

## **Dystopias: Orwell, Atwood, Le Guin & Beyond**

**The Rosenbach of the Free Library of Philadelphia 2008-2010 Delancey Place  
Philadelphia, PA 19103**

**Instructor: Fran Wilde, Author**

*(award-winning & Nebula/Hugo/Locus nominated works include: The Bone Universe Trilogy & The Jewel & Her Lapidary)*

*"Utopia, and Dystopia, are intellectual places.... To me the important thing is not to offer any specific hope of betterment but, by offering an imagined but persuasive alternative reality, to dislodge my mind, and so the reader's mind, from the lazy, timorous habit of thinking that the way we live now is the only way people can live. It is that inertia that allows the institutions of injustice to continue unquestioned."*  
Ursula K. Le Guin, *The Wave in the Mind* (Shambala 2004)

In four class sessions, we'll explore four disparate dystopias - those of Orwell's 1984, Le Guin's short story "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas," Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and M.T Anderson's *Feed*, exploring how familiar cultural and linguistic structures are shifted in order to create plausible dystopias and to make us look ever more closely at persuasive alternative realities.

Texts: *1984* By George Orwell, "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas," by Ursula K. Le Guin & handouts (distributed in class), *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood, and *Feed* by M.T. Anderson.

### **Reading Schedule**

April 26 - Session 1: Metaphor as a "Safe" Container

Reading – *1984*, Orwell

May 10 - Session 2: Language as Impetus & Change-Agent

Readings – "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas," Le Guin, and class handouts.

May 24 - Session 3: Familiarity & Inertia

Reading – *The Handmaid's Tale*, Atwood

June 7 - Session 4: So Far In the Future & Yet So Close to Home

Reading - *Feed*, MT Anderson