

Abstract

In Spring 2019, I proposed a new course for Xavier University of Louisiana's new undergraduate core curriculum (X-Core). In the 3000-level Engaging the Missions courses (XCOR 3010) students "learn to integrate diverse perspectives [...] to find solutions to complex problems." While not all XCOR 3010 classes must be interdisciplinary, the idea is that through these classes, a diverse group of students will use their varied disciplinary training to collaboratively engage "big ideas." Interdisciplinarity is at the heart of these seminars, which are developed by faculty from across the university.

Within a month of the class beginning in January 2020, as we were developing our initial definition of "dystopia," it became clear that the United States would not be spared from the spread of COVID-19. Within two more weeks, class was taking place over Zoom and our discussions routinely revolved around concerns over the stability of the United States. This paper will discuss the original plans for the class and how those changed in response to the COVID-19 panic and the switch to emergency remote teaching. In particular, I will explore how the once fanciful notion of dystopia becoming reality empowered my students to confront the crisis they found themselves in.