UTOPIA AND IDEOLOGY

András Bozóki & Zsolt Czigányik
Central European University
MA course, 4 credits, Fall, 2015.
Classroom: Vígázhó F. u. 2. #213.
Monday and Wednesday, 15.30 – 17.10
Office hours:
András Bozóki: Vígázhó F. u. 2. #202, Wednesday 11 am – 1 pm.
Zsolt Czigányik: TBA.

Course description
The course will cover two, often related topics: utopias and ideologies. Professor Czigányik will lead the discussion on utopianism in the first 6 weeks of the semester, while Prof. András Bozóki will continue on ideologies in the second part of the course.

Utopianism is usually understood in everyday discourse as irrational and irresponsible dreaming about the future. A similar view is maintained by Marxists, and also by Karl Mannheim, who, observing the disastrous results of certain 20th century totalitarian utopian ideologies condemns utopianism as a whole. Here the course has a twofold objective; first, by acquainting students with important texts of utopian and dystopian (negative utopian) thought, analyses the utopian impulse as a source of imagination and dynamism in the social sciences and also as an intersection of literary fiction and political thought. The involvement of literature in the understanding of politics provides a platform for understanding social tensions from the individual’s point of view.

The second part of the course discusses the nature of political ideology. It offers readings on some “classic” ideologies, namely liberalism, conservatism, socialism, anarchism (and their different combinations). Some of the texts are often labelled as manifestations of the liberal, socialist, conservative or anarchist “utopias” and our aim is to discuss the similarities and difference among them.

Learning outcome
Students will be able to understand the major traditions of literary utopianism, its relationship with political ideologies and the differences between utopian and dystopian literature. With the methods of literary hermeneutics a complex analysis of such texts will be obtainable.

Modern dystopias will be shown to be reactions to and criticism of contemporary societal structures and trends, rather than warnings or prophecies, the way they are often interpreted. Students will also be able to identify and analyze the characteristics of ideological thinking.

Requirements
Students must participate in all classes and inform the professor in advance if they cannot attend a class. They should read the mandatory readings before the meetings. Please note that the reading load of this course is somewhat higher than usual, however, many of the texts are primary literary material and hence considered to be more easily readable than a theoretical or critical paper.

Students are expected to participate actively in the discussions, and will also be asked to present one or more readings during the semester. These in-class activities will make up 60 per cent of the final grade (which include participation, activity, position papers and oral presentations). 40 per cent of the grade will be made up by a 3000 word final paper. Titles
must be pre-approved. Final essays should be both handed in print-out form and e-mailed by the last meeting of the semester.

FIRST PART  (Prof. Zsolt Czigányik)

WEEK 1.  September 21, 23.  Introduction: Utopia and utopianism

The first classes will introduce students into the history of utopian thought and other utopian phenomena, confronting academic discourse with everyday understanding of the terms. Utopia will be shown to be part of a larger scheme, utopianism.

Mandatory reading

Suggested readings
Jacoby, Russell (2005), Picture Imperfect. Utopian Thought for an Anti-Utopian Age. New York: Columbia UP.
Segal, Howard (2012), Utopias. A Brief History from Ancient Writings to Virtual Communities. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.

WEEK 2.  Sep. 28, 30.  Introducing the Genres: Utopia, Dystopia and Satire

The basic similarities and differences: social criticism, present or future tenses. When a literary work takes place in the future, readers often regard it as a prediction, in case of dystopia as a ‘warning’. It will be demonstrated that a more fruitful analysis can be achieved if we look at utopia as a criticism of the author’s own era and relate the work of art to political ideology and social criticism. In the analysis of utopias profit is drawn from the fact that in this genre literature and social sciences overlap. Literary theory will be kept to a necessary minimum, however students will be acquainted with the basic literary concepts of satires and their interpretation, the understanding of fictional space, the uses and versions of displacement and alternative literary realities.

Mandatory readings
More, Thomas (1516), Utopia. Book II.

Suggested readings
The full text of the above book.

WEEK 3. October 5, 7. The best known utopia: Gulliver’s Travels

The description of alternative worlds expresses criticism for the author’s own country. Debates of interpretations in case of Book Four: the triumph of an enlightened rational utopia or a cautionary tale with an underlying dystopian irony / sarcasm? Differences between satire and utopia (local / temporal and global / universal interpretations). Dynamic tension of the cosmos of imaginary worlds and the chaos of reality.

Mandatory reading
Swift, Jonathan (1726), Gulliver’s Travels. Book I (Lilliput) and Book IV (Houyhnhnms).

Suggested readings
Swift, Jonathan (1726), Gulliver’s Travels. Book II and Book III.

WEEK 4. October 12, 14. Future Tense and Dystopia Appears:
The Time Machine by H. G. Wells

Possible degeneration of the human race and concern for the condition of human beings in the author’s own time in the first successful science fiction story. The appearance of the future tense means the diversification of displacement from purely spatial to temporal. Spatial anachronisms and echoes, defamiliarized settings, utopia / dystopia and science fiction. The dystopian turn on page and screen

Mandatory reading

Suggested readings
Yevgeny Zamyatin (1921), We
WEEK 5. October 19, 21. The logical consequences of a Consumer Society

Huxley’s thought experiment points out the shortcomings and dangerous tendencies in the writer’s present by placing them in the future to provide ‘laboratory conditions’ for the experiment. Signs of a dystopian turn in literature. The irony of the reversal of moral values. Reflection on the social and historical background in Europe and the US (Americanization of European culture). The loss of human liberty through conditioning.

**Mandatory readings**


**Suggested readings**

The full text of the above book
Huxley, Aldous (1962), *Island.*
Orwell, George (1949), *1984.*

WEEK 6. October 26, 28. Utopian Conclusions

The optimism of earlier utopias is replaced by a satirical disillusionment as the 20th century seems to fuel dark thought experiments and gave rise to dystopia, and its rhetorical referentiality to the empirical world. Partly due to the utopian roots of totalitarian ideologies, utopia generally was looked at with suspicion. The reasons and misguided nature of this suspicion will be discussed as a conclusion to the first part of the course.

**Mandatory reading**


**Some additional readings on Utopia**

Kumar, Krishan (1991), Utopianism. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

SECOND PART  (Prof. András Bozóki)

WEEK 7. November 2, 4. The Concept of Ideology

Mandatory readings

Suggested readings

WEEK 8. November 9, 11. Liberalism, Libertarianism, Neoliberalism

Mandatory readings

Suggested readings
Friedrich A. Hayek (1944), The Road to Serfdom. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press
David Harvey (2005), A Brief History of Neoliberalism. Oxford: Oxford University Press


Mandatory readings

Suggested readings
Mark Gerson ed. (1996), The Essential Neoconservative Reader. Addison Wesley

Mandatory readings

Suggested readings
Alexander Gray (1963), The Socialist Tradition. London: Longmans
Nikolai Bukharin (1966), The ABC of Communism. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan P.
Darrow Schechter (1994), Radical Theories. Manchester: Manchester University Press

WEEK 11. November 30, December 2. Anarchism

Mandatory readings
Suggested readings

WEEK12. December 9. Anarchism continued

Readings

December 11. Concluding discussion

Final essay must be handed in print out form, as well as electronically, by the last class.