Space and Representation*. London: Pluto, 2000. 116-30.

(use ed. for one Editor, eds. for multiple Editors)

For articles in journals or magazines:

Name, First Name. "Article". *Magazine Title*. Magazine Number (Year): Pages.

e.g. Foucault, Michel. "Of Other Spaces." *Diacritics* 16.1 (1986): 22-27.

For monographs:

Name, First Name. *Larger Volume*. Publishing Place: Publishing House, Year. Pages.

e.g. Soja, Edward. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London: Verso, 1989.

For internet articles: Name, First Name. "Article." *Main Web Site Title*. URL. Retrieved MM/DD/YYYY.

(or variations, such as organization name or alias in the first place, depending on nature of the web site)

e.g. Edmunds, R. David. "The US-Mexican War: A Major Watershed." *PBS*. pbs.org/kera/usmexicanwar/war/major_watershed.html. Retrieved 09/01/2009.

e.g. World Health Organization (WHO). *Active Ageing: A Policy Framework*. Geneva: WHO, 2002. who.int/ageing/publications/active/en. Retrieved 08/25/2011.

Some publication guides say you do not need to list the URL any more – I require you to do this nevertheless.

12. Appendix III: Citation Guide APA

You can use MLA or APA style for citations, see: owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01. The major rules for APA style are summarized here, as follows:

Page/font format:

- Font Size 12 pt (use a normal system font like Times New Roman, Arial, Cambria, etc.)
- Line spacing 1.5
- Footnotes: 10 pt, Line spacing 1
- Indent quotations longer than 3 lines, with 10 pt size font
- Mark omitted parts of a quotation with [squared] brackets to distinguish them from possible (round) brackets within the quotation:

"Falling Down is a smart film, but it struggles [...] to convince viewers that [the hero] represents an ultimately (mythologically) redundant model of white masculinity." (Kennedy, 2000, p. 122)

Bibliographical reference in parentheses (Author Year: Page):

Blabla blabla (Soja, 1989, p. 37).

When Works Cited holds more than one title of the same author and from the same year, specify text by adding letters to the publication date:

Blabla blabla (Soja, 1989a, p. 37).

Blabla blabla (Soja, 1989b, p.1).

Footnotes should be used only for further comments, not as bibliographical reference.

The **Works Cited** appears at the end of your paper. The format is the following:

For articles in collective volumes:

Name, First Name. (Year). Article. In: Editor1FirstName Editor1LastName & Editor2FirstName Editor2LastName Editor (Eds.). *Larger Volume* (pages of chapter). Publishing Place: Publishing House.

e.g. Kennedy, Liam. (2000). Paranoid Spatiality: Postmodern Urbanism and American Cinema. In: Balshaw Maria & Liam Kennedy (Eds.). *Urban Space and Representation* (pp. 116-30). London: Pluto.

(use Ed. for one Editor, Eds. for multiple Editors)

For articles in journals or magazines:

Name, First Name. (Year). Article. *Magazine Title*. Magazine Number, Pages.

e.g. Foucault, Michel. (1986). Of Other Spaces. *Diacritics* 16.1, 22-27.

For monographs:

Name, First Name. (Year). *Larger Volume*. Publishing Place: Publishing House. Pages.

e.g. Soja, Edward. (1989). *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*. London: Verso.

For internet articles: Name, First Name. (Date of Publication). Article. *Main Web Site Title*. Retrieved from URL on MM/DD/YYYY.

(or variations, such as organization name or alias in the first place, depending on nature of the web site)

e.g. Edmunds, R. David. (n.d.). "The US-Mexican War: A Major Watershed." *PBS*. Retrieved from pbs.org/kera/usmexicanwar/war/major_watershed.html on 09/01/2009.

e.g. World Health Organization. (2002). *Active Ageing: A Policy Framework*. Geneva: WHO. Retrieved from who.int/ageing/publications/active/en on 08/25/2011.

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