Department of Sociology  
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill  
Fall, 2010

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

Section 001  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:30–10:45  
Graham Memorial 210

Andrew Perrin  
Office: Hamilton 159  
Office hours: Thursday, 2:00–3:30; Wednesday, 1:30–3:30; or by appointment  
Phone: 962-6876  
E-mail: andrew_perrin@unc.edu • http://perrin.socsci.unc.edu

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


**Supplementary Readings**

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

- The *New York Times*
- 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, available through [http://blackboard.unc.edu](http://blackboard.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](http://www.dictionary.com) if you prefer using an online version.

The UNC Writing Center ([http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb](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.

**Small-Group Reading Presentations** Your small group will be responsible for managing the discussion of the class reading during two class sessions. You should write and distribute a *seminar paper* to the rest of the class via [blackboard](http://blackboard.unc.edu) (an example will be provided in class) no later than 12:00 noon the day before the class. You will then be responsible for running the discussion of the reading during class.

**Blogging** You will be responsible for evaluating and commenting on the accuracy and/or fairness of a current debate in the news media and/or blogs about the 2010 election in North Carolina. Our class blog, The Sixty-Six Ten, is at [http://unc6610.wordpress.com](http://unc6610.wordpress.com). You may choose to post anonymously to the world, but in order to receive credit for your blogging you must tell me your posting identity!

**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 small group, 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 OPTIONAL. It 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. If you choose to do the final paper it will be averaged with your team blogging grade for that segment of your grade.

Final Exam  There will be a take-home final examination on the course’s material and content. It will be handed out in class on December 7 and will be due via blackboard or in 159 Hamilton on Thursday, December 16, at 5:00 PM. You will be on your honor to take no more than three hours to complete the exam.

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. Completing them less than adequately will earn you a C+ or below.

Grading

Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar Papers and Discussion Leadership</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blog Posts</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship Interview</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Election Ethnography</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
<td>15%</td>
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Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction to the Course

August 24  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 26  Discussion: What does “citizenship” mean? What do we think are the threats and opportunities to it?

• Presentation group sign-ups

Week 2: Introduction to Citizenship

August 31  Competing Views of Democracy

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
**September 2** The history of American citizenship. **Reading:** Schudson, Chapters 2 & 3

**Week 3:** Discussion: Epistemic Closure and Public Spheres

**September 7:** Reading:


**September 9:** No Class: Rosh Hashanah Holiday

**Week 4:** Citizenship History and Practice

**September 14:** Schudson, Chapters 4 & 5

**September 16:** Reading and Writing Political Blogs: Quality and Coverage

**Week 5:** Development of the Modern Public and Public Opinion

**Reading:** Igo, *The Averaged American*

**September 21:** Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2

**September 23:** Chapters 3, 4, and Epilogue

**Recommended:**


**Week 6:** What public?

**September 28:** Bishop, *The Big Sort*, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 6

**September 30:** Discussion on Citizenship Interviews: Whom to Interview, What to Ask?

**Week 7:** **October 5:** Bishop, *The Big Sort*, Chapters 7 and 9

**October 7:** Blog Check Day

**Week 8:** Reading:

**October 12:** No Class: University Day

**October 14:** Presentations

**Week 9:** **October 19:** Presentations

**October 21:** No class: Fall Break

**Week 10:** **October 26:** Presentations

**October 28:** Election Day Observation Plans

Schudson, Introduction

Danielle S. Allen, from *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown v. Board*

**Week 11:** Election week

**November 2:** Election Day: all students must observe a polling station and interview one or more voters there

**November 4:** Excerpts from TV news coverage of the election, discussion
Week 12: The Power of Language

**Reading:** Large Group 1: Fishkin, *When the People Speak*; Large Group 2: Saletan, *Bearing Right*

**November 9:** Presentation by Large Group 1

**November 11:** Presentation by Large Group 2

Week 13: Election Week Wrap-up

**November 16:** Presentations

**November 18:** Presentations

Week 14: Theorizing Talk and Citizenship

**November 23:** Blog Review

**November 25:** No Class: Thanksgiving

Week 15: Theorizing Talk and Citizenship

**Reading:** Perrin, *Citizen Speak*

**November 30:** Chapters 1, 3, & 4 (Discussion: Prof. Perrin)

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

**December 2:** Chapters 5–8 (Discussion: Prof. Perrin)

Week 16: Synthesis and Connection

**December 7:** Discussion: Synthesizing ideas on democracy; course wrap-up and evaluation

**December 17:** Final Examination due, 8:00 am