

**Professor Manfred B. Steger**  
**Monday, 2:30-5:00**  
**BUSAD D106**  
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**POLS 338F: TOPICS IN POLITICAL THOUGHT**  
**REVOLUTION AND UTOPIA**  
**Spring 2014**

***Course Description:***

“Utopia” literally means “no place.” Utopias are about how we would live and what kind of world we would live in if we could do just that. The creation of such “imaginary states of ideal perfection” (Thomas More), free from the difficulties that beset us in reality, has occurred in many cultures. In the history of political thought, utopias have been constructed not just as idle dreams to be enjoyed or escapist fantasies to be rejected, but as guiding visions of the “good life” that are beckoning to be put into practice in the “real world.”

But how do we can from “here” (imperfection) to “there” (utopia)? The political answer is very often “revolution”—literally a “turning around” of currently existing social and political conditions. Revolutions usually seek to accomplish such a fundamental change in power or organizational structures in a relatively short period of time. Different forms of revolutions have been both imagined and put into practice by political thinkers and leaders. In this course, we set out to explore the types and meanings of revolution & utopia by looking at a variety of political utopias from 16<sup>th</sup> century England to contemporary America. Our main task will be to identify the main elements of these revolutions and utopias, and compare their central features and assumptions with regard to such important topics as human nature, origin of society and government, political obligation, law, freedom and liberty, equality, community, power, justice, and means and ends. In addition, this seminar raises question such as: What are the theoretical features and functions of utopia/revolution? Do utopias encourage the formation of egalitarian or authoritarian regimes? Do we still need utopias at the outset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Is it dangerous for a democratic society to attempt putting utopias into practice through revolutionary means? What is the relationship between utopia and revolution?

***Course Readings (required):***

The following paperback books are available for purchase in the UH bookstore:

- 1) Thomas More, *Utopia* (Penguin Classics, 2012). ISBN: 978-0141442327
- 2) Lyman Tower Sargent, *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2010). ISBN: 978-0199573400
- 3) Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (Create Space, 2013): 978-1453704424
- 4) Steven Biko, *I Write What I Like: Selected Writings* (University of Chicago Press, 2002). ISBN: 978-0226048970
- 5) Ron Paul, *The Revolution: A Manifesto* (Grand Central Publishing, 2009). ISBN: 978-0446537520
- 6) Writers for the 99%, *Occupying Wall Street* (OR Books, 2011). ISBN: 978-1-935928-68-3
- 7) John Bellamy Foster, *The Ecological Revolution* (Monthly Review Press, 2009). ISBN: 978-1583671795

Plus other writings available online for free (see course schedule below)

***Useful Secondary Sources:***

- 1) Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia* (Harcourt, Brace and Co, 1936).
- 2) Peyton E. Richter, *Utopias: Social Ideals and Communal Experiments* (Holbrook Press, 1971).
- 3) Paul Ricoeur, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia* (Columbia University Press, 1986).
- 4) Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (Macmillan, 1949).
- 5) Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Vintage, 1962).
- 6) Ernst Bloch, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature* (MIT Press, 1988).
- 7) George Kateb, *Utopia and its Enemies* (Schocken Books, 1972).
- 8) Manuel F. E. and F. P., *Utopian Thought in the Western World* (Basil Blackwell, 1979).
- 9) K. Taylor, *The Political Ideas of the Utopian Socialists* (Cass, 1982).
- 10) Krishan Kumar, *Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times* (Basil Blackwell, 1987).
- 11) Albinski, N. B., *Women's Utopias in British and American Fiction* (Routledge, 1988).
- 12) Melvin Lasky, *Utopia and Revolution* (U of Chicago Press, 1976).
- 13) Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (Syracuse UP, 1990).
- 14) Jack Goldstone, *Revolutions: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford UP, 2013).
- 15) Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of Revolution* (Vintage, 1965).
- 16) Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge UP, 1979).
- 17) James DeFronzo, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements* (Westview, 2011).

***Learning Objectives & Outcomes***

The four principal learning outcomes of this course are:

- *To gain a clear understanding of the theoretical features, history, and political functions of revolution and utopia;*

- *To acquire the knowledge and skill to analyze various revolutions and utopias with an critical eye toward the workings of asymmetrical power relations in society;*
- *To appreciate the role of revolutions and utopia in contributing to the constitution and reproduction of power relations;*
- *To produce and deepen critical forms of knowledge and understanding that contribute to emancipatory strategies of social and political transformation.*

### **Course Requirements**

It is important to me to encourage you to maintain an exploratory mind and create your own “active learning environment”—not solely interacting with me, but with each other as well. I EXPECT REGULAR STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION. You must be willing to engage in class discussions. I will facilitate student discussions by creating a safe context that allows you to speak up freely. But I do not accept the equation of subjective experience with “truth.” You must be able to confront the questions I ask, regardless of your own preferences. Most of all, I am interested in preparing you for independent research which requires a tolerant, reflective mind, best summarized by Immanuel Kant’s dictum: “*Sapere aude*”—“Have the courage to use your *own* understanding!”

You are expected to complete the weekly reading assignments and attend class prepared to discuss the texts. The format of this course will consist of lectures with plenty of opportunity for discussion. We will also view some films in class (see course schedule below). Since it is imperative for a well-educated person to articulate his/her ideas in public, you will also engage regularly in small and large group interactions, including formal presentations of your reactions to the readings. Hence, your active participation in the discussion contributes to your final grade.

Written work will consist of three (3) interpretive papers comparing and contrasting the ideas, features, and functions of revolution/utopia of two thinkers of your choice (five double-spaced, typed pages on font Times Roman 12, not counting the cover page). **Paper I** should be on More, Owen, Marx & Engels (due March 3). **Paper II** should be on Gandhi and Biko (due April 7). **Paper III** should be on Paul, The Writers for the 99%, Bellamy (due May 12).

In your interpretive papers, you should carefully explore the meaning of the revolution/utopia in your selected two authors. With as much sophistication as possible, you should indicate similarities, differences, overlaps, and the political significance of their respective views. You should engage in a critical textual analysis and cite appropriate, short textual passages (full footnotes or endnotes). *No book reports or summaries please!* You are expected to incorporate in your papers external research (books, journal articles, reviews, online materials). I am happy to give you recommendations for external readings; if you wish such advice, please talk to me about it BEFORE you get to work on your paper. These papers represent exercises in the art of interpretation and critical questioning/political

thinking. **No late papers will be accepted (except in documented emergency cases).**

Finally, each student will be responsible for a 30-40 minutes *in-class group presentation* (1-3 students per group) on particular readings (plus leading class in an ensuing discussion). Rather than offering a “book report,” you are expected to present to class what you consider important or difficult textual passages from the readings and then generate questions for discussion. You will be asked to sign up for a presentation on an author of your choice at the latest in the third week of class. Assignments on particular topics will be made on first-come first-serve basis. You may generate supportive materials for your presentation (for example, power points, handouts, charts, and/or other online visual materials).

### ***A Note on Grading***

You must complete all assigned written and oral work in order to pass the course. Any student found guilty of plagiarism will fail the course. Your in-class presentation will count for 15%, your three interpretive essays 75% (25% each), and your attendance/participation 10%. More than TWO absences per semester will result in a 5% penalty per missed class (in order to be considered “legitimate,” absences must be documented and they must clearly reflect cases of emergency. It is not acceptable to simply cite “other commitments”). Thus, your course grade will reflect your presentation, your willingness to participate in discussions, class attendance, and the overall quality of your written work. Students who distinguish themselves during our class discussions will receive *extra credit*—meaning that if you find yourself between two grades at the end of the semester, you will receive the *higher grade*.

Please be advised that *overparticipation* and the monopolization of class discussion at the expense of your peers may count against you, especially if such actions consistently derail the course agenda. I reserve the right to cut off discussion at any point in order keep us on track and help *all* students to understand the relevant material. A significant element in the study of political theory is the ability to learn to listen to other voices. For the purposes of this course, you should interpret the grades you receive in the following terms:

#### ***1) In-Class Presentations:***

An “A” will only be given to presentations that are clearly superior in form as well as content. Typically, such presentations are coherent, well organized, and adhere to the given time frame. “A” students show their thorough and careful reading of the text(s), bring in outside and/or online materials for reference, and generate genuine interest and excitement for their topic. They lead discussions effortlessly, distribute speaking time fairly, and stay focused on their theme.

#### ***2) Interpretive Essays:***

Much of the above pertains to interpretive essays as well. In addition to treating the subject in a sophisticated and creative manner, “A” papers exhibit elegant and clear prose. Such papers draw connections between nonobvious points; they are well organized and furnish adequate citations of primary and secondary sources without losing their own unique and distinct voice and perspective. If this grade is to mean something, just doing a “good job” is not good enough for an “A.” You must demonstrate your ability to go *beyond* the expected.

**Course and Classroom Protocols:**

Our goal is learning, through the sharing of ideas about a complex and rich subject of great intellectual and aesthetic value. The classroom is for comments, questions, and clarifications about the assigned reading. To help us achieve that goal:

- Reading assignments are to be completed in advance of the class meeting when they are scheduled to be discussed; you are expected to bring the book, and your insights as well as puzzlements to share with the rest of the class;
- Be on time; do not go out and come back during class (except for real emergencies); do not leave early;
- No eating during class (drinking is allowed);
- Turn off and put away your cellphones;
- No private conversations;
- Laptops are permitted for occasional note taking use only; you may not withdraw from the group into your laptop;
- Participation in class discussions is a required component of the grade for classwork;
- To sum up: we want to keep the heat in the system for 150 minutes and maximize our learning experience.

***Academic Dishonesty***

The Political Science Department holds its students to the highest standards of academic integrity. Examples of academic dishonesty include, but are not limited to:

- Using the same paper for more than one class without explicit permission from the instructors
- Cutting and pasting directly from a website or other source without attribution.
- Using sources or referring to sources without directly referencing the materials.
- Passing off work done by other students as your own.
- Cheating on tests.

No forms of academic dishonesty will be tolerated. If a student is found to have engaged in a form of academic dishonesty, consequences will range from failure in the course to suspension from the program. Evidence of academic dishonesty within a course will be forwarded first to the graduate chair and then, following the procedures for the University of Hawaii system, to the Office of Judicial Affairs. A record of charges will be kept in the student's file. More information regarding this subject can be found on the Office of Student Affairs' website in the student conduct code.

**Source:** Graduate Student Guide, Department of Political Science, University of Hawaii at Manoa. Accessible at: [http://www.politicalscience.hawaii.edu/3-working/grad\\_documents/gradeguide12011.pdf](http://www.politicalscience.hawaii.edu/3-working/grad_documents/gradeguide12011.pdf) p. 28.

***Office Hours:***

Mon 11:30 – 12:30; and by appointment.

Students are encouraged to see me during office hours on a regular basis. Please clarify any difficult readings and/or other problems as soon as they arise; don't wait until the last few weeks of the semester.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### **WEEK 1 (Jan. 13): INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE**

Readings for week 3: More, *Utopia*.

### **WEEK 2 (Jan. 20): NO CLASS (MLK Day)**

### **WEEK 3 (Jan. 27): THOMAS MORE, *UTOPIA***

Readings for week 4: Sargent, *Utopianism: A Very Short Introduction*

### **WEEK 4 (Feb 3): SARGENT, *Utopianism***

Readings for week 5: Owen, *A New View of Society*

Online at:

<http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/owen/index.htm#new-view>

### **WEEK 5 (Feb 10): ROBERT OWEN, *A NEW VIEW OF SOCIETY***

**Student Presentation 1 (Owen)**

Readings for week 6: Marx and Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*

### **WEEK 6 (Feb. 17): KARL MARX AND FRIEDRICH ENGELS, *THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO***

**Student Presentation 2 (Marx and Engels)**

Readings for weeks 8 & 9: Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*

Available online at: <http://www.mk gandhi.org/swarajya/coverpage.htm>

### **WEEK 7 (Feb. 24): NO CLASS (Presidents' Day)**

### **WEEK 8 (Mar 3): FILM: *GANDHI***

Paper # 1 due.

### **WEEK 9 (Mar. 10): GANDHI, *HIND SWARAJ***

**Student Presentation 3 (Gandhi)**

Readings for week 10 & 12: Biko, *I Write What I Like*

### **WEEK 10 (Mar. 17): FILM: *BIKO***

### **WEEK 11 (Mar. 24): SPRING BREAK**

### **WEEK 12 (Mar. 31): STEVEN BIKO, *I WRITE WHAT I LIKE***

**Student Presentation 4 (Biko)**

Readings for week 13: Paul, *The Revolution*.

### **WEEK 13 (APRIL 7): RON PAUL, *THE REVOLUTION***

**Student Presentation 5 (Paul)**

**Readings for week 14:** The Writers for the 99%, *Occupying Wall Street*.  
**Paper # 2 due.**

**WEEK 14 (Apr 14): WRITERS FOR THE 99%, *OCCUPYING WALL STREET***  
**Student Presentation 6: (99%)**

**Readings for week 15:** Foster, *The Ecological Revolution*.

**WEEK 15 (April 21): JOHN BELLAMY FOSTER, *THE ECOLOGICAL REVOLUTION***  
**Student Presentation 7: (Foster)**

**WEEK 16 (April 28): FILM: *ELYSIUM***

**WEEK 17 (May 5): REVOLUTION AND UTOPIA: DISCUSSION OF *ELYSIUM* AND  
REVOLUTION & UTOPIA IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION**

**Paper # 3 due: MONDAY, MAY 12, Noon.**