

ENGLISH 500
Term 1 2015-16
Tuesday 1:00-4:00-ish
BuTo 597

Prof. Deanna Kreisel
Buchanan Tower 520
Office Hours:
W 12:30-2:00 (MA Advising)
W-Th 2:00-3:00 (Open)
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VICTORIAN UTOPIAS

The late Victorian period saw an efflorescence of interest in imagined other worlds, from the persistent fantasy of sheltering domesticity to science-fiction utopias to geometric hyperspace. In this course we will examine the underlying exteriorizing impulse behind these various discourses: an attempt to mark off, often in quite literal terms, new spheres of privilege, meaning, and presence by banishing perceived threats to disciplinary and civilizing boundaries. We will focus on two popular genres and explore the connections between them: the didactic socialist Utopia, and higher-dimensional “scientific romance.”

COURSE READINGS

1. Texts

The following books are available at the UBC Bookstore. Please use these editions of the course texts; it makes seminar discussion much easier if we’re all (literally) on the same page. You are welcome to use electronic versions as long as the edition and pagination are the same as the paper editions listed here. If you’re using electronic versions, please (if possible) bring an electronic tablet to class to read them rather than a laptop.

Samuel Butler, *Erewhon* (Penguin); ISBN: 9780140430578

William Morris, *News from Nowhere* (Oxford); ISBN: 9780199539192

James DeMille, *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* (Broadview); ISBN: 9781551119595

Edwin A. Abbott, *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* (Oxford); ISBN: 9780199537501

Charles Howard Hinton, *An Episode of Flatland; or, How a Plain Folk Discovered the Third Dimension* (Kessinger); ISBN: 9781166451646

H. G. Wells, *The Time Machine* (Penguin); ISBN: 0141439971

2. Other Reading Materials

Critical and other reading materials will be available electronically, in one of two ways. For texts that are available through UBC Library databases (library.ubc.ca), the citation is listed on the syllabus. For book chapters and primary materials, a PDF of the reading will be available in the class Dropbox folder (tinyurl.com/VicUtopias). These readings will be uploaded two weeks before the class in which we will discuss them (I will remove them after that class, so please be sure to download them before class time). Please **bring the readings to class with you in some form** each week, either by bringing an electronic tablet to class, or by printing out and bringing hard copies if you prefer; we will be referring to these texts extensively in class and will need to have them before us. **Please note:** I may be adding other readings to the syllabus as we go along, depending on class interest. I will notify you of any additions at least two weeks in advance.

3. Further Reading

There is a substantial amount of primary source material and secondary criticism on related topics that we will not have time to read in this course. I will provide a selected bibliography for some of this material. You are strongly encouraged to use the bibliography as a starting point for your class discussion leading (if you are so inclined) as well as your research papers and, of course, your general edification and interest.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

1. Discussion Leading

For each class, one or more students will be in charge of leading class discussion for the first hour of the class. This means coming to class with whatever questions, background materials, or prompts that you feel will help facilitate discussion of the day's readings. You may do a formal presentation on some aspect of the readings or on further background research you have done; you may distribute questions for discussion; you may show images or a visual presentation; in short, you may do whatever you like to get the ball rolling. You will receive feedback and a formal grade for your efforts (as I believe this encourages taking the assignment seriously); that grade will be based on the thoroughness, thoughtfulness, and cogency of your preparation.

20% of Grade

2. Class Discussion

Everyone is expected to participate in class discussion. I realize that some folks are chattier than others, but please do your best within the parameters of your personality and comfort level.

20% of Grade

3. Final Research Paper

Each class member must write a formal research paper (15-20 typed, double-spaced pages with 1-inch margins in 12-point Times New Roman font), due Wednesday, December 16th, at 5:00 p.m. **Please note:** If you want to receive your course mark on time, you *must* submit your paper by this date; otherwise, you need to arrange for deferred standing yourself.

60% of Grade

COURSE SCHEDULE

D = In the course Dropbox: tinyurl.com/VicUtopias

L = Available through UBC Library databases: library.ubc.ca

B = Book (course text)

9/8: **Course Introduction**

Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, Chapter 2 [D]

9/15: **Background: Theories of Utopia I**

Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, Chapters 4 and 6 [D]

Vieira, "The Concept of Utopia," *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature* [D]

da Silva, "Revisiting the Rationales of Utopianism" [D]

9/22: **Background: Theories of Utopia II**

Marcuse, from *Eros and Civilization* [D]

Jameson, from *Archaeologies of the Future* [D]

- 9/29: ***Erewhon***
Samuel Butler, *Erewhon* [B]
Zemka, “*Erewhon* and the End of Utopian Humanism,” *ELH* 69 (2002): 439-72 [L]
- 10/6: ***News from Nowhere***
Morris, *News from Nowhere* [B]
Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia*, Chapter 5 [D]
- 10/13: ***News from Nowhere***
Morris, *News from Nowhere* [B]
Morris, “How We Live and How We Might Live” [D]
Ruskin, “The Nature of Gothic” [D]
Freeland, “The Dustbins of History: Waste Management in Late-Victorian Utopias” [D]
Roemer, “Paradise Transformed: Varieties of Nineteenth-Century Utopias” [D]
- 10/20: ***A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder***
DeMille, *A Strange Manuscript Found in a Copper Cylinder* [B]
Huenemann, “Dystopia in a New Land” [D]
- 10/27: ***Flatland***
Abbott, *Flatland* [B]
Richards, *Mathematical Visions*, chap. 2 [D]
Valente, “Transgression and Transcendence: *Flatland* as a Response to ‘A New Philosophy,’” *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 26 (2004): 61-77 [L]
Fechner, “Space Has Four Dimensions” [D]
- 11/3: ***After London***
Jefferies, *After London* [B]
Ruskin, “Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century” [D]
Plotz, “Speculative Naturalism and the Problem of Scale: Richard Jefferies’s *After London*, after Darwin,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 76 (2015): 31-56 [L]
Presentation: Virginia
- 11/10: ***The Coming Race***
Bulwer-Lytton, *The Coming Race* [B]
Barnett, “Education or Degeneration: E. Ray Lankester, H. G. Wells and *The Outline of History*,” *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 37.2 (2006): 203-229 [L]
Judge, “The ‘Seamy Side’ of Human Perfectibility: Satire on Habit in Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s *The Coming Race*,” *Journal of Narrative Theory* 39.2 (2009): 137-158 [L]
Presentation: Sarah
- 11/17: ***The Time Machine***
Wells, *The Time Machine* [B]
Ruskin, “Traffic” [D]

11/24: ***The Time Machine***

Wells, *The Time Machine* [B]

Gomel, "Shapes of the Past and the Future: Darwin and the Narratology of Time Travel,"

Narrative 3 (2009): 334-52 [L]

Presentation: Dalton

12/1: **"The Machine Stops"**

Forster, "The Machine Stops" [D]

Decker, "Politicized Dystopia and Biomedical Imaginaries: The Case of 'The Machine Stops'" [D]

Seegert, "Technology and the Fleshly Interface in Forster's 'The Machine Stops': An Ecocritical Appraisal of a One-Hundred Year Old Future," *Journal of Ecocriticism* 2.1 (2010): 33-54 [L]

Caporaletti, "Science as Nightmare: 'The Machine Stops,'" *Utopian Studies* 8.2 (1997): 32-47 [L]