

BREAKING AWAY: LEAVING CLOSED COMMUNITIES

Coordinator: Jan Adler

Leaving a faith-based community or a group that is based on a political ideology can sound to the outsider like it would be a liberating experience. In fact, whether the people who leave are born into or join as adults, the actual experience of leaving is often very painful and difficult to negotiate. We read memoirs by people who have left groups such as Scientology, Amish, Jehovah's Witness, Chasidic sects, Communist Party, terrorist groups, and cults and discuss the complex issues involved in what first brought them to the group, what led to their decision to leave and their struggle in starting a new life. We examine the similarities and differences in these experiences. This study group was held last semester.

Readings and other Materials/Online Services:

Coursepack and website. There are approximately 50 pages of reading per week. Cost of the coursepack is approximately \$15.

Jan has coordinated a wide range of study groups at the IRP.

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Week 1	Overview of course	Batya Ungar Sargon, Undercover Atheists , <i>Aeon.co</i> , 2/11/15 coursepack pages 1-1 through 1-11 William A. Galston, Two Concepts of Liberalism , edited. Original was published in <i>Ethics</i> 4/95 and is on website coursepack pages 1-12 through 1-16
Week 2	Charlie Veitch former 9/11 conspiracy theorist and the wrath of the scorned	<i>Rationally Speaking</i> podcast #156 transcript, Why Is It So Hard To Change Someone's Mind coursepack pages 2-1 through 2-9 Will Storr, The 9/11 Conspiracy Theorist Who Changed His Mind , <i>The Telegraph</i> , 5/29/13 coursepack pages 2-10 through 2-13
Week 3	Why did Maajid Nawaz leave a radical Islamist group?	Malik Neal, Review of Radical , <i>International Policy Digest</i> , 11/19/13 coursepack 3-1 through 3-3 Maajid Nawaz, Radical: My Journey Out Of Islamist Extremism ,

		<p>excerpts, Lyons Press, 2012, coursepack 3-4 through 3-31</p> <p>Keith Frankish, Whatever You Think You Don't Necessarily Know Your Own Mind, Aeon.co coursepack 3-32 through 3-34</p> <p><i>optional readings found on website not in coursepack</i> Nathan Lean, What Does Maajid Nawaz Really Believe, <i>New Republic</i>, 1/27/16</p>
Week 4	Richard Wright's experience with the Communist Party	<p>Richard Crossman ed. The God That Failed, Richard Wright chapter, Harper and Brothers, 1949 coursepack 4-5 through 4-52</p> <p>Excerpts from wikipedia entry on Richard Wright coursepack 4-1 through 4-4</p> <p><i>optional readings</i> Daniel Oppenheimer, Exit Right, <i>excerpt from Whittaker Chambers chapter</i>, Simon and Schuster, 2016</p> <p>Sam Tanenhaus, How American Communists Shaped American Conservatism, <i>Atlantic Monthly</i>, 3/16</p>
Week 5	How did Jonestown survivor Deborah Layton get involved with Jim Jones?	<p>Jayanti Tamm, What Is A Cult, huffpost.com, 6/14/11 coursepack 5-1 through 5-4</p> <p>Marcia R. Rudin, Book Review of Seductive Poison, <i>Cultic Studies Journal</i>, Volume 16, Number 1, 1999 coursepack 5-5 through 5-7</p> <p>Deborah Layton, Seductive Poison, excerpts, Anchor Books, 1998 coursepack 5-8 through 5-33</p> <p><i>optional reading</i> Affidavit of Deborah Layton Blakey</p>
Week 6	What was it like for Jenna Miscavige Hill to grow up in a family of Scientologists?	<p>Kevin Fallon, review of <i>Beyond Belief</i>, <i>Daily Beast</i>, 2/9/13 coursepack 6-1 through 6-3</p> <p>Jenna Miscavige Hill, Beyond Belief, excerpts, William Morrow, 2013 coursepack 6-4 through 6-37</p>
Week 7	How did it come about that Megan Phelps Roper left the Westboro Baptist Church?	<p>Adrian Chen, Unfollow, <i>New Yorker</i>, 11/23/15 coursepack 7-1 through 7-19</p> <p><i>optional reading</i></p>

		<i>Amy Westervelt, Letting Go, Aeon.co</i>
Week 8	Ira Wagler's 10 year journey to leave the Amish	Book review of <i>Growing Up Amish</i> on pluggedin.com, Plot Summary section coursepack 8-1 through 8-2 Ira Wagler, <i>Growing Up Amish</i> , excerpt, Tyndale House, 2011 coursepack 8-3 through 8-29
Week 9	Shulem Deen's story of leaving an ultra orthodox Jewish sect	Shaul Magid, My Teacher's Son: A Memoir of Heresy Is Marked by a Father's Unnerving Piety , <i>Tablet</i> , 4/15/15 coursepack 9-1 through 9-9 Shulem Deen, <i>All Who Go Do Not Return</i> , excerpt, Graywolf Press, 2015 coursepack 9-10 through 9-35
Week 10	Leah Vincent's adjustment to the secular world after being rejected by her ultra orthodox family	Gena Feith, Book Review of <i>Cut Me Loose</i> , <i>WSJ</i> , 5/29/16 coursepack 10-1 through 10-2 Leah Vincent, <i>Cut Me Loose: Sin and Salvation After My Ultra-Orthodox Girlhood</i> , excerpt, Doubleday, 2014 coursepack 10-3 through 10-23 <i>optional reading week 10</i> <i>Ayala Fader, Mitzvah Girls: Bringing Up The Next Generation of Jews In Brooklyn</i> , Defiance chapter, Princeton University Press, 2009
Week 11	Why did Barbara Taylor Brown leave the priesthood of the Episcopal Church?	<i>PBS Religion & Ethics Newsweekly</i> transcript, 3/9/07 coursepack 11-1 through 11-3 Barbara Brown Taylor, <i>Leaving Church</i> , excerpt, Harper One, 2006 coursepack 11-3 through 11-36
Week 12	Review	