

Utopia

Description

This is a course about rhetoric and how to use it, the tactics and strategies of effective academic argument and research. It focuses intensively on a single text for the entire term: Thomas More's *Utopia*. It does so not only because this particular book spawned the term moderns use to describe implausibly fanciful imaginary societies, but also because of the elaborate fakery, hints, and in-jokes involved in the text's original publication (More also, conveniently, has quite a lot to say about the practice of writing). More's little book also invites multiple methodological approaches: examinations of historical and biographical context, as well as later reception history and modern translation; philosophical and political arguments about the role of reason in social formation; literary theoretical questions about meta- and framing fictions.

This class requires a lot of writing from students and many class periods will be devoted to examining individual pieces of student writing, talking specifically about what works, what doesn't, and why. To do that, students will learn a good bit of linguistic, logical, grammatical, and rhetorical terminology. In addition to writing quite a few different types of essays, students will also write sustained evaluations of their peers' work: i.e., part of what this course will teach you is how to be a competent and engaged editor/reviewer. By the end of the course, students will be able to fashion an argumentatively sound essay. Ideally, they'll also be able to discern an academic bluff or con when they read it.

Texts

Thomas More, *Utopia*, 3rd ed., trans. Robert M. Adams, ed. George M. Logan (W.W. Norton, 2010).

Bryan A. Garner, *Garner's Modern English Usage*, 4th ed. (Oxford UP, 2016).

Requirements

Four major papers, seven article synopses, and six peer/editorial reviews.