

CANADIAN SCHOOL OF PEACEBUILDING CANADIAN MENNONITE UNIVERSITY

STUDY OF VOLUNTARY SIMPLICITY

IDS-2521/3

Session I - 6-10 June 2011

COURSE SYLLABUS

Instructor

Mark A. Burch, M.A. (University of Manitoba)

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Class Meetings

6-10 June 2011, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

Course Description

IDS-2521/3 Within International Development Studies, development is increasingly understood as a participatory, deliberate process aimed at enhancing the quality of life for individuals with community. This course examines the concept, theory, and practice of voluntary simplicity as a means of development for individuals seeking alternatives to consumer values and culture. The course explores both the historical roots of voluntary simplicity and its modern expressions, with special emphasis on the relevance of simplicity to build emotional well-being, vibrant communities, sustainable environments, and social justice.

This course is offered either for training or for 3 hours of academic credit.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students will:

1. Be able to define voluntary simplicity and cite the diversity of meanings associated with this way of life in different historical periods and cultures;
2. Understand the historical origins of voluntary simplicity;
3. Be able to describe a variety of reasons *why* people practice simple living and link these rationales to aspects of their own experience;
4. Cite examples of *how* people practice voluntary simplicity as individuals and in communities both historically and in present day circumstances;
5. Have the opportunity to catalyze a process of personal change in collaboration with others which leads toward a simpler, more sustainable way of life.

Text(s) and Required Readings

Note in addition to the one required text cited below, there are four required readings which should be accessed online via the links provided. The recommended text by Burch is available from me or from McNally Robinson Booksellers in Winnipeg. Required readings (in Alexander & websites) will be tested; recommended readings (in Burch) will not be tested. If you can complete some or all of the required readings before classes begin on 6 June, it is recommended that you do so as this will make the actual week of classes more relaxing and enjoyable.

Alexander, Samuel (Ed.) (2009). *Voluntary Simplicity: The Poetic Alternative to Consumer Culture*. Wanganui, NZ: Stead and Daughters Ltd., ISBN 978-0-9864537-0-0. **This text is required** for all students taking Study of Voluntary Simplicity for academic credit and strongly recommended for all. The book will be available at the CMU bookstore throughout the time the course is offered.

Burch, Mark A. (2011). Course pack for Study of Voluntary Simplicity. Available from instructor.

Burch, Mark A. (2000). *Stepping Lightly: Simplicity for People and The Planet*. Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers. This book is **strongly recommended** for both those taking Study of Voluntary Simplicity for academic credit and for training purposes, but is not required. Content from this book will not be tested. Copies available from author / course instructor.

Alexander, Bruce "Roots of Addiction in Free Market Societies." (Available as a .pdf download: <http://www.cfdp.ca/roots.pdf>)

Huber, Cheri (1990). One Less Act of Violence. Access at: <http://www.cherihuber.com/onelessact.html>

Schumacher, E. F. "Buddhist economics." Access from: http://www.smallisbeautiful.org/buddhist_economics/english.html

Wildmind Buddhist Meditation (2006). Mindfulness of Breathing: Meditation. <http://www.wildmind.org/meditation/mindfulness/intro.html>

Course Requirements and Deadlines

The following requirements apply to students taking *Study of Voluntary Simplicity* for academic credit. Students taking the course for training purposes are encouraged to complete as many readings and other activities as possible in order to derive maximum benefit from the course.

Book Review (25% of course credit)

All students taking Study of Voluntary Simplicity for academic credit will select one book of at least 100 pages about voluntary simplicity, or a clearly related topic, and write a **1,500 word (maximum) review, typed or word-processed**, according to the guidelines included for Book Review assignments. **Book reviews must be submitted by e-mail to the course instructor by 24 June 2011.**

Post-Course Open-Book Test on Lecture and Readings (35% of course credit)

One open book test will be given upon completion of the course that covers lecture and discussion content from 6-10 June 2011, plus assigned reading material. Students are welcome to consult notes taken during class or notes on readings to assist with preparing answers. All test questions will be short answer essays (2 pages maximum) based on study questions that will be supplied along with the list of required readings. Students will be offered **six questions** and may choose **any four** of them to answer. **Assigned readings will be tested whether or not they were discussed in class.** It is expected that students will work independently on an honor basis in preparing their test responses. Test papers should be word-processed before submission. **Post-course tests must be submitted to the course instructor by e-mail on or before 24 June 2011.**

Major Research Assignment (40%)

A major project consisting of a research paper written according to Guidelines for Major Research Assignments (see below). **Major research papers must be submitted to the course instructor by email on or before 5 August 2011.**

Final date to withdraw from this course without academic penalty: June 10, 2011

Grading System

%	Letter Grade	Grade Points	Descriptor
95-100	A+	4.5	Exceptional
88-94	A	4	Excellent
81-87	B+	3.5	Very Good
74-80	B	3	Good
67-73	C+	2.5	Satisfactory

60-66	C	2	Adequate
50-59	D	1	Marginal
49 or less	F	0	Failure

Schedule of Assignments

Whenever possible, reading assignments shown below should be completed before the date on which they are listed as required. In practice, this implies a “double” reading load for the first day of class and students taking this course for credit should budget their time accordingly. Students are responsible for and will be tested on assigned reading material even though it may not be discussed in class.

Session	Assignments / Activities and Due Dates	% Credit
Monday 6 June 2011	<p><u>Activity Schedule:</u></p> <p>8:00 - 8:45 Registration 9:00 - 9:45 Opening Program 10:00 - 12:30 Orientation to course / Introductions of participants 12:30 - 1:30 Lunch 1:30 - 3:00 Best Things in Life / Gratitude Log 3:00-3:30 Break 3:30-5:00 Roots and Meanings of Voluntary Simplicity 5:30 Supper</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>Alexander, Samuel (2009) “Introduction.” In Alexander, pp. 1-15. Burch, Mark A. (2000) “Voluntary Simplicity: The Middle Way to Sustainability.” In Alexander, pp. 27-54. Gregg, Richard (1936) “The Value of Voluntary Simplicity.” In Alexander, pp. 111-126. Elgin, Duane & Mitchell, Arnold (1977) “Voluntary Simplicity.” In Alexander, pp. 143-153.</p> <p><u>Recommended Readings:</u></p> <p>Alexander, Samuel (2009) “First Meditation - Defining the Subject.” In Alexander, pp. 356-358.</p>	

Session	Assignments / Activities and Due Dates	% Credit
Tuesday 7 June 2011	<p><u>Activity Schedule:</u></p> <p>9:00 - 10:30 Mindfulness in Simple Living 10:30-11:00 Break 11:00-12:30 Mindfulness in Practice 12:30 - 1:30 Lunch 1:00 - 3:00 Sufficiency 1 3:00-3:30 Break 3:30-5:00 Sufficiency 2 5:30 Supper</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>Wildmind Buddhist Meditation (2006). Mindfulness of Breathing: Meditation. http://www.wildmind.org/meditation/mindfulness/intro.html Read all pages of the site dealing with mindfulness of breathing meditation. Feel free to browse the rest of the site if you are interested: www.wildmind.org but you are only responsible for the subsection on mindfulness.</p> <p>Shi, David (1985) "Transcendental simplicity." In: Alexander, pp. 291-314. Etzioni, Amatai (2009) "A new social movement?" In: Alexander, pp. 55-73. Hamilton, Clive & Denniss, Richard (2009) "What is Affluenza?" In: Alexander, pp. 93-103.</p> <p><u>Recommended Readings:</u></p> <p>Burch, pp. 103-110. Alexander, Samuel (2009) "Fourth meditation - How Much is Enough?" In: Alexander, pp. 363-366.</p>	

Session	Assignments / Activities and Due Dates	% Credit
<p>Wednesday 8 June 2011</p>	<p><u>Activity Schedule:</u></p> <p>9:00 - 10:30 Solo Simplicity 1 10:30-11:00 Break 11:00-12:30 Solo Simplicity 2 12:30 - 1:30 Lunch 1:00 - 3:00 Communal Simplicity 1 3:00-3:30 Break 3:30-5:00 Communal Simplicity 2 5:30 Supper</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>Burch, Mark A. (1995) "Why simplify?" In: Alexander, pp. 181-205. Thoreau, Henry David (1854) "Economy." In: Alexander, pp. 315-352. Hamilton, Clive & Denniss, Richard (2009) - "The downshifters." In: Alexander, pp. 219-233. Alexander, Bruce "Roots of Addiction in Free Market Societies." (Available as a .pdf download: http://www.cfdp.ca/roots.pdf) Freyfogle, Eric T. (2009) "Simplicity, community and private land." In: Alexander, pp. 245-252. Schor, Juliet (2009) "New politics of consumption." In: Alexander, pp. 253- 269.</p> <p><u>Recommended Readings:</u></p> <p>Burch, pp. 39-54; 63-76. Alexander, Samuel (2009) "Second Meditation - Consumer culture." pp. 358- 361.</p>	

Session	Assignments / Activities and Due Dates	% Credit
Thursday 9 June 2011	<p><u>Activity Schedule:</u></p> <p>9:00 - 10:30 Ecological Simplicity 1 10:30-11:00 Break 11:00-12:30 Ecological Simplicity 2 12:30 – 2:00 Peacebuilder Banquet** 2:00 - 3:00 Simplicity and Nonviolence 1 3:00-3:30 Break 3:30-5:00 Simplicity and Nonviolence 2 5:30 Supper</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>Cafaro, Philip (2009) "Less is More." In Alexander, pp. 127-133. Merkel, Jim (2003) "The case for global living." In: Alexander, pp. 135-141. Huber, Cheri (1990). One Less Act of Violence. Access at: http://www.cherihuber.com/onelessact.html Merkel, Jim (2003) "Sharing the earth." In: Alexander, pp. 207-217.</p> <p><u>Recommended Readings:</u></p> <p>Burch, pp. 77-90; 171-178. Alexander, Samuel (2009) "Seventh meditation - Environmental sustainability." In: Alexander, pp. 371-374.</p>	
Friday 10 June 2011	<p><u>Last date for withdrawal without academic penalty.</u></p> <p><u>Activity Schedule:</u></p> <p>9:00 - 10:30 Wealth and Development (The Uses of Nothing.) 10:30-11:00 Break 11:00-12:30 Wealth and Development (lecture) 12:30 - 1:30 Lunch 1:30 - 3:00 Course Wrap-Up; final messages; farewells. 3:00 - 4:00 Closing Ritual & Break</p> <p><u>Required Readings:</u></p> <p>Schumacher, E. F. "Buddhist economics." Access from: http://www.smallisbeautiful.org/buddhist_economics/english.html Durning, Alan (1992) - "A culture of permanence." In: Alexander, pp. 235-244.</p> <p><u>Recommended Readings:</u></p> <p>Grigsby, Mary (2009). "Extending the movement." In: Alexander, pp. 283-289. Burch, pp. 137-158; 159-169.</p>	
Friday 24 June 2011	<p>Post-course Open-Book Test on Lectures and Class Discussions, and Readings due. Please submit to course instructor by email at: burma50@shaw.ca</p>	35%
Friday 24 June 2011	<p>Book Review due. Please submit to course instructor by email at: burma50@shaw.ca</p>	25%

Session	Assignments / Activities and Due Dates	% Credit
Friday 5 August 2011	Major Research Assignments due. Please submit to course instructor by email at: burma50@shaw.ca	40%

Other Terms and Conditions:

We abide by all existing policies and procedures of The Canadian Mennonite University as described in its regular academic policies and the *Handbook for CSOP Faculty* regarding academic misconduct (III, 1, p. 11), appeals regarding grades (III, 2, p.12), class attendance (III, 3, p. 12), extensions and incompletes (III, 4, p. 13), grades and submission of grades (III, 4, pp. 13-14), multiple submissions of the same work (III, 6, p. 14), students with disabilities (III, 7, pp. 14-15). If University policy is in conflict with this syllabus, University policy shall apply.

Submission of Written Work:

Written assignments should conform in format to some accepted guideline for university assignments such as APA, University of Chicago, or CMU's official guidelines as found in: L. Q. Troyka, and D. Hesse, *Simon and Schuster Handbook for Writers*, 4th Canadian edition, (Toronto: Pearson Prentice Hall, 2006) or the guidelines for written work as published in the *CMU Student Handbook*. **Assignments must be submitted ON TIME either (a) in person to the instructor, or (b) by email to the instructor at: burma50@shaw.ca . Assignments will not be accepted by fax, or when submitted to other locations or persons in the university.**

Group Work

Group work forms an essential element of *Study of Voluntary Simplicity*. Information of a personal nature may be disclosed during some class exercises. **Participants agree to maintain the confidentiality of personal disclosures made by other class members.** Respect, tolerance, a non-judgmental attitude, and discretion are essential pre-requisites to meaningful participation. Trust, privacy, and co-operation are essential to this sort of learning activity. Photographs, video or electronic transmissions of any sort containing content, comments, or other class activities may not be recorded or transmitted by any means whatever without the expressed written consent of those being recorded. This is mere courtesy.

Guidance

Feel free to ask questions during or after class. If you have questions about any aspect of the course, course delivery, or classroom interaction, please approach the Instructor in the first instance. Students considering withdrawing from the course are also encouraged to discuss their decision with the Instructor.

Late Work

Late written assignments will be accepted **ONLY on the following grounds and ONLY with the appropriate supporting documentation:**

- (a) **Illness or medical emergency** – must be supported by a medical certificate indicating the period of time during which you were incapable of working, in which case an extension will granted for an equivalent time;
- (b) **Severe domestic or personal affliction** – must be supported by a note or certificate from an appropriate care provider or from Student Counseling Services, indicating the period of time during which you were incapable of working, in which case an extension will granted for an equivalent time;
- (c) **Religious holiday** – if a written assignment due date coincides with a major religious holiday within the tradition ascribed to by the student, a one day extension will be granted.

Computer problems, disc failures, difficulty getting access to communal printers, etc., difficulties in traveling to the University, employment commitments, and study commitments and deadlines for other subjects, are not acceptable as reasons for late submission.

These conditions will be strictly adhered to. It is not fair to students who submit their work on time if other members of a class obtain extra time. Your continued enrollment in this course is taken to indicate your acceptance of these conditions.

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Book Review Assignment

All course participants will select one book of at least 100 pages about voluntary simplicity or a clearly related topic. In general, you should probably select a work of non-fiction, although you might review a novel if you can provide a convincing relational as to its relevance to voluntary simplicity. Write a 1,500 word (maximum) review, word-processed, including the following **minimum** requirements:

1. Your review should be written to university level standards, substantive, thoughtful, and appropriately documented if necessary.
2. Complete citation information for the book you are reviewing.
3. What is (are) the key thesis (or theses) of the book?
4. Provide a precis of the book.
5. Identify aspects of the book you found particularly effective or ineffective in arguing the thesis. Did the book fulfill the central purpose set out by the author?
6. Explain the relevance you think this book has to voluntary simplicity. Why did you choose it?
7. Provide at least two paragraphs of evaluative critique offering your own assessment of the book and offer reasons for your position. "I really like this book," is not a sufficient evaluation.

Note: Competently fulfilling minimum requirements is enough to earn a grade of "C". To earn a higher mark, your review should demonstrate above average insight, more background knowledge of the author of the book you are reviewing and of the subject being discussed, a more literate style of writing and a generally more sophisticated approach to the topic. It is doubtful that you could earn highest marks without research in addition to simply reading the book you are reviewing.

Book Review Assignments are marked using the following protocol as a guide:

Numbers on a scale from 0 to 5 indicate the degree to which a particular evaluation criterion was met, 0 = entirely unmet to 5 = superior performance.

- ___ Assignment written to university level standard.
- ___ Complete citation included written to CMU specified format for university assignments.
- ___ Thesis(es) of the book clearly outlined.
- ___ Precis of book which is comprehensive, balanced, accurate and fair.
- ___ Effective / ineffective aspects of the book clearly identified with accompanying rationale.
- ___ Relevance of book to course convincingly explained.
- ___ Evaluative feedback supported by rationale and reflective of individual analysis and thought.

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Research Paper Assignment

A major research paper of **minimum 3,000 and maximum 4,500 words** on some aspect of voluntary simplicity. Any research project requiring review by the University Research Ethics Review Committee is discouraged. If you insist on undertaking this sort of research, see your Instructor for a copy of the Ethical Guidelines and procedure for applying for review. **Due date for major projects is shown in the Schedule of Assignments. Ordinarily, no extensions will be granted.**

Major projects *must*:

1. be written to a standard consistent with university level assignments, i.e., substantive, thoughtful, well documented;
2. have something to do with *voluntary simplicity*;
3. have a clearly stated *thesis or point of departure* for what follows;
4. include original thinking and analysis;
5. maintain a clear *focus, develop a coherent narrative or argument and develop* from beginning to end;
6. *provide sufficient and appropriate support and documentation* for the narrative or argument;
7. display some creativity and originality in selection of topic or approach;
8. *integrate personal application and relevance* with more objective academic content;
9. include research and reading over and above class requirements; (Projects which are purely “personal reflections” with no research component, no search for new insights beyond the personal experiences of the writer, do not fulfill the course requirement.)
10. *demonstrate knowledge of the key values, principles and practices* that define voluntary simplicity;
11. display *competent application of written English*;
12. **follow an accepted style format** for university level essay or research assignments. **Written work should be typed (or word processed)** and legibly printed with a good quality ink jet or laser printer. **Always keep a copy of your written work in case the original is lost.**
13. **In the interest of conservation of resources, all papers should be single spaced, with 1 inch margins all around, formatted to 10 point font, and printed on both sides of the paper. Follow all other formatting conventions for university papers.**

Major Research Assignments are marked using the following protocol as a guide:

Numbers on a scale from 0 to 5 indicate the degree to which a particular evaluation criterion was met, 0 = entirely unmet to 5 = superior performance.

- ___ **Relevance** of topic to voluntary simplicity and sustainable living. Your paper should demonstrate a plausible connection between the topic you have selected and key principles and values discussed in the course, and / or understandings of simple living offered by other authorities on the subject.
- ___ Clearly stated **thesis or point of departure** for paper. What do you intend to demonstrate, argue or describe? What angle are you taking? Declare your biases and major influences.
- ___ Inclusion of **original thinking and analysis**. Academic writing often relies heavily on quotations from other scholars' works to support one's own arguments. This is fine, but the assignment also requires that you offer some of your own thinking---not off the cuff opinions, but carefully considered arguments with some evidence to support them.
- ___ **Focus, coherence and development**. Stay on topic. Make sure that the parts of your paper hold together as a single narrative/argument. Develop your thinking or your narrative from a beginning toward a conclusion.

- ___ **Appropriate support and documentation** for argument or descriptive development. Everyone has an opinion but some opinions are more informed and better thought out than others. Document your paper with support from well-informed, experienced sources and institutions and agencies that are recognized authorities in their fields.
- ___ **Creativity and originality** of topic and/or approach. Innovate responsibly. Creativity and originality consist in adding something useful to the store of human thought and experience which wasn't there before, or to the same degree, or in that particular way. Just coming up with illogical, unsupportable, wild or "original" (i.e., idiosyncratic) ideas is not evidence of creativity.
- ___ **Integration of personal application** and relevance as well as objective academic content. This requirement seeks your personal voice, i.e., show how your topic is related somehow to your own life, your own search for meaning, your own efforts to resolve an issue that is important to you.
- ___ Demonstration of **knowledge of key principles and practices that define voluntary simplicity** and their application in the context of the topic selected. Don't assume that your reader already knows what voluntary simplicity is about. Take a paragraph to explain it, thus demonstrating that *you* understand what it is, then zero in on the aspects of it that are relevant to your assignment.
- ___ General **quality of written communication** and conformity with accepted term paper **formatting for university assignments**. You may have great ideas, but if you're trying to express them with butchered grammar and freestyle spelling, I will not be amused. The rules governing written communication are intended to help us think clearly. They are not an arbitrary system of oppression that free-thinking people can disregard and still hope to be understood.

Other comments: