

PT 121 Civic Engagement and Democracy: Berlin Lab

M/W 9-10:30 in SR 3 (P98)

Seminar Leader: Prof. Dr. Ewa Atanassow

Guests: Tuki Jencquel (Berlin); Dominik Zahrnt ([R]evolutionary Ideas)

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Office Hours: after class, by appointment

Course Description

What does it take to be an engaged democratic citizen? Why should we as citizens be engaged and in what ways? What are our rights and duties in participating in the democratic society in which we live? How has the understanding of these rights and duties changed over time? This course explores historical, philosophical and practical dimensions of civic engagement while also investigating the question of what it means to be an engaged citizen in the 21st century. Together, we'll probe the foundational principles of liberal democracy and its enduring dilemmas as they pertain to questions of political participation, civil society, associational life, social justice, and personal responsibility.

We will also examine through stories and experience different notions of civic life and various forms and levels of civic engagement: local, national, global. Whatever form our civic participation may take, it demands that we join with others as fellow citizens in the effort to sustain and enhance our communities and the world. These efforts are strengthened when we reflect together on what we are doing and why we are doing it. While encouraging students to be active and thoughtful participants in their community (however defined), this course will support them in crafting a project proposal aimed at improving this community. To this end it will feature seminar discussions, workshops, and field trips to relevant sites, as well as guest lectures by scholars, activists, and artists.

GHEA21 Network Collaborative Classes

Our class will be part of a GHEA21 Network Collaborative Course, which links students across Bard affiliated campuses through shared assignments and cross-network activities.

Creating Community

Building stronger democracies starts in local communities. The classroom is such a community. This course will provide opportunities not only to study the history and theory of civic engagement but also practice it in different forms. Students will **help shape the seminar agenda, present their own projects, and respond to each other, as well as take turns in running the discussion**. Together we will strive to encourage freedom and dialogue, and a robust yet civil debate that is informed by attentive listening and appreciation of legitimate differences. If the occasion calls for, we will deliberate together on how to navigate conflicts in a productive and respectful way. Developing a shared sense of responsibility for and

dedication to our classroom discussion will help us hone crucial skills of listening, responding, contributing, and leading. At its best, our class discussion will not only examine the questions and challenges of civic engagement but also mirror the modes of participation that are integral to a constructive democratic process, and reflect on the conditions that make such engagement possible. Note: Some classes will take place outside of the scheduled hours in order to reach speakers and students from other institutions.

Learning Outcomes

- Understand the core notions civic engagement, citizen participation, civil society and their relation(s) to liberal democracy as they have been conceptualized historically;
- 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), 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;
- Practice and reflect on engaged research, organizing, communication and leadership skills to develop experience and self-confidence in these areas.

Technology

This course will have an GHEA21 Brightspace site where readings and links to virtual meetings and recordings will be posted. Please log-in with your BCB credentials.

Readings

- Course Reader
- Additional readings or viewings for the class will be available in the relevant folder on Brightspace.

Requirements

- Come to every class meeting, having read the assigned material carefully, 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 project, including workbook assignments leading up to the final project 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, students are allowed two absences from twice-per-week course. More than two absences will affect your participation grade. Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, whether excused or unexcused. Please note: arriving late or leaving in the middle of a session will count as half an absence.

The success of this course crucially depends on the quality of thought and energy you bring to class. 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 citizens and scholars, recognizing that academic study is as much an intellectual as it is an ethical and civic enterprise. Building on the ideas and contributions of others is a vital part of academic as well as civic life. However, you are also obligated to document every occasion when you use another's ideas, images, language, or syntax and formally acknowledge that debt by signaling it in the MLA parenthetical format (<http://www.mla.org/style>). If you have questions about when and how to cite, don't hesitate to bring them up. Note: 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 I: What does it mean to be a good citizen?

Submit a 1-page document **on Padlet** describing what it means to be civically engaged in your community (however defined) 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 III

What does civic engagement mean to me so far and what ideas/projects I want to explore? Building on Reflection Paper II, analyze an activity or a civic engagement initiative developed by your role model. Alternatively, you could choose to conduct an interview with an activist or expert of your choosing. What motivates this person/group? What kind of change do they want to make and why? What practical steps did they take to make that change happen? How successful are they?

Final Project (group project)

The final weeks of the course will be dedicated to working in groups to identify an issue and put together a well-researched proposal for community projects of our choosing. Two workshops and a Project Development Workbook with regular assignments will guide us through the process including the submission of a final essay and presentations.

The final consists of a Project Proposal and Civic Issue Research Paper (8-10 pages, double-spaced: 2000-2,500 words, excluding notes and bibliography):

The projects will situate and provide a description of a community initiatives that we propose to implement. The project should identify an issue, be action oriented and achievable. A Project Workbook will help us develop project ideas and action plans and 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 specific context and evidence, and draw a roadmap for action.

The Final Projects should:

- Define the key problem;
- Explain why this problem 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?

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

Presentations

Students will present their group projects in the final week of class, and participate in evaluating them. 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: 40%
- Reflection Paper I: 10%
- Reflection Paper II: 10%
- Reflection Paper III: 10%
- Project Development Workbook preparatory assignments: 10%
- Final Project: 20%

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.

Schedule

Week	1 st session	2 nd session	films and assignments
1: Jan 27	<u>Introductory</u>	Thucydides, Pericles' Funeral oration What is a democratic citizen?	
2: Feb 3	<u>Civic engagement and education</u> <i>Plato's Apology</i>	Gandhi, "Story of a Soldier of Truth" Orwell on Gandhi Martin Luther King, Letter from Birmingham Jail Cornel West, a Gadfly	
3: Feb 10	<u>What is democracy?</u> Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i> Introduction, 1.1.2	What democracy is ... and is not? What civic engagement is ... and is not? Civic Engagement in Diverse Society Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed	Assignment I
4: Feb 17	<u>Democracy's principles: people, equality, power</u> <i>Democracy in America</i> , 1.1.3-4	Citizen power Havel, "The Power of the Powerless" Davis, "Voices of the People" Sherry Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" The case of Venezuela	TJ visit
5: Feb 24	<u>Democracy and Participation</u> <i>Democracy in America</i> , 1.1.5	MLK, The Drum Major Instinct https://poets.org/poem/let-america-be-america-again Han, "Pathways to Participation" <i>Gandhi</i> (1982) dir. Attenborough	
6: Mar 3	<u>Democracy's virtues and drawbacks</u> <i>Democracy in America</i> , 1.2.1, 6-7	A. McIntyre, Is Patriotism a Virtue? Nussbaum, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism" Walzer, "Spheres of Afection" James Baldwin, "In Search of a Majority"	Assignment II

		Pastor Niemöller, "First they Came"	
7: Mar 10	<u>Race and Democracy</u> DA 1.2.10	The Boy Who Was Sacrificed Wewiibitaan Baldwin, "Letter to My Nephew" <i>The Best of Enemies</i> (2019), dir. R. Bissell	
8: Mar 17	<u>Democracy and Civil Society</u> DA 2.1.15, 2.2.1-8	Putnam, "Bowling Alo ne" "The Precipice of Hope" Sheri Berman, Democracy and Diversity Direct Action Organizing	DZ visit
9: Mar 24	Threats to democracy DA 2.4.6-7	Berman, Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic Rebuilding the Hungarian Right Walzer, Spheres of Affection	Assignment III Case studies
March 30	SPRING BREAK		
10: Apr 7	Project week1: Identifying an issue		
11: Apr 14	Project week2: researching a successful community initiative...		
12: Apr 21	Project week 3: ... and its contexts		
13: Apr 28	Project week 4: mapping a way forward		
14: May 4	Final presentations	Final presentations	
15: May 11	Final Essay due: Friday, May 15, 23:59		