For as long as history has been recorded, human beings have sought to form communities—social, political, religious—according to ideals they articulate, most often in texts. History records many such experiments: both the ideals that guided them and the tensions of instituting those ideals among living human beings. This course will explore that particular interplay of history and fiction: the efforts to put an ideal into practice in specific places and times.

Each member of the seminar will choose one instance of a utopian experiment. Weekly meetings, after the first month, will address specific problems of research: identifying and locating sources; finding the relevant scholarship on one’s topic; reading sources; asking questions; formulating a research paper; discussing problems in writing up one’s findings; polishing the final essay.

The final paper—6250 words, not including the bibliography and notes, double-spaced, in 12-point New York Times font—is due in class, May 3.

Books:


Class Meetings:

1/18 Preliminaries


2/1 Plato, *The Republic*, Books 8-14

2/8 Thomas More, *Utopia*

2/15 Initial proposals: five minute oral reports

2/22 Identifying Sources: oral reports

3/1 Locating historiography: oral reports

3/8 Hurdles and Questions

Spring Break
3/22 Bibliographies: Reports
3/29 Blocking the draft: initial reports
4/5 Questions and Puzzles
4/12 Critiquing rough drafts: writing partners’ reports
4/19 Critiquing rough drafts: writing partners’ reports
4/26 Final drafts
5/3 Final drafts