

Syllabus Arch 3314 Contemporary Issues in Architecture Spring 2021

Contemporary issues in architectural theory and history utilizing precedents from early 20th century to present. May be repeated for credit. 100% Online MW 9:00-10:20 AM

Ben K. Shacklette, Architect & Associate Professor Ben.Shacklette@ttu.edu

Mobile: 806-392-6558, Online Office hours: 10:30-12:00am MW OBA



Bad Places: Viewpoints on Dystopian Worlds

Reflections on the buildings and landscapes of real and imagined societal dysfunction.

In 1516, Sir Thomas More published *Utopia*, a satirical novel describing a fictional island inhabited by his notion of an ideal society living without violence, crime, unhappiness, or poverty. The term *utopia*, which comes from Greek: οὐ ("not") and τόπος ("place"), literally means "no-place". Coined by More, it has since been used by numerous authors to describe various mythical states or societies which are ideally perfect with respect to politics, laws, customs, and living conditions. Ironically, the Greek word εὖ, which means "good" or "well" can be interchanged with οὐ to create the word *Eutopia*, or "good place", which has become the standard interpretation of the concept in modern writing and film. In either case, it is a world more perfect and ideal than the real societies of the day.

A *Dystopia* can be defined as a society or a world in which people do not work well with each other and are not happy. The first use of the term "dystopia" was in 1868 by John Stuart Mill, one of the most influential thinkers in the history of classical liberalism. Mill contributed widely to social theory, political theory, and political economy, stressing the freedom of the individual in opposition to the unchecked power of the state. Taking cues from More, Mill constructed the word *Dystopia* from the Ancient Greek words δυσ- meaning "bad" or "not-good", and τόπος or "place". **Bad Places** investigates the buildings and landscapes of present day dystopias as formidable examples of the current state of human crisis, and poignantly reminiscent of the social ills and human excesses foretold in the history of frictional dystopian works. What can be learned from "bad places"? What can be done to make them "good places"?

Warning: The films shown in this course are all found in mainstream American film libraries. The very nature of the topic of dystopia results in content which may be disturbing or offensive to some viewers, there may content of a sexual nature, nudity, profanity, graphic violence and socially abhorrent behavior, vivid imagery of human depravity, and it may include scenes which depict the demeaning treatment of people including women and certain ethnic groups. The ideas expressed, the characters portrayed, and the conditions depicted in these films does not necessarily represent the viewpoints of the instructor, the College of Architecture, or Texas Tech University. The films shown are considered to be works of cinematic art which are meant to be viewed from a critical perspective and are not shown solely for gratuitous entertainment value. Viewer discretion is advised.



Dystopian literature generally paints a nightmarish image about what the world will be or has become. Usually, the main themes of dystopian works are rebellion, oppression, revolutions, wars, overpopulation, and disasters. Dystopias can result in brutish totalitarian government and the loss of democratic rule, unrestrained corporate greed and corruption, environmental disaster, the breakdown in social order, or the rise of an evil cult of mind control at the hands of nefarious yet charismatic despots.

Dystopias are typically characterized by dehumanization and oppression, a disparity in wealth and poverty, widespread human misery, rampant disease, and overcrowding. Dystopias culminate during systematic social decline and conclude with the inevitable cataclysmic collapse of civilization. Dystopian scenarios are occasionally set in post-apocalypse situations where there is usually no government and societies have been reduced to primitive existences. William Golding's allegorical novel *Lord of the Flies*, and George Miller's *Mad Max* series are examples of a civilized group who revert to savagery after a cataclysmic event.



Descriptions of fictional Dystopian societies are often commentaries on real societal, environmental, political, economic, religious, psychological, ethical, scientific, and technological conditions. Some philosophers, authors, musicians, artists, and filmmakers use the concept broadly to create fictional exaggerations of imagined dystopias to draw attention to the ills and misfortunes of contemporary societies, and to make dire warnings about the future. Dystopian societies commonly appear in fictional works set in the future.



The predominant qualities of a Dystopian World are:

1. Propaganda is used to control the citizens of society which is often an illusion of a perfect utopian world.
2. Information is controlled, independent thought and freedom are restricted or forbidden.
3. Inhabitants are expected to conform to uniform expectations, government by totalitarian force.
4. Citizens are perceived to be under constant surveillance and are taught to fear the outside world.
5. Society is organized around the worship of an absolute ruler, a monolithic state, or an abstract concept.
6. The masses live in a dehumanized state and are ruled by callous elites who live in excessive luxury and privilege.
7. Loss of individual identity-citizens are expected to sacrifice self for the benefit of the state.

There are many reasons contemporary societies create “bad places” that are neither ideal nor desirable, but these places are informative representations of the human condition. Turning away in revulsion from these places, too often a natural response, and not seeing them as meaningful and powerful images of our everyday world may continue their existence through our indifference to them. Through the study of the often displeasing, disturbing, and shocking examples of contemporary human environmental production, a study informed by the broad cultural impact of fictional dystopian art and literature across history, this course seeks to identify, classify, understand, and interpret meaning from the fictional and real dystopian images of human creation and, ultimately, to speculate alternative perceptions about such anti-utopian environments.



Real and modern dystopias, or contemporary “bad places”, arise from human activity that make up the following seven categories which constitute the primary areas of focus for this course.

1. human made disasters and inadequate responses to acts of nature
2. economic decline, the disparity in wealth and poverty, corporate corruption
3. cultural conflicts, migration, asylum, refugees, and xenophobia
4. bad government, theocratic rule, totalitarianism
5. war, rebellion, oppression, and terrorism
6. pollution, improper disposal of waste, and the stockpiling of obsolete machines and materials
7. climate change and environmental catastrophe





Bad Places: Viewpoints on Dystopian Worlds Arch 3314 Contemporary Issues in Architecture meets Monday and Wednesday Mornings from 9:00 to 10:20am online. The class structure includes watching films, lectures, discussions, and student presentations of assignments.

This elective class is designed as an interactive survey course that relies less on the traditional methods of lecture and test, and actively engages students in discovery, discussion, and the presentation of student led research through written, verbal, and graphic exposition. Through watching, writing, reading, and discussing 19 selected films, ideas will be tested and contested, opposing viewpoints will be considered critically, and conclusions may be controversial.

Films, like architecture are composed of created environments that are inhabited by human thought as well as physical form, and both reflect social conditions, espouse political ideologies, express aesthetic preferences, and embody values, perspectives, beliefs, and aspirations relative to their time and creators. Imagined and built places rethink the past, emphasize the present, and envision the future, and it this intersection between cinema and the city, a confluence of expression and speculation about *who we are and what we want to be*, which forms the focus of this course.



Bad Places: Viewpoints on Dystopian Worlds-Arch 3314 aligns with the **Written Communication** component of the College of Architecture (COA) Communication Literacy Plan and fulfills related criteria from the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB).

COA Communication Literacy Plan

Critically analyze contemporary issues in architectural history and theory utilizing precedents from the early twentieth century to the present through a series of writing exercises and assignments. (3314)

NAAB A.1. Professional Communication Skills

Professional Communication Skills: Ability to write and speak effectively and use representational media appropriate for both within the profession and with the general public.



Assessment of Student Performance

Student performance will be evaluated through a series of writing exercises and assignments given throughout the semester which are designed to advance the students' abilities to analyze, integrate, synthesize, and communicate in writing supported by verbal and graphic presentation techniques. This will include reviews of scholarly articles, the study of well-known examples of architecture and cultural landscapes, the study of literary and film resources, and analytical essays or position papers. The methods for assessment are:

1. 60% Three writing assignments at 20% each.
2. 30% Final Project.
3. 10% Class attendance, discussion, participation, and contribution.

NOTE: The instructor will stream many of the films viewed in this course during class. It is important that all students sign into the zoom meetings on time, and vigorously participate in online discussions.

Expected Student Learning Outcomes

Upon the satisfactory completion of this course, students will become better researchers and more competent writers able to construct, present, and defend advanced written positions, including verbal and graphic methods of communication, about the architectural theories and cultural histories of dystopian societies utilizing precedents, both fictional and real, from the early 20th century to the present.



Course Requirements

Independent research, film viewing, and writing outside of regular class time are expected. Each student is required to use and maintain an individual folder system in the designated class OneDrive folder on the college server and use email regularly to communicate with the instructor and classmates.

Required Texts and Materials

Students are required to have a functional computer with typical software for writing, graphics, and film viewing. It is mandatory to have a strong, steady, and reliable internet connection for attending online classes, downloading movies and materials online, and attending classes. Movies constitute the primary source of materials for this course and there are two forms of delivery. Films shown during class hours will be streamed live by the professor, and films to be viewed outside of class are to be purchased, rented, or borrowed by the student.

Texas Tech University and College of Architecture Polices

Academic Regulations

Regulations concerning admission, registration, grading practices, class attendance, the university calendar, and other similar matters are stated in the current Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog. <https://catalog.ttu.edu/>

Civility in the Classroom

Texas Tech University is a community of faculty, students, and staff that enjoys an expectation of cooperation, professionalism, and civility during the conduct of all forms of university business, including the conduct of student–student and student–faculty interactions in and out of the classroom. Further, the classroom is a setting in which an exchange of ideas and creative thinking should be encouraged and where intellectual growth and development are fostered. Students who disrupt this classroom mission by rude, sarcastic, threatening, abusive or obscene language and/or behavior will be subject to appropriate sanctions according to university policy. Likewise, faculty members are expected to maintain the highest standards of professionalism in all interactions with all constituents of the university. See www.depts.ttu.edu/ethics/matadorchallenge/ethicalprinciples.php



Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Violence

Texas Tech University is committed to providing and strengthening an educational, working, and living environment where students, faculty, staff, and visitors are free from gender and/or sex discrimination of any kind. Sexual assault, discrimination, harassment, and other Title IX violations are not tolerated by the University. Report any incidents to the Office for Student Rights & Resolution, (806)-742-SAFE (7233) or file a report online at <http://www.depts.ttu.edu/titleix>

LGBTQIA Support Statement

Within the Center for Campus Life, the Office serves the Texas Tech community through facilitation and leadership of programming and advocacy efforts. This work is aimed at strengthening the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA) community and sustaining an inclusive campus that welcomes people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions. Office of LGBTQIA, Student Union Building Room 201, www.lgbtqia.ttu.edu, 806.742.5433

TTU Statement of Ethical Principles

Texas Tech University is committed to the values of mutual respect; cooperation and communication; creativity and innovation; community service and leadership; pursuit of excellence; public accountability; and diversity. See http://www.depts.ttu.edu/officialpublications/catalog/_EthicalPrinciples.php

Academic Integrity Statement

It is the aim of the faculty of Texas Tech University to foster a spirit of complete honesty and a high standard of integrity. The attempt of students to present as their own any work they have not honestly performed is regarded by the faculty and administration as a serious offense and renders the offenders liable to serious consequences, possibly suspension. See OP 34.12 and the section on "Academic Dishonesty" in the Code of Student Conduct for more information.

Retention of Work

The college of Architecture reserves the right to retain, exhibit, and reproduce work submitted by students. Work submitted for grade is the property of the college and remains as such until it is returned to the students.



Attendance

Professor Shacklette will allow each student to have **three unexcused absences** during the semester. Two points will be deducted from the final grade for each additional unexcused absence. Absence due to religious observance: The Texas Tech University Catalog states that a student who is absent from classes for the observance of a religious holy day will be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment scheduled for that day within a reasonable time after the absence Notification must be made in writing and delivered in person no later than the 15th class day of the semester. Absence due to officially approved trips: The Texas Tech University Catalog states that the person responsible for a student missing class due to a trip should notify the instructor of the departure and return schedule in advance of the trip. The student may not be penalized and is responsible for the material missed. Whether an absence is excused or unexcused is determined solely by the instructor except for absences due to religious observance and officially approved trips described above. Students are responsible for attending class.



Religious Holy Day Statement

A student shall be allowed to observe Religious Holy Days without penalty, subject to the following conditions: "Religious Holy Day" means a holy day observed by religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Section 11.20, Vernon's Texas Codes Annotated, Tax Code. A student may be excused from attending classes or other required activities, including examinations, for the observance of a religious holy day, including travel for that purpose. A student whose absence is excused for this purpose may not be penalized for that absence and shall be allowed to take an examination or complete an assignment from which the student is excused.



Grading

The grades used, including plus and minus, with their interpretations, are: A, excellent; B, good; C, average; D, inferior (passing, but not necessarily satisfying degree requirements); F, failure; I, incomplete; and W, withdrawal (not to be confused with a drop). The letter R designates a course repeated to remove an I. The grade of I is given only when a student's work is satisfactory in quality but, due to reasons beyond his or her control, has not been completed during the regular semester. The professor of record reserves the right to refuse to grade work that is incomplete, extremely late, does not meet requirements, is substantially inferior in quality, or is poorly displayed. Any work submitted after the time and date scheduled will receive a reduction in grade, unless the circumstances- documented illness or death, unusual acts of nature, family crisis-warrant consideration by the faculty and constitute a valid justification.



Reporting Illness and Deaths

In case of an illness that will require absence from class for more than one week, the student should notify his or her academic dean. The dean's office will inform the student's instructors through the departmental office. In case of class absences because of a brief illness, the student should inform the instructor directly. Other information related to illness can be found in the Student Handbook. The Center for Campus Life is responsible for notifying the campus community of student illnesses, immediate family deaths and/or student death.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that universities, and all faculty and staff therein, make reasonable accommodation for all students with disabilities in all programs and activities, both academic and nonacademic. See OP 34.22 Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements. Students should present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services during the instructor's office hours. Please note instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from Student Disability Services has been provided. For additional information, you may contact the Student Disability Services office in 335 West Hall or 806.742.2405.

Bad Places: Arch 3314 Spring 2021 Course Schedule

Monday & Wednesday 9:00-10:20 am 100% Online

Dystopian Films 1: Early Classics in Black and White 1927-1956



Week 1

Wednesday January 20 First day of class- **Lecture No. 1 Course Introduction**
Watching Assignment No. 1: Metropolis (Fritz Lang, 1927) 120 minutes

Week 2

Monday January 25 "1984" (Michael Anderson, 1956, 90 minutes) Part 1 60 minutes
 Wednesday January 27 "1984" (Michael Anderson, 1956, 90 minutes) Part 2 30 minutes

Discussion

Watching Assignment No. 2: The Trial (Orson Welles, 1962) 118 minutes

Week 3

Monday February 1 **Lord of the Flies** (Peter Brook, 1963, 92 minutes) Part 1 60 minutes
 Wednesday February 3 **Lord of the Flies** (Peter Brook, 1963, 92 minutes) Part 2 32 minutes

Discussion

Writing Assignment No. 1: The Origins of Themes as Tropes in Dystopian Cinema

Week 4

Monday February 8 Group 1 Reports & Presentations Writing Assignment No. 1
 Wednesday February 10 Group 2 Reports & Presentations Writing Assignment No. 1
Reading Assignment No. 1: Building Dystopia, Nathaniel Coleman

Dystopian Films 2: Hollywood Cult Classics In Living Color 1966-1981



Week 5

Monday February 15 **Fahrenheit 451** (Francois Truffaut, 1966, 112 minutes) Part 1 70 minutes
 Wednesday February 17 **Fahrenheit 451** (Francois Truffaut, 1966, 112 minutes) Part 2 42 minutes

Discussion

Watching Assignment No. 3: Soylent Green (Richard Fleisher, 1973)

Week 6

Monday February 22 **A Clockwork Orange** (Stanley Kubrick, 1972, 136 minutes) Part 1 70 minutes
 Wednesday February 24 **A Clockwork Orange** (Stanley Kubrick, 1972, 136 minutes) Part 2 70 minutes
Watching Assignment No. 4: Escape from New York (John Carpenter, 1981) 99 minutes

Week 7

Monday February 22 **Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior** (George Miller, 1981, 96 minutes) Part 1 70 minutes
 Wednesday February 24 **Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior** (George Miller, 1981, 96 minutes) Part 2 20 minutes

Discussion

Writing Assignment No.2: Interpreting Cultural Meaning in the Development of Dystopian Films as a Genre

Week 8

Monday February 22 Group 1 Reports & Presentations Writing Assignment No. 2
 Wednesday February 24 Group 2 Reports & Presentations Writing Assignment No. 2
Reading Assignment No. 2: Of other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias, Michel Foucault

Dystopian Films 3: Blockbusters with Cool Special Effects 1982-1998



Week 9

Monday March 1
Wednesday March 3

Blade Runner (Ridley Scott, 1982, 117 minutes) Part 1 70 minutes

Blade Runner (Ridley Scott, 1982, 117 minutes) Part 2 47 minutes

Discussion

Watching Assignment No. 5: The Terminator (James Cameron, 1984) 107 minutes

Week 10

Monday March 8
Wednesday March 10

12 Monkeys (Terry Gilliam, 1995, 129 minutes) Part 1 70 minutes

12 Monkeys (Terry Gilliam, 1995, 129 minutes) Part 2 60 minutes

Discussion

Watching Assignment No. 6: The Truman Show (Peter Weir, 1998) 103 minutes

Week 11

Monday March 15
Wednesday March 17

Dark City (Alex Proyas, 1998, 100 minutes) Part 1 70 minutes

Dark City (Alex Proyas, 1998, 100 minutes) Part 2 30 minutes

Discussion

Writing Assignment No.3: Generation Y at the Box Office-Millennials Change Dystopian Film

Week 12

Monday March 22
Wednesday March 24

Group 1 Reports & Presentations Writing Assignment No. 3

Group 2 Reports & Presentations Writing Assignment No. 3

Watching Assignment No. 7: The Matrix (the Wachowskis, 1999) 136 minutes

Dystopian Films 4: 21st Century Global Megahits



Week 13

Monday March 29
Wednesday March 31

Children of Men (Alfonso Cuarón, 2006, 109 minutes) Part 1 70 minutes

Children of Men (Alfonso Cuarón, 2006, 109 minutes) Part 2 39 minutes

Discussion

Watching Assignment No. 8: Elysium (Neill Blomkamp, 2013) 109 minutes

Week 14

Monday April 5
Wednesday April 7

No Classes

Lecture No. 2: **The Vocabulary of Visual Media Communication**

Final Project

Hyperreality & Cyberspatiality -Theorizing the Interconnectedness of Architectural Space and Cinematography

Week 15

Monday April 12
Wednesday April 14

Mad Max: Fury Road (George Miller, 2015, 120 minutes) Part 1 70 minutes

Mad Max: Fury Road (George Miller, 2015, 120 minutes) Part 2 50 minutes

Discussion

Week 16

Monday April 19
Wednesday April 21

Blade Runner 2049 (Denis Villeneuve, 2017, 163 minutes) Part 1 80 minutes

Blade Runner 2049 (Denis Villeneuve, 2017, 163 minutes) Part 2 80 minutes

Week 17

Monday April 26
Wednesday April 28

Group 1 Final Project & Presentations

Group 1 Final Project & Presentations **Last day of class**