Course Description

Throughout American history, individuals have grouped together in an attempt to craft a new American society, a utopia to improve, or replace, institutions of the mainstream society of the day. Some of these new societies existed without notice; others stirred fear and anger in mainstream culture. By studying these communal experiments’ critique of American society and the mainstream response to them, we will gain insight into the social, economic, political and other problems that challenged Americans in times both past and present. In our investigation of communal experiments from the late 18th to the late 20th centuries we will consider ideas from history and the social sciences, as well as literary musings.

In the first part of the course, we will explore several (of the many) communal experiments that have emerged in American history. As you become familiar with this fascinating aspect of American life, you can expect quizzes on the assigned readings. In Part Two of the course we will turn to a thematic comparison – how have various groups handled tension, decision-making, the role of women, raising children, dissolution, and other topics. Each student will select a communal group to research independently and you will share what you’ve learned about your group during discussion, in a short paper, and in written mini-reports. In the final section of this class, we will examine current fears about communalism and so-called “cults” and think about the future of communal living. At the end of the semester, we will share our own ideas for communal living as students share the results of the major project for this course, designing your own communal group.

This course satisfies the Advanced Studies component of the UNE Core Curriculum. As an upper level humanities course, this class builds on the skills and knowledge gained in your explorations and human traditions courses. Advanced Studies courses offer you an opportunity to explore a topic in depth at an advanced level, further developing your skills in critical thinking, effective oral and written communication, and problem solving.

Course Requirements

Attendance is expected at every class. I expect that each class member will participate constructively and thoughtfully in class discussion. This class will emphasize discussion; lecturing will be minimal. Papers and other assignments are expected to be completed in a timely manner. Consistent with university policy, after more than two absences for any reason, your attendance grade will suffer.

Books

* available at the UNE bookstore. Additional readings may be placed on reserve in the Library. The Alcott and Chmielewski texts are available from online used book sellers such as Abe.com or Amazon.com

Louisa May Alcott, Transcendental Wild Oats (Harvard Common Press)
*Ernest Callenbach, Ecotopia (HeyDey Books)
Wendy Chmielewski et al, Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies... (Syracuse)
*Elizabeth De Wolfe, Domestic Broils (University of Massachusetts Press)
*Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Commitment and Community (Harvard)
*Donald E. Pitzer, ed., America’s Communal Utopias (University of North Carolina Press)
Course Work & Projects for the semester will include a good amount of reading which I expect will be completed before each class. You can expect short, informal writing assignments (out of and in-class) based on the readings or films. You can also expect to present some of the assigned reading material to the class. There will be quizzes on the readings and a final exam. Two papers will be assigned:

Paper One: You will select a historic communal group and research it independently, exploring some facet of interest to you. You will write a short paper (5 pp. + bibliography) on a focused topic such as health practices, apostate writing, women’s clothing, or any other topic of interest as it pertains to the communal group you have selected. In addition, for each class meeting in Part Two of the syllabus (10/14 to 11/19) you will write a one-paragraph summary of how your selected community handles the subject of that class meeting [see Part Two of the syllabus for specific topics]. You will serve as the class expert on that community during our discussions. To select a community, review the table of contents and appendix of the Pitzer volume and the table of contents of the Chmielewski et al text for ideas. I will provide additional resources for identifying a community to study. Some important dates:

- October 7: Community selected. Send me an email no later than this date with your community identified. The earlier the better.
- October 14 – November 9. Mini-report due in each class. Write one paragraph about the topic for each day’s class in your selected community. Typed, due in class.
- November 11: Short paper on focused topic due.

Communal Project: you will design your own communal group drawing upon the information learned from historic and contemporary communal groups as a springboard for your own ideas. This project can be completed individually or in a group and I will set aside some time in class for work on this major assignment. More detail on this term project will be distributed in class.

Grades will be determined as follows:

- Participation & Attendance 15%
  (includes reading presentations and other in-class work)
- Quizzes 10%
- Paper 1 20%
- Community mini-reports 5%
- Communal Project 35%
- Final Exam 15%
Reading Assignments
Readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be placed on reserve, distributed in class or found online. Additional short readings will be added during the semester.
Key to abbreviations:
ACU-Foster = Read the chapter by Foster in Pitzer’s America’s Communal Utopias;
W-Lambach = read the chapter by Lambach in Women in Spiritual & Communitarian Societies
Kanter = Commitment and Community

Date Topic & Readings

9/9 An introduction to communal societies groups.

Part I: Historical Survey

9/14 Communalism in Colonial America
Readings: Kanter ch. 1 (pp. 1-8) and ch. 2 (pp. 32-57); ACU-Durnbaugh (pp.14-36) ; “What’s True about Intentional Communities” at http://www.ic.org/pnp/myths.php OR “Intentional Communities: Lifestyles based on Ideals” at http://www.ic.org/pnp/cdir/1995/01kozeny.php

9/16 The Shakers
Readings: ACU-Brewer (pp.37-56); *The Millennial Laws (handout); View the online exhibit “In Time and Eternity” – available on the Maine Memory Network www.mainememory.net Go to home page; click on “Exhibits” →”View All Exhibits” → select “In Time and Eternity”

9/22 Shakers II
Readings: Sr. Frances Carr, Growing Up Shaker* (selection) and TBA

9/24 New Harmony
Readings: ACU-Pitzer (pp.88-134)

9/28 Brook Farm & Fourierism
Readings: ACU-Guarneri (pp.159-180); W-Freibert; Ch. VIII of N. Hawthorne, The Blithesdale Romance (online)

9/30 Oneida Perfectionists
Readings: ACU-Foster (pp. 253-278); Noyes “On Marriage”*

10/5 Woman’s Commonwealth
Readings: W-Chmielewski

10/7 Walden Two, the 1960s, and Beyond
B.F. Skinner, Walden Two (selections)*; “Growing Up at Los Horcones”* Twin Oaks website; Kanter 7 & 8
Paper One Historic Community selection due

10/12 Communal Studies Resources: An Overview and Work Day

Part Two: Comparisons

10/14 Tensions from Within
Readings: Kanter ch. 3 & skim 4; *Humez “Weary of Petticoat Government”

10/19 Control & Decision Making
Readings: De Wolfe, Domestic Broils; Kanter ch. 5
10/21  Family & Childrearing
Readings: FIC#5*- Christian, Gabriel, Greenberg (Advantages & Disadvantages of Multiple Parenting); W-Klee-Hartzell; W-Lambach

10/26  Work & Industries
Readings: W-Gordon & TBA
Communal project progress report due.

10/28  Women
Readings: selections from Communities 82 (1994)*; W-Goldenberg; W-Brewer

11/2  Rituals
Chmielewski, “Strawberries & Cream”*; selections from Communities 142 (2009)*; Communal Project Workshop Day

11/4  Grand Ideas and Reality
Readings: L.M. Alcott Transcendental Wild Oats; Kincade “Why ... Live in a Commune?”*; Skees, God Among the Shakers (Prologue & Epilogue)*

11/9  Change & Dissolution
Readings: ACU-Andelson; Kanter 6
Woman’s Home Companion 1902*; Schiff “Before & After”*

Part III: Today

11/11  Cults, Conflict, and Community I
Readings: T. Miller & C. Wessinger on “cults” from Communities 88 (1995)*; Film
Paper One due in class.

11/16  Cults, Conflict, and Community II
Reading: Bates et al “Waco”*; L. Foster et al “Forum on Waco”*

11/18  Ecotopia, pp. 1-83
Communal Project Workshop II: Peer Review --bring your notes & ideas

11/23  Ecotopia, pp. 83-167

11/25  Thanksgiving: no class

11/30  The Future of Intentional Communities
Readings: Kanter Ch. 9; Questenberry “Who We Are” at http://www.ic.org/pnp/cdir/1995/05quest.php

12/2  Presentations

12/7  Presentations

12/9  Presentations

12/14  Presentations(as needed) and Course Review and Conclusions

Communal Project Due 12/15

Final Exam: Friday, December 17
What I Expect From You and some important class policies:

I aim to provide you with a meaningful and productive educational experience. To that end, please assist in creating a conducive learning environment by turning off your cell phones and other electronic devices; please refrain from eating in the classroom--the crinkling of wrappers and crunching of food is very distracting; please share your opinions with the entire class, not just your neighbor in side conversations. I expect you to follow the assignments as outlined on the syllabus, to attend every class and arrive on time, to stay in the classroom once you have arrived, to treat your classmates and professor with courtesy and respect, and to take responsibility for your education and for the consequences -- good and bad - - of your actions.

Snow Days in the (unlikely) event that class is canceled due to inclement weather keep reading according to the syllabus as if class had been held. Any papers due or tests scheduled will be due/taken the next class period.

Help is available at any time throughout the semester. See me during my office hours or make an appointment to meet at a mutually convenient time. The University of New England will make reasonable accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students should notify the Office for Students with Disabilities of any special needs. Timely accommodations are dependent on early registration with the OSD.

Academic Dishonesty:
This class explores communal living – a life way in which participants share goods, possessions and ideas. The sharing of ideas is what higher education is all about and as scholars we frequently draw upon the ideas and inspiration of others to advance our own work. Ideas for the organization of this course, for example, were inspired by the utopia courses of Professor Sharon Hewitt at Brandeis and Prof. William Ball at Stetson, as well as syllabi archived on the website of the Communal Studies Association. As students, you will read the work of others as you develop your knowledge of this field. Building on another’s work is the very act of scholarship and is appropriate when proper credit is given to the originator of materials and ideas . However, as clearly stated in the Student Handbook, to fail to acknowledge the sources of information and ideas is academic dishonesty. Academic Dishonesty can take many forms but it is unacceptable in any form. In this class, any work found to be academically dishonest, including but not limited to plagiarism, sloppy or "forgotten" citations, work previously or concurrently submitted to another class, or other forms of dishonest work will receive a “zero” and the Dean’s Office will be notified. If you are at all unsure what constitutes academically dishonest work, review page 33 of the 2010-2011 Student Handbook available online: [http://www.une.edu/studentlife/handbook/upload/2010-2011-Student-Handbook-Final.pdf](http://www.une.edu/studentlife/handbook/upload/2010-2011-Student-Handbook-Final.pdf).

Student athletes are wished good luck with their upcoming seasons and reminded that they are responsible for notifying me in advance of absences due to games. Athletes with potential class conflicts must meet with me with their athletic schedules within the next two weeks in order to agree upon acceptable make-up work for missed classes. Any student who will miss an excessive number of classes for games or whose practices conflict with this class might be better served educationally in taking another class.

What You Can Expect From Me: An interesting course with challenging material; multiple opportunities for you to demonstrate what you’re thinking and learning; assistance with the readings, assignments or writing as needed; additional resources and information on topics as desired. I will come to every class prepared; I will keep careful records of your attendance, performance and progress; I will return your assignments with feedback and within a reasonable amount of time; I will be honest with you. I will keep regular office hours and I welcome the opportunity to get to know you and your ideas; I am willing and eager to help you achieve your educational and professional goals in this class and beyond. If my office door is open and keys are dangling from the doorknob, I’m here.
Discussion Questions

These questions provide a starting point for our examination of the various communal groups we will encounter. Use these questions to guide you through our readings and to take, and organize, your notes. I recommend writing down the answers to these questions in your class notebook, or, you might make several copies of this form and create a record for each community we study. As you answer these questions be sure to record page numbers from readings or record pertinent quotes to support your answers. You should come to each class prepared to discuss these questions and to share the historical evidence for your answers. Developing the answers to these questions will not only prepare you for class discussion but will also help you in your research for your papers and in studying for quizzes and exams.

1. Origins
   Why was the communal group created?
   According to the creators, what need would this group fill?
   What aspect of American society does this group critique (in other words, attempt to improve)?
   Who were the leading figures in the creation of the utopia?
   Who were the initial residents?
   Where did they come from?
   How were they recruited?
   What types of residents were desired?

2. Physical Space and Place
   What was the physical structure of the community?
   Where was the community created and how was the site selected?
   How were the buildings and other physical structures of the community created to reflect the community's objectives and functions?

3. Organizational Structure and Governance
   What was the political structure of the community?
   How were the leaders selected?
   What powers did they have?
   What decisions were left in the hands of the residents?
   What mechanisms of decision-making did the community employ?
   How did the community interact with outside governments?

4. Economics
   What was the economic structure of the community?
   How was its initial creation financed?
   What economic activities did its members engage in?
   How were earnings used--who got to keep what for what purpose?
   What economic interactions did it have with the outside world?

5. Social Structure
   What was the social structure of the community?
   What was the system for marriage and family?
   How were children educated?
   What were the gender roles?
   What were the key moral principles of the community?

6. Historical Context
   What was unique about this community?
   How was this community similar to/different from earlier communal groups?
   Were there any connections between this group and other concurrent communal groups?
   Were those connections advantageous or not?

7. Continuity and Change
   How did the community evolve over time?
   What changes occurred in the physical, political, economic, or social structure of the community?
   Were these changes choices made by the community or as a result of forces the community could not control?
8. Success?
How successful was the community?
Did it reach its goals for size?
Did it accomplish its objectives?
Did members live up to its principles?
How was it treated by the outside world?
What were the factors that accounted for the relative success or failure of this community?

9. Historical, Social and Cultural Impact
What is the socio-cultural value of this community?
Did it influence other utopian efforts?
Did it have an impact on outside society?
What legacy remains of this group?
Can we learning anything about how we should live from this community?
What lesson do you personally take away from this community?