

**Title:**

Educating Utopia: The School Strike for Climate Crisis and their Legislative Visions

**Abstract:**

This essay uses critical utopian theory to interrogate the discourses of school strikes across Europe and their demand for legal reform. The school strike movement is constructed of a critical utopian discourse expressed through complex temporalities, which define the role of resistance as anticipation. Arguably the movement has, even during the pandemic, proven to be self-reflexive and grounded in a broader discourse on politics, oppression, and futurity.

The anxiety in the student strike movement creates a non-violent but militant optimism, and the narratives of cathedral thinking are demonstrative of an open-ended utopian. This paper contends that school strike movements go beyond presenting a vision of an inescapable future, or a simplistic request for adults to listen to science, as suggested by some critics. Instead, their vision is constructive of a better world as they challenge the failures of politicians and the adult public more generally. Young participants and organisers demand to play an active role in policy making when it comes to climate crisis, making specific claims and requests around democratic reform as well as environmental policy. This paper considers how, using activist pedagogies, the school strike movement increasingly centres the interconnection between racism, colonialism and the climate crisis when proposing progressive legal solutions.

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**Bio:**

Heather McKnight has recently completed her PhD at University of Sussex Law Department on the topic of Reimagining the University through Resistance. She is a climate and union activist, and founding partner of the Magnetic Ideals collective and the CHASE Feminist Network. Her research focuses on utopian analysis of activist movements, unions and culture.

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