

# POLI328 Civic Engagement

Spring, 2010

MW 4:05-05:20, Sage 239

## **Description:**

Civic engagement is a course that will combine equal parts study of the contemporary theory and empirical research on civic engagement in the US with community based research (CBR) designed to enhance the level of civic engagement in the region around Stetson.

Since the publication of Robert Putnam's "Bowling Alone" essay in 1995 social scientists and other scholars have been studying the factors that account for differing levels of engagement in public life across citizens. We will examine this contemporary research from the perspectives of political and social institutions, individual backgrounds and identities, and personal motivations. Special attention will be paid to the differences among groups and individuals (including the underrepresented) rather than broad generalizations about the citizenry as a whole.

For the spring, 2010 semester the CBR project will consist of a voter education project for the "Hometown Democracy" initiative, which will appear as amendment 4 on the November, 2010 Florida ballot. Given Florida's heavy reliance on rapid suburban growth for economic development and the intent of amendment 4 to take ultimate power over growth planning away from planning councils and give it to voters, amendment 4 will be a highly contentious and important decision for Florida voters. In the CBR project, we will work with local partners (governments, businesses, and non-profits) to design and implement a project to assist voters in this region with deciding how to cast their ballots and to increase participation by the typically underrepresented voters in a decision that will have direct impact on all Floridians.

## **Instructor:**

Dr. William J. Ball, Department of Political Science, 302 Elizabeth

Office hours: 10:00-01:30 T

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## **Books (all required):**

Franzitch, Stephen E. 2003 (3rd. ed.) *Citizen Democracy: Political Activism in a Cynical Age (People, Passions, and Power)*. Rowan & Littlefield. (ISBN 9780742564466)

Skocpol, Theda and Morris P. Fiorina. 1999. *Civic Engagement in American Democracy*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings. (ISBN 0815728093).

Zukin, Cliff, Scott Keeter, Molly Andolina, Krista Jenkins, and Michael X. Delli Carpini. 2006. *A New Engagement? Political Participation, Civic Life, and the Changing American Citizen*. New York: Oxford. (ISBN 13978195183160).

Other required readings will be made available online

**Required work:**

Active participation at all classes is expected. The course grade will be comprised of the following.

Assignment	Percent of final grade
Midterm	20
Final	20
Discussion assignments	20
Paper proposal	10
Final paper	20
Forum participation	05
Other Attendance/participation	05

Exams will be in essay format. Details of the paper assignments are provided following the reading list and will be expanded upon during the semester. I may return substantially incomplete assignments for resubmission for reduced credit at my discretion. I will provide detailed expectations about all assignments and exams before they are due. However it is important to realize that, unlike the contemporary K12 system in the U.S., higher education does not “teach to the test” and thus is more like the real world outside of institutional education.

**Grading:**

The distribution of grades varies tremendously from class to class. Given our relatively small class sizes, no true “grading on the curve” is possible. Yet within general guidelines, grading expectations are adjusted to my cumulative experience of teaching the subject, and the specific set of performances on a particular assignment/exam. Some general guidelines for overall course grades follow for you to keep in mind:

A, A- are marks of excellence, not averageness. To earn one of these grades a student has to complete all assignments on time and attend and participate actively in all, or virtually all, class sessions. In addition, a student has to rise above these basic expectations on each assignment, providing evidence of great attention to detail, a passion for learning, and considerable time invested outside of class. A grade of “A” is truly a special mark, earned by few, and indicating that the student’s performance is among the best of those who have taken the course.

B+, B, B- are indications of good but not outstanding work. To earn a grade in the B range a student has to complete all assignments satisfactorily and on time, and attend and participate in most class sessions. A grade of B+ indicates a student has occasionally distinguished themselves on graded components in the class, but not consistently enough to move into the A range.

C+ through F are indications of substantial shortcomings in one or more major components of the course. Simply showing up and turning in largely complete assignments is C-level work. Less than that (i.e. failing to turn in major assignments and not attending regularly) endangers a passing grade.

### Other Policies:

Students are expected to do the reading and study assignment prior to the class period in which they are discussed. I will regularly call upon individual students to report on the reading assignment and their written assignments to the rest of the class. This is a small class. There is no "back row" to hide in. The participation grade will be based on all class discussion not otherwise graded.

All work submitted for a grade in this class must be the student's own work and must be done exclusively for this class.

Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due dates listed below. Late work will lose 10 percent of its grade for every day that it is late, up to a maximum of 50 points. The only exceptions will be for extreme, documented cases in which the student has made a serious attempt to contact me beforehand. Computer/disk/printer failure is not a valid excuse for late work--back up your files often.

Please be careful to avoid plagiarism. Any case of academic dishonesty will be dealt with in accordance with University regulations.

The Honor Pledge is the central statement of the Stetson Honor System. All incoming students are expected to subscribe to the Pledge upon entrance to the university. They are asked to reaffirm the Pledge on a regular basis, by writing the word "Pledged" in front of their signature when they submit exams and papers.

### Topic and reading list:

Week	Dates	Topic/Reading	Due
1	- 01/13	<b>Class Introduction</b>	
2	01/18 01/20	<i>MLK day – no class</i> <b>Bowling Alone and Early Responses</b> Putnam, Robert. 1995. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 6:1, Jan 1995, 65-78 (online) From the Skocpol and Fiorina book: Skocpol and Fiorina. 1999. "Making Sense of the Civic Engagement Debate" (ch. 1) Skocpol, et al. 1999. "How Americans Became Civic" (ch. 2)	Disc
3	01/25  01/27	Primer on reading empirical social science research Rahn, Brehm and Carlson. 1999. "National Elections as Institutions for Generating Social Capital" (ch. 4) Hall. 1999. "Vital Signs...Civic Engagement in New Haven" (ch. 6) Ray. 1999. "Technological Change and Associational Life" (ch. 8) Wuthnow. 1999. "Mobilizing Civic Engagement: The Changing Impact of Religious Involvement" (ch. 9) Berry. 1999. "The Rise of Citizen Groups" (ch.10). Fiorina. 1999. "Extreme Voices: A Dark Side of Civic Engagement" (ch. 11)	Disc
4	02/01	Schlozman, Verba and Brady. 1999. "Civic Participation and the	Disc

	02/03	<p>Equality Problem" (ch. 12)  Skocpol. 1999. "Advocates without Members: The Recent Transformation of American Civic Life" (ch. 13)  <b>The Status of Contemporary Research and Practice on Civic Engagement</b>  Ostrander and Portney. 2007. "Key Issues in Civic Engagement Research Today" (online)  CIRCLE and other research groups (online)  Portney and Berry. 2007. "Neighborhoods, Neighborhood Associations, and Social Capital" (online)</p>	
5	02/08 02/10	<p><b>Demographic Diversity and Civic Engagement</b>  Zukin, et al. 2006. <i>New Engagement?...</i> (chps. 1-3)  <i>Diversity Town Meeting – no class</i></p>	Disc (thepolity.net)
6	02/15 02/17	<p>Civic engagement in Florida, Florida's Civic Health Index 2008 (online)  Research paper discussion  <b>CBR Project – Civic engagement and Fla. Amendment 4</b>  Amendment 4 "Hometown Democracy" (online)</p>	
7	02/22 02/24	<p>Public forum discussion and task assignments  <b>Mid-term exam</b></p>	Disc (thepolity.net)
8	03/01 03/03	<p><i>Spring Break – no class</i>  <i>Spring Break – no class</i></p>	
9	03/08 03/11	<p><b>CBR Project –ongoing through 4/12</b>  guest speakers (supporting research readings TBA)</p>	
10	03/15 03/17	<p>planning the public forum (readings on hosting a forum TBA)  <b>Demographic Diversity and Civic Engagement / CBR project</b>  Sobieraj and White. 2007. "Could Civic Engagement Reproduce Inequality?" (online)  Wu. 2007. "Race Matters in Civic Engagement Work" (online)</p>	Paper proposal
11	03/22 03/24	<p>Theiss-Morse and Hibbing. 2005. "Citizenship and Civic Engagement" (online)  Reading TBA</p>	Disc (thepolity.net)
12	03/29 03/31	<p>Reading TBA  Practice forum</p>	Disc forum
13	04/05 04/07	<p>Final preparation of public forum  Public forum</p>	
14	04/12 04/14	<p>Debriefing on forum  <b>CBR Project / Individual Activists</b>  Frantzich. 2003. <i>Citizen Democracy</i> (your selections from chp. 1-10)</p>	Disc
15	04/26 04/28	<p>Frantzich. 2003. <i>Citizen Democracy</i> (your selections from chp. 11-21)  Final paper due &amp; course conclusion</p>	Disc

## Discussion assignments

The discussion assignments will vary quite a bit in nature as they are designed to fit with the particular topic and approach we are working with on a specific day. The minimum number of assignments and their due dates are noted in the reading list. I may add one or two if the situation requires it. The total assignments given will together form the percent of your grade noted elsewhere in the syllabus. All discussion assignments have the following in common:

1. The discussion assignments will be 350-500 words in length and shall not be hand written.
2. Discussion assignments will use complete sentences and not bullets or fragments unless specifically instructed otherwise.
3. The assignments are due **at the beginning** of class on the due dates given.
4. Since these tend to be more opinion-oriented than other assignments in the course, each assignment will be graded 0=no credit, 1=half credit, 2=full credit. Late or substantially inadequate discussion assignments will receive half credit

There are three special discussion assignments. For each of these you are to write a 250-500 response to one of the postings on [www.thepolity.net](http://www.thepolity.net) in the form of a comment (alternatively for up to two of these you can write a comment in response to someone else's comment). Your comment should reflect our class readings and discussions but only needs a bibliography if you cite something very specific. These will be very public postings so feel free to run your comment by me via e-mail before you submit it. You can submit your comment as early as you like but there are dues dates for each one listed in the readings section of the syllabus .

## Research paper requirements

1. The paper needs to meet formatting requirements:
  - a. It will be 3000-3500 words in length (not counting the bibliography), prepared in traditional format: double-spaced, 1 inch margins, 12 point font.
  - b. The paper will use parenthetical citation format (be sure to attribute any ideas that are not your own) and have a bibliography that uses the style sheet presented in class.
  - c. The paper will use scholarly and applied sources outside of those assigned for class.
2. The theme of the paper is how best to bring the citizens of our region into engagement with the approval process proposed by amendment 4. There are several components of this topic:
  - a. For the purposes of the research paper, we will assume that amendment 4 passes.
  - b. You should select a specific topic within the theme. **Do not** develop a paper offering a comprehensive plan for citizen engagement. Instead select something more narrow within the topic and present it in your proposal. You may wish to focus on a particular demographic segment (e.g. young adults, minorities, etc.) a particular means of engagement (e.g. public campaigns, deliberation, new media advocacy, nonprofit groups, etc.) or a targeted segment of the policy making process (e.g. local or county government, legislative or executive branch, etc.).

- c. Draw upon and cite the research relevant to your specific topic from that covered in class as well as additional scholarly sources.
  - d. Draw upon and cite original research of your own. This **must** include at least two field interviews (a field interview means you get off campus and meet face to face with someone – not conduct it by phone or e-mail). It **must** also include your analysis of results from our public forum as well as your personal observations from the forum.
  - e. You may also draw upon and cite applied sources (i.e. newspaper or magazine -type) as relevant to your topic.
3. The paper will have the following sections:
    - a. Introduction—identify your specific topic and summarize your key points (1 page max).
    - b. Review of the Literature—make an argument for the significance of your topic and your approach to it by referencing the scholarly literature on engagement relevant to your topic. Conclude this section by presenting a theory of civic engagement for your topic based on the research you have reviewed. A diagram of predictors of engagement should be included.
    - c. Original and Applied Research—report on the research you conducted using original and applied material. Indicate how this research supported or undermined your theory. Note adjustments to your theory.
    - d. Recommendations – propose a means for improving civic engagement on land use (amendment 4-required) planning within your topic that is clearly built on your research and theorizing.
    - e. Conclusion – indicate any problems you anticipate in implementing your recommendations and how we would know if your recommendations are successful (1 page max).
    - f. Full bibliography (not annotated).
  4. The paper will be delivered to me as a blackboard submission by 4 pm on the due date in the reading list. You will also return my graded copy of your proposal in class on the paper due date. You should expect to give an informal five minute presentation of your findings in class on the paper due date.
  5. I will edit together a public report from among the student papers. I will select passages and sections from student papers to make up this report. The report will be disseminated online with all the students in the class listed as contributors and myself as editor.

### **The paper proposal**

You will write a proposal in the same format as your paper. The proposal should be 500-750 words in length, plus an annotated bibliography. The proposal will include:

1. Your specific topic identified in a clear topic sentence.
2. The key points you expect to cover in your paper, with reference to items in your annotated bibliography.

3. The kinds of additional and original sources (aside from additional scholarly publications) you will need to complete your research (i.e. who you might interview, what kind of information will you need from the public forum, what newspaper archives you might need to search).
4. Your hypothesized recommendations. Based on your research and thinking so far, what will be the best ways to improve civic engagement on your topic within the theme?
5. An annotated bibliography of at least 6 key sources, of which at least 3 have to be scholarly sources not listed in the class reading assignments. An annotated bibliography includes 3-4 sentences under each reference indicating why this source will be an important one for your paper. This means you have to obtain the source, read it, and think about it before you write your proposal.

This should be about two pages, double spaced. Write it out in narrative form with complete sentences (no bullets or fragments, no sub-sections)

1. What is Putnam's primary thesis about Social Capital?
2. Summarize Putnam's main points in support of his thesis about Social Capital.
3. Describe his evidence in support of his thesis.
4. Summarize Skocpol and Fironia's points about the response to *Bowling Alone*—in particular what are the different *methods* scholars are using to investigate Putnam's thesis?
5. What were the major means of creating civic life in the U.S., according to Skocpol's historical chapter?