WS 305-4: Women & Utopias

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"Thinking Utopia" is a dual exercise: it is at once a projection of what may be and a critique of what is. Western utopian thought begins in ancient Greece and sees a proliferation after Thomas More's Utopia. We begin this course with a look at pre-feminist utopian writing, attending particularly to the role of women in these works. Our principal focus, however, is with feminist utopian and dystopian novels: from the early 20th century, to the extraordinary efflorescence of utopian fiction in the 1970s and 1980s, to the most recent 21st century expressions of the utopian propensity.

Through an examination of feminist novels and films, both utopian and dystopian, we are going to explore the capacities and possibilities of utopian thought as both a critique of prevailing conditions and as a potential catalyst for social change.

Required Reading:


Plus one feminist utopian novel of the student's choice.

Course Requirements: Participation 10%
Presentation (5-7 pages) 15%
Mid-term (in class) 25%
Final Paper (20-25 pages) 50%

Students may apply to the English Dept. to have this course designated for four upper division English credits.

THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN'S STUDIES ENCOURAGES CLARITY OF THOUGHT AND EXPRESSION AND GOOD WRITING. STUDENTS WILL BE EVALUATED ON THESE SKILLS IN ALL COURSES GIVEN BY THE DEPARTMENT.