

## HNRS 130: Conceptions of the Self (Spring, 2017)

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Office: Mason Hall D205

Hours: M, T, W, and R: 12-1:00pm (by appointment only)

You can schedule an appointment with me here: <https://honorscollege.gmu.edu/academics/academic-advising>

HNRS 130.005: M and W, 1:30-2:45pm (R B105)

HNRS 130.006: M and W, 10:30-11:45am (MH D003)

### Dystopian Imaginings: Future Societies and Selves



The last decade has seen a proliferation of popular novels and films dedicated to a dystopian theme. While some commentators have celebrated the anti-sexist and anti-racist themes of these recent dystopias, others have dismissed them as “a quasi-paranoid fear of any form of political or social organization” (Frederic Jameson). By historically contextualizing this phenomenon, this course asks how such imagined futures inform our present political, economic and social landscapes, as well as our conceptions and understandings of the self.

The first half of the semester will focus on defining terms and tracing the origins and historical trajectories of several recent imagined futures. Central to our readings will be the themes of collectivism and individualism, socialism and capitalism, racism and solidarity, especially as they appear in political, economic and philosophical texts. Readings will include selections from authors as varied as F.A. Hayek, Ayn Rand, Herbert Marcuse, Francis Fukuyama and Donald Trump. The second half of the semester will focus on the themes of consumer culture and media technology. Alongside M.T. Anderson’s popular young adult novel *Feed* (2002), we will read selections from the *Unabomber*, Theodor Adorno, Guy Debord, Jean Baudrillard, Zygmunt Bauman and E.M. Forster.

*A complete schedule and reading list can be found on our course Blackboard site.*

### Course Assignments and Percentages

This is a reading, writing and discussion course. Many of the readings are challenging and complex—you’ll need to put extra effort into preparing for class in order to succeed.

- Reading Notebook (10%): I will collect these randomly throughout the semester.
- Weekly Quizzes (30%): Quizzes **cannot** be made up if you miss class.
- Group Presentation(s) (10%): You’ll work with your peers to lead at least one class discussion.
- Midterm Exam (25%): We’ll take a short-answer and short-essay midterm exam.
- Final Exam (25%): We’ll take a short-answer and short-essay final exam.

*More info about assignments can be found on our course Blackboard site.*

### Course Learning Outcomes

In addition to developing an understanding of the course’s main content, themes and lines of inquiry, students will pursue the following learning outcomes:

Understand and practice effective elements of evidence-based reasoning. (I, R)

Use written communication as a means of discovering, exploring and expressing ideas and meaning. (I, R)

Understand and practice effective elements of ethical verbal and nonverbal communication. (I, R)

Develop analytical and critical thinking, reading and listening skills. (I, R)

I="Introduced" indicates that students are introduced to the concept.  
R="Reinforce" indicates that students have opportunities to practice.

**Links to info on student support services, Disability Services and The Mason Honor Code can be found on our course Blackboard site.**