The study of utopia (a genre that includes dystopia) is a staple of political thought. Imagining how we might structure our lives in radically better ways has yielded imagined systems of living together as varied as Plato’s Republic, Thomas More’s Utopia, and Ursula le Guin’s The Dispossessed. In the study of politics utopian and dystopian spaces provide both experimental spaces for imagining how people live together and fodder for thinking about how we live now and how we might live differently.

In this class we will read six (mostly) contemporary utopian novels (and one of the things we will discuss is the idea of utopia embedded within seemingly dystopian texts). Interspersed with these readings will be selections from classical utopian texts and experiments in living intentionally. The success of this class is dependent on everyone’s close reading and thoughtful participation. We will likely disagree, which is expected! These novels were chosen because of the varieties of issues that they address, which goes from genetic engineering, to the role of education to 3D printing and shared work. Underneath the relevant particular issues, each author is interested to consider how humans live together and what tears us apart.

**Required Texts:**
- Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Herland*
- Ursula Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*
- Margaret Atwood, *Oryx and Crake*
- Cory Doctorow, *Walkaway*
- Octavia Butler, *Parable of the Sower*
- Kim Stanley Robinson, *Pacific Edge*
- Adrienne Maree Brown and Walidah Imanisha, *Octavia’s Brood*

**Course Requirements:**
- Five 3-5 page papers (due dates in syllabus) 10% each 50%
- Two Midterm exams 10% each 20%
- Class participation 15%
- Final project 15%

**Course scale:**
- A (93-100)
- A- (90-92)
- B+ (87-89)
- B (84-86)
- B- (80-83)
- C+ (77-79)
- C (74-76)
- C- (70-73)
- D+ (67-69)
- D (64-66)
- D- (60-63)
- F (0-59)
Accommodations: Any students who have special learning needs or concerns are urged to speak with me during the first week of the semester if accommodations are needed. The Center for Disability Services provides a comprehensive list of accessibility resources available at the College on the following website: http://disabilityservices.cofc.edu/

Schedule of Readings:

8/23: Introduction
8/25: Ursula Le Guin, The Ones Who Walked away from Omelas, (OAKS)

8/28: Isaiah Berlin, “The Decline of Utopian Ideas in the West” (OAKS)
9/1: Octavia Butler, Parable of the Sower, chs. 1-3

9/4: Parable of the Sower, chs. 4-9
9/6: Parable of the Sower, chs. 10-13
9/8: Parable of the Sower, chs. 14-20

9/11: Parable of the Sower, chs. 21-25 (Paper due, OAKS, 11pm)
9/15: More and Montaigne in Utopian Reader, pp. 93-118

9/18: Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Herland, chs. 1-6
9/20: Herland, chs. 7-12 (Paper due, OAKS, 11pm)
9/22: Edward Bellamy, excerpts from Looking Backward in Utopia Reader, pp. 282-320

9/25: Margaret Atwood, “Writing Utopia” (OAKS) and Oryx and Crake, chs. 1-2
9/27: Oryx and Crake, chs. 3-6
9/29: Oryx and Crake, chs. 7-10

10/2: Oryx and Crake, chs. 11-13
10/4: Oryx and Crake, chs. 14-15 (Paper due, OAKS, 11pm)
10/6: Exam 1

10/9: Evie Shockley, “Separation Anxiety,” in Utopian Reader, pp. 509-524
10/11: Ursula Le Guin, The Dispossessed, pp 1-90
10/13: The Dispossessed, 91-101

10/16: No Class, Fall break
Class participation: Students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the daily reading. Discussion questions will be posted on OAKS to help guide the reading. In addition, there will be open discussion threads for students to share ideas about links between what we are reading and happenings in the world. These questions will help guide our discussion in class, and will give a space for more active participation for those of you who are less excited about speaking up in class! Threads particular to the novels we are reading will be clased after we complete that novel.

Short papers: for 5 of the 6 novels we will read (you choose which one you do not want to write about) you will write a 3-5 page paper analyzing some aspect of the novel. Paper prompts will be available on OAKS. Each paper must include textual evidence for the argument you are making. Papers will be turned in on OAKS (please do not upload documents saved in pages! Save those documents in pdf format before uploading!). Any failure to cite materials used for
papers in this class is considered plagiarism. **Plagiarism is pretending as if the words and ideas of another are in fact yours.** This includes a failure to use quotations, a failure to indicate when you are paraphrasing and the failure to give credit to the author whose ideas you are using. **Plagiarism is a violation of the Honor Code and will be treated as such.**

**Exams:** Twice during the semester there will be in class exams. These exams will be short essays asking you to synthesize the texts we have been reading.

**Final projects:** each student will choose one idea that they think can make a radical difference for the better in the world. On OAKS you will submit your idea and the initial pieces of your project. By the end of the semester your project will include the following: an explanation of the idea (e.g. how does the technology work), an explanation for why the idea will produce radical change for the better (why it will work), a discussion of who supports the use of this idea, a connection between the idea and one of the novels we have read and an explanation for how its use could potentially go terribly wrong. More information on this project will be distributed mid semester.