

# LT165 DYSTOPIAN FICTION

Seminar Leader: PD Dr. Sladja Blazan

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Office Hours: by appointment

## Course Description

Dystopian fiction often imagines bleak, post-apocalyptic futures, in which themes of environmental and biological disaster, societal collapse, totalitarian control or the technological subjugation, dehumanization or enslavement repeat again and again. Why immerse oneself in images of such depressing futures? Why does dystopia seem to dominate past and present speculative fiction? In this class, we will examine the ways in which dystopias sought to address the social and political problems of their times. From George Orwell's *1984* (1949) to Octavia E. Butler's Parable Series (1993), Kazuo Ishiguro's *Never Let Me Go* (2005), Basma Abdel Aziz, *The Queue* (2013/1016) and Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* (2014), dystopian fiction has been understood (and used) as a politicized oppositional space. The extreme portrayal of contemporary problems in dystopian fiction makes these issues more visible and therefore intelligible. Throughout this class, we will discuss how the political potential of the dystopian imaginary manifests itself in literary and cinematic examples.

## Requirements

Regular attendance

Occasional one-paragraph reading responses

Active participation in group discussions

One in-class presentation

Two term papers (total 5000-7000 words)

## Academic Integrity

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

## Attendance

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

## Assignments

Midterm paper ca. 3000 words

Final paper ca. 4000 words

### Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

## Grade Breakdown

Seminar preparation and participation 30 % (15% for weeks 1-7 and 15% for weeks 8-14)  
Essay assignments 50 %  
In-class presentation 20 %

## Schedule

**January 31, 2023**

Introduction: Terms and Theories

**February 7, 2023**

George Orwell, *1984* (1949)

**February 14, 2023**

George Orwell, *1984* (1949)

**February 21, 2023**

Ursula K. Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walked Away from Omelas" (1973)

**February 28, 2023**

*Blade Runner*: Directed by Ridley Scott, performances by Harrison Ford, Rutger Hauer, Sean Young, Warner Bros., 1982.

**March 7, 2023**

Octavia E. Butler, Parable Series (1993)

**March 14, 2023**

Octavia E. Butler, *Parable Series* (1993)

**March 21, 2023**

Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (2005)

**March 28, 2023**

Kazuo Ishiguro, *Never Let Me Go* (2005)

**April 11, 2023**

Emily St. John Mandel, *Station Eleven* (2014)

**April 18, 2023**

Emily St. John Mandel, *Station Eleven* (2014)

**April 25, 2023**

Basma Abdel Aziz, *The Queue* (2013/1016)

**May 2, 2023**

Basma Abdel Aziz, *The Queue* (2013/1016)

**May 9, 2023**

*The Lobster*. Directed by Yorgos Lanthimos, performances by Colin Farrell, Rachel Weisz, Jessica Barden, Feelgood Entertainment, 2015.

**May 16, 2023**

Completion Week

### Essay Deadlines

Midterm papers are due March 18, 2023.

Final papers are due

- for graduating students on April 12, 2023
- for all other students on April 26, 2023