

**IDS 333 (01): Topics in American Studies: American Utopias**  
T/R 9:300-10:45                      Spring 2008                      Central Campus Res. Hall Classroom

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**\*Notes:**

- 1) *While the basic structure and requirements of this course will not change, good pedagogical practice suggests that this syllabus might be altered slightly as class needs require.*
- 2) there will be one required field trip to Canterbury Shaker Village (Canterbury, NH) on SATURDAY Feb. 16

**Professor:** Elizabeth Duclos-Orsello, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Studies Dept.  
**Office Hours:** Mon. 12:30-2:00; Wed. 12:30 – 3:00

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When emailing include your name,  
“IDS 333” and the topic of your email  
on the “Re: line

**Important Notes about Office Hours:**

- **If you would like to reserve a time to meet with me, please SIGN UP ON THE SHEETS INSIDE the IDS OFFICE.** Otherwise, I meet with students on a first-come, first-served basis. If office hours change for any given week, I will post changes outside my office.
  - Please contact me if you would like to set up an appointment to speak face-to-face at a time other than those listed above. If my schedule allows I am happy to accommodate.
  - **I generally return emails and phone calls within 24 hours M-F. Weekends and holidays are exceptions to this.**
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**Course Description (From 2006-2008 Undergraduate Catalog)**

Topics in American Studies: “A close examination of a topic significant in the formation of American culture. Potential topics may be (but are not limited to) immigration, popular culture, religion or consumerism. Students will examine texts drawn from art, literature, history or other fields and conduct interdisciplinary research. Three lecture hours per week.”

**Course description/Overview for “American Utopias”**

While discussions of and writings about utopia have permeated every culture on earth for millennia, both the history and the culture of the United States have been full of efforts to create or imagine a better life for all (or part) of the American populace. In addition, the United States itself has been imagined as a utopia by many people around the world at many different historical moments. American cultural products—from landscape painting to new forms of architecture and literature—bear the marks of these utopian visions, as do the many experimental intentional communities that stand out among a sea of conformity (Amana, the Shakers, The Farm...to name a few). In this course, we will explore the meaning and power of “utopia” in American culture and consider/investigate the myriad forms that utopian thinking has taken in the U.S. Film, literature, architecture, political tracts, foodways, clothing, and relations between the sexes will each attract our attention. Utopian thinking and experimentation in New England will be highlighted throughout the course.

## Course Goals:

**Global Goal:** To explore the historical, literary and cinematic experiments in/representations of utopian thought and ideals in the United States from 1600s and apply American Studies methods to this study.

### Additional Goals and Objectives

1. To introduce students to the concept of “utopia”— its historical and ideological contours, and its artistic/cultural presence – both in the US and globally
  - a. Students will understand and be able to discuss both the origins of “utopia” as a word and a concept, and the origins of utopian literature as a genre.
  - b. Students will understand and be able to discuss the relationship between (primarily) European utopian ideology and U.S. versions of the same.
2. To explore how, why, and in what real-world utopian experiments have come in to being in the United States.
  - a. Students will be able to discuss various U.S.-specific utopian experiments/efforts and connect their goals, form etc. to larger questions of American identity/ideology.
  - b. Students will be able to link changes in U.S. social, political, cultural arenas to the rise, growth and/or demise of American utopian experiments to which utopian experiments.
  - c. Students will be able to identify and discuss the relationship between utopian ideas and the built environment in some of these experiments.
  - d. Students will be able to identify and discuss the place of New England and New Englanders in the discourse and practice of American utopianism.
3. To investigate and analyze the unique elements of “utopian fiction” – as a literary genre.
  - a. Students will be able to identify and discuss the significance of Thomas More’s *Utopia* (1516).
  - b. Students will be able to identify and discuss typical elements of utopian fiction and how these elements develop in at least two (2) works of American utopian fiction.
4. To consider the ways in which key demographic variables (e.g. gender, race, economic status, language) have influenced utopian thought and experiments.
  - a. Students will be able to discuss the degree to which utopian experiments replicated or challenged “real-world” gender, race, or economic divisions (and consider how successful these efforts were).
  - b. Students will be able to discuss the ways in which authors of utopian fiction addressed these issues.
  - c. Students will be able to discuss the degree to which contemporary trends such as “gated communities” fit within a longer utopian tradition.
5. To deepen and strengthen students' understanding of the skills, methods and work of American Studies scholars and scholarship.
  - a. Students will research a utopian community or a work of utopian fiction not covered in class materials. Research will be in at least 2 disciplinary areas.
  - b. Students will use oral history methods to explore contemporary ideas about utopia
  - c. Students will engage with online communities and use electronic media to learn and create new knowledge.

**Required Reading** (the first 2 items available at the SSC bookstore, additional readings will be made available electronically or from professor)

*The Utopia Reader* (paperback version)

Ed. Gregory Claeys

Publisher: NYU Press (1999)

*Herland, The Yellow Wall-Paper, and Selected Writings* (Penguin Classics)

Charlotte Perkins Gilman (Paperback – September 1, 1999)

Additional readings as noted in syllabus.

### **Assessment and Grading**

Attendance and participation=30%

Includes attendance at field trip Sat. Feb. 16.

Quiz at end of Unit II. (covering Units I and II) Will be graded in class = 10%

Reading Logs (6 total – about bi weekly) = 25%

As you read and explore assigned materials for this class keep a reading log tracing two issues:

- 1) The ways in which the materials you are exploring connect with the large themes of our course and
- 2) The way a specific aspect of “utopia” is represented/discussed. (These “other aspects” are to be drawn from the following list: geography, economy, work/labor, living arrangements, home design, architecture, leisure/entertainment, gender relations, families, public/private divide/ownership, race relations, foodways, clothing, work, sexual relations/rules, education...or another topic you clear with me. These reading logs will form the basis for much of our class discussion.

Wikipedia Project = 20% - see separate assignment sheet.

Final Exam = 10%

- will present to you some late 20<sup>th</sup> c./21<sup>st</sup> c. examples of (and selections from) American utopias & utopian fiction and you will (in writing) respond to a set of questions. Questions will ask you to discuss the ways in which these experiments and visions connect with the themes and examples we have studied throughout the semester. Selections will be announced last week of class, giving you time to do some research/reading on them. You will be able to choose 2 from a larger set.

## ADDITIONAL COURSE POLICIES/PROCEDURES

### ***Standard Form for Written Work:***

All written work (unless otherwise specified) must be computer-generated in 12 point standard font with 1" margins. All pages should be stapled. (no fancy binders, please) At the top of page one should be:

First Name Last Name	Prof. Duclos-Orsello
IDS 333	Date
NAME OF ASSIGNMENT	

### ***Attendance Policy***

As with all college courses, class time is an essential to your learning and growth. I expect that all students will be in class each day we meet. However, I know that emergencies arise. Each student may miss 2 classes without penalty (and I do not need to know why). Any additional absences will result in a 2/3 of a grade reduction (per absence) in your final Att. and Part. Grade. Students will be held responsible for any material they miss when absent; it is up to the student to acquire any course materials, notes etc.

### ***Late Work***

Work handed in late without prior approval from me will result in an automatic 1/3 of a grade reduction per day. Work not handed in after 5 weekdays will result in an "F". It is YOUR responsibility to contact me well in advance of a deadline if you anticipate a problem completing an assignment. Extensions are not guaranteed, but I will make every effort to accommodate hard working students if an emergency/unexpected issue arises.

### ***Academic Integrity and Academic Dishonesty***

"Salem State College assumes that all students come to the College with serious educational intent and expects then to me mature, responsible individuals who will exhibit high standards of honesty and personal conduct in their academic lives. All forms of academic dishonesty are considered to be serious offenses against the College community. The College will apply sanctions when student conduct interferes with the College's primary responsibility of ensuring its educational objectives." *As per the SSC 2006-2008 Undergraduate Catalog, p 332*

The definition of "Academic Dishonesty" used at SSC is explained in detail on pp 332-333 in the *2006-2008 Undergraduate Catalog*. Please familiarize yourself with it. It includes, but is not restricted to the following: "Submitting, another person's work as one's own. This includes, for example, copying another's work during examinations, purchasing term papers, copying papers, reports, copying laboratory or computer results, and presenting materials from another course without acknowledgement."

### ***Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:***

"SSC is committed to providing equal access to the educational experience for all students in compliance with Section 504 of The Rehabilitation Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act and to providing all reasonable academic accommodations, aids and adjustments. Any student who has a documented disability requiring an accommodation, aid or adjustment should speak with the instructor immediately. Students with Disabilities who have not previously done so should provide documentation to and schedule an appointment with the Office for Students with Disabilities and obtain appropriate services." The Office for Students with Disabilities can be reached in Meier Hall room 102 or at 978/542-6217. I am happy to help arrange for you to meet with someone from this office. Please let me know if you would like assistance. *I am happy to discuss your concerns at any time. However, by law you MUST register with the Office for Students with Disabilities in order for me to be able to officially meet your accommodation needs.*

### ***Writing Support Available at SSC***

My goal is to assist you in succeeding here at SSC. Please be aware that in addition to making use of my office hours there are other services and offices on campus which you should make use of whenever necessary. One of the most valuable is the SSC Writing Center (Meier Hall 223).

**Schedule of Topics and Assignments (tentative)**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic/Activity</b>	<b>Due Today (Reading and Assignments)</b>
T 1/15	Introductions, Syllabus & Utopia Definition activity	
<b>Unit I: Introduction to “Utopia” and <i>Utopia</i></b>		
Th 1/17	- Characteristics of utopias - Sir Thomas More and <i>Utopia</i> (1516)	Read Introduction in <i>The Utopia Reader</i> (TUR). Bring to class any questions you have about terminology
T 1/22	More’s <i>Utopia</i>	Read <i>Utopia</i> (Book II) (I will give you)
Th 1/24	Legacies: More and <i>Utopia</i>	Reading Log Due
<b>Unit II: Anglo Americans and Utopian Ideas in New England (?)</b>		
T 1/29	John Winthrop, The Puritans and A Modell of Christian Charity (1630)	A Modell of Christian Charity (on line at <a href="http://www.winthropsociety.org/doc_charity.php">http://www.winthropsociety.org/doc_charity.php</a> )
Th 1/31	North Shore Covenanted Communities	- “The Salem Covenant of 1629” - “The Enlarged Salem Covenant of 1636” - “Covenant of Exeter, New Hampshire, July 5, 1639” <a href="http://personal.pitnet.net/primarysources/covenants.html">http://personal.pitnet.net/primarysources/covenants.html</a>
T 2/5	Dedham, MA –rethinking colonial utopias	“The Dedham Covenant, 1636” (available at same link as above)  Selection from Lockridge, Kenneth. <i>A New England Town: The First Hundred Years</i> . ( Part I Chs 1-2; Ch. 5 “Decline”)
Th 2/7	- Unit I and II quiz - 19 <sup>th</sup> . c/20 <sup>th</sup> /21 <sup>st</sup> c idealization of these towns -town planning	Reading Log Due
<b>Unit III: 19<sup>th</sup> c. Communal Societies as Utopias (Am. Communitarianism)</b>		
T 2/12	Major Antebellum experiments I: Millennialism - The Shakers (Intro, Ideology and Architecture) (millennialism)	Read from <i>TUR</i> – section on Shakers  Statement of choice for Wikipedia project due today. In writing.
Th 2/14 (no class today. Individual meetings as needed to	<b>Individual meetings to discuss wiki projects (as needed)</b>  <b>Alternate class time Sat.</b>	Be sure to familiarize yourself with the Shaker Village website before Sat. 2/16

discuss Wiki projects <b>Field trip on Sat. 2/16 instead)</b>	<b>2/16 Field Trip to Shaker Village, Canterbury, NH (details on sep. sheet)</b>	
T 2/19	- Recap Shaker Village and discuss Shaker material culture - Oneida: Intro and Fourier's influence	Article on Shaker architecture & Essay on Shaker foodways ( I will give you)
Th 2/21	- Oneida II	Read from <i>TUR</i> – section on Oneida
T 2/26	Problems w/, Critiques of & Legacy of these groups	Critiques from contemporaries of Shakers and Oneida (TBA- 19 <sup>th</sup> c. articles from newspapers and journals about these groups.)
Th 2/28	- Brook Farm - introduce students to additional 19 <sup>th</sup> . c. communal groups esp. Fruitlands	Reading Log Due
<b>UNIT IV: African American Utopias? (The case of Nicodemus, KS)</b>		
3 /4	Intro to Nicodemus KS	
3/6	Independent work on wiki projects	
SPRING	BREAK	3/10-3/14
T 3/18	Wiki Project updates (2 min. presentation and 1 page written update) Include: 1. Topic 2. Research you have done 3. Existing gaps in current wikipedia entry 4. Plan for content of your posting (focus based on gaps and threads we have been following) 5. Research you plan on doing	Post your update on WebCT discussion bd PRIOR to coming to class.
Th 3/20	Nicodemus, KS - live lecture discussion via video feed with scholars at the Nicodemus National Historic Site	Primary sources re: Nicodemus. KS (I will give you)  Reading Log Due
T 3/25	Nicodemus, KS compared to previously studies 19 <sup>th</sup> . c. utopian communities	
<b>Unit V: Modernizing America and Utopian Fiction</b>		

Th 3/27	Utopian Fiction: intro to the form and its place in Gilded Age America Introduction to Edward Bellamy and <i>Looking Backward</i>	Reading by Jean Pfaeltzer about form of utopian fiction (TBD)
T 4/1	<i>Looking Backward (LB)</i>	Read <i>LB</i> through Ch. 13 (XIII) Available at <a href="http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/BELLAMY/toc.html">http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/BELLAMY/toc.html</a>
Th 4/3	<i>Looking Backward</i>	Read <i>LB</i> to end Reading Log Due
T 4/8	Intro to Charlotte Perkins Gilman and <i>Herland</i>	Begin reading <i>HL</i>
Th 4/10	<i>Herland</i>	Read through Ch. 7
T 4/15	<i>Herland</i>	Read to end
Th 4/17	- Intro to film and utopia - <i>Beach Party</i> films	Reading Log Due
T 4/22	Discuss <i>Beach Party</i> (1963)	Watch <i>Beach Party</i> (1963) Come to class with statement answering the following: “Why did I assign this film in THIS class”
Th 4/24	In class exploration of 1960s/70s communes: focus on “The Farm”	
T 4/29	Wiki Project showcase	
Th 5/1	Prep for final exam	
FINAL	Friday May 9th	8-10 am