SESP 298: Building Intentional Communities
Alternative Student Breaks: The Farm

Facilitators
Sade Hood
(773) 456-8435
sadiehood2020@u.northwestern.edu

Lily Zhang
(331) 980-1826
xiangyunzhang2020@u.northwestern.edu

Adviser
Rosemary Bush
Associate Professor of Instruction, Weinberg College Advisor
Department of Earth and Planetary Sciences
rosemary.bush@northwestern.edu

Class Time and Location
TBD. (Ideally Monday evenings)

Goals
This course is designed to give students a better understanding of the historical, social, political and economic structures of intentional communities, which are groups of people who share a collective lifestyle (e.g. living together, pooling financial resources, etc.) based on common values. Students will relate these structures and practices to the setup of our own society and their daily lives. Students will also explore environmental degradation and the impacts of food cultivation, distribution and consumption. The course will culminate in an Alternative Student Breaks trip to the Farm, an intentional community that focuses on environmental issues.

Course Objectives
Unit 1: The Farm and Intentional Living
Students will analyze the various characteristics of intentional communities and develop an understanding of its definition. They will study examples of these communities that revolutionize social change as well as examples of conformity and entrapment that have been associated with them. By the end of this unit, students should understand why these communities form and the ways in which the media affects our perspective of them.

Unit 2: Environment and Sustainability
Students will learn about permaculture and sustainable infrastructure as it is used at the Farm. In this unit students will look deeply at the way that society interacts with food and the impact that this has on the planet.
Unit 3: Living Intentionally in Our Community
Students will begin to analyze their own interactions with living intentionally and develop the skills necessary to make change systematically. The result of this unit will be a highly developed plan of action for each student, using their own unique idea to take a step towards intentional living.

Expectations
Class participants are expected to attend the ASB trip to The Farm and to complete all requisite readings and assignments prior to each class meeting. Attendance at each class is mandatory and active participation will be expected of everyone. Failure to uphold these requirements and to demonstrate commitment to the trip and its mission may result in dismissal from the class. If any concerns should arise, please email the student facilitators.

Students with Disabilities
Students in need of accommodations with any component of this course related to a disability or other condition are encouraged to contact and register with AccessibleNU (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; 847-467-5530). Please do not hesitate to ask for accommodation and other arrangements!

Grading
This class is graded on a Pass/No Credit basis. In order to pass the class, each student must attend and actively participate in at minimum eight out of ten classes. Expected participation in classes includes attendance, attentiveness, creativity, preparation and meaningful contribution to discussion.

Grades will be determined based on participation (40%), midterm project (30%) and final presentation (30%).

If the student cannot attend class, they must let the student facilitators know in advance and complete makeup work. Makeup work will be determined by the instructors, and will be proportional to the amount of work done in the class. For emergencies and extenuating circumstances, please inform the student facilitators.

Midterm Project: Build Your Own Community
Each student will create and develop an intentional community based on their interests and values. Students should consider location, form, government, food systems, culture, recruitment, finances, sustainability and any other factors they think are pertinent, drawing on the examples of intentional communities we’ve discussed in class. Students will present their finished concepts to the class however they choose: as a diorama, a recruitment speech/Stephen Gaskin-type “sermon,” an ad/documentary, a picture or whatever format they decide fits. After presentations, the class will compare and discuss the different proposals.
Final Presentation: Change Your Life
The ultimate goal of this project is to create and ideally implement a proposal to shift our lives in some way, big or small. This could be anything from installing solar panels on campus to reducing materialism at home to creating a garden. Students will progress their project by first brainstorming topics, then creating a timeline, acquiring materials and reaching out to people and appropriately researching their topic. The eventual goal is to develop a presentation for the appropriate outlet in order to turn your project into action. If your project is to shop locally, this could be presented to a family member or a roommate. For a large-scale change, the presentation might be addressed to a faculty member or administrator, or maybe even a government official if you are ambitious. While it may seem strange to create a presentation for a roommate about the project you choose, the goal is to develop the students’ ability to create change systematically, even if they don't actually use the presentation. The project is meant to positively apply the ideas and skills from the class in an ongoing way in the students’ lives.

Course Schedule

Week 1: Introductions
We will start by getting to know each other and spend the rest of class introducing The Farm and the basics of the course. We will have an in-class group discussion with paired breakouts about the benefits and challenges of living in an intentional community.

Homework (for next class):
Read TRIBE, Introduction
https://books.google.com/books/about/Tribe.html?id=VIl_CwAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=kp_read_button#v=onepage&q&f=false
Read The Caravan, Stephen Gaskin’s service at St. Stephen’s Catholic Church in Minneapolis (pp. 14) (pp. 38 = NU history)
Online copy through Northwestern Library

Week 2: Intentional Living
This week will focus on what intentional living means. In this class we will define intentional communities and look at what different types of communities exist throughout the world. Finally, we will do a brief introduction to sustainable infrastructure at the farm.

Homework:
Watch “Welcome to the Jungle,” season one episode one of Jungletown
https://www.viceland.com/en_us/video/welcome-to-the-jungle/58d40c41af6ad27c2878bf3f

Week 3: The Farm (If on Monday, then no class for Martin Luther King Jr. Day)
This week we will discuss the foundation and history of The Farm, exploring the teachings of Steven Gaskin and the community's colored past. As part of our examination of The Farm's past we will watch segments of "American Commune". After
watching the film, we will discuss our different perceptions of The Farm and whether we believe the film offered an accurate representation of The Farm or if stereotypes and stigmas influenced the film makers.

**Homework:**
None

**Week 4: Why Communes Form**
We will discuss the assigned readings/viewings in this class to look at the purpose that intentional communities serve. This will include talking about Kalu Yala, the intentional community featured in *Jungletown*, and the two Medill reporting trips focused on environmental concerns. Students will engage with in depth analyses of communes' relation to creating a sense of belonging in addition to their creation in response to social issues.

**Homework:**
Read “Sex, Drugs, And Soybeans,” *Vanity Fair*
Find a representation of an intentional community, commune or hippies in popular culture to bring to class and discuss

**Week 5: Stereotypes and stigmas of communes**
In this class we will look into the media’s portrayal of communes and the reasons for the stigmas and stereotypes. Additionally we will have discussions of conformity in communes and the relationship with cults.

**Homework:**
Finish midterm project for next class
Skim *Hey Beatnik! This Is The Farm Book*
http://thefarmcommunity.com/PDF/The_Farm_Book.pdf

**Week 6: The Intersection of Materialism and Environment**
To begin this class, students will present their community concepts to the class. During this class, students will determine their Environmental Footprints and discuss at how escaping materialism could decrease environmental destruction.

**Homework:**
Make a list of 20 food items you regularly consume and where you get them

**Week 7: Sustainable agriculture and permaculture**
For this class, we will learn about our relationship with food and the impact it has on environmental degradation through exploring the journey that food makes from farm to table by screening clips from *Food Inc* and *Foodchains*. We will also learn about permaculture and the ways that the Farm utilizes sustainable agriculture to minimize their ecological footprint. We will relate our in-class activity to what we know about The Farm.

**Homework:**
Read “Read This Story and Get Happier,” *New York*
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1AeR92883TtwCO_3beLqVAEQtMC-18iOn/view?usp=sharing
Explore MOSAIC’s website and come up with two questions for our visit http://mosaiccoop.org/

**Week 8: Living Intentionally in Our Society**
This class will focus on recognizing the overlap of our community and intentional communities, and how to take small steps towards living intentionally. So, we will have our discussion at the MOSAIC housing cooperative and talk with some other Northwestern students who have committed to living intentionally in our own community.

**Homework:**
Prepare to present final presentation in the next class

**Week 9: Final Presentations**
Students will present their final “Change Your Life” proposals in this class. After each presentation, the class will offer thoughts and ideas on the proposed change and its implementation.

**Homework:**
If you haven’t done it already, complete van certification!

**Week 10: Prepare for our trip!**
In this class we will make final preparations to go to the Farm.

**Homework:**
Complete van certification
Attend Kick-Off