

**Minutes of the Utopian Studies Society / Europe Committee Meeting
9th September 2026, 5:15 pm ECT (online)**

Present: Sorin Antohi, Emrah Atasoy, Barnita Bagchi, Liam Benison, Andrea Burgos Mascarell, Joana Caetano, Gregory Claeys (Chair), Nathaniel Coleman, Iva Dimovska (ECR Officer), Teppo Eskelinen, Justyna Galant (Secretary), Kenneth Hanshew (Treasurer), Burcu Kayışcı Akkoyun, Marta Komsta (EDI Officer), Diane Morgan, Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga, Philipp P. Thapa, Maria Varsam

1. Apologies: Susanna Layh, Nicole Pohl
2. **USS/E Website reorganisation:** Burcu Kayışcı Akkoyun notes that the website should contain separate sections for member publications, CFPs, available scholarships, and relevant events and acknowledges the need for substantial work on the task. All agree the information circulated via the mailing list regarding new publications, CFPs, scholarships and other relevant content should also be placed on the Society website. Philipp P. Thapa offers to place information on the website. Gregory Claeys notes the need to post members' publications in utopian studies on the website. Justyna Galant suggests that publications of all individuals on the mailing list could be placed on the website. Barnita Bagchi notes it would be more appropriate to limit those to the current Society members. Seconded by Maria Varsam. It is agreed that current USS/E members will be asked to send their lists of publications on utopian studies to be placed on the Society website. No primary sources or links to them will be placed on the website; the information will be limited to a list of publications by the members. An appropriate template is to be prepared and distributed by the Secretary; also edited afterwards. Nathaniel Coleman notes that the Society website does not need to be overly attractive; some content improvement should suffice. Philipp P. Thapa offers to place information on the website.
3. **Online lectures/seminars** (open to the public): Gregory Claeys concurs with Philipp P. Thapa's suggestion to organise online events between conferences and committee meetings; suggests doing so twice a year, then possibly expanding. GC suggests November for the first lecture in 2026; followed by another one in April. Barnita Bagchi notes that the meetings nearest in time could focus on the Cambridge Companion to Utopian Studies ed. Greg Claeys or a number of utopia-related events and presentations undertaken by Society and Committee members, such as The Big Green project by Philipp P. Thapa. Diane Morgan suggests that a moderator or respondent should also be added as a function for these online meetings. On Philipp P. Thapa's suggestion, the preliminarily agreed on format would be a 20-min presentation preceded by a 5-minute introduction, with the rest of the time devoted to Q&A and a 5-min wrap-up. Philipp P. Thapa offers to organise the online meetings, welcoming anyone else to also act in this capacity.

4. **ECR events:** Iva Dimovska suggests organising **ECR events** during the conferences (at least 2 per conference) as well as – in future – online throughout the year, preferably divided into segments such as conference presentation skills, publishing advice, job market advice, writing skills, mental health, etc. Gregory Claeys offers to conduct the publications panel of the ECR events.
5. **ECR paper awards:** Iva Dimovska suggests that awarding a best paper award during USS/E conferences would also encourage ECRs to excel and help their career prospects. Awards could be given in several categories related to career stages and the award could take any form, from symbolic to financial. Gregory Claeys observes that best paper awards could be potentially problematic as contributions will be linked to a variety of subdisciplines; choosing a single paper across subdisciplines as different as e.g. utopian art and utopian literature could be difficult. GC also mentions that the name “best” may not be the best choice. Alternative names are suggested, to be agreed on later, such as “outstanding paper”. Additionally, the award process would require appointing a body to participate in every ECR session to assess the papers. As an alternative GC suggests that ECR papers be sent around September after the conference for assessment. Liam Benison suggests that the question of subdisciplines could be addressed by selecting e.g. 2 or 3 outstanding papers within narrower categories. All agree. Andrea Burgos Mascarell stresses the importance of feedback for all the submitted papers. Barnita Bagchi suggests that awards should be given only to PhD students, with the aim of keeping the number of submissions manageable, especially given the need for feedback for each. Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga expresses concerns about the Committee’s / Jury’s workload connected to the prospective ECR awards. Justyna Galant notes that the Jury does not have to be synonymous with the Committee, especially given the need for a variety of disciplines to be represented in the Jury. Joana Caetano stresses the importance of ECR awards for the young scholars’ career prospects, especially if the award would be linked to a publication of the paper. Liam Benison suggests the possibility of publishing the winning papers in *Revista de Estudios Utópicos*. Emrah Atasoy suggests that ECRs’ contributions could be published in *The Literary Encyclopedia* in the section on Utopian/Dystopian studies / Speculative Fiction / SF. Barnita Bagchi notes that the dilemma could be solved if conference organisers were strongly encouraged to publish a selection of papers after the event. Gregory Claeys agrees but observes that given it is unlikely many organisers will be able to also promise post-conference publications. GC also stresses the importance of good-quality peer-reviewed publications in utopian studies to maintain/raise the discipline’s status.
6. **Working groups / Teaching utopia:** Philipp P. Thapa notes the need for working groups within the Society, such as the already existing Teaching Utopia working group. Gregory Claeys seconds the proposal noting that a Teaching Utopia panel should feature at every USS/E conference. Teppo Eskelinen – organiser of the 2027 USS/E conference – notes that a special session on Teaching Utopia is already planned for the 2027 conference. Philipp P. Thapa clarifies that working groups should be suggested by Society members.
7. **USS/E Conference 2027:** Teppo Eskelinen asks for emails regarding the draft CFP for the conference; informs the Committee that the venue has been

booked; notes that a publication of selected post-conference papers is planned; confirms the conference dates for 21-24th June 2027 in Jeonsuu, Finland.

8. **Outreach** (both through personal diplomacy and broader publicity campaigns) to academic societies and institutions, artists, intentional communities, civil society organisations with utopian interest. Philipp P. Thapa specifies that the purpose of the above is to share our conference invitations with the like-minded organisations. Gregory Claeys suggests making a list of those organisations.
9. **Senior Advisory Board:** Gregory Claeys notes that the previous year the Committee did not express support for the idea of an Honorary Committee gathering long-term Society members in an advisory function to the Committee. While acknowledging the need to honour long-term members, GC also notes that during informal conversation with young USS/E members fears of gerontocracy were expressed, with potential excessive focus on older members. Marta Komsta observes that the Honorary Committee would not be a supervisory board, but an advisory one and that Iva Dimovska's ideas regarding the variety of ECR events, including ECR awards, balances the potential Honorary Committee addition, with both younger and older members being acknowledged and respected. GC expresses the concern with longer Committee meetings if Honorary Committee members were to join the Committee. Barnita Bagchi seconds, expressing the concern with diluting the Committee, and suggests an alternative function rather than inviting the Honorary Committee members to join Committee meetings. Diane Morgan suggests considering the name of the potential body, a variety of names are suggested; to be determined in due course. Urszula Terentowicz-Fotyga notes the need to honour long-term Society members as inspirational individuals also for young scholars. Andrea Burgos Mascarell observes that cooperation between ECRs and Honorary Committee members would be a good solution. All agree. Barnita Bagchi suggests that Lyman Tower Sargent could be one such Honorary Committee member.
10. Thanks from the Chair. All the above points to be discussed further during the next Committee meeting.