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Utopian Literature, Empowering Students, and Gender Awareness

1. Utopian Hesitancies and a 36-Year-Old Grandmother. Most young professors, still caught up in the glow of completing their dissertations, yearn to teach their specialties. I didn't yearn. I hesitated for some obvious general reasons: inexperienced professors who teach their specialties tend to assume too much familiarity about their topic, and hence fail to clarify or support their claims; or, because of their infatuation with the topic, they smother their students with too much detailed support. Most likely, they alternate between the two extremes, and their students walk away in a fog of generalities and under a mountain of detail. I also hesitated because of the unusual problems posed by teaching utopian literature. (My brief working definition of a literary utopia is: a fairly detailed narrative account of one or more imaginary communities, societies, or worlds. These fictional constructs represent radical, though identifiable, alternatives to the readers' cultures, and they invite iconoclastic and normative evaluations of those cultures. For an extended definition, see Appendix A.) These problems often involve reading processes, redundancy, and depression. Students often want to read utopias as if they were novels and, hence, try to force them into molds that are inappropriate for the genre's historical, cultural, and literary contexts. Since certain themes, structural devices, narrative viewpoints, and character types tend to reappear, a conventional chronological approach could raise the problem of redundant reading experiences. And doubly depressing experiences at that: well-known 20th-century dystopias can certainly be depressing, eutopian works can depress students by making the worlds students inhabit seem bleak in comparison to utopian worlds.

By the late 1970s, I was still hesitant, but I hoped I had achieved enough distance from my dissertation to avoid turning my students into foggy-headed detail spouters. Moreover, I had decided that the problems of teaching utopian literature could be minimized if a teacher acquainted him or herself with the growing number of bibliographic and critical tools available to utopographers; and if he or she
conscientiously and imaginatively presented the historical, rhetorical, and perceptual differences between novels and utopias, drawing upon the tremendous diversity of utopian literature and emphasizing the positive intellectual and emotional aspects of reading utopias. In an unexpected arena, a freshman composition class, I had also experienced a new impetus to teach utopian literature. As I have described elsewhere ("Using Utopia" 2), I asked the students to pretend that they had all the financial, popular, and intellectual support imaginable and then to describe how they would transform Arlington, Texas, where I teach, into utopia. Soon after most of the students were writing, one student—probably the brightest in the class with a good deal of "life experience" (she was a 36 year-old grandmother)—nervously approached my desk. She asked, "What if I believe that Arlington is utopia?" The students who overheard her laughed. And yet, their papers echoed her sentiments. Most of them projected utopias that were rather unimaginative, minor tinkerings with their present environments (a few more parking lots, a winning season for the Texas Rangers, etc.)

This experience convinced me that many of my students were speculative illiterates. Their educational experiences had conditioned them primarily to be dependent on teachers-as-experts who gave them knowledge about the past and present which was legitimized when they gave it back to the teachers in appropriate oral and written forms. This exchange does involve learning, even empowerment: the students gain knowledge, and the teacher expands his or her sense of power by creating a mirrorlike feedback situation. But such teaching does little to develop independent decision-making skills or to foster speculative thought processes that can add significantly to students' abilities to measure themselves and their environments against alternative possibilities.

My student's question also exposed my pedagogical illiteracy. I thought I knew how to teach students certain types of concepts, skills, and knowledge, but how could I answer their speculative illiteracy? How could I convince them of the value of what they brought to class (a necessary prerequisite for independent speculation), while simultaneously encouraging them to evaluate critically their ideals and values? How could I foster critical and speculative thought that would not be overly dependent upon the students' perceptions of my own values and ideals. I simply didn't know how to achieve these types of student "empowerment."

And I'm still baffled. But I've been impelled to continue my search for answers by my strong belief that exposure to the types of speculation and critical perspectives found in utopian literature can liberate students from old habits of thought and by the advice and help I've received from several critical perspectives (especially reader-response theorists), from pedagogical experts (particularly those interested in
problem-solving, group-discussion methods), and from the many participants in the teaching panels at the meetings of the Society for Utopian Studies and the Modern Language Association. In the remainder of this essay, I will focus on two of several methods I have used in a particular course that emphasizes the types of student empowerment described above. I’ve selected illustrations that relate to students’ abilities to define and analyze their attitudes about gender and family structure.

The 36-year-old grandmother never took this course. If she had, by the end of the semester, she might still think that Arlington, Texas, was utopia. But I would hope that she would be more aware of the value, power, and limits of the views she brought to class, of a variety of other models of utopia she could use to support and critique her views, and of her own ability to evaluate and speculate independent of a teacher’s influence.

2. Empowerment Through Reader-Response Analysis. I begin the process of the reader-response paper with a blatant act of totalitarian teaching: I require them all to read the same book, Edward Bellamy’s Looking Backward (1888). In part I do this for selfish reasons; I am conducting research about how modern readers give meanings to Bellamy’s utopia (see Utopian Audiences). I also require one text because the shared reading and writing experience facilitates class discussions. (In other classes I have, however, used other texts and allowed students to make their own selections. In all cases, the students have gained insights into the processes that shape their reading experiences.)

The reading and writing processes begin almost simultaneously. Besides using their individual systems of note taking, I ask the students also to pay particular attention to strong positive or negative responses (intellectual and/or emotional) to sections of the text and to note any possible connections between these responses/sections and what they bring to the text (e.g., awareness of immediate circumstances, memories of previous texts, classes, people, and other types of experiences, or general attitudes about politics, religion, economics, human nature, etc. See Appendix B.) When they have finished their initial reading and note taking, I ask them to survey what they have written, looking for recurrent patterns of "outside" influences that dominate how they responded to passages, characters, styles, ideas, and other entities "in" the text. (Of course, one of the outside forces is my requirement to read/write about the book in this fashion. Some, though not many, of the approximately 700 American, Canadian, and Japanese students who have participated in this experiment have described this as an important influence.) The discovery of patterns constitutes a step toward organizing a paper around discussions of particular kinds of interrelationships between the marks on the page and the perceptual systems of
individual readers. Rather arbitrarily, and again so that the students will share constraints that become touchstones for discussions, I ask each student to focus the paper on only five types of significant influences. For each influence, and in whichever order they deem appropriate, I expect them to define the nature of the influence, to indicate the relevant section or sections of the text, and to discuss the interaction "between" the two.

Whether Looking Backward or some other text is used, one obvious advantage of the assignment is that it teaches the value and importance of what students bring to class. Specifically, they realize that the confines of their academic reading experience is not limited to the actual "reading" of the text, to any assigned critics' views, or to the teacher's or their fellow student's comments. Rather it is a complex process shaped by many academic and reading experiences, as well as many non-reading experiences and non-academic attitudes.4

Especially experiences and attitudes related to gender. Every time I have used Looking Backward in Texas and Japan, and in six other states and in Canada, where students and faculty have used this approach or a variation of it,5 students have routinely included gender-related influences among those that dominated their responses to Bellamy's utopia. Elsewhere, I have used statistics and evaluative descriptions to define and analyze these responses and their implications ("Late 20th-Century Reconstructs"). For this essay, two striking examples may suffice to illustrate how students discover the importance of what they bring to class.

Several years ago, a young man—Caucasian, in his early 20s, and raised in Texas—focused on his strong negative responses to Dr. Leete, the primary guide figure in Looking Backward. He decided that the most probable reason for his response was that Dr. Leete reminded him of his father, a very successful dentist. Specifically, the tone of confidence and authority in Leete's answers to Julian West reminded him of past father-son conversations when his father taught him that a real man was always right, always had The Answer. The student had been struggling with this restrictive concept for years. Reading about and imagining Leete and writing the paper enabled him to articulate the tremendous power (burden) of his view of masculinity and to begin to identify how it shaped his perceptions of Dr. Leete and by implication other fictional and "real" males, including himself.

More recently, an African-American woman in her late thirties who was raised in Cleveland articulated a very different type of gender awareness. She was a very strong person. I expected her to be upset by Dr. Leete's off-hand pronouncements about protecting women from too much physical exertion (§25:263). Instead, she
enthusiastically described a very positive response to the role of women in the industrial army. In part she attributed this reaction to a Cleveland experience. When she was younger, her father, a construction foreman, had hired her. Because of her strength, she had no trouble wielding a trip-hammer or lifting heavy materials. She did, however, have problems with onlookers. Crowds gathered to gawk at this female doing a man's work. She resigned. She feared that her father, who wanted her to stay, would suffer reprimands for hiring someone who caused work slow-downs. Unlike some of the other women and men students, she was not particularly bothered by Leete's comments about women's physical limitations, by the separate status of the female industrial army, by a ranking system that discriminated against unmarried women, or by a model of femininity that didn't seem particularly liberating (Edith Leete). From her viewpoint, these were relatively insignificant drawbacks to a system that promised equal educational and career opportunities, to a place where people wouldn't stare at a woman doing a good job at what she wanted to do. (Ironically, both Leete and Bellamy would have probably gawked at a female construction worker. By the time he wrote Equality, 1897, Bellamy might have been a bit more tolerant, though the comments Leete makes about African-Americans in that book [e.g., §37:364-65] would probably offend my student.)

In both these cases, the students learned how the attitudes and memories that they brought to a book can obscure—even render invisible—certain parts of the text (in the first, the genial side of Dr. Leete is obscured; in the second, the limitations placed on women are downplayed). This type of awareness, though unsettling (the "how-did-I-miss-that" syndrome), can empower students by sharpening their ability to understand how they process texts and by teaching them the power and value of what they bring to the classroom. Whether the text is Looking Backward or some other book, the reader-response paper also teaches students that they are co-creators of the utopias (and by implication all other texts they read) because they actively translate the marks on the page through their individualized networks of experiential and attitudinal schemata. They are not passive receptacles; they are active shapers. They are also experts in areas where teachers are ignorant. I may know a great deal about Looking Backward and utopian literature, but I know little about the students' lives and how those lives interact with the texts I assign. They have real power "over" me. If my women students, for instance, thought that I liked to read about female construction workers, they could invent appropriate pasts and use them in their papers. A much more constructive way to view this expert-nonexpert role reversal is to mention that after I return the papers to the students (an act which, because of the grading, still is disempowering to some students), I tell them what I have learned from them. I offer an overview of the influences described most frequently and compare them to the influences examined by other students. This
empowers them in the sense that they realize that what they have taught me is worthy of publication and of comparison to the ideas readers have articulated at well-known universities in America, Canada, and Japan, including Minnesota, Harvard, and the University of Tokyo.

3. Empowerment Through Guided Design. One reader-response paper completed early in the semester can give students a new sense of their power as text co-creators and as experts. Ending the course with an "exam" that requires students to outline the characteristics of their utopias can also encourage the development of valuable speculative and evaluative skills. Nevertheless, to achieve the types of goals described at the outset of this essay, professors will have to do more than dream up different types of papers and exams. They should at least experiment with different approaches to the entire classroom experience. One alternative that I have found to be effective is the Guided Design approach to teaching.

Guided Design is not new. It was developed by a group of engineers at West Virginia University during the 1970s (see Wales). From the instructor's viewpoint, a Guided Design course begins when the teacher decides which concepts, skills, texts, and information he or she wants or needs to teach. (Thus, Guided Design is still, in one sense, a teacher-oriented method of instruction, since the instructor is making assumptions about what the students should know.) Then he or she conceives of a series of open-ended problems, suitable for small group discussions, that require an acquaintance with or mastery of the selected concepts, skills, texts, and information. Each problem is then articulated in a set of written instructions and feedbacks that reflect a traditional process of discovery. Students begin by reading an introduction that implies but usually does not define a problem. The process typically moves through the following general phases: problem definition, tentative hypothesis formation, information gathering, evaluation, modification, even rejection of the initial hypothesis, more information gathering, the development and evaluation of more probable hypotheses and solutions. The instructor visits each group, responding to questions and evaluating the written responses to each step. When he or she is satisfied with the group's work, the teacher gives each member a previously written feedback that outlines one approach to the stage and continues on to the questions of the next stage.

In my "Build Your Own Utopia" course, the four open-ended problems focus on questions relating to concepts of the utopian individual, family, community, and culture; the fourth, which I sometimes place first, also requires students to consider the structural, narrative, and stylistic elements of utopian literature that invite readers to suspend their tendency toward disbelieving utopian possibilities. Gender
awareness is an important component of all four problems, but Problem Two: "The Spartan Family and the New Mexico Commune" places special emphasis on the significance of concepts of masculinity, femininity, and family structure. My goals in this problem are to encourage students to examine several types of sex roles and family structures within particular historical, cultural, and ethical contexts. I also want to introduce them to a variety of utopian works and descriptions of intentional communities that either focus on or contain important sections about sex roles and family structures. In each problem, students can use the readings from the previous problems. Typically, by the completion of Problem 2, they have read Genesis and utopias and dystopias written by Plato, Plutarch, Campanella, More, Swift, Bellamy, Gilman, Skinner, Huxley, Orwell, Rimmer, Le Guin, Piercy, and Lessing. They've encountered descriptions of Ephrata, Shaker communities, New Harmony, Amana, Brook Farm, Oneida, Shalam, Helicon Hall, and late 20th-century urban communes. Students can also use relevant readings from other courses or "outside readings," including internet sources, and life experiences as resources for discussions.

"Spartan Family" begins with a description of an imaginary New Mexico commune (dubbed the New Wavers by nearby residents) established during the 1960s as an alternative to the culture and economics of the American, suburban, nuclear family. It is a heterosexual "free-love" community of 30 women and 30 men supported by the cooperative production of yucca shampoo and embroidered backpacks. For the first five years, the community is economically successful, psychologically liberating, and fecund: by the early 1970s, 40 little Wavelettes are part of the community. Unfortunately, during the 70s, the yucca and backpack markets are saturated and tensions rise about responsibilities for the children who are often sickly and disobedient. All the tensions disrupt work schedules causing serious threats to the community's financial stability. In the early stages of the problem, the students are directed to concentrate on defining the community's "family" difficulties. Then they are presented with a possible solution to these problems. An unemployed visitor with a Ph.D. in Classics suggests that the community adopt the Spartan family structure as described by Plutarch. After reading about and outlining the major characteristics of this structure, the students are asked to evaluate its potential as a solution to the problems they defined. At this stage, the instructions allow evaluation in an ethical, historical, and cultural vacuum. Without these constraints, the Spartan system seems to be an effective approach to the commune's woes. But in later stages, when the constraints are added, the students raise serious objections. (No group has ever approved of infanticide.) At the very least, the Spartan family must be drastically modified. New information-gathering stages begin. Students examine the above-mentioned materials and a variety of other sources. (Life experiences are often valuable. The age diversity at my university usually allows me to include at least one
parent in each discussion group.) The final aim of the problem is the description of a family structure or structures that will reduce the problems defined earlier and have a good chance of being accepted and used by the New Wavers.

Certainly, I still have a great deal of control as the students progress through each stage. After all, I wrote the instructions and feedbacks, and I evaluate each stage. Nonetheless, I make it clear from the outset that the written feedbacks (prepared before the course began) do not equal The Answers. Furthermore, gaining permission to go on to the next step does not require groups to devise responses that approximate my feedbacks. Students can, and usually do, modify or reject my models and build excellent cases for their approaches. In the "Spartan Family" problem, the families described in the final stages range in nature from variations of "Leave-It-To-Beaver" families (the reruns are still popular) to combinations of Piercy's co-moms and Le Guin's partners.

I wish I could conclude my comments on notes consistently positive. I have been very pleased with the students' discovery of the value of what they bring into the classroom from their outside lives and with their ability to design convincing and imaginative solutions that I haven't "taught" them. Several times, I've even been startled. One year a student wrote a novel based on his outline-of-utopia final exam; another year a group of students—without my knowledge—formed a cooperative living experiment that lasted for more than a year. Nevertheless, evaluating and "tabulating" the reader-response papers takes much effort, and writing the instructions and feedbacks takes a long time. Then too, Guided Design is not an inspiring approach to learning for all students. I vividly recall one student evaluation that claimed that I didn't deserve my salary; the citizens of Texas, the student maintained, were paying me to stand up in front of the class and lecture, and I wasn't doing my job. Various teaching situations can also cause problems. For instance, Guided Design night classes, especially those beginning at 5:30, can be high risk ventures. Most of the students work; inevitably some of them can't get to class on time; hence, tensions arise over late or no-show group members who aren't pulling their load. Of course, at any time of the day, a teacher could misuse the instructions and feedbacks, turning them into straightjackets that stifle students' critical and imaginative abilities.

For me, the most frightening experiences are the dreams. Usually they begin about a week or two into the semester and recur once or twice before the course ends. I'm in the middle of making a thoroughly convincing justification of the reader-response paper or giving a brilliant response to a question from a group member. Out of the corner of my eye, I notice that two students aren't listening to me. They begin to chat.
A few more join the dialogue. Then another and another group take up conversations. Soon the entire class is actively debating and actively ignoring all my wonderful discourse. For some educational theorists—even me, considering the general goals I defined at the outset of this essay—this might sound like a utopian classroom. But for someone like me raised in a system that defined the teacher as the expert and placed him (in college it was usually a white "him" like me) at the front of the class, this situation tends toward the dystopian.

Fortunately, I'm inclined to ring hopeful signs out of dismal situations. Most political theorists argue that in any power relationship, in order for one group to increase their power, another group must relinquish some of theirs. If my dreams express some truth and if being ignored means losing power, then the power must be flowing out from me to those citizens of Texas who share the classroom with me. Some student empowerment must be going on. I hope it's constructive, vital, and a good taxpayer investment, even for the 36-year-old grandmother (who must now be 50) who lives in utopia.

NOTES

1. Since 1990, many of these tools have been mentioned in the journal *Utopian Studies*, and since 1975 in *Utopus Discovered*, the newsletter of the Society for Utopian Studies, which for a few years appeared as part of *Alternative Futures* as the "News Center" and the "Checklist of Recent Utopian Studies." For information about past issues, contact Kenneth Roemer, English, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX 76013. To fill in partially the gap for the several years during the early 1980s when the newsletter did not appear, see Roemer's "Utopian Studies: A Fiction with Notes Appended."

2. For example, see the Works Cited titles by Bleich, Fish, Flynn, Holland, Iser, Mailloux, Ruppert, Steig, Suleiman, and Tompkins (reader response); Wales (problem solving); and the programs of the SUS conventions printed in *Utopus Discovered* and "News Center"/"Checklist" from December 1976 through the last issue of *Alternative Futures* 4.2-3 (1981). Recent relevant MLA sessions include #597 chaired by Libby Falk Jones, 29 December 1989, Washington D.C., and #660, chaired by Peter Fitting, 30 December 1995, Chicago. Professor Jones is preparing a collection of essays on teaching utopian literature.

3. See Appendix A. For other types of courses that emphasize historical or literary introductions and analyses, different methods may be more appropriate.

4. Initial results of my own research indicate that the process is particularly complex for utopian literature because of its multi-fictional and non-fictional forms and because of its controversial nature.

5. At the University of Texas at Arlington, International Christian University, Rikkyo University, and University of Tokyo, students wrote papers and filled out a questionnaire. At the University of Minnesota, RPI, Hood College, the University of Louisville, Harvard, University of Regina, Arlington High School, and Wesley Palms retirement community in San Diego, readers indicated the five
influences in outline form.

WORKS CITED


Fish, Stanley. Is There a Text in This Class?: The Authority of Interpretive Communities. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1980.


Utopian Audiences (a work in progress).


Steig, Michael. Stories of Reading: Subjectivity and Literacy Understanding. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins
APPENDIX A. The first four pages of the "Build Your Own Utopia" course, including a working definition of utopian literature.

Nature of the Course/Goals. "Build Your Own Utopia" is an interdisciplinary course designed to help students to clarify and evaluate their ideals as they improve reading, writing, and group and individual decision-making skills. To achieve these goals, the course is structured around several hypothetical problems similar to those encountered by authors of utopian fictions and founders of utopian communities. Students read several well-known utopian authors (e.g., Plato, More, Campanella, Swift, Bellamy, Skinner, Huxley, Orwell) and several lesser-known utopists (e.g., Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Abraham Maslow, Doris Lessing, Ursula Le Guin, and Marge Piercy). They also study several communes and visit one experimental community. In small discussion groups, students use the readings, the visit, and their own life experiences and reading in attempts to define possible solutions to the hypothetical problems. For example, in one of the problems, "The Spartan Family and the New Mexico Commune," the students receive a brief introductory handout that acquaints them with an imagined community characterized by tensions among the adults and chaotic relations with the children. In a step-by-step process called "guided design," printed instructions and feedbacks direct students through a series of stages (problem definition, information gathering, examining possible solutions, selecting, defining, and justifying a particular option, etc.) toward the articulation of ways of helping this community. The two papers require students (1) to define influences that they bring to the reading of a utopian work— influences that shape the reading experience, and (2) to develop a model for the development of a utopian individual. The final exam calls for a synthesis of in-class and out-of-class work: an outline of the individual, family, community, and cultural characteristics of each student's utopia. For more specific information about the course see the instructor's essay and textbook: "Using Utopia to Teach the 80s: A Case for Guided Design," World Future Society Bulletin 14 (July-Aug. 1980): 1-5 and Build Your Own Utopia (Washington, DC, 1981).

Working Definitions. Literary utopia: a fairly detailed, narrative description of an imaginary community, society, or world that invites readers to experience vicariously a culture that offers radical though identifiable alternatives (both iconoclastic and normative) to the readers' culture. If the imaginary world is much better than the readers' world, then the text is usually called a "utopia" or "eutopia." "Dystopia" is used for the depiction of "much worse" worlds. The authors of utopian and dystopian works often hope to alter readers' perceptions of and feelings about the origins, realities, and potentialities of the present. In many (though certainly not all) cases the authors hope that the altered perceptions and feelings will move readers to actions that make the real world resemble the authors' imaginary worlds. From the readers' viewpoint, engagement with a utopian text invites
opportunities for self-evaluation, as well as evaluations of the origins, realities, and potentialities of the present. Depending on a complex matrix of personal, reading, and cultural contexts, the reading of a utopia can reinforce, undermine, and/or liberate readers' perceptions of and feelings about themselves and their worlds, and even motivate them to change their daily behavior or to act out their interpretations of utopian proposals.

Utopian communities (often called intentional communities) form when groups act out their utopian ideals by creating a living environment that, from their viewpoint, represents or points toward a much better way of life than is practiced in their societies. These communities may boast hundreds of members or be as small as several families sharing a house in an urban commune or co-op. Some are dominated by charismatic and/or wealthy individuals; some are not. Several of the best known are religious, though many are secular.

Required Readings (HO = numbered handouts students borrow from the instructor)

Roemer, Build Your Own Utopia Appendix: instructions & feedbacks (available at the Fast Copy Center in the University Center)

Kumar, selections from Utopianism (HO)

"Utopia." Omni Apr 1968 (quotations from utopias, comments by celebrities; HO)

More, Utopia.

Bellamy, Looking Backward.

Lessing, Marriages Between Zones Three, Four, and Five.

Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas" (HO).

Johnson, selections from Utopian Literature.

Maslow, "Eupsychia" (HO).

Gilman, Herland.

Skinner, Walden Two.

Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four

Fogarty, selections from American Utopianism (HO)

Le Guin, The Dispossessed.

Piercy, Woman on the Edge of Time.
Group Discussion Problems, Reading Assignments, Exams, Papers, Dates

(UL = Johnson's Utopian Literature; AU = Fogarty's American Utopianism)

To improve the quality of the (graded) group discussions, students should complete the reading assignments before the dates indicated. As students discuss each problem, they can refer to all the previous readings and to readings done for other courses or "for pleasure." Life experiences may also be very relevant to the discussions.

Introduction to the Course

Description of the course; students define, in writing, what they want in their utopias Jan 17

Group discussions of the limitations of selected celebrities' concepts of utopia Jan 19

Readings: "Utopia," Omni; Kumar Jan 19

A Utopian Quiz (Kumar) Jan 19

Problem #4: Illusions of Reality, Culture, and Utopia

(From Build Your Own Utopia Appendix)

Readings: More, Bellamy, Lessing, Le Guin ("Ones")

More Jan 24, 26

Your group's selection Jan 30, Feb 2

The other selections Feb 7, 9, 14

Problem completed Feb 16

Reader-Response Paper on Bellamy Due Feb 14

Exam on Problem #4 Readings Feb 21

Problem #1: The HH Will and the Utopian Individual

(From Build Your Own Utopia Appendix)

Readings: UL: excerpts from Siculus, "Egyptians"; Plato, Republic; Plutarch, "Spartans"; Johnson,
Rasselas; Shaw, Methuselah; Huxley, BNW; Gilman, Skinner, Maslow, Orwell

UL/Maslow(+film) Feb 23, 28

Gilman Mar 2

Skinner Mar 7

Orwell Mar 9

Problem completed Mar 14

Exam on Problem #1 Readings Mar 16

Utopian Individual Paper Due Mar 30

Problem #2: The Spartan Family and the Utopian Commune

(From Build Your Own Utopia Appendix)

Readings: AU Handout (e.g., Ephrata, Shakers, Oneida, Amana, Owenism, Brook Farm, Helicon Hall, Family Living); UL: excerpts from Genesis, Plutarch, "Spartans"; Campanella, City; Swift, Gulliver; Le Guin, Dispossessed; Piercy

UL ("Spartans")/AU Mar 28

AU selections/UL Mar 30, Apr 4

UL selections/Le Guin Apr [6], 11, 13

Le Guin/Piercy Apr 18, 20, 25

Problem Completed Apr 25

Exam on Problem #2 Readings Apr 27

Discussion of Outline of Utopia (take-home final exam) May 2

Individual conferences on Outline May 9, 10, 11

APPENDIX B. Listing of influences examined in the reader-response papers of a 1984 class.

PREVIOUS ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES 9 (7+, 2-) [+ is a positive response; - is negative]

Specific Courses: History (read L.B., so the surprise end was no surprise; (1-); U.S. History (1+);
Psychology (1-); Pol. Sci. "equality" (1+); English (wrote a similar story, though better: 1+); Art (1+);
Economics (1+); Govt. (1+).

General Experience: enjoys studying history (1+)

READING/VIEWING TASTES 30 (20+, 10+)

General Preferences

Likes: science fiction (2+); romances (2+); surprise endings (1+); Gothic romances with class differences (1-); imagery symbolism (1+); happy endings with romance (1+); utopian literature (1+)

Dislikes: science fiction (1-); exciting cover blurbs and dull historical openings (1-); wordiness (1-); formula endings (1+); overly detailed descriptions (1-); Marxist/communist books (1-); dystopias (1+); futuristic works; (1-); foreign language books (ESL;1-)

Specific Written or Video Works

_Utopia_ (1-); _Nineteen Eighty-four_ (1+, 1-); _Animal Farm_ (1+); _The Jungle_ (1+); "House of Usher" (1+); "Rip Van Winkle" (1+); favorite ghost story 1+); Biblical prophesies (1+); "The Jetsons" (1+); favorite space comedy 1+); historical documentary on late 19th century (1+).

CIRCUMSTANCES WHILE READING 34 (18+, 16-)

Physical Environment

alone/late night (identify with West's isolation) (3+) quiet/night (2+, 1-); cold / quiet (identify with West, 1+); private study (1+); library (1-) comfortable univ. center area (1+)

Effect of Assignment/School

forced to look for influences (1+, 1-); lack confidence in paper writing ability (1-); heavy paper-writing load (1-); English class low priority (1+, 1-); required to read Bellamy (2-)

Other Experiences

reading the book twice (2-); rereading specific paragraphs (2+); watching boyfriend's sister (1+); live in a house for the "needy" (1-); upset about seriously ill pet (1-); bad weather (1-); sunny winter day (1-); fight with boyfriend (1+); sick (1-) living in Chinese community (1+); conversation about sports salaries (1+); reading _The Jungle_ (1+) dreamlike state while reading (1+); upset about oversleeping (1-)

PREVIOUS PERSONAL EXPERIENCES 37 (32+, 5-)

Knowing People with Characters or Situations Similar to Bellamy's Characters:

Girlfriend (1-), fiancee (1+), handicapped uncle (1+), friend who visited another country (1+), friend in a coma for a year (1+); woman who suddenly became wealthy (1+); member of a minority (1-); meeting
Characteristics of Self (the reader)

mixture of realism and idealism (1+); guided by "middle-age practical" goals (1-); role as mother (1+)

Other Experiences

King of the Mountain childhood game (1+); discussions with friend about Marxism (1); return to home town (1+); receiving unfair wages (1+); live in socialist Germany (1+); educational exp. (1+); collect records (1+); job experience (4+, 1-); impact of dreams (1+); high school graduation (1+); college experience (1+); moving to new locales (3+); tight finances (1+); playing monopoly (1+); disorientations after waking up from surgery, etc. (3+); frustrations about Christmas shopping (1+); desire to be a coach but know how low the pay can be (1+); difficulty explaining a new-found truth to friends (1+)

ATTITUDES/BELIEFS 68 (30+, 34-, 4 +/-)

Likes and Dislikes

Likes: capitalism (3-); education (2+); time travel imaginatively (1+) music (4+) hypnosis (1+); individual freedom (1-); competition (2-) peace (1+); animals (1); homes with personality (1-); time to travel (1+); interesting personal relationships (1+); politics (1+); science/technology (1+, 1-); statistics (1+)

Dislikes: TV religion (1-); trends in our society (1+); expensive concerts (1+); sermons (1-); socialism (3-, 1+); any talk about unions (2-); commercial competition (1+); preaching not based on the Bible (1-); middlemen (1+); lawyers (1+); communism (2-); selfishness (1+); threat of physical punishment as motivation (1-); hypnosis (1-)

General Attitudes About: concept of an ideal society (2+, 1-, 1+/-); human motivation (2-); Braniff failure (1+); shopping (1-); social interdependence (1+); 20th-century women (2+, 3-, 1+/-); inability of humans to achieve high ideals (1-); the poor (1+); social security (1+, 1+/-); relationship between achievement and reward (1+); the economies of N. and S. Vietnam (2-); national differences (1-); U.S. as military peacekeeper (1-); family relations (1+/-); menial jobs (1-)