

## Political Science 488/589

### The Politics of the Darkside: Dystopia in Literature, Film, and Popular Culture

Dr. Jeffrey Herndon  
160 Ferguson Social Science  
Office Hours: 8:00-9:00 a.m., Mon-Thurs  
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#### Required Books:

- Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. Simon and Schuster. ISBN: 9781451673319
- Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. Scholastic Press. ISBN: 9780439023528
- Golding, William. *Lord of the Flies*. (Centennial edition). Perigee Trade. ISBN: 9780399537424
- Koestler, Arthur. *Darkness at Noon*. Scribner. ISBN: 9781416540267
- King, Stephen. *The Long Walk*. Signet. ISBN: 9780451196712
- Miller, Frank. *The Dark Knight Returns*. ISBN: 9781435223097
- Orwell, George. *1984*. Penguin. ISBN: 9780143416302

Other readings as assigned.

#### Course Description:

This class is an examination of dystopian politics as represented in a variety of source materials.

#### Course Objectives:

Students will

- understand the basic elements of dystopian politics.
- be able to identify trends in popular culture leading to dystopian and dysfunctional politics.
- relate material from the course materials to structures and events in "the real world."
- improve communication skills.

#### Attendance Policy:

Given the nature of this course, your attendance is required. You cannot receive an attendance and participation grade if you do not attend. With that said, you are allowed to have two absences to use however you choose (do not bring me notes from your mother, your doctor, your Great Aunt Matilda, etc. explaining why you did not attend). Absences over that number will result in 0 participation points for you on that day. Also, attendance means that you arrive on time—do not make a habit of tardiness.

You should arrive for class prepared to take part in the class. Participation in class discussions is an essential part of this course. You should have done the readings assigned prior to class, thought about them in a critical way, and be prepared to have something to say. In many cases the discussion papers will provide insight into the tenor of our conversation on a given day.

Finally, given the fact that we are using film, some of the class meetings may run longer than the time allotted by the schedule. You are responsible for material covered in class if you have to leave before the class is over.

**Grading:**

Undergraduate	Discussion papers	30%
	First Paper	20%
	Second Paper	30%
	Class attendance and participation	20%
Graduate	Discussion Papers	40%
	Final Paper/Presentation	40%
	Participation/Discussion	20%

**Electronics Policy:**

We are fortunate to live in a technologically advanced time. With that said, the following guidelines must be observed. First, laptop computers are wonderful things and I highly recommend their use. With that said, it is disrespectful to the class for you to cruise the internet, check your email, or engage in electronic conversations while class is in session. You will get one warning if you are engaged in such activities during class. After that, you will be asked to leave your computer at home.

With regard to cellular telephones: one person in this class has permission to leave his phone on during class—and it is not you. It is entirely possible that you will survive for two hours without using your telephone. Your instructor reserves the right to answer any telephone that rings during class (and trust me—you do not want him to do it). Repeat violations will result in the confiscation of the offending instrument. Texting during class is prohibited and will likewise result in the confiscation of the offending instrument. Failure to adhere to these guidelines will result in your being removed from the course.

**Conduct:**

“All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment.” What this means in terms of our class is that from time to time we will discuss controversial issues. During these discussions, you are expected to conduct yourself with civility and politeness (remember, “politeness” is the first form of politics). A university education is a privilege and ought not be abused through disruptive and impolite behavior.

The following are not allowed in the context of this class:

- Sunglasses, Bluetooth earpieces, caps/hats, etc.
- Leaving class and then returning (if you have to go to the bathroom, do so before and/or after class)
- Eating during class
- Texting, or any other form of instant messaging
- Listening to your iPod or other media devices

## Course Calendar

[This calendar represents the best estimate of our progress. Your instructor reserves the right to edit the calendar as necessary. This would include adding or deleting readings as required by the exigencies of the class.]

July 9: Introduction to the Course

July 10: Dystopia, Totalitarianism, and You

July 11: Orwell, *1984*

July 12: *1984*

July 16: Koestler, *Darkness at Noon*

July 17: *Minority Report*

July 18: *Minority Report* discussion

July 19: *The Obsolete Man*.

July 23: Bradbury, *Fahrenheit 451*

July 24: *Children of Men*; First paper due

July 25: *Children of Men* Discussion

July 26: Miller, *The Dark Knight Returns*

July 30: Miller, *The Dark Knight Returns*

July 31: *The Running Man*

August 1: King, *The Long Walk* and *The Running Man* discussion

August 2: *Gattaca*

August 6: Collins, *The Hunger Games*

August 7: Lang, *Metropolis*

August 8: Golding, *Lord of the Flies*

August 9: Graduate Student Presentation; Final paper due