



# HIST 423: American Radicals and Reformers

Professor Caleb McDaniel

Fall 2014

Time and Place: Wed 2-4:50pm, Humanities 327

Office: Humanities Building 330

Office hours: Fridays, 2-4pm or by appt.

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This syllabus is a static version (current as of August 18, 2014) of the full syllabus available at <http://utopias.blogs.rice.edu>. Please visit the website for working links and the latest updates about this course, or send email to [caleb.mcdaniel@rice.edu](mailto:caleb.mcdaniel@rice.edu).

## Course Description

Each semester, students in HIST 423 read scholarship about a particular group of American radicals and then conduct independent research on a historical question related to course themes. In the Fall 2014 semester, we will be focusing on Americans who formed utopian communities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

American utopians were visionary people who believed they could change the world by living in particular kinds of small communities. For some utopians, these communities were means to other ends, instruments in a larger movement of social reform. For others, communities were ends in themselves, designed as radically different alternatives to mainstream society.

In this course, we will meet figures like John Humphrey Noyes, who founded a nineteenth-century religious community where members held property in common and practiced polygamous “free love” relationships. We’ll visit a group of liberal Southern Baptists in Georgia who founded an interracial cooperative farm called Koinonia Farm, which served as a seedbed for the present-day non-profit organization Habitat for Humanity. And we’ll also spend time with various socialists, hippies, and their heirs.

Throughout, we will not only read the latest historical scholarship about these radicals but will also conduct independent research projects. In the process we will also consider general scholarly debates about American reform and radicalism and explore the methods that historians use to explain past movements, understand their aims, and gauge their effects on society at large. Among the questions we will consider are these: How is historical knowledge made? If the past is past, why are historical interpretations still so contested? What makes one historical interpretation better than another? How are interpretations of radicalism in the past shaped by the times in which historians themselves write?

## Required Books

The following books are available at the bookstore on campus and from various online retailers. All required books will also be placed on reserve at Fondren Library.

- Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Harvard University Press, 1972), ISBN: 0674145763
- W. Fitzhugh Brundage, *A Socialist Utopia in the New South: The Ruskin Colonies in Tennessee and Georgia, 1894-1901* (University of Illinois Press, 1996), ISBN: 0252065484
- Tracy Elaine K'Meyer, *Interracialism and Christian Community in the Postwar South: The Story of Koinonia Farm* (University of Virginia Press, 2000), ISBN: 0813920027

Other required readings will be made available electronically on [OWL-Space](#).

## Assignments

Your assignments this semester include the following.

- A 15- to 25-page original research paper, including shorter “benchmark” assignments (50% of course grade)
- A “Wikipedia” entry or revised entry on the topic of your research (10%)
- Weekly short comments on assigned readings (25%)
- Contributions to seminar discussions (15%)

## Research Project (50% of course grade)

Your major assignment for this course is to write an original, thesis-driven research paper on some question related to the course theme. The paper can either be an original work of history that uses primary and secondary sources to answer some question about a particular utopian community, or it can be a historiographical paper that uses scholarly sources to analyze, trace changes in, and explain the way past historians have understood a particular aspect of utopian communities. We will talk much more about these possibilities in class, but either way, **you must advance an original argument that adds something new to the historical literature on your topic.**

Your final paper should be 15-25 typed, double-spaced pages (including footnotes).

Because of the length and complexity of this assignment, **this is a writing-intensive course that will require substantial investments of your time outside of class.** I will be available throughout the semester, both in and out of class, to help you succeed. Your fellow classmates will also work as peer reviewers to assist you in refining your project and completing your final paper.

In order to complete this assignment, you will:

- Identify a topic for research

- Locate primary and secondary sources related to your topic
- Devise a narrower research question
- Develop an original thesis that addresses that question
- Write a paper that defends that thesis and relates it to some existing scholarship on your topic

A great deal of class time will be spent explaining in detail how to complete these steps, and much more information will be distributed on the blog or in class. You will also be required to complete a variety of smaller, “benchmark” assignments that will help you prepare for the final paper. These “benchmark” assignments include:

- An informal email to me by **September 26** discussing your interests or possible ideas for the research paper
- “Two Topics” Memo: a short, one-page list of two potential research topics, along with at least two primary sources and two secondary sources you have identified on each topic (due in my email inbox by *noon* on **October 1**)
- Proposal: a two- to three-page proposal explaining your topic, the question you want to answer about your topic, and the sources you intend to use (due in my email inbox before 11:59 PM on Tuesday, **October 22**)
- Outline of your paper due by *noon* on **October 29**
- “Primary Source” Memo, a short summary of one significant source document you have found for your research, to be shared with the seminar on **November 5**
- Two “Three to Seven Page” Memos (rough drafts of three to seven pages from your paper), due by *noon* on **November 12** and **November 19**
- Complete First Draft, due by *noon* on **November 26**; you will distribute the draft both to me and to a peer reviewer in the course whom I will designate, and we will meet with you during the final week of classes to discuss your draft and suggest revisions

Completion of the smaller “memo” and draft assignments are designed to help you perform well on the final paper and ease your anxiety about the final product. Moreover, since part of the objective of this seminar is to introduce you to the tasks of working historians, it’s imperative to know that drafting, outlining, planning, and getting feedback are essential parts of what historians do.

These “benchmark assignments” will not receive individual grades, because the point of them is for you to get regular, informal feedback from me and your classmates before handing in the final paper. Nonetheless, they are required assignments, and failure to complete them by the stated deadlines will make it very difficult for you to produce an “A” final paper. On days when we will be discussing student work in class, you will be asked to leave if you do not have material to present. Unless you have a medical emergency, I will not accept these benchmark assignments late, so failure to meet the deadline also means you won’t get *any* feedback from me on that assignment. I should be notified about any medical emergencies or potential setbacks to completing work on time as soon as they arise.

The Final Draft of your paper is due in my email inbox by **5 p.m. on December 17**. I will distribute a grading rubric beforehand that will explain exactly how I will assess your final paper.

You will be able to see this rubric long before turning in the paper, and it should help guide revisions of your drafts along the way.

### **Wikipedia Entry or Revision (10% of course grade)**

As part of the process of developing your research paper topic, you will be writing and/or revising a Wikipedia entry about the community or figure that you choose to study. More information about this assignment, which will be due on **October 15**, will be distributed in class.

### **Blog Comments on Assigned Readings (25% of course grade)**

In addition to being a writing intensive course, this is a reading intensive course, especially in the first half of the semester. Whenever there are assigned readings, I will post some reading questions on the home page of the course blog. By noon on the day of our meeting, you should post a comment in response to one of these questions on the blog. While you must answer one of the questions, you can also use your comment to raise other questions of interest to you about the readings or respond to another student's comment. Days when you can expect to have comments due are indicated on the schedule below.

I will give you some feedback on your comments after our October 1 meeting, including a rough grade of your comments to date. This will give you some indication of how you are doing in the comments, but only your final grade on the reading comments will count towards your grade. Here is a rough breakdown of what grades for blog posts look like:

- An "A" on this assignment means that you posted all comments on time, and your comments were consistently accurate, thoughtful, based on specific evidence and examples drawn from the reading, and written in direct answer to one of the questions I posed.
- A "B" means your comments were mostly accurate but insufficiently supported with evidence and examples or not always relevant to the questions at hand. You may have failed to post one comment, but posted all the others.
- A "C" means you posted the comment but give little evidence of thoughtful engagement with the reading—as evidenced either by widespread inaccuracy, very limited use of the texts, clear unfamiliarity with the arguments of the book, or lack of comprehension of the readings questions posed. You may also have failed to post more than one comment.
- If you receive a grade less than "C" when I give you an initial report after October 1, you need to make an appointment to speak with me personally.

Your comment should be about 300 to 500 words, though longer posts are also acceptable. It should be free of grammatical and typographical errors. It must be posted by noon on the day of our meeting unless there is an emergency that you can document to my satisfaction; late comments will not be accepted, and missing comments will lower your grade on this assignment. You should treat your post with the same seriousness and attention to detail as you would give to a response paper handed in to me, while also taking seriously your responsibility to inform and engage your fellow classmates.

## **Seminar Contributions (15% of course grade)**

This course will be run as a seminar, which means that your participation is crucial to its success. That participation should come mainly in two forms, which will be weighted equally:

First, you should contribute regularly to in-class discussions. Many of our class periods will be spent discussing assigned texts. That means you should come prepared to talk about the required readings and should spend time thinking about any discussion questions that I circulate beforehand. Whereas in a lecture course you might take most of your notes in class, in a seminar it's a good idea to take most of your notes before class so that you will be prepared to contribute to the discussion. As you read, jot down questions about the readings, summarize their major arguments, brainstorm potential problems with the readings, etc., and then use these notes to assist you in class.

Secondly, you should give feedback to your fellow historians in the seminar about their research projects. Informally, this means attending to and commenting on student's projects whenever we discuss them in class. Formally, it means that you will at various points be assigned as a "peer reviewer" for one of your classmates. Towards the end of the semester, you will exchange complete rough drafts with a partner designated by me, and you will be responsible for writing a thoughtful, 300-600 word memo to him/her with comments and suggestions about the draft. You will also be required to meet with me and your peer reviewer to discuss the draft.

An "A" student will make regular, consistently excellent contributions to the intellectual community of the course, though the quality of your contributions is more important than their quantity. You are free to speak with me throughout the semester about how you are doing in class, and I encourage you to do so. Your performance in this course is ultimately your responsibility.

## **General Policies**

**Attendance** Since discussion is a crucial part of this course, attendance is mandatory. Please be aware that **more than two unexcused absences** will result in a full letter grade deduction from your grade for "contributions to the seminar" for **each additional absence** since without your presence in the seminar, I cannot assess your performance on this assignment. If you miss more than once because of a chronic medical problem that arises during the course of the semester, you should contact me confidentially right away. All absences in case of medical or personal emergency must be documented to my satisfaction.

**Classroom Civility** I expect everyone to treat other members of this course with respect, just as you have the right to expect the same from me. As part of that respect, please refrain from distracting activities during class, which include interrupting your classmates during discussion, or using cell phones or laptop computers for personal instead of course-related business.

**Honor Code** The Honor Code covers all work performed in this class, and all suspected cases of plagiarism and intellectual dishonesty will be reported to the Honor Council. If you are unclear at any time about what constitutes an Honor Code violation in this course, it is your responsibility to clarify the issue with me before any ambiguous case arises. Please take the time

to read the Honor Council's explanation of what constitutes plagiarism and intellectual dishonesty; don't assume you know the definitions of those terms until you read [the Honor System Handbook](#) carefully.

## Schedule

If readings are listed on the below days, that means that you must complete them before class and come ready to discuss them.

**August 27** Course introduction

**September 3** Blog comment due

Readings:

- Kanter, *Commitment and Community* (required book), pp. 1-31
- "History of Village," *Historic Rugby*, accessed May 6, 2014
- Mary Ann Lamanna and Jayme A. Sokolow, "Belton Woman's Commonwealth," *The Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed August 14, 2014
- Hugh Gardner, "Rule by the Woodchucks: Drop City," in *The Children of Prosperity: Thirteen Modern American Communes* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1978), available on [OWL-Space](#)
- Rob Moll, "The New Monasticism," *Christianity Today*, September 2, 2005
- Gina Bellafante, "On Campus, Finding Face Time in a Virtual Age," *New York Times*, September 28, 2006
- Olga Khazan, "Multiple Lovers, Without Jealousy," *The Atlantic*, July 21, 2014

Media:

- [The Farm](#) on YouTube, with [obituary of founder Stephen Gaskin](#)
- [Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage](#), on YouTube
- [Summer Commune](#) on YouTube, together with website <http://summercommune.com>

**September 10** Blog comment due

- Kanter, *Commitment and Community* (required book), pp. 165-237
- Fred Turner, "Where the Counterculture Met the New Economy: The WELL and the Origins of Virtual Community," *Technology and Culture* 46 (July 2005), 485-512, online at [Turner's website](#) (PDF)
- Donald E. Pitzer, "Developmental Communalism into the Twenty-First Century," in *The Communal Idea in the 21st Century*, ed. Eliezer Ben-Rafael et al. (Brill, 2013), available [online from Fondren](#)

**September 17** Blog comment due

- Brundage, *A Socialist Utopia in the New South* (required book), entire

**September 24** Blog comment due

Readings on Oneida:

- Lawrence Foster, “Free Love and Feminism: John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida Community,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1981), pp. 165-183, available on [JSTOR](#)
- Marilyn Klee-Hartzell, “‘Mingling the Sexes’: The Gendered Organization of Work in the Oneida Community,” *The Courier* (Fall 1993), available [online](#)

Readings on The Farm:

- Louis J. Kern, “Pronatalism, Midwifery, and Synergistic Spiritual Enlightenment and Sexual Ideology on The Farm,” in Chmielewski, Kern, and Klee-Hartzell, ed., *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian Societies in the United States* (Syracuse University Press, 1993), reprinted [online](#)
- Tim Hodgdon, “‘We Here Work as Hard as We Can’: The Farm’s Sexual Division of Labor,” Chapter 5 in *Manhood in the Age of Aquarius: Masculinity in Two Countercultural Communities, 1965-83* (Columbia University Press, 2007), available as an [online book](#)

**Note:** Informal email due by end of day on Friday; discuss your interests and ideas for the research paper

**October 1** “Two Topics” Memo due by noon.

- Kanter, *Commitment and Community*, pp. 61-138

**October 8** Blog comment due

- K’Meyer, *Interracialism and Christian Community in the Postwar South* (required book), entire

## Final Sprint

For the remainder of the semester, you will be focusing intensively on reading and writing your research paper outside of class. The *required benchmark assignments* and their deadlines are listed below. During class, we will be conducting writing workshops and in-class source analyses to help you with the tasks of doing and writing about your research.

**October 15** “Wikipedia” entry due by noon.

**October 22** Submit your Proposal to me by midnight *before* our usual class time. In lieu of meeting as a group, I will be scheduling brief meetings with each of you this week to discuss your proposal.

**October 29** Outline of your paper due by noon.

- Noyes, ed., *Free Love in Utopia: John Humphrey Noyes and the Origin of the Oneida Community*, pp. 213-218, available on [OWL-Space](#).
- Robert S. Fogarty, ed., *Desire and Duty at Oneida: Tirzah Miller’s Intimate Memoir*, pp. 53-74, available on [OWL-Space](#).
- *First Annual Report of the Oneida Association* (1849), scroll down and skim “Testimony of the Members”

**November 5** “Primary Source” Memo should be brought to class at 2pm.

**November 12** “Three to Seven Page” Memo due by noon

**November 19** “Three to Seven Page” Memo due by noon

**November 26** NO CLASS. Complete first draft due by **noon** to me and your designated peer reviewer.

**December 3** Final draft of research paper due by 5 p.m.