WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM

SUMMER 1988

MARGARET BENSTON
Lec. Tues.
10:30-12:20
Sem. Thurs.
10:30-11:20

W.S. 301-3
SPECIAL TOPICS: WOMEN AND UTOPIAS

This is a course about visions of a better world. In the most interesting of these there is a call, not only for a total reorganization of the "public" life of a society, but for a change in private life as well. Human relationships, sexuality and sexual practices, reproduction, childbearing, parenting and family structure all come into question. In many instances equality for all members of the community, female or male, is one of the explicit goals.

We will look at a number of these utopian visions, some fictional and some actual attempts to create ideal communities. Besides comparing the solutions that each offers in such major areas as production, reproduction, political organization and family structure, we will consider their relationship to utopian ideas arising in the class.

PART I: Theories, Dreams and Speculations (approximately half the course)

The Utopian Vision: An overview

Four Utopias: Limitations and Strengths

Exploration of Alternatives

PART II: Utopian Communities

The Shakers and the Oneida Community: A celibate community and one based on group marriage

Nineteenth Century Socialist Visions: Communities based on the ideas of Fourier and Owen

Modern Utopian Communities
REQUIRED TEXTS:

More, Thomas *Utopia*
Gilman, Charlotte Perkins *Herland*
Percy, Marge *Woman on the Edge of Time*
Le Guin, Ursula K. *The Dispossessed*
Gearhart, Sally *The Wanderingground*

(plus additional notes from the instructor)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

25% - class participation and in class presentations
25% - midterm exam
25% - final exam (take home)
25% - essay

Prerequisites: 60 credit hours or permission of the instructor

NOTE* Students who have taken WS 303-3 under the topic "Women and Utopias" may not take WS 301-3 for credit this semester.