

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAPEL HILL
Fall, 2014

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

Section 001 Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00–12:15 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

Daniel Kreiss. *Taking Our Country Back: The Crafting of Networked Politics from Howard Dean to Barack Obama* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

Andrew J. Perrin. *American Democracy: From Tocqueville to Town Halls to Twitter* (Polity, 2014).

Sarah Sobieraj and Jeffrey Berry. *The Outrage Industry* (Oxford University Press, 2014).

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://sakai.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. Participation grades will be posted on approximately September 20 (first 5%); October 25 (second 5%); and December 10 (remaining 10%).

Small-Group Reading Presentations You will be part of two small groups 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 [sakai](#) (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 is on [sakai](#).

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 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. The final paper is due on **Thursday, December 4, at 5:00 pm** and may be turned in via [sakai](#) or

Completing these requirements fully and 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. Not completing them, or completing them less than adequately, will earn you a C+ or below.

Grading

Your course grade will be calculated as follows:

| | |
|--|-----|
| Course Participation | 20% |
| Seminar Papers and Discussion Leadership | 25% |
| Blog Posts | 15% |
| Citizenship Interview | 10% |
| Election Ethnography | 15% |
| Final Paper | 15% |

Honorable Behavior

YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS COURSE IS COVERED BY THE UNC HONOR CODE (see <http://studentconduct.unc.edu/students>). I take academic dishonesty—including, but not limited to, plagiarism—very seriously. There will be no excuses or second chances; if you have plagiarized the *ideas* or *words* of someone else without giving credit, or if you have cheated in other ways, you will be referred to the Student Attorney General. If you have questions as to what constitutes academic dishonesty, check <http://www2.lib.unc.edu/instruct/plagiarism> or consult me.

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?

- Presentation group sign-ups

Week 2: Introduction to Citizenship

August 26 Competing Views of Democracy

Federalist #10: http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/fed10.asp

The Port Huron Statement: http://lists.village.virginia.edu/sixties/HTML_docs/Resources/Primary/Manifestos/SDS_Port_Huron.html

Schudson, Michael. “Why Conversation is Not the Soul of Democracy.” *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, Volume 14, Issue 4 December 1997, pages 297 - 309. <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a911338060>

August 28 The history of American citizenship. **Reading:** Perrin, Intro and Ch 1

Week 3:

September 2: The Digital World.

Chayko, Mary. "Techno-Social Life: The Internet, Digital Technology, and Social Connectedness." *Sociology Compass* July, 2014. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/soc4.12190/abstract>

September 4: Epistemic Closure and the Public Sphere.

Sanchez, Julian. "Epistemic Closure, Technology, and the End of Distance." <http://www.juliansanchez.com/2010/04/07/epistemic-closure-technology-and-the-end-of-distance/>

Cohen, Patricia. "'Epistemic Closure'? Those Are Fighting Words." *New York Times* April 27, 2010. <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/28/books/28conserv.html>

Saletan, William. "Bubble Think: How to Escape a Partisan Echo Chamber." *Slate* May 3, 2010. <http://www.slate.com/id/2252685>

Week 4: Citizenship History and Practice

September 9: Preview discussion of Elections 2014

September 11: Kreiss, Chapters 1–3

Week 5:

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

September 18: Kreiss, Chapters 4–6 and Conclusion

Week 6:

September 23: Workshop: Planning and Writing the Final Paper

September 25: No class - Rosh Hashanah Holiday

Week 7: Blogs and the Public Sphere

September 30: Berry & Sobieraj, Chapters 1 and 2

October 2: Blog Check Day

Week 8:

October 7: Berry & Sobieraj, Chapters 5–8

October 9: Workshop: Planning the Citizenship Interview

Week 9:

October 14: Class Cancelled - Work on Citizenship Interviews

October 16: No class: Fall Break

Week 10:

October 21: Citizenship Interview Presentations

October 23: Citizenship Interview Presentations

Week 11: Citizenship in Practice

October 28: Perrin, Chapters 2–3

October 30: Workshop: Election Day Planning

Week 12: Election Week

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:

November 11: Presentations

November 13: Presentations

Week 14:

November 18: Presentations

November 20: Presentations

Week 15:

Reading:

November 25: Perrin, Chapters 4–5

November 27: No class - Thanksgiving

Week 16: Synthesis and Connection

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

Reading: Perrin, Chapter 6

December 4: Final Paper due, 5:00 pm