

POLS 405 Senior Capstone
“Keeping the Republic: the Politics and Policy of Civic Engagement”

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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.

In 1787 as Benjamin Franklin left Independence Hall on the final day of the Constitutional Convention, a lady shouted out “Well Doctor, what have we got--a republic or a monarchy?” Franklin quipped, “A Republic, madam, if you can keep it.” We have probably done a lot better than Franklin expected we would, but keeping a republic means convincing people to get involved and stay involved in politics and in their local communities. This seminar is designed to explore the ways in which citizens engage with politics today and will in the future. And, if civic engagement is critical to maintaining the republic what role should government play in getting citizens involved? What are the expectations about civic engagement that govern individuals and groups? Are those expectations static or dynamic? Is there a minimum level of engagement required to make democracy work? Is there such a thing as too much engagement? How have events like 9-11, an unpopular war in Iraq, and the 2008 presidential election 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? How engaged are you and your friends? Would you define this campus as “engaged”? How engaged *should* you be? These questions and those you bring to the seminar will guide our work throughout the semester. In addition to our academic work, you will engage directly in a variety of ways with other students on campus and with members of the Charleston community in addressing these questions experientially.

Required Course Materials

Citizenship: a very short introduction Richard Bellamy (Oxford University Press, 2008).

Community Matters: Challenges to Civic Engagement in the 21st Century edited by Verna V. Gehring (Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

A New Engagement? Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen. Zukin, Keeter, Andolina, Jenkins and Delli Carpini (Oxford University Press, 2006).

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

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

There are five 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 books so that we could examine different aspects of citizenship and civic engagement. *Citizenship: a very short introduction* is just that—a short review of the theory and practice of citizenship. We will read and discuss this work first. *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. They also make interesting claims about the value of civic vs political engagement that we will consider carefully. *Hearing the other Side* is a focused examination of how we interact with one another through political talk and social relationships. We can't possibly effectively engage with one another if we do not know how to talk and listen to people with divergent views. *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? Finally, *Community Matters*, is a book directed at policy challenges associated with civic engagement. It is organized into three sections: the challenge of civic education, the challenge of civil debate, and the challenge of action. 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. I will post these to Ereserve; they are not all listed on the current syllabus.

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—you can subscribe to the *New York Times* through the College of Charleston bookstore for a reduced rate of \$ 33.50 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.

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 him or herself.

You will be responsible for all of the assigned reading each class period. I have divided the material by weeks. Try to read the material and think of it in blocks. As always, the schedule of reading is subject to revision and you can expect changes based on the content and pace of our discussions. Use the four days between Thursday and the following Tuesday to prepare for the week ahead. Read the assigned material and 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 with 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 5pm the night before the class in which we discuss the reading. In all you will submit 8 throughout the semester—4 in the first half, and 4 in the second half. This scheme provides for two weeks in which you do not submit a critical

reaction, but use them carefully because there will be no way to make up this assignment if you come up short.

In order to assess your overall understanding and integration of the material we cover together, there will be a ***culminating exam*** (20% of your final course grade). 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 November, thus freeing you to complete your other projects at the end of the term. I will prepare five questions and distribute them well in advance and you will write on two of those questions during the 75 minute class period. 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.

Engagement Most significantly, since this seminar is about civic engagement, you can expect to directly engage in a variety of ways. I am also teaching a first year seminar broadly organized around issues of citizenship and civic engagement this semester. The first year students enrolled in this seminar are all presumably interested in politics, public affairs, and/or political science. Since you are veterans at the college experience as well as political science, you will mentor these new students as one form of engagement. The first form of mentorship will be to design an introduction to the Charleston community. You will work as a group of five to design and then implement an introduction to the community of Charleston.

In addition, we will be working with Mary Ford Elementary school located in the Chicora neighborhood in North Charleston. Josephine Rex is an AmeriCorps Vista member assigned to Mary Ford and she has a couple of projects that we will work on together—one involves a clothing drive and the other a community garden. You may choose which project you work on and you will work on these projects in groups. There will no doubt be a variety of other opportunities for you to select as engagement projects. If there is something in particular that you would like to work on, please see me within the first two weeks of class. These projects will entail work outside of class, so plan accordingly.

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

Introduction to Charleston Community Tour You will work in groups of five for this assignment. You will design an introduction to the Charleston community for a group of 4-6 first year students enrolled in my First Year Seminar. There will be required elements but lots of flexibility to design the type of introduction you wish you had gotten when you arrived on campus. This exercise should be taken seriously, but should also be a lot of fun. This will also give you a chance to meet some of the first year students since you are likely to see them again throughout the semester! A separate assignment sheet will be provided. Tour must be designed, scheduled and the reflection paper completed no later than September 25, 2009.

Critical Reading Reactions and Discussion Questions 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. This is rather informal writing designed to help you 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 by 5:00pm the night prior to the class in which the readings will be discussed. You must each submit EIGHT (8) reading reactions with questions over the course of the semester. Four of these must be submitted by October 8 with the remaining four submitted no later than November 17, 2009.**

Community Research and Engagement Projects (40%) This course is designed to connect academic and intellectual inquiry about civic engagement with actual forms of community engagement. Therefore, almost half of your grade will be based on your selection and completion of community projects. I will provide you with a menu of choices for how you can complete this portion of the course, but if there is a project you are already involved with or you have always wanted to work on a particular issue, please see me within the first two weeks. In each case, you will produce an academic research paper about some relevant aspect of the issue or problem as well as engage the issue directly. For most of you, I hope the direct engagement is with the Mary Ford Elementary School and their projects. However, there will also be opportunities for you to complete a series of one-time service projects if you prefer that approach. Along with the direct service you will be doing some background research. At the end of the semester, you will put your academic research and preparation together with your direct action in the form of a paper and short presentation.

Book Review and Book Discussion Group Participation (20%) Essential to becoming a liberally educated person is cultivating the habit of reading beyond what is required for school or work—simply reading for pleasure and reading to learn more about the world around you! When we read books in common, we can also expand the pleasure of reading by engaging with others about the ideas and issues raised by the book's author. Sometimes, you even have the chance to engage the author directly! This semester, you will have a number of opportunities to read and share what you've read with others. As I noted above, The College Reads! is a campus-wide reading initiative. I hope you will plan to attend the author lecture on October 2. In addition, I have selected five additional books—most of them new and on a variety of topics. You must choose at least one of the six to read, review and discuss with others. You will receive an additional assignment sheet on the Book Review and Book Discussion detailing the requirements and the due dates. You will complete and submit the book review prior to joining the book discussion. Due dates vary depending on the book you choose to read. You must **send me an email by September 8 informing me of your book choice**. The book review (~3-5 pages in length) and your participation in the book discussion is worth 20% of your grade.

Scheduling Policy and Due Dates

You must take the culminating 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 5:00pm on December 15, 2009.

Illness and Class Attendance

As most of you know, there are a variety of fears surrounding an outbreak of H1N1 (also known as swine flu) on campus. If you experience flu-like symptoms, please visit Health Services immediately. If you test positive for the flu, you should take steps to limit your exposure to other people—this means do not go to class! Use email to alert your professors that you are ill and then follow the instructions of the medical professionals about your immediate care and recovery. When the flu vaccines are available, I encourage you to get the shot! There will no doubt be other announcements coming from the College of Charleston administration

Important Dates

Introduction to Charleston Community Tour—design and execution—10%

(NOTE: Tour must be scheduled and completed no later than 9/25/09)

Critical Reading Reactions and Seminar Discussion Questions: (8 submissions for 15%)

(NOTE: 4 reading reactions due by October 8; remaining 4 by November 17)

Book Review and Book Discussion: (20%)

(NOTE: due dates vary depending on the book you select, book choice due by 9/8/09)

Culminating Examination: November 19, 2009 (15%)

Community Research and Engagement Project with Final integrative paper and short presentation (40% in all)

Submission of Final Integrated Paper on Engagement Project: December 11, 2009 no later than 5:00pm

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 this seminar is obviously organized around working in groups, there is sufficient independent work required to issue this warning. If you have any questions along the way—ask.

Course Grades

Grades 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

August

- 25: Introductions, syllabus review, and course plan
- 27: Getting to know your community – Introducing new members to the community
Groups formed for First Year Student Tours—class time to begin to organize
Assignment Sheet with details on tour requirements distributed and discussed

September

- 01: Guest: Josephine Rex ('08), AmeriCorps Vista assigned to Mary Ford Elementary School
Projects introduced. Be prepared to sign up for a day/time to visit Mary Ford Elementary and the
surrounding neighborhood. You will also go in groups (4-5) and meet Josephine for a tour of the
school.
Reading: *Community Matters*, Introduction and Part I—chapters 1 and 2
- 03: No class—Professor Ford away at APSA meeting in Toronto.
Work on planning your First Year student tour with your group

I. What does it mean to be a citizen?

- 08-10: What is Citizenship? What is required of citizens?
Reading: *Citizenship: a very short introduction*, chapters 1 and 2
Mayflower Compact (<http://usinfo.state.gov/usa/infousa/facts/democrac/2.htm>)
United We Serve, chapters 1-4
- 15 – 17: Membership and Belonging to a Community—rights, duties, privileges
Reading: *Citizenship: a very short introduction*, chapters 3, 4, and 5

II. What kind of citizenship is required for an engaged public?

- 22 – 24: The Changing Nature of Citizenship—civic vs political engagement
Reading: *A New Engagement?* Preface and chapters 1 and 2
United We Serve, Part 2—Politics of the Service Debate
- 29 – 01: What kind of Public Engagement?
Reading: *A New Engagement?* chapters 3 and 4

**October 2: Author Tim O'Brien visits campus. Book talk in Carolina First Arena @ 4:00pm.

October

- 06 – 08: Pathways to Participation—Generations, Cohorts, and You
Reading: *A New Engagement?* Chapters 5, 6, and 7
United We Serve Part 5—chapters 29-32

** Fall Break—October 12 and 13—no classes

15: Taking Stock—a project update day

III. Public Dialogue as a form of Citizenship and Public Engagement

20 – 22: Deliberative vs Participatory Democracy

Reading: *Hearing the Other Side* chapters 1 and 2

27 – 29: *Hearing the Other Side* chapters 3, 4, 5

November

03 – 05: The Challenge of Public Debate

Reading: *Community Matters*, Part II—chapters 3 and 4

IV. Service and the Future of Citizenship

10: Universal Service?

Reading: *United We Serve*, Part 3—chapters 14-15

12 - 17: The Experience of Service and Making Good Citizens

Reading: *United We Serve*, Part 4 (Chapters 22-28) and Part 7 (36 – 38)

19: Culminating Exam—in class with questions distributed no later than 11/10/09

24: Taking Stock—a project update day

December

01- 03: Presentations—Theory meets Engagement—What worked and What didn't and Why?

Final Integrative Paper due no later than December 11, 2009 by 5:00pm