

Fall 2007  
**POLS 405.001 Capstone Seminar**  
**“Citizen Engagement in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”**  
**Tuesday and Thursday 12:15-1:30–Maybank 307**

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The Capstone Seminar is designed as a “culminating experience.” What does that mean? It means that this seminar will give you the opportunity to put into practice the knowledge, values and skills you have developed as political science majors. Although the seminar topics change by semester, every capstone seminar includes the following: intensive writing, independent research, opportunities to apply theories and concepts to new problems and cases, and the opportunity to go beyond comprehending the views of others to articulate and defend one’s own view. In the process, we hope you’ll be able to integrate the knowledge and the many skills you have developed as a political science major into a more coherent understanding of how political science relates to the world around you.

This particular seminar is designed to explore the ways in which citizens engage with politics today and in the future. What are the expectations about civic engagement that govern individuals and groups? Are those expectations static or dynamic? Is there a floor—in other words, is there a basic minimal level of engagement required to make democracy work? Is there such a thing as too much engagement? How have events like 9-11 influenced the way we view participation in civic life? Are people in your generation more or less engaged than those in others? In what ways does technology facilitate and/or stifle engagement? Who is most likely to use technology and how? Can schools teach people to get involved? Are there “good” ways and “bad” ways for people to engage? What are the prospects in the United States for mandatory service of some sort...or the reinstatement of the draft? Why all of the hand-ringing about low voter turnout rates? If we wanted to increase voter turnout (an arguable proposition), couldn’t we do it overnight? How engaged are you and your friends? Would you define this campus as “engaged”? The 2008 presidential elections have already started...is this early start going to increase citizen engagement or depress involvement? Just how important are elections in connecting individuals to government? How will campaigns utilize communication technology to attract volunteers and supporters? In a decade will we still be walking precincts and voting in school basements? What will be gained and what will be lost if we move to electronic voting and other forms of E-government? These questions and those you bring to the seminar will guide our work throughout the semester.

### **Required Course Materials**

There are three books available at the bookstore for you to purchase. Other readings are on Electronic Reserve (ER) or available with a link provided on the syllabus. I selected these three books so that we could examine different aspects of citizen engagement. *A New Engagement?* is an empirical examination of patterns of political participation over time and across generations. The authors use the empirical data in order to explore more normative questions about improving both the quantity and quality of civic participation. *Hearing the other Side* is a focused examination of how we interact with one another through political talk and social relationships. Finally, *United We Serve* is an edited volume of essays organized around the link between citizenship and national service. What can be gained and/or lost by requiring citizens to serve? As we work through each of these larger volumes, you’ll also read other articles—some scholarly and others from the broad political opinion literature or from the popular press.

Additionally, I strongly recommend that you keep up with daily events, domestic and international, by reading the

*New York Times* and other national and international newspapers. When there are articles relevant to the seminar topic, please forward them to the class as a whole via email or bring them to class. If, like me, you still prefer to get some of your news the “old fashioned” way and actually tough paper—you can subscribe to the *New York Times* through the College of Charleston bookstore for a reduced rate of \$26.80 for the semester. I believe the dorms and the Addlestone coffee shop are still access points for free papers (NYT, P&C, USA Today) through the readership program.

*A New Engagement? Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen.* Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins and Delli Carpini (2006, Oxford University Press). \*\*This work is also available as an electronic book through the library.

*Hearing the Other Side: Deliberative versus Participatory Democracy.* Diane Mutz (2006, Cambridge University Press).

*United We Serve: National Service and the Future of Citizenship.* Dionne, Drogosz, Litan (eds.) (2003, Brookings Press).

**Electronic Reserves** This course will make use of the library’s electronic reserves. Access this service from <http://ereserve.cofc.edu> or from the library’s homepage. To access our course material, choose my name from the instructor pull-down menu, then POLS 405. Password: Engage

## Course Orientation

This is a seminar, not a lecture-based course. The major difference between the formats is that in a lecture-based class, the instructor is largely responsible for delivering content and interpreting the material. In a seminar, all of the participants are responsible for reading, digesting, and interpreting the material through lively, substantive dialogue with one another. This can only happen if you come to each class prepared to contribute to the dialogue. I have tried to select readings that will stimulate your thinking and provoke discussion. In many cases, the subject areas are “contested ground” meaning that there are a variety of competing interpretations of the same idea or event. There are some basic ground rules for the seminar that will permit us to more effectively engage contested ideas. First, it is essential that participation and contributions to the class dialogue be made on the basis of substantive information rather than emotional reaction to the presentation of ideas or the presenter.

You will be responsible for all of the assigned reading each class period. I have divided the material by weeks, but have divided the reading by class meeting. This division is somewhat arbitrary though so try to read the material and think of it in blocks. Use the four days between Thursday and the following Tuesday to prepare for the week ahead. Read the assignments as a block, make notes where you need to. Everyone will be expected to participate actively in the discussion of the reading and the ideas presented by the week’s reading and the course as a whole. To encourage substantive and thorough discussions, you will complete **critical reading reactions and pose two discussion questions** each week (described in more detail below), identifying the most significant ideas, questions, or dilemmas posed in the work. As we progress through the semester, you can begin to link theories or ideas as well as contrast and challenge the work you read. These will be due by 10pm the night before the class in which we discuss the reading. In all you will submit 10 throughout the semester.

In order to assess your overall understanding and integration of the material we cover together, there will be a **culminating exam** in November (11/13/07). This is designed to be cumulative and cover the reading and discussion over the course of the seminar. Rather than delay this until the finals period, I have opted to give it in early November, thus freeing you to complete your research paper or engagement project over the course of the last three weeks of the course. I will prepare five questions and distribute them in advance and you will write on two of those questions during the 75 minutes you have on November 13. This will not be an exercise in content recall, but rather an opportunity for you to synthesize ideas and reflect on the range of issues we’ve covered as well as demonstrate

competency in your ability to apply theories and concepts to new problems and cases and go beyond comprehending the views of others to articulate and defend your own view. I will expect you to marshal specific evidence from the material in this course to support your particular understanding or argument presented in your essays.

Finally, since there is no way to address every topic of interest in a single semester, you will each identify a topic of interest related to the course material and complete a significant *independent research paper* or design and carry out an *engagement project* with others in the seminar. You will share your work with the seminar and thus enrich our collective understanding and increase the breadth of coverage in the course. Your choice of topic and methodology will largely be informed by your previous course work and your plans for the future—as well as your desire to work alone or with others. The research papers and projects must include original analysis and the projects must involve direct action (details to follow). At the conclusion of the course, you will present your paper or project with attention to both process/outcomes to the seminar. You'll get feedback from me and from your peers and then submit a final product on December 11, 2007 by noon.

***Special Circumstances*** If you have any kind of special circumstance that I should be aware of please let me know right away. If you have SNAP accommodations of any kind, please make the appropriate notifications and arrangements with the Center for Students with Disabilities within the first week of class. Alternatively, if you have any sort of undiagnosed learning disability, a physical impairment of any kind that will require special arrangements for exams or papers, if you are an athlete or member of any club or organization that will travel, let me know. I will keep the information you share with me strictly confidential, but in order to create the best environment for your academic success, I need to know if there are circumstances that may interfere with your performance in the course

***Office Hours and Ways to Contact Me*** I have posted office hours every week. You can find these at the top of this syllabus. You can also just stop by the office or make an appointment to see me if the posted hours do not fit your schedule. Erin Blevins has access to my calendar in the event I am not here when you call or stop by to make an appointment. I am very accessible by email for quick questions or by phone. Please take the initiative to contact me or to come see me if you have questions, problems, or special circumstances. My direct line office phone number at the top of the syllabus—953-6531. The main office number is 953-5724. For emergencies or questions that cannot wait until the following day, my home number is 723-6910. Please call between 8:30 and 10 pm. Both phone numbers have Voice Mail. When you leave a message be sure to speak slowly, clearly and leave your full name and a phone number so that I can return your call.

## **Course Assignments**

***Critical Reading Reactions and Discussion Questions*** (15%) Each week (Tuesday or Thursday class) you will submit a written reaction to one or more of the assigned readings along with two questions designed to elicit discussion in class. These reading reactions are designed to facilitate your understanding of the reading assigned for each week, but also to help you keep track of individual reading assignments and how they are linked to one another over the course of the semester. To complete the reaction assignment, you need to first read all of the assigned reading for one or both class meetings. Your reaction may vary in length from a few sentences to a few pages depending on what you have read and what you have to say about it. The idea is to react to what interested you, what puzzled you, and/or to identify any questions you had about the author's argument. Conclude your reaction piece by posing two thoughtful questions that are written in a way that promotes discussion rather than simply a descriptive response. This is rather informal writing designed to help think about and process the reading rather than hone your writing skills. There are other assignments with that purpose in mind! **You are required to submit your reactions and questions in an email to [FordL@cofc.edu](mailto:FordL@cofc.edu) by 10:00pm the night prior to the class in which the readings will be discussed. You must each submit TEN (10) reading reactions with questions over the course of the semester. Five of these must be submitted by October 5 with the remaining five submitted no later than November 1, 2007.**

***Independent Research Paper or Engagement Project*** (70%) The major project for the semester will be an independent research paper or an engagement activism project that will allow you to explore in greater depth any issue of interest related to the course theme. The choice of topics is yours, but we will need to discuss what you choose before you get started. I've offered these two choices rather than just one in recognition that some of you may prefer a more academic exercise while still others would rather get out there and see what you can actually do relative to the theme of "engagement." Both choices offer different but equally valuable learning opportunities and so both are available to you. In each case however, you will be asked to draw upon and demonstrate proficiency with a broad spectrum of research skills including accessing relevant theory and research literature, collecting and compiling data/information, analyzing the data, and drawing conclusions and making meaning from your work prior to disseminating your new knowledge. Obviously the type of project you choose and the topic will determine your methodology and overall approach, but overall everybody will be producing an annotated bibliography, a formal proposal, a literature review, a presentation of your work, and final paper or product. I will produce a separate assignment sheet with more details about the research paper and engagement project and we will discuss it in greater detail in class. You will work incrementally throughout the semester on your project, culminating in a 10-20 page paper and 15 minute presentation or a major activism project with a corresponding 10-12 page paper and a 15 minute presentation to the class. In all cases, you (or you and your group) will meet with me for a research consultation prior to submitting an initial proposal. Initial consultation meetings will take place September 3-14. Individual pieces of the overall project will be due throughout the semester—see the syllabus and the separate assignment sheet for details and due dates.

### ***Scheduling Policy and Due Dates***

You must take the exam on the scheduled date unless you can provide an excuse acceptable within College guidelines. With an acceptable excuse, a make-up will be scheduled. It is your responsibility to see me immediately upon missing an exam (preferably call before the exam). If you do not contact me within 24 hours of the exam, or miss the scheduled make-up, you fail the exam and there will be no other opportunities to make up that portion of your final course grade. The critical reading reactions and seminar discussion questions and other papers are due as noted on the syllabus. For each day a paper or course assignment is late, 5% will be deducted from the grade assigned to that work. This applies to everyone, no exceptions. No work of any kind will be accepted after 3pm on December 11, 2007.

### **Important Dates**

Research Paper or Project Consultations: appointments scheduled September 3-14, 2007

Fall Convocation Lecture: October 3, 2007 @ 4:00pm (Ron Motley on child slavery/labor)

Critical Reading Reactions and Seminar Discussion Questions: (10 submissions for 15%)  
5 reading reactions due by October 5; remaining 5 by November 1

Culminating Examination: November 13, 2007 (15%)

Independent Research Paper or Engagement Project: see due dates on separate assignment sheet (total 70%)

\*Initial Research Consultation – 5%--September 3-14 appointments scheduled

\*Annotated Bibliography – 10%--due on Friday, September 28, by 4:00p

\*Formal Proposal – 10%--Due on Friday, October 10, by 4:00p

\*First Draft of Independent Research Paper or Project Execution Progress Report – 15%--due Friday, November 2

\*Oral Presentation – 10%--November 15, 20, 27, 29

\*Final Integrated Independent Research Paper or Analysis of Process and Execution of Project – 20%

Final Submission of Integrated Paper/Project: December 11, 2007 no later than 12 noon.

### ***Academic Dishonesty***

This subject is very important! When you enrolled in the College of Charleston, you signed an Honor Code. I expect you to abide by that code and it is the only way for you to maintain the integrity and value of your degree. If you are found to have cheated on an exam or plagiarized any portion of your paper, you will fail my course and I will turn the case over to the Honor Board and vigorously pursue further disciplinary action. If you have any questions or are unsure what constitutes cheating or plagiarism--ask. Ignorance is not a valid defense. Although I encourage you to study together to prepare for exams and to learn the concepts, you must turn in your own work that you complete independently.

### ***Course Grades***

Your grade in the course is determined solely by the quality of your work in this course. I grade on a straight scale and do not curve or otherwise judge your performance against that of your colleagues. As you are aware, the College has adopted a new grading scale that now allows for the full range of +/- grades. Grades for individual assignments (excluding homework) and the final grade in the course will be based on the following scale: 93-100 A; 90-92 A-; 88-89 B+; 83-87 B; 80-82 B-; 78-79 C+; 73-77 C; 70-72 C-; 68-69 D+; 63-67 D; 60-62 D-; below 60 F. If you have any questions, please let me know.

### ***Course Schedule and Reading Assignments***

Note: Seminars are necessarily dynamic and readings may be substituted, dropped or added at the discretion of the instructor. Students should feel free to suggest readings for the group.

#### *August*

21: Introductions, syllabus review, and course plan

### **I. The American Experience and Founding Normative Expectations for Citizen Engagement**

23 John Locke, *Second Treatise*, Chapters 7, 8, and 9 (<http://www.constitution.org/jl/2ndtreat.htm>)  
Mayflower Compact (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/facts/democrac/2.htm>)

28 - 30 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (Author's Introduction, Chs 2-4, 14, 17)  
(HTML text available at: [http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/toc\\_indx.html](http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/DETOC/toc_indx.html))

Note: Although I have assigned several chapters for everyone to read, I encourage you to read more widely and to choose sections of Locke and de Tocqueville that interest you and have relevance in understanding the founding expectations relative to individuals, politics, and government.

### **II. Where do we stand today? A Broad Empirical Examination of Civic Engagement**

#### *September*

4 *A New Engagement?* Preface and chapters 1 and 2

6 *A New Engagement?* Chapters 3 and 4  
“Civic Engagement among Young Men and Women” (ER)  
“Politics in the Supermarket: Political Consumerism as a form of Political Participation” (ER)

11 **Intermission—the Impact of September 11 on Civic Engagement**  
*United We Serve* PART ONE, Chapters 2, 3, and 4  
“September 11 as Civics Lesson” (ER)

- 13 – 18     *A New Engagement?* Chapters 5-7  
              “The American Freshman: National Norms for 2006” (ER)  
              *United We Serve* PART SEVEN

### **III. Engagement as Political Dialogue vs Action? Deliberative vs Participatory Democracy**

- 20     *Hearing the Other Side* Chapter 1
- 25 - 27 *Hearing the Other Side* Chapter 2  
          “E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” Robert Putnam (ER)  
          Reactions to Putnam’s article and the larger study (see “Reactions to Putnam” folder on ER)
- October*

- 2 - 4     *Hearing the Other Side* Chapters 3, 4 and 5
- 9     NO CLASS, Ford Away

### **IV. Where will technology take us?**

- 11     Deliberative Democracy in the age of Facebook and Second Life  
          “A Typology of Information and Communication Technology Users” (ER)  
          “If Political Fragmentation is the Problem, is the Internet the Solution?” (ER)  
          “The Taxi Driver” (ER)

#### *October 15-16 Fall Break*

- 18 – 23     E-democracy--promises and perils (selected readings from *Internet Politics*)  
              “Community, Deliberation and Participation” (ER)  
              “Interest Groups and Social Movements,” (ER)  
              “Parties, Candidates and Elections,” (ER)

### **V. Service as Civic Engagement—of what sort? for what purpose? to what end?**

- 25     Volunteerism, National Service, Universal Service  
          *United We Serve* Chapter 1 and PART FOUR  
          “Volunteering in America 2007” Report from Corp for National and Community Service (ER)
- 30 – 1     Universal Service  
          *United We Serve* PART THREE and PART FIVE
- November*
- 6     NO CLASS ~~ Election Day~~ENGAGE!

## **VI. Concluding Thoughts and a Path Forward**

- 8      Building a context for Effective Civic Engagement  
         “Americans and Social Trust: Who, Where and Why?” (Pew report, ER)  
         “Citizens at the Center: a new approach to civic engagement,” (CASE report, ER)

## **VII. CULMINATING EXAMINATION—November 13**

You will write in class on two questions selected from five questions distributed in advance.

## **VIII. Research Paper and Project Presentations—November 15, 20, 27, 29**

Each of you will prepare and present your paper or semester-long project. Individuals should plan on a 15-minute presentation with time for questions and discussion. Groups should plan on a 30 minute presentation with time for questions and discussion. Presentations that do not elicit questions and discussion will be penalized. I’ve allowed plenty of time for this part of the course so that we will not be rushed in the presentations and so that we have plenty of time to reflect on what is presented and fully discuss each piece of work.

## **IX. Final Independent Research Papers and Final Engagement Projects Due Tuesday, December 11, 2007 no later than 12 NOON**