BISLA
Liberal Arts College

American Utopias and Dystopias

Code:
Term: Spring 2022
ECTS credits: 6
Lessons per week: 90 + 90 min
Language: English
Instructor: Tor Lindbloom, MA
Form of study: seminar/lecture

Email: lindbloom@bisla.sk
Office Hours: TBA
Information and assignments will be posted on Google classroom.

Course Description

This course will focus on three novels which are by Americans or have their setting in the US and which look critically at how societies are organized: Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance,* Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood. We will also examine these novels in their historical, political and literary contexts. The course, therefore, will allow students to explore some important issues connected to political science as well as to build on their abilities to understand, interpret and appreciate literature.   Discussions will certainly involve politics and how citizens create political structures and regimes and how these in turn motivate, manipulate and control citizens. Other issues which these works deal with include the themes of science, religion, feminism, consumerism, sexuality and suicide.

Course Objectives

- Enhance analytical reading and critical thinking skills.
- Gain intimate knowledge of three influential works of literature.
- Develop abilities to analyse literature and to recognise literary features
- Become aware of three separate historical periods and the philosophical and political movements which traversed them.
- Reinforce and improve writing skills

Required Readings

Students will be expected to obtain their own copies of these novels. BISLA has purchased enough copies of Huxley and Atwood for each student to obtain his or her own copy through the school. Hawthorne is now far beyond its copyright and so is available free online (through project

Gutenberg). I am also able to lend copies of the Oxford Classics edition of this novel from the high school where I teach. All additional readings will be provided to students through Google Classroom or given in class.

Contents

A tentative schedule for the topics/chapters covered each week follows. It is, of course, subject to change.

Week	Dates	Topics/Chapters
1	10/1 + 12/1	Intro to the course and Hawthorne. Preface + Chapter I
2	17/1 + 19/1	Hawthorne chapters 2-7
3	24/1 + 26/1	Hawthorne chapters 8-15
4	31/1 + 2/2	Hawthorne chapters 16-22 First reflection
5	7/2 + 9/2	Hawthorne chapters 23-29
6	14/2 + 16/2	Intro to Huxley. Chapters 1-3 1st essay due date I
7	21/2 + 23/2	Huxley chapters 4-8
8	28/2 + 2/3	READING WEEK
9	7/3 + 9/3	Huxley chapters 9-15 Second reflection
10	14/3 + 16/3	Huxley chapters 16-28
11	21/3 + 23/3	Intro to Atwood. Parts I and II 1st essay due date II
12	28/3 + 30/3	Atwood parts III-VIII
13	4/4 + 6/4	Atwood parts IX-XII Third reflection
14	11/4 + 13/4	Atwood parts XIII-XV+epilogue Second essay
15	20/4	Final essay (contextual)

Evaluation Criteria

20% of the student's grade is based on participation (including attendance, preparation and being active in class)

10% is based on quizzes (approximately one per week) on the readings.

70% is based on six written assignments:

--10% on three mid-work reflections (300-500 words each)

--30% on a comparative essay (1,500-2,500 words) examining a theme which is prevalent in two of the novels

--15% on a literary essay (800-1,500 words) on the novel not used in the comparative essay. This will consist of an analysis of a particular passage in the text, its literary features and its role in the text as a whole.

--15% on a contextual essay looking at a particular aspect of the context of any one of the novels, whether this context be historical, philosophical, literary, geographical, sociological or political. This essay will be researched outside of class but written on the last day of class.

More details on each of these papers will be forthcoming.

Late assignments will be treated as follows:

A 10% deduction of points will be made for the first two days late. 20% for days 3-5. 50% for days 6-10. Assignments turned in more than 10 days late will no longer be accepted.

Grade boundaries (%)
A – excellent: 100-90%,
B – very good: 89-80%,
C – good: 79-70%,
D – satisfactory: 69-60%,
E – sufficient: 59-51%,
Fx – fail: 50-0%.

Passing a course assumes that student was not absent at more than 4 lessons.