

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL
Fall, 2008

First-Year Seminar:
Citizenship and Society in the United States
(SOCI 66)

Section 001 Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:00–3:15 Graham Memorial 210

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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is designed to give you a framework for thinking about the possibilities for, and the impediments to, effective democratic citizenship in the United States.

This course has 3 main goals and 2 secondary goals. The main goals are:

1. To acquaint you with ideas about citizenship and democracy in an American context;
2. To introduce you to the relationship between society and politics; and
3. To get you thinking about both the possibilities and the impediments to effective citizenship.

The secondary goals are:

1. To stimulate critical and sophisticated thinking about politics and democracy; and
2. To provide a gentle, exciting introduction to college.

READINGS AND RESOURCES

Required Books

Danielle S. Allen. *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown v. Board* (University of Chicago Press, 2004).

Sarah Igo. *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public* (Harvard University Press, 2007).

Thomas E. Patterson. *The Vanishing Voter: Public Involvement in an Age of Uncertainty* (Vintage, 2003).

Andrew J. Perrin. *Citizen Speak: The Democratic Imagination in American Life* (University of Chicago Press, 2006).

Michael Schudson. *The Good Citizen* (Free Press, 1998).

Katherine Cramer Walsh. *Talking About Politics: Informal Groups and Social Identity in American Life* (University of Chicago Press, 2004).

Supplementary Readings

You should read one or more of the following newspapers on a **daily** basis:

- *The New York Times* (The *Times* offers special pricing for students in this class; go to <http://nytimes.com/student> for more information.)
- *The Wall Street Journal*
- *The Washington Post*
- *The Raleigh News & Observer*

All other readings are available either on the web or on the course website. Readings available on the course website are marked with the WWW symbol. Those available on the web are linked from the course website. A few readings are on reserve in the library, and should also be available by electronic reserve; these are marked with the LIB symbol. The course website is available through <http://blackboard.unc.edu> and is also linked from <http://perrin.socsci.unc.edu>.

Other Resources

Have a dictionary close at hand to look up words you don't know. You can find an adequate one at <http://www.dictionary.com> if you prefer using an online version.

The UNC Writing Center (<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb>) can help you with writing clearly and correctly.

There is an astonishing amount of information available on the World Wide Web. A significant proportion of that information—though by no means all—is true and relevant. By all means, use the Web to supplement your reading and knowledge, but use it critically and make sure you know the source of the information.

FORMAL REQUIREMENTS

The requirements of this course are as follows:

Reading You must complete all the course readings. *You are responsible for understanding the readings—*make use of your fellow students, your dictionary, the Internet, and me to make sure you understand the readings. Course time is to be used for substantive discussion and further exploration of the implications of course readings, *not* for grasping the basic contents.

Participation You must attend, and participate in, all class discussions. *Class participation is the only graded measure of your understanding of the readings.* You must therefore be an *active* participant in *all* class discussions.

Team Blogging You will be part of a blogging team, which will be responsible for following and blogging about some element of the 2008 election in North Carolina.

Citizenship Interview You will conduct an in-depth interview with someone who has something interesting to say about good citizenship. You will write up the important sections of the interview and present them to the class.

Election Ethnography Along with your blogging team, you will observe the goings on at a polling site on election day, taking detailed notes and interviewing at least one voter. You will present your observations to the class.

Final Paper The final paper is your opportunity to synthesize what you have learned during the class. The paper should address some aspect of the topic: *How healthy is American democracy at the beginning of the 21st century?* It may do so by approaching any issue raised in class. We will spend time in several class sessions discussing the process of writing the final paper.

Final Exam There will be a final examination on the course's material and content. It will be held in the regular classroom on December 5 at 12:00 noon.

Completing these requirements adequately will earn you a **B-** in the course. Completing them *exceptionally well* will earn you a B+, A-, or A, depending on the quality of work.

Grading

Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

Course Participation	20%
Team Blogging	25%
Citizenship Interview	10%
Election Ethnography	10%
Final Paper	20%
Final Exam	15%

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction to the Course

August 19 Introductions and discussion; course organization and ground rules for discussion. Discussion of bias and respect for individuals' political views; political self-introductions

Assignment for Thursday: Write brief answers, based on your knowledge and opinions, to these three questions:

1. What does "democracy" mean?
2. What does it mean to be a "good citizen"?
3. How healthy is American democracy today?

August 21 Discussion: What does "citizenship" mean? What do we think are the threats and opportunities to it?

Week 2: Introduction to Citizenship

August 26 Discussion; Reading: Federalist #10 (<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/federal/fed10.htm>), The Port Huron Statement (http://lists.village.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/SDS_Port_Huron.html)

August 28 Discussion; Reading: Perrin, Andrew J., and Katherine McFarland. "The Sociology of Political Representation and Deliberation." *Sociology Compass*, 2008.
Formation of blogging teams

Week 3: Where did American citizenship come from?

Reading: Schudson

September 2: Chapters 2 & 3 (Discussion: Group 1)

September 4: Chapters 4 & 5 (Discussion: Group 2)

Week 4: The modern public and public opinion

Reading: Igo

September 9: Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2 (Discussion: Group 3)

September 11: Chapters 3, 4, and Epilogue; also Robert Putnam. "Bowling Together." *The American Prospect* February 11, 2002 <http://www.prospect.org/web/page.wv?section=root&name=ViewPrint&articleId=6114> (Discussion: Group 4)

Week 5: Citizenship Talk

Reading: Allen

September 16: Chapters 2, 3, 4

September 18: Chapters 5, 10

Week 6: Talk and More Talk

Reading: Walsh

September 23: Chapters 1, 3, 4 (Discussion: Group 5)

September 25: Chapters 5 & 6 (Discussion: Group 6)

Week 7: Designing citizenship interviews

September 30: No Class: Rosh Hashanah holiday

October 2: Discussion: Whom to Interview, What to Ask?

Week 8: The Vanishing Voter

Reading: Patterson

October 7: Chapters 1 and 3 (Discussion: Group 2)

October 9: No Class: Yom Kippur holiday

Week 9: The Vanishing Voter, continued

October 14: Patterson, Chapters 4 and 5 (Discussion: Group 3)

October 16: No class, Fall Break

Week 10: Presentations on citizenship interviews

October 21: Presentations

October 23: Presentations

Week 11: Has Culture Trumped Interests?

Reading: Frank

October 28: Plans for election day observation

Reading: Schudson, Introduction **and** Frank, Introduction and chapters 1 and 2

October 30:

- Frank, Chapter 12
- Larry M. Bartels, "What's the Matter with *What's the Matter with Kansas?*." *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 2006: 201–226. <http://www.princeton.edu/~bartels/kansasqjps06.pdf>
- Monica Prasad, Andrew J. Perrin, Kieran Bezila, Steve Hoffman, Kate Kindleberger, Kim Manturuk, and Ashleigh Smith Powers. "The Undeserving Rich: 'Moral Values' and the White Working Class." *Sociological Forum*, 2009 (forthcoming)

Week 12: Election week

Tuesday, November 4: Election Day: all students must observe a polling station and interview one or more voters there

November 6: Excerpts from TV news coverage of the election, discussion

Week 13: Election Week Wrap-up

November 11: Presentations

November 13: Presentations

Week 14: Theorizing Talk and Citizenship

Reading: Perrin, *Citizen Speak*

November 18: Chapters 1, 3, & 4 (Discussion: Prof. Perrin)

Assignment: Bring a one-page, *anonymous* discussion and/or critique of the chapters to class.

November 20: Chapters 5–8 (Discussion: Prof. Perrin)

Week 15: November 25: Blog Review

November 27: No Class: Thanksgiving

Week 16: Synthesis and Connection

December 2: Discussion: Synthesizing ideas on democracy; course wrap-up and evaluation

December 11: Final Examination