Books

Books, except for *A Bliss Case*, are available at the bookstore on Nichol Ave. and Lipman Drive here on the Douglass campus and, I’m told, at the main Barnes and Noble bookstore downtown as well. I have not ordered my novel for the bookstore because it would cost several dollars more there and I wanted to save you some money and, also, forgo any royalties on my own book. You may purchase the novel from me directly at the author’s price or attempt to secure a used copy.


Electronic Reserve

There is also an extensive electronic “packet” of articles from magazines, newspapers, journals, and chapters in books. To access these readings, go on the web, find Rutgers, then Rutgers libraries, then Reserves, and then enter my name, Rockland, and go to our course (01:050:330) Do not confuse our course materials with those materials for other courses of mine on reserve. You may read all these materials on line, but I strongly urge you, instead, to print them out immediately and put them in a folder and to be sure you bring them to class with you on the days they will be discussed. You will do much better in the course if you have the materials with you in class. This, of course, goes for the books as well when they are discussed. The materials on electronic reserve are just as important as the books, films, lectures, etc. They appear on electronic reserve in the exact order they are discussed in class. I have put these materials on electronic reserve in an attempt to save you considerable money had they been xeroxed and rights secured.

Please note that all materials are to be read for the class they are listed for, not after that class.

Syllabus

Thursday, Sept. 2  Introduction: The Main Ideas of the Course; What’s a cult, what’s a commune, what’s a religion? Is there a difference between them? How they are different, how the same

Wednesday, Sept. 8 Introduction (continued) Yes, Monday classes on this Wednesday

Read Dilbert cartoons, excerpt from Abbie Hoffman’s *Woodstock*
“Nation; “Commune flourishes as does Neighborliness: A New Kind of Housing That Brings People Together” “A Close Circle of Friends” “Free Love, Hate, And Ambush at Staten Island Commune”

Thursday, Sept. 9
“Better to Marry Than to Burn?” [Paul]
“Fight Over an Ex-Nun’s Mind”; “Some Colleges Warn Students of Cult-Like Methods Being Used by Christian Fundamentalist Groups”; “Hazing Photos Spur Debates on Complicity of Coaches.”

Monday, Sept. 13
Not All Communes are Rural
read: Samuel Delaney, *Heavenly Breakfast*

Thursday, Sept. 16
Why People Join Cults and Communes
Read: Rosabeth Moss Kanter: “Commitment Mechanisms in 19th Century Communes”

Monday, Sept. 20
Why People Join Cults and Communes II
Continuing discussion of Kanter’s ideas

Thursday, Sept. 23
Is This a Cult or a Religion?
Read: “The Holy Ghost People”
Film: “The Holy Ghost People”

Monday, Sept. 27 & Thursday Sept. 30
Ticket to Hell?
Movie: “Ticket to Heaven”

Monday, Oct. 4
The Krishna Movement
Read: E. Burke Rockford, *Hare Krishna in America*
Guest Speaker, Donia Salem an adherent to the Krishna faith

Thursday, Oct. 7
Older Sects
Films “The Shakers” and “The Hutterites”

Monday, Oct. 11
Older Sects II: The Oneidans
Read Constance Noyes Robertson, *Oneida Community: An Autobiography*. The Introduction

Thursday, Oct. 14
Older Sects III: The Mormons
Read from Jon Krakauer, *Under the Banner of Heaven*, Prologue

Monday, Oct. 18  and  The Farm
Thursday, Oct. 21  read: “Why I Left the Farm”  
Films of life on the farm

**Note:** Term Paper Précis is due in class on October 21 as well. See Ground Rules and Requirements. Original and copy stapled together. Will not be accepted any other way.

Also, objective midterm (multiple choice quiz) on October 21. No makeups, no matter what the excuse. You must take the exam this day.

Monday, Oct. 25  Jonestown

Read: Deborah Layton, *Seductive Poison*
also read: Lawrence Hall, “Lambs to the Slaughter”
and the Jonestown Rutgers Rugby Song

Thursday, Oct. 28  Jonestown (continued)

Film: “The Jonestown Massacre”

Monday, Nov. 1  Waco

read: *Time* magazine coverage of Waco
film: “Waco, Rules of Engagement”

Thursday, Nov. 4  Heaven’s Gate

Read: *New York Times* material on Heaven’s Gate, as well as “This just in From Our Cult Desk” and “Deprogramming Heaven’s Gate”

film: “The Heaven’s Gate Cult”

Monday, Nov. 8  Professors and Gurus

Read: Michael Aaron Rockland, *A Bliss Case*

Thursday, Nov. 11  *A Bliss Case* (continued)

Read as well: “The Professor and the Guru” and “Bloom Country”

Films of the Ashram

Monday, Nov. 15  Scientology
Read: *Time* magazine’s reportage on Scientology
I will discuss Scientology’s response to it in class

Thursday, Nov. 18  The Unification Church
Film on the church

Note: The university has cancelled Monday classes on November 22nd. Instead, Wednesday classes will be held.

Monday, Nov. 29  Power, Sex and Mindbending
Movie: “Holy Smoke”

Term Papers are due this day in class. Papers may not be sent as an e-mail attachment. Late papers will be penalized with each passing day and regardless of the reason. I need the projects by this date so they can be graded by the final and returned then.

Thursday, Dec. 2  Completion of “Holy Smoke” and Discussion

Monday, Dec. 6  New Religions Will Always Emerge


Thursday, Dec. 9  A Different Kind of Walden
& Monday, Dec. 13

Read: B.F. Skinner, *Walden II*

Final Examination, Friday, December 17, 8:30-11:00

GROUND RULES AND REQUIREMENTS

Summary of key Dates in the Course:
1. Midterm quiz is on Thursday, October 21
2. Term Paper Precis is due same day, Thursday, October 21
3. Term Project due on Monday, November 29
4. Final Examination is on Friday, December 17, 8:30-11:00

TERM PAPER

Precis: On October 21 (no other time) you are to give me a one paragraph précis, a description of your term paper project and, if possible, what your central argument (s)
will be. This means that well before that date you should have decided on your topic so you can discuss it intelligently in your précis. Although you will not be graded on your précis, no late précis will be considered, and failure to hand the précis in on time will affect your grade. The précis should be typed and handed in in duplicate, original and copy stapled together, on normal 8 and ½ x 11 inch paper. I will return the original to you with my comments as soon after October 21 as possible, keeping the copy. The précis is my way of guaranteeing that your term project is indeed a term project and that you are working on a project appropriate to our course.

**Topic:** In general, you will be writing on an American cult or commune or some institution that has characteristics of a cult or commune or both. I would prefer your writing on groups or institutions not studied in class—though I will not automatically reject your desire to research in much greater depth a group we have looked at quickly. Groups examined can either be historical or contemporary. If a contemporary group, it will be meaningful if you can experience it personally—though be careful: I don’t want to hear that you’ve become a disciple of some guru and then we have to send the deprogrammers after you. If you are studying a group and find yourself losing objectivity—have stopped being an observer/ are becoming a participant—see me at once.

You may also choose to write about an institution that is not a cult or commune per se but which exhibits cult-like characteristics when one applies such criteria as Kaner’s. Fraternities and sororities, especially in their hazing practices, are often thought of as cult-like. Indeed, as I write this, a Rutgers sorority has been hauled into court charged with vicious hazing practices, including a good deal of physical abuse. Sometimes athletic teams and the military are thought to have cult-like characteristics. I certainly thought boot camp had such characteristics when I was drafted into the Navy. You may also choose to examine alternate living arrangements and formalized sexual arrangements that depart from the nuclear family norm.

I’d like these term projects to be in the neighborhood of 10 written pages, plus exhibits if you’d like-- illustrations, photographs, drawings, etc. In a few instances, I might be willing to let students study a group or institution by making a movie as their term project and, in this instance, I might agree to let two students work together on such a project if it was sufficiently demanding, ambitious, and to be skillfully executed.

**Course Objectives and Grading Policy**

1. This course raises a basic question: whether all religions begin as what we call “cults” and, if they stick around long enough, become “respectable.” We will examine a host of communal and religious experiments in American life and discover some surprising things: 1) that cults or religions tend to succeed based not on what they offer their adherents but what they deny them; 2) all new religions or cults tend to attack the family as we generally conceive of it; 3) All new religions or cults succeed to the extent to which freedom of inquiry is limited if not prohibited and, thus, prosper to the extent to which they are undemocratic and even totalitarian. As we shall see, ironically, democratic
and egalitarian cults or communes have generally been far less successful in terms of longevity than totalitarian and autocratic ones.

2. Students will learn to understand the different social, religious, and political forces that give rise to new religions—often pejoratively referred to as “cults”—and alternate ways of organizing social groupings—such as communes. Attention will be paid to the ways in which these experiments both imitate and vary from mainstream or hegemonic ways of organizing religious and social institutions.

3. As with any American Studies course, we will endeavor to improve your skills in writing, in public speaking, and in critical and analytical reading. These three skills are the hallmark of a liberal arts education and are essential to success in most professions.

4. We are also interested in your developing facility in dealing with a range of materials and disciplines—film, literature, politics, sociology, and religious thought—so that thinking in an interdisciplinary fashion will become second nature to you. It is generally recognized that most problems are interdisciplinary in nature.

5. Term grades will be based on the following criteria:
   a) Term paper, 40%
   b) Midterm quiz, 15%
   c) Final quiz, 15%
   d) Final essay question (s) 20%
   e) Attendance and class participation, 10%

6. From the above you can see that your term paper—your own independent, creative work—is the most important factor in your grade. Given the nature of the assignment, there is no reason why you cannot get going on it immediately so that it will truly be a term project. The précis you hand in midway through the course should be an indication that you have already made considerable progress.

7. Be certain that everything in your term paper is your own work. Plagiarism (either quoting or paraphrasing the work of others without attribution) is perhaps the most serious of academic crimes. Plagiarism can lead to an “F” in your term paper, an “F” in our course, and even to being expelled from the university. Remember: proper attribution is simply good manners, a means of, in effect, saying “Thank you” to those whose words or ideas have been useful to you. Making use of the words and ideas of others—properly attributed—is not a sign that your own learning is defective but, instead, that you are participating in the community of scholars.