

Intentional Communities

This is a course about people who attempt to create a better life together in community. It is a course about alienation, dreams, optimism, human frailty, charisma, tradition, revitalization, industrial capitalism, agrarianism, individualism, the family, faith, and very possibly the future. Taking this course is unlikely to help you get a job after you graduate, but it may affect how you think about society and your place within it.

Texts

Donald E. Pitzer (ed.), *America's Communal Utopias* (U.-North Carolina Press, 1997)

Susan Love Brown (ed.), *Intentional Communities: An Anthropological Perspective* (SUNY Press, 2002)

Alan Weisman, *Gaviotas: A Village to Reinvent the World* (Chelsea Green, 1999)

E. Ben-Rafael, *Crisis and Transformation: Kibbutz at Century's End* (SUNY 1997)

Anna Peterson, *Seeds of the Kingdom: Utopian Communities in the Americas* (Oxford University Press, 2005)

Diana Leafe Christian, *Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities* (New Society Publishers, 2003)

Course Requirements: 100 pts Total

1. 6-7 pp. paper on a theme in historic U.S. communes (due 2/13)(25 pts)
2. 7-8 pp. paper on theoretical approaches to historic U.S. communes (due 3/30)(30 pts)
3. 5-6 pp. paper on what's happening in current communities (due 4/27)(20 pts)
4. group presentation/written report on community vision and plan (due 5/14)(20 pts)
5. class attendance and participation throughout semester (5 pts)

Topics and Readings

I. Introduction

1/19 A. Ethos, World View, and Intentional Communities

1/21 B. Overview of the History of Intentional Communities

Bertrand Russell, "Plato's Utopia," from *A History of Western Philosophy* (Simon & Schuster, 1945)

Lawrence Schiffman, "The Character of the Community" (Chapters 6), of *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Doubleday, 1995) [e-reserv]

Video: portion of "Visions of Utopia" (in class)

II. American Communitarian Ventures, 1620-1940: In this section of the course we will examine many of the most noteworthy American intentional communities from the colonial period to WWII. The United States, with its guarantees of religious freedom, its cultural emphasis on experimentation and innovation, and its unfettered early development of capitalism, became the first nation in history to harbor -- and to generate -- such a wide array of intentional communities. With the exception of the Israeli kibbutzim (see Section III), these are the best documented and most studied intentional communities on record.

A. Historical Sketches: descriptive accounts

- 1/23 1. Donald Pitzer, Foreword & Introduction, *America's Communal Utopias*

 Kenneth Lockridge, "The Policies of Perfection: the Town," Chap 1 of *A New England Town: the First Hundred Years* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970) [e-reserve]
- 1/26 2. Durnbaugh (Colonial Communities) and Brewer (The Shakers) in Pitzer
 Video: "The Shakers" (before class)
- 1/28 3. Arndt (Harmony Society) in Pitzer

 Donald F. Carmony and Josephine Elliot, "New Harmony, Indiana: Robert Owen's Seed bed for Utopia," *Indiana Magazine of History* 76: 161-187 (1980) [e-reserve]
- 1/30 4. Andelson (Amana) in Pitzer
 Video: "Amana: The Community of True Inspiration" (before class)
- 2/2 5. May (Mormons) and Foster (Oneida) in Pitzer
- 2/4 6. Guarneri (Fourierists) and Sutton (Icaria) in Pitzer
- 2/6 7. Huntington (the Hutterites) in Pitzer
 Video: "The Hutterites: To Care/Not To Care" (before class, 12:45)
- 2/9 8. Bartelt (Jewish colonies) and Hine (socialist colonies) in Pitzer
- 2/11 9. Melton (Theosophical comm.) and Weisbrot (Peace Mission) in Pitzer
- 2/13 *****PAPER DUE:** Write a comparative essay on one of the following themes in American utopian history, 1620 to 1940: (1) ideological basis, (2) mission, (3) leadership, (4) gender/marriage, (5) economic organization, (6) immigrant/native communities, (7) success, (8) other (clear with instructor). Identify significant differences and similarities among communities and offer your insights and

conclusions. Provide in-text citations for quoted, paraphrased, or borrowed material. You may base your essay entirely on course material up to this point, but please do NOT look ahead to articles in the next section. 6-7 pages.

B. Analytical and Interpretive Studies: theoretically-based explications

- 2/16 1. Liminality and Communitas
- Kamau, "Liminality, Communitas, etc." in Brown (ed.)
- Foster, "Between Two Worlds," in Brown (ed.)
- 2/18 2. Commitment
- Rosabeth Moss Kanter, "Commitment and Social Organization: A Study of Commitment Mechanisms in Utopian Communities," *American Sociological Review* 33(4):499-517 (1972) [JSTOR]
- 2/18 3. Charismatic Leaders
- 2/20 a. Diane Sasson, "The Shakers: The Adaptation of Prophecy," in T. Miller (ed.), *When Prophets Die: The Postcharismatic Fate of New Religious Movements* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1991) [e-reserve]
- Spencer C. Olin, "The Oneida Community and the Instability of Charismatic Authority," *J. of American History* 67(2):285-300 (1980) [JSTOR]
- 2/23 b. Lawrence Foster, "The Psychology of Religious Genius: Joseph Smith and the Origins of New Religious Movements," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 26(4):1-22 (1993) [e-reserve]
- Chrisotoph Brumann, "The Dominance of One and Its Perils: Charismatic Leadership and Branch Structures in Utopian Communes," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 56(4): 425-451 (2000) [JSTOR]
- 2/25 4. Society and Economy
- 2/25 a. Peter Hoehnle, "Machine in the Garden: The Woolen Textile Industry of the Amana Society, 1785-1942," *The Annals of Iowa* 61(1):24-67 (2002) [e-reserve]
- Matthew Cooper, "Relations of Modes of Production in Nineteenth Century America: The Shakers and Oneida," *Ethnology* 25(1):1-16 (1987) [JSTOR]

- 2/27 b. John Baden, "Communitarianism and the Logic of the Commons," in John Baden and Douglas Noonan (eds.), *Managing the Commons*. Indiana University Press, 1998.

Brian J.L. Berry, "Contrapuntal Long-Wave Rhythms," Chap. 2 of *America's Utopian Experiments*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1992 [e-reserve]

5. Social Relations and the Social Order

- 3/2 a. Beth DeWolfe, "The Mob at Enfield," in Brown (ed.)
 J. Andelson, "Sociogenesis and Schismogenesis," in Brown (ed.)
- 3/4 b. Michael Hechter, "The Attainment of Solidarity in Intentional Communities," *Rationality and Society* 2(2):142-155 (1990) [e-reserve]
- John W. Bennett, "Social Theory and the Social Order of the Hutterian Community," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 51(4):292-307. (1977) [e-reserve]

III. Kibbutz: an Intentional Community in Israel: in this section we will examine the rise and decline of the largest and one of the most significant utopian experiment in history, whose story fits almost perfectly into the 20th century.

- 3/6 A. M. Spiro, "The Moral Postulates of Kibbutz Culture," from *Kibbutz: Venture in Utopia* (New York: Schocken Books, 1956) [e-reserve]
- Ben-Rafael, Preface, Chapters 1 & 2
- 3/9 B. Ben-Rafael, Chapter 3
- 3/11 C. Ben-Rafael, Chapters 4 & 5
 Video: (before class)
- 3/13 D. Ben-Rafael, Chapters 6 & 7

3/14-3/29 **SPRING RECESS**

- 3/30 *****PAPER DUE:** The articles and the book we have read for sections II-B and III all deal, in one way or another, with the questions of why, when, and how intentional communities get formed and why some persist and others fail. In a 7-8 page paper, present your assessment of the origins, persistence, and decline of such communities. Your task is to think critically about the evidence and the

interpretations, and to present your own synthesis, arguing for or against particular interpretations and possibly coming up with your own.

IV. Intentional Communities of the 1960s: among the most colorful and interesting of intentional communities were those founded as part of the self-proclaimed “counter-culture” of the 1960s. Hundreds and perhaps thousands of such communities began during this period, attracting tens of thousands of members. Many, probably most, had short careers, but some have persisted, changing and adapting to new circumstances and inspiring others to start new ones. Our brief survey only scratches the surface.

- 4/1 A. Timothy Miller, “The New Communes Emerge,” Chap 2 of *The 60s Communes* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999) (e-reserve)

Gretchen Siegler, “In Search of Truth,” in Brown (ed.)

- 4/3 B. Brown, “Community as Cultural Critique,” in Brown (ed.)

Albert Bates, “From Intentional Community to Ecovillage: The Farm in the Nineties,” Conference Paper ICSA, 1995 (electronic documents)

V. Intentional Communities and a Sustainable Future: As modern industrial capitalism reached its zenith, the world came to realize its fatal flaw: a lack of sustainability. Intentional communities have long sought to create a more satisfying way of living than the one offered in consumer-driven urban society. Today, more and more communities around the world are taking up the sustainability challenge. We will examine a few of these, and groups of you will plan your own.

A. Gaviotas: Sustainability in the Colombian Llanos

- 4/6 1. Weisman: Overture, Part I (to p.59)
- 4/8 2. Weisman, Part I (p.59-90) and Part II (to p.121)
Video: “Gaviotas”
- 4/10 3. Weisman, Part II (p. 121-159) and Part III (to p.188)
- 4/13 4. Weisman, Part III (p. 188-222) and Afterword

B. The Amish and the Salvadoran *re pobladores* communities

- 4/15 1. Peterson, pp.1-40
Video: “The Amish: How They Survive” (before class 12:30)
- 4/17 2. Peterson, pp. 40-75

- 4/20 3. Peterson, pp. 77-123
- 4/22 4. Peterson, pp. 125-145
- C. Planning a Sustainable Intentional Community: An Exercise in Applying Knowledge
- 4/24 1. No readings; form community groups
- 4/27 *****PAPER DUE: What's happening in current communities?** In this paper you have the opportunity to survey some aspect of the current communities movement, in the U.S. or abroad, through communities' websites, special topic issues of *Communities* magazine (e.g. women in community, the arts, green building, community politics), or other materials you can find. In 5-6 pages, offer your reflective and evaluative commentary on the community/communities or topic you have chosen. Be sure to cite your sources.
- 4/29 2. D.L. Christian, *Creating a Life Together*, Foreword, Introduction, Chapters 1-3
- 5/1 3. Christian, Chapters 4-8
Video: "Visions of Utopia"
- 5/4 4. Christian, Chapters 9-12
- 5/6 5. Christian, Chapters 13-15
- 5/8 6. Christian, Chapters 16-18
- 5/14 ***** ORAL PRESENTATIONS BY COMMUNITY GROUPS
THURSDAY, 2-5 P.M. (refreshments will be served)**

Each group must also submit at this time a written community prospectus, including a vision statement and plans for establishing and organizing your community.