

PT 351 Civic Engagement

Seminar Leaders: Profs. Kerry Bystrom & Xenia Muth

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Class Times: Mondays and Wednesdays 15:45-17:15

Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

8 ECTS-4 US credits. Over the semester we will explore historical, philosophical and practical elements of civic engagement while also investigating the underlying question of what it means to be an engaged citizen in the early 21st century. Together, students will address issues related to political participation, civil society, associational life, social justice, and personal responsibility, particularly in relation to the liberal democratic order (and its rupture). The class reflects a balance between theory and practice, exploring notions of civic life while supporting students to be active and thoughtful participants in the communities in which they are situated. More specifically, we will begin to map the local community engagement landscape in Berlin (with all its fault lines) and connect this into theories of civil society and histories of citizen activism in Europe and globally. This work will feed into engaged student research, participation in local and global initiatives, hand-on project development trainings, and the crafting by each student of a project proposal aimed at improving their local communities (however defined). The course will feature seminar discussions, workshops on interviewing and organizing, and field trips to relevant sites, as well as guest lectures by scholars, activists, members of local NGOs, government officials and foundation representatives.

OSUN Collaborative Network Classes

Our course is an OSUN Collaborative Network course which links students across the international network by assigning cross-network assignments and hosting cross-network activities, and events with peers and faculty from Bard College, Central European University, European Humanities University, American University of Central Asia, Al-Quds Bard College of Arts and Sciences and the HUBS for Connected Learning Initiatives (Jordan and Kenya).

Creating Community

Building stronger democracies starts in local communities. Developing a sense of community within our classroom can help students hone skills related to global citizenship as we connect to students around the world. We encourage dialogue and debate that is informed by empathic listening and cultural sensitivity. We look forward to robust discussion that mirrors the type of engagement that is necessary to be part of the democratic process in the “glocal” community. We will focus on readings and activities that help students hone skills that we believe relate to successful community engagement. Some classes will take place outside of the scheduled hours in order to reach speakers and students from other institutions. Please read your syllabus carefully.

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the core notions civic engagement, citizen participation, civil society and their relation(s) to liberal democracy;
- Develop the capacity to think critically about the context, impacts, challenges and opportunities of civic engagement activities;

- Understand various contexts where civic engagement takes place at different levels (local, national, global) and between/across state and non-state organizations and groups, as well as in countries with different levels of political, social and economic development and diversities of population;
- Develop an understanding of the ethical implications of civic engagement activities, particularly for students involved in civic engagement activities;
- Practice and reflect on engaged research, organizing, communication and leadership skills to develop experience and self-confidence in these areas.

Readings

This course has one required text which you should purchase or consult in the library reserve shelf:

- Eric Liu, *You're more powerful than you think: A citizen's guide to making change happen* New York: Public Affairs, 2017.

All other required readings or viewings for the class will be available as links or as PDFs through an electronic reserve system.

Requirements

- Come to every class meeting, having read the assigned material thoroughly and preferably more than once, and participate actively in our discussions and activities
- Thoughtfully complete all informal assignments
- Write three short reflection papers and respond to other student papers as assigned
- Prepare and present a final paper/project proposal, including workbook assignments leading up to the final paper and presentation

Attendance and Participation

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation. After this, in order for an absence not to impact a student's participation grade, medical documentation must be provided to your professor and any assigned make-up work completed. Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences, whether excused or unexcused. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SPRING 2022: In order to attend the course in person, students must be tested, recovered or vaccinated. All not yet fully vaccinated students must present negative tests no older than 48 hours to me before entering the seminar room at the start of each class.

Additionally, all students and instructors must refrain from in-person attendance if they are feeling ill. If you are unable to attend class in person because of COVID-related reasons, please notify your instructors immediately and contact the Berlin Coronavirus Hotline (030 90 28 28 28) for quarantine and testing instructions. If you feel well enough, you should plan to join the class remotely by teleconference. In the case that you are unable to join by teleconference, your instructors will assign make-up work. Note: Additionally, some students might need to begin the semester remotely due to travel restrictions caused by the pandemic.

Whether you are attending class in person or online, the success of this class is dependent not only on you actually being present but also on the quality of thought and energy you bring. Class sessions often include brainstorming and writing periods, in which you may work alone or with a partner, as well as group work ending with the creation of impromptu mini presentations. You may also be asked to select passages, formulate discussion questions or complete informal writing assignments in advance of the class. You are expected to engage in all of these activities; failure to do so will impact your class participation grade.

Academic Integrity

In this course, we aim to conduct ourselves as a community of scholars, recognizing that academic study is both an intellectual and ethical enterprise. You are encouraged to build on the ideas and texts of others; that is a vital part of academic life. However, you are also obligated to document every occasion when you use another's ideas, language, or syntax. When you use another's ideas or language—whether through direct quotation, summary, or paraphrase—you must formally acknowledge that debt by signaling it in the MLA parenthetical format (<http://www.mla.org/style>). Please come to see me if you have any questions about when and how to cite. Further note that even one occasion of academic dishonesty, large or small, on any assignment, large or small, may result in referral to the Examination Board and failure for the entire course.

Policy on Late Submission of Papers

Essays or projects that are up to 24 hours late will be downgraded one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. If I agree to accept a late essay, it must be submitted within four weeks of the deadline and cannot receive a grade of higher than C. Thereafter, you will receive a failing grade for the assignment.

Assignments

Reflection Paper I

Reflecting on Adler and Goggin and Kahne and Westheimer, submit a one-page document on Padlet (single spaced) describing what it means to be civically engaged in your community (however you define your community: locally, nationally, globally) and how this informs your own engagement.

Follow-up network assignment: Read other students' posts on what it means to be civically engaged and indicate how your view compares and contrasts with others.

Reflection Paper II

Referencing at least two past readings (which you should cite), post an image and prepare a two-page paper on a contemporary or historical figure (or group) whom you consider to be a successful role model of civic engagement reflecting some of the following questions. Please offer an image and post on Padlet:

- Why did you choose this figure or group?
- What about their work helps with your own understanding of civic engagement?
- How did their work contribute to the issue they worked to address? What takeaways can you draw for your own civic engagement?
- *Include at least two citations*

Follow-up network assignment: Read other students' posts on historical figures and post analysis of examples that you found particularly compelling and why.

Reflection Paper III

Referencing at least one reading not previously explored in your papers, reflect in 2-pages on your engagement in the Weeks Against Racism, Climate Teach-In, or other practical activity option. How did the reading impact, deepen your understanding of or trouble your practical work, or vice versa, how did your practical engagement deepen your understanding or create questions about the reading? Submit directly to your instructors.

Final Paper (Project Proposal and Civic Research Paper)

All students will identify a civic issue and put together a well-researched proposal for a community project of their choosing. A Project Development Workbook with regular assignments will guide students through the process including the submission of a final paper and presentations.

The final paper is both a Project Proposal and Civic Issue Research Paper (8-10 pages, double-spaced: 2,000-2,500 words, excluding notes and bibliography):

The paper will situate and provide a description of a student's community project that they implemented or proposed to implement. Projects should identify a social issue, be action oriented and achievable. A Project Workbook will help students develop project ideas and action plans. The paper must incorporate research that supports the proposed project. This should include sources that help identify best practices used in modeling the project, help outline the challenges faced by the community, ground the project within a regional or community specific context and support the proposed project.

Final papers should:

- Define the key problem or civic issue for study;
- Explain why this problem or civic issue requires civic action;
- Identify what entities are currently addressing the issue and what actions are working and which are not sufficient;
- What is the project and strategy being proposed to address the issue;
- What evidence can support the basis for the proposed action?

Students should have at least five academic/policy sources that include comparative data on the issue or similar issues.

The grading rubric will incorporate the following:

- Identified a problem and the underlying causes of the problem/challenge within a particular community.
- Situated that problem in broader research including comparative data.
- Identified a clear civic response and proposed project addressing the issue.
- Identified key community stakeholders and the roles they play.
- Outlined a project with clear goals and potential outcomes.
- Offered comparative examples of programs or projects that are working to address the issue.
- Comparative data or evidence to support the proposed project.
- Used five sources (beyond popular newspapers/magazines)

Each student will be asked to complete a cover-sheet with the rubric to self-evaluate.

Presentations

Students will present their projects at midterm and in the final week of class. Final presentations are 10 minutes long and includes a short PowerPoint that incorporates research and project outcomes. More information is included in the Project Development Workbook.

Grading Overview

- Participation: 20%
- Reflection Paper I: 10%
- Reflection Paper II: 10%
- Reflection Paper III: 10%
- Project Development Workbook preparatory mini-assignments (community mapping, engaged bibliography, interview): 10%
- Final Paper: 30%
- Presentation: 10%

Course Schedule **Please note that this schedule is subject to change and it is your responsibility to keep up with the latest assignments and deadlines.**

Unit I: What is Civic Engagement?

Week 1

Monday January 31

Introduction

Wednesday February 2

Starting Definitions

Readings:

- Richard Adler and Judy Goggin, "What do we mean by civic engagement?," *Journal of Transformative Education* 3.3 (July 2005)
- Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne, "Educating the "Good" Citizen: Political Choices and Pedagogical Goals," *Political Science*, April 2004.

Week 2

Monday February 7

Student Engagement

Readings:

- Han, Harhie "Ch 5: Pathways to Participation" in *Moved to Action: Motivation, Participation and Inequality in American Politics*, Stanford University Press, 2009
- Cnann, Smit et al., "Motivations of Student Volunteers in Five Countries," *Canadian Journal of Non-profit and Social Economy Research* 1.1 (2010)
- Student Civic Engagement Case studies

Wednesday February 9

German Contexts

Readings:

- Evers, "Diversity and Coherence – Historical Layers of Current Civic Engagement in Germany," *VOLUNTAS International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 30.1 (2019)

Friday February 11: **Reflection Paper I due**

Unit II: Liberal Democracy, Civil Society and Civic Participation

Week 3

Monday February 14

Democracy in Theory and Practice

Readings:

- Schmitter and Karl, "What Democracy is... and is not," *Journal of Democracy* (1991)
- Jutta Kramer, "Local Government and City States in Germany" in *The Place and Role of Local Government in Federal Systems* (2004)

Wednesday February 16

Review of Reflection Papers

Week 4

Monday February 21

Democracy in America

Readings:

- Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Volume II, Part II Chapters 3-5

Wednesday February 23

Democracy in America and Germany

- Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone" *Journal of Democracy* (January 1995)
- Jenny Wüstenberg. "Civil Society Activism, Memory Politics and Democracy" In *Civil Society and Memory in Postwar Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2017)

Saturday February 26 **Field trip to Topographie des Terrors (TBC)**

Week 5

Monday February 28

Civil Society in Eastern European Democratic Transitions

- Michael Bernhard, "Civil Society and Democratic Transition in Eastern Europe," *Political Science Quarterly* 108.2 (Summer 1993), pp. 307-326
- Vaclav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless" in Stokes, *From Stalinism to Pluralism*

Wednesday March 2

Network course lecture

Friday March 4 **Community mapping project due**

Week 6

Monday March 7

Critiques of Civil Society

Readings:

- Sandi Berman, "Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic," *World Politics* 49.3 (1997)

- Omar Encarnacion, "Civil Society Reconsidered," *Comparative Politics*, 38.3 (April 2006)
- Krastev, Ivan. "Can democracy exist without trust?" TED Talk 2012:
https://www.ted.com/talks/ivan_krastev_can_democracy_exist_without_trust

Unit III: Contemporary Transformations of Civil Society, from Populism to Pandemic

Wednesday March 9

Transformations of Civil Society: The Current Picture

Join CEU class for guest lecture with Alex Soros and Open Society Foundation staff

Readings:

- Civicus, "State of Civil Society Report 2021"

Friday March 11: **Reflection Paper II due; start of engagement in Pankow Weeks Against Racism, Global Climate Teach-In or alternative (ends April 1)**

Week 7

Monday March 14

Populism in Germany and Europe

Readings:

- Müller, Jan Werner "Is Everyone a Populist?" in *What is Populism?*
- Krastev, Ivan "The Specter Haunting Europe: The Unraveling of the post 1989 Order" *Journal of Democracy* 27.4 (2016)
- Vormann and Lammert, "Europe Disunited" (pp. 129-139) in *The Crisis of Democracy and How to Overcome it* (2017)
- Hentschel, Christine. "Dark Truths in East German Towns in Times of Islamophobia" in *South and North: Contemporary Urban Orientations* (2018)

Wednesday March 16

Review of Reflection Paper

Week 8

Monday March 21

Authoritarian Attacks on Civil Space

Readings:

- Kreienkamp, Julia. "Responding to Global Civil Society Crackdown" *Global Governance Institute Policy Brief* (Sept 2017)

Wednesday March 23

Pandemic

Readings:

- Worschech, Susann "The case of Germany: Civil Society and Civic Engagement during the pandemic," *International Journal of Social Quality* 11.1-2 (Summer 2021)
- UNDP, "Secondary Impacts of COVID-19: Closing Civic Space in Fragile Contexts"

Friday March 25: **Engaged Research Assignment/Draft Project Proposal due**

Week 9

Monday March 28

Project Presentations

Wednesday March 30 Climate Teach-In Activity

Unit IV: Actors and Tactics

Week 10

Monday April 4

Citizen Power

Readings:

- Eric Liu, "You're More Powerful than You Think: A Citizen's Guide to Making Change Happen," pp 45-76
- Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," in *Journal of the American Planning Association* 35.4 (1969)

Wednesday April 6

Community Organizing

Readings:

- M. Avila, "Four Community Organizing Practices: Creating Culture Change" in *Transformative Civic Engagement through Community Organizing*

Friday April 8: **Reflection Paper III due**

SPRING BREAK

Week 11

Monday April 18 NO CLASS (Fed. Holiday)

Wednesday April 20

Project Management Workshop and Individual Project Consultations

Friday April 22: **Interviews due**

Week 12

Monday April 25

Education & Universities

Readings:

- Paulo Friere, selection from *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (New York and London: Continuum, 2000)
- Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, Rosner and Stephens, "Higher Education and the Development of Civic Responsibility," in Ehrlich, ed, *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*,
- Ira Harkavy, Sjur Bergan, Tony Gallagher, and Hilligje van't Land, "Universities Must Help Shape the Post-COVID-19 World," In *Higher Education's Response to the COVID -19 Pandemic: Building a More Sustainable and Democratic Future* (2021)

Wednesday April 27

Youth and Social Media

Readings:

- “Digital Democracy: Is the future of civic engagement online?” (2020)
[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI\(2020\)646161](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document/EPRS_BRI(2020)646161)
- BFMFSJ, “Third Engagement Report, Future of Civil Society: Youth Civic Engagement in the Digital Age” (2020)
- Cabrera, N. L., Matias, C. E., & Montoya, R. “Activism or Slacktivism? The Potential and Pitfalls of Social Media in Contemporary Student Activism.,” *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* (April 2017).

Week 13

Monday May 2

Advocacy in Restricted Places

- Youngs, Richard. “Beyond protest: pathways beyond mass mobilization”
- Advocacy in Restricted Places, a Toolkit for Civil Society Organizations,
https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/FINAL_COMPLETE_Lifeline_Toolkit_for_CSO_Advocacy_in_Restrictive%20Spaces_June_2020.pdf

Wednesday May 4

Advocacy in Restricted Places cont’d

Round table discussion

Week 14

Monday May 9 Make-up class slot (no class meeting unless a previous class needs to be rescheduled)

Wednesday May 11

Civic Engagement Reconsidered/Wrap-Up

Friday May 13: **Final Paper due**

Week 15

Monday May 16: **Cross-campus Final Presentations**

Wednesday May 20: **Cross-campus Final Presentations**