
STUDY CIRCLE – FALL 2018
Visions of America

Meets Tuesday Evenings from 7:30 – 9:00 pm
1407 Chapala Street, Santa Barbara, CA

Diverse expressions of the distinctive visions of America nurtured in American history will be studied in this new season of Study Circle discussions. The ideas and ideals of the Founding Brothers, such as Jefferson, Paine and Franklin, will provide a framework for focus on the aims and purposes of the American experiment. The distinctive visions of the Transcendentalists, the Progressive Reformers and the cultural innovators in literature, art and music will be explored. How the development of educational opportunities and civic participation drew out the potential for individual freedom and social progress will be analyzed. The expansion of an inclusive global vision embedded in the promise of American ideals will be evaluated. We will explore the concept of “vision” and how these visions have influenced 20th century and contemporary society. See website for more detail, and readings: <http://www.worldculture.org>. Topics for consideration include:

- **Early Visions in Colonial America**

The concept of “vision” and its relevance to America; John Winthrop on the beacon light on the hill; the Mayflower Compact on civil obligation; Roger Williams on religious freedom and the separation of church and state; William Penn on the principles of conscience and non-violence; Anne Hutchinson on the inner light.

- **Founding Vision of the Republic (1776–1821)**

The Declaration of Independence, self-evident truths, liberty, equality, consent of the governed, and the pursuit of happiness; Thomas Paine on Deism, the rights of man, and the right of revolution; Thomas Jefferson on education, natural law, Native American influences; Benjamin Franklin on civil society and the value of science; Great Seal of the United States; Benjamin Rush on practical innovations and education for young women; the voices of women.

- **Utopian Visions of Community (1837–1850) America in Crisis**

New Harmony, the Shakers, etc; the vision of art in America, the Hudson River School.

- **The Transcendental Vision**

The oriental impulse; Emerson on self-reliance and the concept of the Oversoul; Thoreau on nature's lessons and civil disobedience; Bronson Alcott and Margaret Fuller on education.

- **New Approaches to Religion**

The Republic of Mind and Spirit, Catherine Albanese; Liberal Theology; cosmic perspectives: Theosophy and New Thought; Self-discover in the poetry of Walt Whitman; Parliament of the World's Religions-west meets east.

- **The Principles and Activism of the Abolition Movement**

John Woolman on the abolition of slavery; The message of “The Liberator”; “Here I stand, I can do no other . . .”; voices or protest: William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, John Brown, etc.; the Gettysburg Address and the leadership of Abraham Lincoln.

- **The Visions of Progressive Reform**

Community activism for the poor: Jane Addams, Florence Kelley; political activism and legislative reform; the Socialist vision of Edward Bellamy; the promise of American life according to Herbert Croly.

- **Visions of Nature and the Frontier**

John Muir on conservation and the value of National Parks; the west/frontier as a teacher of humanity.

- **Expressions of American Culture**

Music: Aaron Copland; creativity and freedom in jazz; the comic vision of Mark Twain; the images and values in movies and the influence of radio; arts and crafts in America