UTOPIA: INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES IN AMERICA, 1630-1997

This seminar examines the evolution of utopian visions and utopian experiments in American history. It begins with John Winthrop’s 1630 vision of a “City upon a Hill,” explores the proliferation of both religious and secular communal ventures between 1780 and 1920, and concludes with an examination of 20th-century counter-culture communes, intentional communities, and dystopian separatists. Primary source readings include official statements of vision and purpose by a variety of charismatic leaders; personal accounts by members, both loyal and apostate; descriptions and evaluations by “informed” contemporaries; and utopian fiction. We will read scholarly analyses by historians to help us locate those documentary readings in their historical contexts. Class discussions, in-class presentations, and assigned essays designed to introduce students to the resources and methods of historical inquiry and critical analysis, and to provide opportunities for students to strengthen their speaking and writing skills.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS. The seminar consists of two class meetings each week. The reading assignments for each class should be completed by that class meeting. The online History 12 Reading Guide for the course provides questions to help focus your reading for the class discussions. Most of the reading assignments come from the essay collection and monographs assigned for the course. The rest of the assignments (journal articles and primary documents) are available through the Library Reserves link on Blackboard or by link from the online Reading Guide. Students are strongly encouraged to purchase the assigned texts from the bookstore, although copies of each are on reserve in the library.

Class participation and oral presentations: You are expected to attend class and to come to all class meetings ready to participate in a discussion and analysis of the readings [35% of final grade]. In addition, students will give two oral presentations: an analysis of a secondary source article or chapter during the first half of the semester and a formal work-in-progress report on the five-page research paper at the end of the semester [together, 15% of final grade]. Prior to each of the presentations, students are expected to attend two small-group Presentation Prep Sessions to work on the preparation and delivery of their oral presentations.

Essays: Students will write three essays during the first half of the course (the first assignment is required; students will choose two out of three additional assignments). These assignments give students experience in drafting, revising, and editing a short (2-3 page) focused essay and teach students how to subject primary source materials to critical analysis [together, 30% of final grade]. During the second half of the course, students will design, pursue, draft and revise a five-page research paper [20% of final grade].

All students are expected to read, understand, and abide by the rules of citation outlined in Sources: Their Use and Acknowledgement (Dartmouth College, 1998).

BOOKS: Donald E. Pitzer, ed., America’s Communal Utopias (1997)
Charles Nordhoff, American Utopias, Foreword and Afterword by Robert Fogarty (1993)
[originally published as The Communistic Societies of the United States (1875)]
Edward Bellamy, Looking Backward: 2000-1887 (1888)

The History 12 online Reading Guide, Electronic Reserve Reading Links, and other online Resources can be found on Blackboard Academic Suite at http://blackboard.bowdoin.edu/, or at http://academic.bowdoin.edu/faculty/S/smcmahon/courses/hist012/index.shtml
Week 1.
9/4 INTRODUCTION

9/6 UTOPIAN COMMUNITIES—INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES
Readings:
   Paul S. Boyer, “Foreword,” and Donald E. Pitzer, “Preface” and “Introduction,” in Pitzer, America’s Communal Utopias, ix-13

Week 2.
9/11 UTOPIAN VISIONS: REVISING COMMUNITY, FAMILY, GENDER ROLES
Readings:
Instructions for writing the short essays (LINK)
Guidelines for the first oral presentation (LINK)
Monday, Sept. 11, 7:00-9:00 p.m.: Presentation Prep Session 1A
Tuesday, Sept. 12, 7:00-9:00 p.m.: Presentation Prep Session 1B

Early Ventures
9/13 EARLY UTOPIAN VISIONS AND EXPERIMENTS
Document:
   John Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charity” (1630) in Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society. (LINK)
Reading:
   Donald F. Durnbaugh, “Communitarian Societies in Colonial America,” in Pitzer, America’s Communal Utopias, 14-36
Bring draft of first essay to class (required)

Utopian Ventures in the Early Republic
Week 3.
9/18 MILLENNIALISTS AND RADICAL GERMAN PIETISTS: The Rappites Of Harmony and the Separatists of Zoar
Readings:
   Karl J.R. Arndt, “George Rapp’s Harmony Society,” in Pitzer, America’s Communal Utopias, 57-87
   Charles Nordhoff, “The Harmonists of Economy” and “The Separatists of Zoar,” American Utopias, 63-113
First 2-3 page essay due (required)

Monday, Sept. 18, 7:00-9:00 p.m.: Presentation Prep Session 2A

9/20 THE COMMUNITY OF TRUE INSPIRATION AT AMANA
Readings:
   Jonathan G. Andelson, “The Community of True Inspiration from Germany to the Amana Colonies,” in Pitzer, America’s Communal Utopias, 181-203
Week 4.

9/25 **Mother Ann Lee and the Evolution of Shaker Beliefs and Theology**

Readings:

9/27 **Shakers: Revising Community, Family and Gender Roles**

Reading:

Document:

Further reading:
- Flo Morse, “In the Nineteenth Century: Some Literary Visitors” [Dickens, Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Artemus Ward], in Flo Morse, *The Shakers and the World’s People* (1987), 184-209. (e-reserve)

**Bring draft of second essay to class**

*Seeking a Perfect Society: Nineteenth Century America*

Week 5.

10/2 **Secular Communities: Robert Owen and New Harmony**

Reading:

Documents:

**Second 2-3 page essay due**

*Tuesday, Oct. 3, 7:00-9:00 p.m.: Presentation Prep Session 2B*

10/4 **Secular Communities: Socialist and Anarchist Communities**

Reading:

Documents:

Week 6.

10/9 **New England: Transcendentalism at Brook Farm**

Reading: [continued]

Documents:
Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England,” from Emerson, Lectures and Biographical Sketches (1904; notes written 1867, first published 1883), 325-370, American Transcendentalism Web, Virginia Commonwealth University. (LINK) [Focus on the section on Brook Farm at the end of the Notes, pp.359-370 in the 1904 edition.]

Note: read one or more of the following:
Nathaniel Hawthorne, from Passages from the American Note-books of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Vol. II (1868), [April 13-October 17, 1841], 1-49, Online Books Page, University of Pennsylvania Library, at Eldritch Press. (LINK) [Note: focus on the entries from April 13-September 3, 1841]

Ora Gannett Sedgwick, “A Girl of 16 at Brook Farm,” Atlantic Monthly 85.509 (March, 1900), 395-404


Joel Myerson, ed., “Rebecca Codman Butterfield’s Reminiscences of Brook Farm [1843-47; written c. 1890s],” New England Quarterly 65.4 (1992), 603-630. (JSTOR)

Louisa May Alcott, “Transcendental Wild Oats” (from Silver Pitchers, 1876), American Transcendentalism Web, Virginia Commonwealth University. (LINK)

Bring draft of third essay to class

10/11 JOHN HUMPHREY NOYES AND ONEIDA
Readings:
Lawrence Foster, “Free Love and Community: John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida Perfectionists,” in Pitzer, America’s Communal Utopias, 253-278
Charles Nordhoff, “The Oneida and Wallingford Perfectionists,” American Utopias, 259-301

Document:

Third 2-3 page essay due

Week 7.
10/18 ONEIDA: PRACTICE AND EXPERIENCE
Readings:

Week 8.
10/23 JOSEPH SMITH AND THE BOOK OF MORMON
Reading:
Brian Berry, “Mormonism,” in Berry, America’s Utopian Experiments, Ch. 6, pp.64-82. (e-reserve)
Dean L. May, “One Heart and Mind: Communal Life and Values among the Mormons,” in Pitzer, America’s Communal Utopias, 135-158
Mormons: Doctrine and Experience

Documents:
Joseph Smith, “Extracts from the History of Joseph Smith” (1838), “Revelation on the Eternity of the Marriage Covenant, including Plurality of Wives” (1843), in *The Pearl of Great Price* (reprinted Salt Lake City, 1888), 83-110, 123-136, or The Official Internet Site of *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints*

Ann Eliza Young, *Wife No. 19, or the Story of a Life in Bondage* (1875), Ch. V, XVII, 98-109, 290-305, or at www.angelfire.com

Instructions for writing a research paper in history (LINK)

Bring draft of fourth essay to class

Week 9.

Library Tour: meet at Bookhenge, first floor of Hawthorne-Longfellow Library

Fourth 2-3 page essay due

The End of Charles Nordhoff’s 1874 Tour and his comparative view and review of communistic efforts in the United States

Reading:

Friday, 11/3 Proposal for five-page research paper due

Week 10.

Jewish Agricultural Communes and Cooperative Farming

Readings:

Guidelines for the second oral presentation (LINK)

Monday, Nov. 6, 7:00-9:00: Presentation Prep Session 3A
Tuesday, Nov. 7, 7:00-9:00: Presentation Prep Session 3B

Utopian Visions in Fiction


Contemporary Utopias

Week 11.

Counterculture (1960s) and Intentional Communities (1970s)

Readings:


Wednesday, Nov. 15, 7:00-9:00: Presentation Prep Session 4A
Thursday, Nov. 16, 7:00-9:00: Presentation Prep Session 4B
11/15  VISIONARY COMMUNITIES: 1980s
    Reading:
    Frances Fitzgerald, “Introduction,” “Rajneeshpuram,” “Starting Over,” Cities on a Hill, 1-24,
    247-414

Week 12.
    Thanksgiving break: no classes

Week 13.
11/27  FORMAL WORK-IN-PROGRESS REPORTS

11/29  FORMAL WORK-IN-PROGRESS REPORTS

    Five-page research paper, penultimate draft due

12/1  FORMAL WORK-IN-PROGRESS REPORTS
    Note: this Friday class is the make-up class for Wednesday of Thanksgiving week.

Week 14.
12/4  FROM UTOPIA TO DYSTOPIA: People’s Temple [Jonestown, Guyana, November 1978]; Branch
    Davidians [Waco, Texas, April 1993]; Heaven’s Gate [San Diego, California, March 1997]
    Readings:
    Gaiardner B. Moment, “From Utopia to Dystopia: The Jonestown Tragedy,” in Moment and
    Kraushaar, Utopias: The American Experience (1980), 215-228. (e-reserve)
    John R. Hall, “Jonestown and Bishop Hill: Continuities and Disjunctures in Religious Conflict,”
    Communal Societies 8 (1988), 77-89. (e-reserve)

12/6  CONCLUSION, OR HOW TO DESIGN A UTOPIAN COMMUNITY
    Readings:
    Graham Meltzer, “Cohousing: Linking Community and Sustainability,” Communal Societies 19
    (1999), 85-100. (e-reserve)
    Jack Crittenden, “Veneration of Community,” Communal Societies 9 (1989), 105-122. (e-
    reserve)
    Further reading:
    Jon Wagner, “Success in Intentional Communities: The Problem of Evaluation,” Communal
    Societies 5 (1985), 89-100. (e-reserve)

    Five-page research paper due: Sunday, Dec. 17, noon.