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## LOVE & DYSTOPIA AMOR LEARNING COMMUNITY 2017

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### Course Description

In this class we will explore fiction that images how love suffers, survives, and even flourishes in dystopian worlds. Our readings each create fictional worlds that are strangely like our own but amplify the worst possibilities for our societies, economies, institutions, and environments. In each case we will ask what happens to love—sex; romance; love between friends and family; love for nation and creed; and love for objects and places—in a world that seems hostile and frightening. Many of the dystopias we will encounter in this class amplify the way our social and institutional structures treat and shape identities, communities, and relationships. We will read and watch a range of stories in this class, from classic dystopian fiction to more recent young adult and children’s stories. Throughout the class we will examine how dystopian fictions interrogate our contemporary responses to gender, class, race, sexuality, and disability.



### Additional Learning Outcomes for This Class:

- Assess in discussions, exams, and written work how dystopian fictions interrogate our contemporary responses to gender, race, class, and sexuality, as well as other aspects of social and political life.
- Develop a broader understanding of the relationship between fictions and the contexts in which they are written and read.
- Define the relationships between dystopian and utopian imagined worlds and demonstrate understanding and analysis of the fictional tropes and techniques of dystopian fiction.
- Develop critical reading and analysis skills and demonstrate those skills in written assignments, exams, presentations, and class discussion.
- Articulate how various forms of love are impacted and explored by extreme states of political, social, economic, environmental, and institutional damage and violence in fiction.

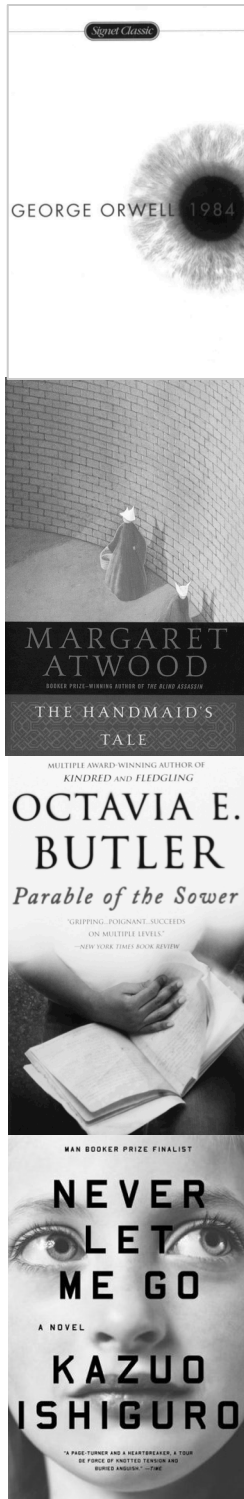
*“[W]e are at peak dystopia... It has become, along with apocalyptic narrative, the default narrative of the generation.”*  
- Junot Díaz, 2016

### Expected Learning Outcomes for the AMOR Learning Community:

- Explore and articulate the meanings of love and what it conquers, resists, and produces in literature and culture from the classical period to the present.
- Analyze representations of love and violence in literature, mythology, rhetoric, media, and art.
- Assess in discussions and written work how ideologies, social status, gender, and race shape the meanings of love and violence
- Evaluate how acts of reading and writing shape cultural experiences of love and violence.

## READING

Please make sure you have the specified editions of the books below and that you bring them to class on the days when we discuss them. You need physical (rather than electronic) copies of these four novels:



George Orwell,  
*Nineteen Eighty Four*,  
Penguin, ISBN:  
9780451524935

Margaret Atwood,  
*The Handmaid's Tale*,  
Knopf Doubleday,  
ISBN: 9780385490818

Octavia Butler, *The  
Parable of the Sower*,  
Grand Central,  
ISBN: 9780446675505

Kazuo Ishiguro,  
*Never Let Me Go*,  
Knopf Doubleday,  
ISBN: 9781400078776

Additional  
readings will be  
uploaded as PDFs  
to Blackboard.

Please make  
sure you bring  
these to class,  
either as a  
printout or on a  
computer or  
tablet.

## ASSIGNMENTS

### Participation (15%)

I expect you to participate actively in class discussions. This is a big class, and I know it can be difficult to talk every time, but I expect you to make every effort to do so. I am not measuring your participation on the complexity or profundity of your comments; I am looking for you to respond to the topic and text that we are discussing thoughtfully and to make substantive contributions to discussion. Please see attendance and electronics policies for more information about participation.

### Exams (15% each)

There will be two exams in this class, one midterm (10/12 in class) and one final (12/7, 1:30-3:30PM). These closed-book exams are meant to offer you the opportunity to synthesize your thoughts and learning. They will offer a mixture of short answer, fill-in-the-blank, and essay questions about the texts and topics we have covered in class. If you do the reading, come to class, take notes, and review your notes, you can expect to do well on this exam. We will have exam review sessions before each exam.

### Grading for In-Class Participation

**A:** Comes to class on time with clear evidence of having read and thought about the material beforehand.

Contributes actively and significantly to discussion in most classes.

**B:** Comes to class on time with clear evidence of having read the material. Contributes some to class discussion in most classes.

**C:** Comes to class on time with clear evidence of having read the material. Contributes occasionally to class discussion.

**D:** Comes to class but does not participate in most class discussions.

**F:** Comes to class but does not show evidence of engaging with the material or participate in class discussion.

**0:** Does not attend class, sleeps during class, uses electronic devices outside of approved usage, or causes substantial disruption to class.

**An important note on reading:** There is a LOT of reading in this class, and you will need to carefully complete all of it. Please make sure you plan your time accordingly. I suggest you carefully annotate or take notes on your reading.

### Free Writes/Quizzes (15%)

You will have frequent (unannounced) free-writes or quizzes at the beginning of class. Free writes ask you to respond to a prompt I give you with *details* from the text we have read for that day. In some cases a free write will ask you to formulate one or two discussion questions about the material for that day. The best way to prepare for these free writes/quizzes is to do all the reading carefully and take notes about your ideas, thoughts, and questions about the reading before class. Free writes and quizzes serve two purposes. First, they let you demonstrate that you are doing the reading for class. Second, they help you to organize your thoughts about a text and topic before we begin our discussion, which can make it easier for you to participate. There are no make-ups offered for free writes/quizzes, but I will drop the lowest free write/quiz when calculating final grades to make up for this. Please note that free writes/quizzes will take place at the beginning of class, so if you are late to class you will miss the quiz/free write. Free writes and quizzes will be graded out of 5 points.

#### Grade % at a Glance

15%	Participation
15%	Free Writes/Quizzes
15%	Midterm Exam
15%	Final Exam
5%	Dystopia Article plan
20%	Dystopia Article
15%	Group Presentation

### Dystopia Article (20% + 5% for plan and draft)

This is a research project with a twist! For this assignment you will imagine you are writing an article for an online magazine geared toward a general educated American audience. The editor has asked you for an article about the significance of a particular dystopian text *now*. This can be a text we have read in class together (one of our four novels) or it can be another dystopian text (e.g. a novel, a graphic novel, a collection of short stories, a film, a television series). Your goal is to make a specific and persuasive case for why this text matters in our culture now. What do you think this text is telling readers/viewers about a specific aspect of our current state of affairs, whether social, economic, environmental, political, etc.? (You will need to pick a focus.) Because this is an online magazine article, you should plan to embed links to other websites (news articles, other magazine articles, statistics, blog posts, etc.) and images (with source citations). You are welcome to use the first-person pronoun and write from a personal perspective, but you need to make the article interesting and persuasive for your online audience and aim to avoid offending readers with different viewpoints (try to persuade them instead!). You will receive more guidance on this article after midterms and you will be uploading these to a website. 5% of your grade will be determined by a plan and draft. **Draft and plan due by November 7; finished article due electronically on or before November 30.**

#### Dates! Deadlines!

10/12	Midterm Exam
11/7	Dystopia Article plan & first paragraph due for feedback
11/28	Group Presentations begin
12/7	Final Exam (1:30PM)
11/28	Dystopia Article due

### Group Presentation (15%)

After Thanksgiving break you will give a 10-15 minute presentation in a group and supplement it with visuals or a handout. You have two options for this presentation. The first is to design your own fictional dystopia. You will sketch out for the class the premise for your dystopian world, your main characters, and your major plot points. In addition to this storyboard presentation (which can be verbal or visual or both), you will

want to explain to us the rationale for your choices. The second option is to “teach” the class about a dystopian text we have not read or watched together. Your goal here is to avoid merely summarizing the plot; instead, you want to briefly introduce the text and then identify *one* important aspect about it that you can “teach” to us. Imagine you are giving a TED talk about a topic explored by this text. (Note that if you choose option 2 you need to pick a text that none of you worked on for your Dystopia Article.)

## ASSESSMENT

Some important points about grades:

- Grades are not negotiable.
- I do not discuss grades via email. This is for privacy reasons and because it is much more productive to discuss these matters in person. I am happy to talk to you about any aspect of your learning experience in the class, including concerns about assessment, in person. Just make an appointment with me or come to my office hours.
- All grades will be posted to Blackboard and are calculated using the grading scale below (with the exception of free writes/quizzes, which are pass/fail). Please check Blackboard regularly.
- I will make every effort to post all grades for assignments that are turned in on time within one week of turn in. If you do not see your grade for an assignment posted on Blackboard within two weeks of completion/turn in, feel free to email me to ask about this.
- If you are concerned about your performance in the class or with any of the assignments, please do come talk to me as early as possible. There is not much I can do to help you if you come to me the week before the final paper to ask me how to get an A if you have a B- average. If you have particular concerns about writing or presentations, talk to me about these things early in the semester so that I can help you develop strategies and direct you to useful resources.
- Your group presentation will receive a group grade unless it is obvious to me that certain members of the group are not contributing. If you have any concerns at all about working with your group, please come to talk to me as soon as possible so that I can help.

*a little  
Orwellian  
syllabus  
humor ;-)*



**We will be discussing some sensitive and difficult material this semester. Keep in mind that we all come from different backgrounds and have different beliefs. Be willing to challenge ideas and have yours challenged, but always be respectful of one another.**

A	93-100 %	Consistently excellent; shows mastery of material
A-	90-93 %	Very good to excellent
B+	87-90 %	Very good
B	83-87 %	Consistently good
B-	80-83 %	Fair to good
C+	77-80 %	Acceptable
C	73-77 %	Falls short of expectations, but acceptable
C-	70-73 %	Falls short of expectations
D	60-70 %	Poor
F	0-60 %	Failing

## COURSE POLICIES

### Expectations Overview:

I expect you to come to class prepared and having read and thought about the assigned material. You cannot learn and do well in this class unless you do all the reading. Please arrive on time, remain in the room during class (e.g. please try to use the bathroom before class), and remain attentive during the class. I also expect you to participate in class discussions so that we are all engaged in the learning process (this is part of your participation grade). However, please refrain from side-conversations with your neighbors.



### Respect Contract:

To make this class a positive environment, I ask that you all adhere to a social contract of mutual respect.

We need to respect one another's opinions, abilities, differences, and backgrounds. This applies to me too: as your professor, I expect your respect, and you can also expect me to treat you with respect. This policy extends beyond the classroom to email correspondence and Amor Facebook posts. Please note that the topic of this class is inherently political, which means at times we will be discussing issues about which you and other members of the class might have strong feelings. Please keep this in mind and make sure you remain respectful of other backgrounds and points of view.

### Attendance:



You are expected to attend all class meetings, to complete all reading and written assignments and exams, and to participate in class discussions.

Attendance involves being on time and attentive in class; you can be marked as absent if you are excessively tardy, asleep, or using electronic devices for reasons unrelated to the course material. I do understand that certain emergencies and life events might mean you need to miss class (e.g. illness, personal emergencies, active military duty). Because of this, you have up to but no more than 4 absences without attendance negatively affecting your grade. For each absence after four, your participation grade

will be dropped by ONE grade level (e.g. from a B to B-). Six absences (the equivalent of three weeks) will result in automatic failure of this class.

Please note that this absence policy is meant to accommodate emergencies and illnesses; it is not an excuse to skip class. I suggest you carefully save up all of these allowed absences in case of emergency towards the end of the semester, since there will be no exceptions to this policy. Also note that if you miss a class it is your responsibility to find out from another student what you missed in class. Please do not email me to see if you missed anything; assume that you have missed something and contact a classmate. If work is due on a day you miss class, you must still turn in that work by the due date to avoid grade penalty (see below). Please arrange with a classmate to turn in your work for you, place it in my mailbox, or upload it to Blackboard when appropriate.



### Late Work:

Work due in class is due at the beginning of a class session unless specified. Please contact me as far in advance as possible if you need more time for an assignment because of a crisis, illness, or family emergency. I will only grant extensions if they are requested at least 48 hours in advance of the due date (since you should have already started working on the assignment before then) and with reasonable grounds. The midterm exam and final essay are exempt from this allowance; you must attend both of these.

### Meetings/Contacting Me:

I'm here to talk to you! I am very happy to discuss any aspect of this class with you during my office hours. My office is College Hall 626, and my regular office hours this semester are 11-12:30 on Tuesdays and Thursdays. If these times do not work for you, just send me an email with your availability and we can set up an appointment at a different time. If



you have any question about your progress in the class, do set up a meeting to discuss this with me in person as early as possible so we can find strategies to help you.



### Format for Written Assignments:

Standard 1-inch margins, 12-point standard font (e.g. Times New Roman), single-spaced header (no longer than 2 lines), double-spaced text, pages numbered. Please use MLA in-text parenthetical citations and works cited.



### Email:

Please check your Duquesne email account daily for any announcements or messages from me (and your other professors). I am happy to receive emails from you. In emails to me, or any professor, please be courteous and professional. This means including a subject line, beginning with a salutation (Dear Dr./Professor X,), using full sentences and proper grammar, refraining from text shorthand, and including a closing remark (Sincerely/Best) with your full name. Please check the syllabus before emailing with a question. Please note that I do not accept assignments via email unless I have agreed to do so in advance (otherwise they are liable to get lost in the gmail abyss!)



### Electronics:

You are welcome to use laptops or notebook devices for *course related materials*—to take notes, consult the syllabus, or view reading assignments (except for the four novels, which you should purchase and bring to class as hard copies). However, if you use any device for anything other than class related work you will receive a “0” (F) for participation that day. For egregious misuse you will be marked as absent. Continual misuse of electronics will result in failure of the participation grade, which is worth 15% of your grade. If I see you texting, checking social media, chatting, answering the phone, shopping online, etc., I also reserve the right

to immediately revoke your electronic device privileges for the rest of the semester, ask you to leave the class, or collect your devices from you at the beginning of class periods. Please be professional and responsible with electronics use. All cell phone ringers should be turned to silent. Remember that even if you finish a task before the rest of the class or if you are engaged in group work, your devices should only be used for class-related material. Please note that any device use during an exam is grounds for failure.



### Blackboard:

You will be using Blackboard frequently in this class, as in many other classes at Duquesne. You need to learn to use Blackboard efficiently.

In this class we will use Blackboard for readings, announcements, grades, and group discussion. Please familiarize yourself with our Blackboard page. If you have any problems, contact Blackboard Student Help.



### Accommodations:

Students who feel they may have a disability that requires special accommodation should contact the Office of Disability Services, 309 Student Union, 412-396-6658. Please also contact me privately/come to talk to me by the second week of class so that we can make necessary arrangements. Per university rules, I can only accommodate disabilities and learning difficulties if they are documented with Disability Services.



### Athletics:

If you are involved in a university athletic program and will miss class because of it, you must bring an official list of the classes you will be missing from the athletic department in the first week of class. Moreover, ALL work is to be submitted prior to the excused absence. You are responsible for any announcements and/or class notes that you miss.

## Academic Honesty:

The Student Handbook defines plagiarism as follows: “Plagiarism includes, but is not limited to, the use, whether by summary, paraphrase, or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work or specific ideas of a person without full and clear acknowledgment. It also includes the use of material prepared by another person or agency engaged in selling of term papers or other academic materials.” This means that plagiarism includes using language or ideas you find on the Internet or in another source and not clearly attributing them to their source. Make sure you cite and document your sources clearly.



If you do plagiarize, you will receive one of the following penalties as specified in university guidelines: “0” (F) on an assignment or portion of the course, failure of the course, suspension, or expulsion from the university. In order to avoid these penalties, ask questions, carefully cite and document your sources, and come to see me or visit the writing center if you are using outside sources and you are not sure whether your incorporation of the material is fair use. Start writing your article well in advance, and consult with me if you are having trouble interpreting an assignment, generating ideas, or documenting sources. I am here to help you, so please come to talk to me if you have any concerns.

### TENTATIVE SCHEDULE\*

DATE	TOPICS / IN CLASS DISCUSSION AND WORK	HOMEWORK & ASSIGNMENTS (due on the day listed)
<b>WHAT IS DYSTOPIA?</b>		
Tu 8/22	<b>Introduction</b> Amor Community; Syllabus; Intros	If you haven't already, try to watch <i>The Hunger Games</i> (first film) before class.
Th 8/24	<b>Utopia and Dystopia</b> <b>Lotteries and Reapings</b> The Hunger Games (clips in class)	<b>Reading:</b> Excerpt from Thomas More's <i>Utopia</i> (2 pages, BB) and Shirley Jackson, "The Lottery" (6 pages, BB)
Tu 8/29	<b>What is Dystopia?</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Essays on dystopia by Booker, Claey's, and Sargisson (22 pages total, BB). Begin reading Orwell to get ahead.
<b>"CLASSIC" DYSTOPIAN FICTION</b>		
Th 8/31	<i>Nineteen Eighty Four</i>	<b>Reading:</b> Orwell to page 69
Tu 9/5	<i>Nineteen Eighty Four</i>	<b>Reading:</b> Orwell to page 136
Th 9/7	<i>Nineteen Eighty Four</i>	<b>Reading:</b> Orwell to page 224
Tu 9/12	<i>Nineteen Eighty Four</i>	<b>Reading:</b> Orwell to end
Th 9/14	<b>America 2017: Alternative Facts, Fake News, and Surveillance</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Articles from <i>The New Yorker</i> , <i>The Nation</i> , and <i>The Guardian</i> (BB)
<b>GENDER, BODIES, REPRODUCTION, and the STATE</b>		
Tu 9/19	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	<b>Reading:</b> Atwood to page 66
Th 9/21	<b>"The Handmaid's Tale" Hulu TV Series</b> (Screened in class for discussion alongside the novel)	<b>Reading:</b> Read articles (BB) for team-taught Amor class in Dr. Miller's session by Friday; continue reading Atwood

Fr 9/22	<b>Team-Taught Amor Class (meet in Dr. Miller's class)</b>	<b>Reading:</b> Carey, Freedman, and Pioreschi articles assigned in all AMOR classes (see Blackboard)
Tu 9/26	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	<b>Reading:</b> Atwood to page 188
Th 9/28	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	<b>Reading:</b> Atwood to page 255
Tu 10/3	<i>The Handmaid's Tale</i>	<b>Reading:</b> Atwood to end (+ Historical Note)
Th 10/5	<i>The Handmaid's Tale Now</i> : Recent articles on <i>The Handmaid's Tale</i> novel & television show	<b>Reading:</b> Articles from <i>New York Times</i> , <i>The New Yorker</i> , and <i>Vulture.com</i> (BB)
<b>MIDTERMS</b>		
Tu 10/10	<b>Exam Review</b>	Study for exam
Th 10/12	<b>Exam (in class)</b>	Study for exam
<b>RACE, ENVIRONMENT, and RELIGION</b>		
Tu 10/17	<i>Parable of the Sower</i>	<b>Reading:</b> Butler to page 99, end of ch. 9
Th 10/19	<i>Parable of the Sower</i>	<b>Reading:</b> Butler to page 149, end of ch. 13)
Tu 10/24	<i>Parable of the Sower</i>	<b>Reading:</b> Butler to page 278, end of ch. 22)
Th 10/26	<i>Parable of the Sower</i>	<b>Reading:</b> Butler to end
<b>REPRODUCTION (again), POPULATION, and IMMIGRATION</b>		
Tu 10/31	<b>"Children of Men"</b> (watch in class)	<b>Reading:</b> None due; start Ishiguro
Th 11/2	<b>"Children of Men"</b> (finish in class & discuss)	<b>Reading:</b> None due; start Ishiguro
<b>BODIES, IDENTITIES, and CONFORMITY</b>		
Tu 11/7	<i>Never Let Me Go</i>	<b>Reading:</b> Ishiguro to page 111 <b>Due: Dystopia Article plan &amp; draft</b> (hard copy in class; see assignment)
Th 11/9	<i>Never Let Me Go</i>	<b>Reading:</b> Ishiguro to page 203
Tu 11/14	<i>Never Let Me Go</i>	<b>Reading:</b> Ishiguro to end
Th 11/16	<b>Group Meetings/No class meeting</b> (Professor at NAVSA conference).	Meet with groups to prepare group presentations.
<i>Thanksgiving Break</i>		
<b>PRESENTATIONS, WRAPPING UP, and FINAL EXAM</b>		
Tu 11/28	<b>Group Presentations (4 groups)</b>	Prepare for presentation & study for exam
Th 11/30	<b>Group Presentations (3 groups)</b> <b>Exam Review</b>	Prepare for presentation & study for exam <b>Due no later than this date: Dystopia Article</b> (online)
Tu 12/7	<b>1:30-3:30PM Final Exam</b>	Study for exam

\* Syllabus subject to change. I will announce any changes in class and on Blackboard.