

Fairhaven College Course Proposal
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Growing Community

This course will be an active exploration into identifying, attending to, and practicing those propitious initial conditions whereby a group of individuals may see their “intentional community” vision get off to a promising healthy start, with every chance of coming to fruition someday. The process will be largely experiential and generic; that is, the techniques, methods, and philosophies employed will be applicable to the inchoate stages of establishing a successful intentional community at *any* scale – from a modest group home to a Community Center to a full-featured Ecovillage.

As a class, these extended practices will include choosing a name and writing up a mission statement and set of Bylaws. It will mean deciding upon a group decision-making process and practicing ‘community growing’ exercises, non-violent communication, and conflict resolution skills. It may mean, perhaps, organizing as a non-profit, coordinating with Land Trusts and other communities in the area (or the world at large), meeting with local government officials, canvassing and evaluating potential sites, exploring funding options, researching and writing grants, and in every way, with genuine intent, instating, practicing, and animating those primary, germinal, incipient patterns, processes, and structures by which a seed-group may initiate movement towards actualizing their intentional community vision.

The presentation of these learning activities will be guided by and instilled with the use of organic metaphors: we will be attempting to generate a ‘living system’ that may be able to assume a semi-autonomous life of its own. The course will be a simulation in an academic setting but all the steps taken will be quite real. It is conceivable that the ‘living system’ we create, our fledgling intentional community, will live on in some form after the class expires. If not, we will still have had great fun exploring the possibilities together, and will have learned valuable collaborative lessons in the synergizing of our intentions, visions, and actions toward the manifestation of a collective ideal, perhaps to be implemented in untold scenarios in the future?

REFERENCES: We will be reading and drawing understanding from the following sources: *Rebuilding Community in America* by Ken Norwood and Kathleen Smith, and *Creating Community Anywhere* by Carolyn Shaffer and Kristin Anundsen, along with a selected reader of enlivening community material, including a review of the journal *Communities*.