

## **In-class exercise: Sustainable 2075**

**Author:** April Anson<sup>1</sup>

### **Day 1: Imagining our utopias**

- 1) Imagine that it is the year 2075, and to the joy of environmentalists, “sustainability” has become a reality... and to your eyes this world is sustainable and good.
  - Prepare a paragraph of formal writing (typed, formatted, and edited) that describes your vision of this sustainable utopia. Think about approaching it through any one of these questions:
    - What does this world look like? How, and where, do people live? What characterizes the way society looks? What is the political landscape, the environment, social situation, etc. like? Are any of the major problems facing the world completely alleviated... do any remain? Be creative, and consider what social/political/environmental problems have been eliminated and which persist in people’s lives.
  - At the end, attempt to summarize your imagined utopia by naming it.
- 2) Email me your fully edited paragraph – in the *text* of an email, not attached as a document.  
→ **Note:** I have students send this via email so that I can compile their writing into a utopian archive, of sorts. We can refer to this throughout the term, but especially as we

### **Day 2: What does utopia mean? What does it leave out?**

- 1) Students come with a print or digital version of their utopian 2075 narrative.
- 2) On a separate sheet of paper, students take 5 minutes to “diagnose and synthesize,” identify the top 3 changes that their utopia envisions.
- 3) In small groups (no more than 3), share the Utopia’s name and three significant features
- 4) Return to own utopian vision and note what that version is “missing” or neglects.
- 5) Return to group discussion and share out some of the most interesting or important changes from group (or own) utopias, and what that particular vision ignores.
  - This discussion will reveal specific value sets. When thinking about making sustainable futures, we must be attentive not just to what our values demand, but also what they ignore and the possible consequences to our position. Anticipating the ways *our* imaginations are limited helps prepare us to imagine together.
- 6) After discussion, students have 5 minutes to return to their piece of paper and:
  - Choose one of the “missing” or neglected issues from their utopia
  - Using the same questions from the Utopian diagnostic prompt, students brainstorm a 2075 dystopia where the particular issue they’ve selected is the most persistent problem.

### **Day 3: (or day 2 after brainstorm):**

- Ask students to select one sentence or description that they really like from either their utopia or dystopia. Have students mark this selection in some way that connects with course themes, or major writing assignment.
- Share in groups, and then as a class
- Conclude by scoping out to course themes and major assignments. Students can think about using their selections as an introductory hook for their essay.

→ **Advice:** I avoid phrasing any of these prompts in a way that asks students to place themselves inside the “problem” or issue. I want their versions to assume a sort of objectivity first, in order to reveal the subjectivity (and to avoid personal diatribes).

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from a lesson plan shared with me by Shane Hall