



*“A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realization of Utopias.”*

Oscar Wilde (1895)

*“There is but one mode by which man can possess in perpetuity all the happiness which his nature is capable of enjoying – that is by the union and co-operation of all for the benefit of each.”*

Robert Owen, *The Social System* (1826)

## **History 357: American Utopian Communities** **Cornell College** **Block 3, October 2019**

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**Office Hours:** Tuesday and Thursday, 11 – 1 p.m. and by appointment.

**Class Meeting Times:** M – Th 9-11 (AM), 1-3 (PM); Fri. 9-11 (AM); see detailed schedule below

### **Course Description:**

Since the late seventeenth century, some Americans have grouped together in order to form a new society, a “utopia” meant to improve or replace the institutions of mainstream society. By studying these communal organizations as a critique of American society through the years, we will gain insight into the social, economic, political, and other problems that challenged Americans in the past.

The motivations for forming communities have always been diverse. Not only have many been formed in response to social and economic situations but many others were created by religious movements in attempts at creating a, if not “Heaven on Earth,” at least a society that they believed more clearly mirrored a divine purpose in life.

This class is an exploration of that history; we will be using a variety of materials, including lecture, readings, films, images, and the occasional outside speaker to further this exploration. We will be examining the beliefs and practices of communities, gender roles, family structures, labor, reform, architecture, literature, and communal art. We will

concentrate primarily on the major nineteenth century communities and communal movements, concluding with a survey of more recent (since 1965) communities and the changing definition of what it means to be an “intentional community” in the world today.

## **Course Requirements:**

### **Participation and Discussion –**

Discussion is a critical component of this course and of your final grade. In order to receive an ‘A’ for the course, you must participate in group discussion during class meetings. Students are encouraged to bring relevant information and materials to class that would enhance discussion of a particular topic.

Everyone has something to contribute, and this class will foster an environment in which the different opinions, reactions, insights, and knowledge of all will be respected and appreciated. I expect discussion to be conducted in a mature, professional manner that is conducive to creative thinking, understanding and learning. We will be studying many different American communities in the coming weeks. Within this classroom we are an intentional community ourselves, focused on the common goal of helping each other learn and grow as historians and as people.

Class attendance is critical to class participation. Poor attendance will have a detrimental affect on your overall course grade.

If you require accommodation for any diagnosed disability, speak with me during the first week of class.

### **Writing –**

There will be a short paper for this class and one larger project. The paper will ask you to consider a particular reading, classroom presentation, or other material in a critical and analytical manner. Endnotes and footnotes in papers should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Be careful to cite material that you quote or that you are summarizing from another source.

We will establish a late paper policy during the first class meeting as part of an in class exercise on consensus.

In grading a writing assignment, I will be paying attention to the clarity of your argument and how you use materials in order to support that argument. Use clear concise writing, including correct grammar and punctuation.

### **Project –**

The project that is required for this class is for each student to devise their own communal society. While there is wide latitude for creativity in this assignment, your community should be grounded on the information that you have gleaned from lecture, discussion, readings, and any additional research that you choose to conduct. We will discuss the scope of this project as the class progresses, and there will be a handout describing it in fuller detail. Students will be asked to make a short presentation about

their communities during the final week of class. This project and presentation will be 25% of the final grade.

Students are encouraged to research independently in the preparation of their project. An excellent resource is the website for the Communal Studies Association which contains a thorough bibliography of sources, as well as links to the web pages of current communities and historic communal sites. A listing of helpful web pages is included at the end of this syllabus.

### **Short Essay –**

You will be asked to write a short (3 – 5 page) review essay of an article on the Moodle page for this class. You may choose any of the listed articles on which to write; essays are due at the start of class on the dates listed. I will expect you to be able to discuss the articles that you have read on the day that they are due. This essay is worth 15% of the course grade.

In your paper you should:

- 1) Identify the thesis of the article. What is the major point that the author is trying to prove?
- 2) What evidence does the author use to support the thesis?
- 3) How does the argument compare with the description of this particular community or movement in either Pitzer or other readings (if applicable)?

Altus, Deborah. “Student Housing Cooperatives: Communitarianism Among American Youth.” *Communal Societies* 17 (1997) 1-13. **Due: November 8.**

Cosgel, Metin M. “Market Integration and Agricultural Efficiency in Communal Amana.” *Communal Societies* 14 (1994): 36 – 48. **Due November 4.**

Foster, Lawrence. “The Rise and Fall of Utopia: The Oneida Community Crises of 1852 and 1879.” *Communal Societies* 8 (1988) 1 – 17. **Due November 1.**

Guarneri, Carl. “Who Were the Utopian Socialists? Patterns of Membership in American Fourierist Communities.” *Communal Societies* 5 (1985): 65 – 81. **Due October 28.**

Hall, John. “Jonestown and Bishop Hill: Continuities and Disjunctures in Religious Conflict.” *Communal Societies* 8 (1988): 77 – 89. **Due October 31.**

Humez, Jean M. “Weary of Petticoat Government”: The Specter of Female Rule in Early Nineteenth-Century Shaker Politics.” *Communal Societies* 11 (1991): 1-17. **Due October 24.**

Janzen, Rod. "The Prairieleut: A Forgotten Hutterite People." *Communal Societies* 14 (1994): 67 – 89. **Due November 6.**

Klee-Hartzel, Marlyn. "'Mingling the Sexes': The Gendered Organization of Work in the Oneida Community." *Syracuse University Library Associates Courier*, 28 (Fall 1993): 61 – 85. **Due November 1.**

LeWarne, Charles P. "The Commune That Didn't Come to Town: The Love Israel Family and a Small Town in Idaho." *Communal Societies* 20 (2000): 81 – 95. **Due November 8.**

Thurman, Suzanne. "No Idle Hands Are Seen': The Social Construction of Work in Shaker Communities." *Communal Societies* 18 (1998): 36 – 52. **Due October 24.**

### **Academic Dishonesty –**

Academic dishonesty in any form is unacceptable. Any plagiarism (including missed citations within a paper) will result in a zero for that particular assignment.

### **Exams –**

There will be both a midterm and a final exam, each worth 20% of your course grade. The exams will consist of short identifications and an essay. There will be a short in-class review prior to the exams.

### **Quizzes and Participation –**

There will be two short quizzes. Quizzes will always be over the reading assigned for that class day and will be administered at the beginning of class. As previously noted, students are expected to attend class every day and to participate, to the best of their ability, in classroom discussion and activities. Quizzes and participation are 20% of the final grade.

### **Readings –**

There are two primary texts for this class:

Donald E. Pitzer, ed., *America's Communal Utopias*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

B. F. Skinner. *Walden Two*. Toronto: Macmillan, 1948.

There will also be copied handouts and some additional short readings on Moodle. Basically, we will discuss individual communities, one by one, with the appropriate readings from our main text and supplemental readings that will be distributed in class. The handouts and material on Moodle will mainly be primary source

material, such as original letters, documents, or accounts of these communities, all of which are relatively short. The goal in the readings is to provide you with material that highlights the actual workings of a community, the experiences of its members and how that community was viewed by outsiders. The intention is also to learn to review and evaluate primary source materials and include these sources in our class discussions.

Students should be prepared to discuss the reading assignments on the days noted in the schedule. **The schedule is always subject to minor changes.**

**Grades will be determined as follows:**

Article Review Paper – 15%  
Midterm Exam – 20%  
Quizzes and Participation – 20 %  
Communal Project/ Presentation – 25 %  
Final Exam – 20%

**Class Schedule:**

**Week One**

**Monday, October 21 (AM)** – Introduction to the topic. In-class exercise on consensus.

**Tuesday, October 22 (AM and PM)** – Colonial Utopias: Valley of the Swans, Bohemia Manor, Woman in the Wilderness, the Moravians, and Ephrata. Film: *Anticipating Paradise*. Reading: Pitzer, “Communitarian Societies in Colonial America,” 14 – 30; Bach, “The Ephrata Community in the Atlantic World, 39 – 66 (on Moodle); Ephrata Translations (handout)

**Wednesday, October 23 (AM)** - The United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing (The Shakers). Reading: Pitzer, “The Shakers of Mother Ann Lee,” 37 – 50; Youngs, The Testimony of Christ’s Second Appearing, 45 – 50, 621 – 622; “The ‘Millennial Laws’ of 1821” (Moodle).

**Thursday, October 24 (AM and PM)** – The Shakers; Film: *The Shakers* and *I Don’t Want to Be Remembered As a Chair*.” Reading: Lamson, *Two Years Experience Among the Shakers*, 50 – 73 (Moodle) “Shakerism for Today” (Moodle).

**Friday, October 25 (AM)** - New Harmony (Owenites). Reading: Pitzer and Elliott, “New Harmony, Indiana: Robert Owen’s Seedbed for Utopia,” 161 – 187 (Moodle).

**Week Two**

**Monday, October 28 (AM)** – the Fourierists, Brook Farm and Fruitlands. Reading: Pitzer, “Brook Farm and the Fourierist Phalanxes,” 159-174; Louisa May Alcott,

“Transcendental Wild Oats” (Moodle); selected short texts from Brook Farm and from the writings of Charles Fourier (Moodle).

**Tuesday, October 29 (AM and PM)** Charismatic Leaders: The Harmony Society and the Icarians Reading: Pitzer, “George Rapp’s Harmony Society,” 57 - 87; Pitzer, “An American Elysium: The Icarian Communities,” 279-294; Cabot, Selections from *Voyages in Icaria*; Georg Rapp, selected writings and Nordhoff, “The Icarian Community” (all on Moodle).

**Wednesday, October 30 (AM) – MIDTERM EXAM**

**Thursday, October 31 (AM and PM)** Charismatic Leaders: Bishop Hill (Janssonites), the Society of Separatists at Zoar, Father Divine. Reading: Pitzer, “Eric Jansson and the Bishop Hill Colony,” 297 – 315; “Father Divine and the Peace Mission,” 432-445 and Fernandez, *A Singular People* (Moodle).

**Friday, November 1 (AM) – Charismatic Leaders – The Oneida Community.** Reading: Pitzer, “Free Love and Community: John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida Perfectionists,” 253 – 270; Wayland-Smith, “Forerunner of Liberation Theology,” 1 – 17 (Moodle). Selections from the writings of John Humphrey Noyes (Moodle)

**Week Three**

**Monday, November 4 (AM and PM) – The Amana Society.** Reading: Pitzer, “The Community of True Inspiration from Germany to the Amana Colonies,” 181 – 201. Hoehnle, “The Trans-Atlantic Odyssey of the Community of True Inspiration” (Moodle). Films: *Amana: The Community of True Inspiration* and *Home On the Iowa*.

**Tuesday, November 5 (AM and PM) – The Amana Society – Amana Field Trip.**

**Wednesday, November 6 (AM and PM) – The Amish, Mormons, Hutterites and concepts of family in community. Communes of the early twentieth century: the Koreshan Unity and the House of David.** Reading: Pitzer, “California’s Socialist Utopias,” 419 – 431; Landing, James E. “Cyrus R. Teed, Koreshanity and Cellular Cosmogony” (Moodle).

**Thursday, November 7 (AM and PM) – The 60’s Communes; Film: *American Commune*.**

**Friday, November 8 (AM)** The 60’s Communes and Beyond. Reading: Johnson “Seeing the Faces” (Moodle)

**Week Four**

**Monday, November 11 (AM and PM) - Discussion of *Walden Two*.** Walden Two communities. Reading: Skinner, *Walden Two*. Project presentations.

**Tuesday, November 12 (AM)** – Project presentations – In Class Review for Final Exam.

**Wednesday, November 13 (AM)** – **FINAL EXAM**

### **Resources for the Study of Communal Societies**

Cole Library has a collection of texts on communal societies. There are also several websites with helpful information and resources on particular communal groups and movements.

Federation of Intentional Communities: [www.ic.org](http://www.ic.org)

Includes a list of links to dozens of contemporary communities plus on-line articles from *Communities: Journal of Cooperative Living*.

Hamilton College Communal Societies Collection

<https://communalsocieties.hamilton.edu/islandora/object/hamLibCom%3Aroot>

Communal Studies Association: <http://www.communalstudies.org/>

Links to numerous historic and contemporary communal sites. On-line index to *Communal Societies*, as well as a lengthy bibliography of recommended texts about particular communities.

Cohousing Network: [www.cohousing.org](http://www.cohousing.org)

Information and resources on co-housing.

Global Ecovillage Network <http://gen.ecovillage.org/>

Information and resources on ecovillages.

### **The fine print – please read carefully.**

#### **Academic Honesty Expectations:**

Cornell College expects all members of the Cornell community to act with academic integrity. An important aspect of academic integrity is respecting the work of others. A student is expected to explicitly acknowledge ideas, claims, observations, or data of others, unless generally known. When a piece of work is submitted for credit, a student is asserting that the submission is their work unless there is a citation of a specific source. If there is no appropriate acknowledgement of sources, whether intended or not, this may constitute a violation of the College's requirement for honesty in academic work and may be treated as a case of academic dishonesty. The procedures regarding how the College deals with cases of academic dishonesty appear in The Catalogue, under the heading "Academic Honesty."

#### **Students with disabilities:**

Cornell College makes reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. Students should notify the Coordinator of Academic Support and Advising and their course instructor of any disability related accommodations within the first three days of the term for which the accommodations are required, due to the fast pace of the block format. For more information on the documentation required to establish the need for

accommodations and the process of requesting the accommodations, see <http://www.cornellcollege.edu/academic-support-and-advising/disabilities/index.shtml>.

**Relevant Educational Priorities:**

This course supports the Educational Priorities and Outcomes of Cornell College with emphases on knowledge, inquiry, reasoning, intercultural literacy and communication. A description of these Priorities can be found on the *Academic Catalogue* website.