

CCS 119/FND 103R
Leaving the World Behind:
Utopian Communities and Other Experiments in Living
Fall 2007

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Office Hours
M 9:30-10:30
W 11:00-12:00
R 1:30-2:30

Texts

The following books are required and may be purchased at the campus bookstore:

St. Benedict, *The Rule of St. Benedict*
Gregory Claeys and Lyman Tower Sargent, eds., *The Utopia Reader*
Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World*
Kat Kinkade, *Is It Utopia Yet?*
Ursula Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*
Thomas More, *Utopia*
Donald E. Pitzer, ed., *America's Communal Utopias*
Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*
Glendyne R. Wergland, *One Shaker Life*

Course Description

Social dreamers have for centuries imagined and sought to build communities better than those in which they lived. Those communities have come to be called “utopian,” following the lead of Sir Thomas More, the sixteenth-century English humanist. More was, of course, neither the first nor the last to articulate a vision of a better world. In this course we will explore utopian communities, both as they have been imagined by writers, planners, and social visionaries, and as they have been constructed by men and women seeking alternative ways of living. Along the way we will address a number of critical questions: What makes a community “utopian”? What drives individuals and groups to form such communities? How can we account for the successes and failures of their attempts? How do utopian communities balance the needs of individuals with those of the group? Discussion of these and related questions will allow us to reflect on the nature of community life in general and on the strengths and weaknesses of our own communities in particular.

Course Requirements

You will need to prepare and submit what I call a “response memo” on four of the specially indicated days in the schedule that follows. Each response memo should make use of the reading assigned for the topic to pose and then answer a question central to the concerns of the course. Such concerns include the appeal of alternative communities for those who create and join them;

their success (or lack of success) in reaching their goals; their attitudes towards work, governance, gender roles, private property, and marriage and family; and the lessons they have to teach the rest of us. Memos should be analytical rather than descriptive; comparative questions are particularly welcome.

At the top of each memo, you should *type the question you will be addressing*. Each memo must include *at least one direct quotation from the assigned reading* (with page number(s) cited). In evaluating your memos I will look for indications that you have thought carefully about the reading, grappled with the ideas presented there, and applied your analytic and creative skills in putting together a thoughtful discussion. As for length and format, memos should be 600-700 words long; should be typed and printed according to the instructions below (no e-mailed memos please); and should include your name and the date for which the memo is being submitted at the top. Memos will be collected at the beginning of the indicated class meetings. A late memo (any memo handed in after the beginning of class) will be accepted with a penalty provided it is handed in by 4:30 on the date it is due. The penalty for a late memo will be one letter grade. If you will be unable to make it to class on a day for which you have prepared a memo, you can hand in your work in advance or arrange for a classmate to hand it in for you. No memos will be accepted after 4:30 on the due date. You must turn in your first memo by September 25th.

You will also complete a “concluding memo” comparing a selected aspect of your end-of-semester presentation group’s community (see below) to *either* Shaker society, as described in Wergland’s book, *or* the anarchic society of Anarres, as imagined by Le Guin. In your memo you should highlight the ways in which your group’s community resembles the society of Anarres or the Shaker settlement at New Lebanon (for your chosen characteristic), and how it differs. Most importantly, you should analyze the implications of those similarities and differences for community life. How do they affect the strength of each community? How do they influence its quality of life? How do they fit with its broader goals? This concluding memo, which can be up to 900 words in length, will be due by 4:30 on the day of your group’s class presentation.

A great deal of the work for this course will be carried out in small groups. On many days, you and your groupmates will work together to formulate responses to questions posed by the instructor. Along with several of your classmates, you will also prepare and deliver an oral presentation describing your vision of an appealing alternative community. Further details will be provided in class.

On October 2nd we will travel to the Ephrata Cloister to visit the site of a former local community. The field trip is scheduled for a regular class day but will begin earlier than our normal class period. If it will be impossible for you to attend because of a conflict with another class, you must see me well in advance for an alternate assignment.

There will be a final examination which you must take to pass the course. The date and time for the final will be announced by the Registrar. You must make yourself available to take the exam at the scheduled time during finals week.

In computing your grade the following weights will be given to your work:

Response Memos	30%
Concluding Memo	10%
Participation	20%
Group Presentation	10%
Final Examination	30%

Attendance and punctuality are expected. Excessive absences or tardiness will adversely affect your grade. If you miss more than three class meetings, your average for the semester will be reduced by five percent for each additional absence. Four absences, for example, will bring a five percent penalty, five absences a ten percent penalty, and so on. Arrival after attendance has been taken will count as half an absence for this purpose.

Instructions for Preparing Response Memos

- Work must be printed at the highest quality possible, double-spaced (equivalent to a line spacing of 20 to 24 points), have reasonable margins (about one inch), and use a standard text size and font (12 point Times is a good choice, as are 10 point Courier and 12 point Baskerville).
- Include a word count at the end of your work.
- Use a staple or paper clip to fasten the pages together.
- Use proper references for quotations and examples—either in the form of footnotes or parenthetical references in the text.
- Be sure to spell-check and proofread your work carefully before handing it in.
- Printed copies (electronic submissions will not be accepted) are due at the beginning of class. Late memos will be penalized as noted above.

Class Topics and Assignments

August 30	Imagining Utopia
September 4	A Hermit's Life I Thoreau, pp. 5-90, 140-50
September 6	A Hermit's Life II Thoreau, pp. 201-97 <i>Response Memo on Thoreau</i>
September 11	A Design for Holy Living Benedict, all

- September 13 The Continuing Appeal of Monasticism
Pitzer, pp. 224-252
Response Memo on Monasticism
- September 18 More's Utopia
More, *Utopia*, pp. 3-85
- September 20 The Puzzle of Thomas More
- September 25 Understanding More's Utopia
Essays by Chambers, Hexter, Elton in *Utopia*
Response Memo on More's Utopia
- September 27 Ephrata
Pitzer, pp. 14-36
- October 2 **FIELD TRIP TO EPHRATA CLOISTER—8:50 AM**
Meet in Williamson Parking Lot
- October 4 The Shaker, Amana, and Oneida Communities
Claeys and Sargent, pp. 182-192
Pitzer, pp. 37-56, 181-203, 253-278
Response Memo on religious communities
- October 9 Shaker Life I
Wergland, chapters 1-6
- October 11 Shaker Life II
Wergland, chapters 7-conclusion
Response Memo on Wergland
- FALL BREAK**
- October 18 Free Day—No Class Meeting
- October 23 Brook Farm, Icaria, and California's Socialist Communities
Claeys and Sargent, pp. 192-202, 219-228
Pitzer, pp. 159-180, 279-296, 419-31
Response Memo on secular communities
- October 25 Looking Backward
Claeys and Sargent, pp. 240-91, 301-11
- October 30 Utopia Gone Awry I
Huxley, chapters 1-8

November 1	Utopia Gone Awry II Huxley, chapters 9-18 <i>Response Memo on Huxley</i>
November 6	A Modern Experiment in Communal Living I Kinkade, chapters 1-17
November 8	A Modern Experiment in Communal Living II Kinkade, chapters 18-32 <i>Response Memo on Kinkade</i>
November 13	Communal Living in the 1960s Le Guin, chapters 1-2
November 15	Other Worlds, Other Possibilities I Le Guin, chapters 3-6 <i>Response Memo on Le Guin</i>
November 20	Other Worlds, Other Possibilities II Le Guin, chapters 7-13
THANKSGIVING BREAK	
November 27	Conclusions
November 29	Group Presentations Concluding Memo Due for Presenters (4:30)
December 4	Group Presentations Concluding Memo Due for Presenters (4:30)
December 6	Group Presentations Concluding Memo Due for Presenters (4:30)

Final Examination—Time and Date to be announced by the Registrar.