Political and Civic Engagement
PLAP 3500
Spring 2017

Instructor: Prof. Carah Ong Whaley, PhD
Course Date, Time & Location: Monday, Wednesday and Fridays, 12:00-12:50 pm, Maury Hall 110
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays, 10:00 am-12:00 pm, Gibson S187, and by appointment
Email: clo3s@virginia.edu (If urgent, call or text)
Phone: 202-378-3334 (text and voice)
Twitter: @CarahOng

Course Overview

This course analyzes and applies scholarship to understand the role of civil society in American political processes and institutions. We will study the role and impact of American political and civic organizations and institutions in the local, state and national context. To develop a “pragmatic sophistication” of political and civic engagement, students will: conduct individual research in addition to assigned course readings; develop a political or civic engagement project to be carried out during the semester; engage in a number of experiential learning activities organized by the instructor; and work with others from a range of perspectives to better understand public issues.

We will explore the following questions: What are civic and political engagement and how do they relate to democratic theory? What constitutes a need for civic or political engagement? What are social capital and civic infrastructure and how can they foster more effective citizen participation? How do political knowledge and efficacy relate to civic and political action? What is the relationship between partisan polarization and political and civic engagement? What are democratic deliberation, civility and compromise? What is the value and role of citizen engagement in social innovation? What are civic and political leadership? What is the role of technology and social media? How does the media matter and what is the role of civic and citizen journalism? What impact do civic and citizen engagement have in policy and administrative processes?

As part of this course, we will spend five weeks engaging with participants in the Leaders for Democracy Fellowship (LDF) hosted by the University of Virginia Center for Politics from the Middle East and North Africa Region. This will provide an invaluable opportunity to learn about and discuss civic and political engagement from a comparative perspective. It is also an opportunity to learn from their experiences and hopefully develop longer-term relationships with them. We have organized a number of joint events and activities that will provide interactive and experiential opportunities to learn about and apply political and civic engagement scholarship in a range of social and political contexts.
Course Learning Objectives

1) Through academic study, dialogues with leading practitioners, case studies, site visits, and hands-on activities, this course seeks to develop a deeper understanding and knowledge of political and civic engagement. Students will have a better understanding of the underlying theories and key ideas central to political and civic engagement, including: democracy, citizenship, community, deliberation, compromise, civility, social capital, leadership, political knowledge, and efficacy.

2) To enhance students’ understanding of political leadership, community service and citizenship.

3) To enhance students’ understanding of the role of technology and media, including civic and citizen journalism, in political and civic engagement.

4) To better understand political and civic engagement from a comparative perspective.

5) To synthesize readings and to connect and extend knowledge from one source (fact, text, theory) to another for the purpose of offering an original insight.

6) To further develop critical and creative thinking, reading, writing and discussion skills about contemporary issues that affect us as citizens of an ever-evolving and complex world.

Core Texts

1. Theoretical and empirical journal article readings will be made available on Collab. Assigned readings for each course meeting are noted in the schedule below. I reserve the right to add readings.

Recommended Readings:


Fred L. Smith, *Field Guide for Effective Communication*. Ch's 1,4-6. Competitive Enterprise Institute, Washington D.C.


**Experiential Learning Activities**

The goal of following scheduled experiential learning activities is to develop a “pragmatic sophistication” of political and civic engagement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date and Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Description and Objectives</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>February 22, 2017, 5:30 pm-7:30 pm</td>
<td>Welcome Reception with MENA Leadership Democracy Fellows</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 24, 8:00 am – 7:00 pm</td>
<td>Civic and Political Engagement from a State Perspective: Learning trip to Richmond (Bus transportation provided by the Center for Politics from Charlottesville)</td>
<td>10-11 am: Presentation, meeting and questions with Secretary of the Commonwealth Kelly Thomasson. One of the functions of the Secretary’s office is to assist the Governor in the appointments of nearly 4,000 individuals to serve on Virginia’s boards and commissions. All Virginians are encouraged to participate in the government of our Commonwealth by offering to serve on a board or commission, or by recommending qualified candidates. 11 am- 12 pm: Meet with Virginia State Delegate(s) to learn about state assembly and</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 3, 3-5 pm</td>
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<td>Civic and Political Engagement in Comparative Perspective: Dialogue with Leaders for Democracy Fellows</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 17, 10:30 am-12:00 pm, City Space (Downtown Mall)</td>
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<td>Citizens’ Eye View of Journalism and Local Politics</td>
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<td>March 20, 5:00-5:45 pm &amp; 7-8:30 pm –</td>
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<td>Civic and Political Engagement in Local Political Institutions</td>
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<td>March 24, 9 am-12 pm</td>
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<td>Service Project with the International Rescue Committee</td>
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<td>April 28, 7 am-7 pm</td>
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<td>Civic and Political Engagement at the National Level: Trip to Washington DC</td>
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12 pm-1:15 pm: Lunch at Coliseum Restaurant (Iranian) ($15 including the buffet, beverage, tax, and tip)

1:45-2:30 pm: Observe legislative session

2:45 pm: depart for Providence Forge

3:30-4:45 pm: Meet with Stephen Adkins of the Chickahominy Tribe to learn about political and civic engagement from a Native American perspective

5:00 pm: Depart for return trip to Charlottesville

Representatives from each country will make a 5-7 minute presentation on Civic Engagement and Politics in their home country. Following presentations, we will divide into small groups to continue discussions on a more personal level.

Presentation, meeting and discussion with Brian Wheeler and Sean Tubbs of Cville Tomorrow on Citizen Journalism and the Role of the Citizens in Local Politics.

5:00-5:45pm: Meeting with Charlottesville Mayor Michael Signer in City Council Chamber
6:00-6:45 pm: Dinner (TBD)
7:00-8:30 pm: Observe City Council Meeting

We will volunteer with the IRC’s New Roots Program, which is a gardening and farming program that helps over 60 refugee families. Service will include helping to prepare the farms for the farming season.

Observe an organized “lobby days” Meet with Members of Congress Meet with a member of the National Press
Course Assignments and Evaluation

*All course writing assignments will be submitted electronically via Collab. All written analyses MUST take into account and apply relevant assigned course readings to demonstrate your knowledge of course materials. Additional guidance for written assignments will be elaborated and discussed in class and posted in the “Assignments” tab on Collab.

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class attendance and participation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>It is essential that you come to class prepared. As such, you are expected to complete and reflect upon the required reading before each class session so that you can actively engage in discussion and ask questions. You will be graded both on the quality and the quantity of your contributions to discussions. Arrive on time and attend all classes. Repeated unexcused absences will result in a reduction to your participation grade.</td>
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<td>Project Proposal</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Political or civic engagement project proposal for the semester. Questions to consider: What constitutes a need for civic or political engagement? What do you see as a problem or challenge that could be improved by civic or political action? ~1-2 single-spaced pages.</td>
<td>2/3/17</td>
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<td>Analysis of Civic and Political Engagement at the State Level</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Analysis of observations about state-level political and civic engagement based on the learning trip to Richmond. Questions to consider: How do citizens and organizations influence policy-making at the state level? What are the opportunities and challenges of political engagement at the state level? How do political and opinion leaders take into account voices from civil society? What did you observe on the floor of the legislative session? How do different political offices interact with the public at the state level? Has partisan polarization affected policy-making at the state level? ~2 single-spaced pages.</td>
<td>3/3/17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis of Citizen Journalism and Citizen Participation in Local Politics</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Analysis of dialogue with Brian Wheeler and Sean Tubbs on citizen journalism and the role of citizen engagement in local politics. Questions to consider: How does citizen journalism differ from traditional media and journalism? What are the advantages and consequences of citizen journalism? What are challenges to citizen journalism? ~2 single-spaced pages.</td>
<td>3/24/17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis of Civic and Political Engagement at the Local Level</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Analysis of political and civic engagement at the local level based on observations from the meeting with Mayor Michael Signer and from the City Council Meeting. Questions to consider: What are</td>
<td>3/31/17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis or Biographic Profile based on an Interview with a Political or Civic Leader</td>
<td>Conduct an interview with a political or civic leader (this could be someone in Charlottesville, in Virginia, in Washington DC, at an organization or with one of the MENA Democracy Leadership Fellows, etc.). Write up a compelling analysis that relates how they are providing political and civic leadership to solve a pressing local, state, national, regional or global challenge. Questions to consider: What catalyzed their involvement? How did they identify a political or civic need? What have they learned through their experiences? What does civic and political leadership mean to them? How do they interact with and engage the public on their issue? How do they interact with and engage the media on their issue? What challenges do they face?</td>
<td>4/10/17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Analysis of Civic and Political Engagement at the National Level</td>
<td>Analysis of political and civic engagement at the national level based on observations from the trip to Washington, DC and meetings with organizations, Members of Congress, the administration and members of the media. How has partisan polarization affected political engagement at the national level? How do citizens and organizations influence policy-making at the national level? How can we measure the effectiveness and impact of organizations and citizens in national policy and decision-making processes? What are the opportunities and challenges of political engagement at the national level? ~2 single-spaced pages.</td>
<td>5/1/17</td>
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<td>Analysis, Op-Ed, Policy Memo, Video or Photo Essay of course civic and political engagement project</td>
<td>Write a final project of your political and civic engagement project. You will present your project and findings to the class during the week of 4/24/17. ~2 single-spaced pages. Questions to consider: How did course theoretical and empirical literature comport with your individual project experiences? What did the campaign, political institution or organization do well to engage citizens? What recommendations would you make to the campaign, political institution or organization that you worked with to improve political and civic engagement among citizens? Students will be organized into panels based on their projects to present to the course. Panel members will read and comment on each other’s projects before final submission to instructor.</td>
<td>4/22/17</td>
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Grading Scale

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<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>124-130</td>
<td>C+</td>
<td>104-107</td>
<td>D-</td>
<td>87-90</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>118-123</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>101-103</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>&lt;87</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>114-117</td>
<td>C-</td>
<td>98-100</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>111-113</td>
<td>D+</td>
<td>95-97</td>
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<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>108-110</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>91-94</td>
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**Late Work:** Late assignments will result in a one-third letter grade reduction per day late (e.g. A becomes A-, B becomes B-, etc.).

**Getting Help:** If you are having difficulties with the class and reading materials, please email me or see me during my office hours.

**University Policies**

The University's Preventing and Addressing Discrimination and Harassment (PADH) policy prohibits discrimination and harassment on the basis of age, color, race, disability, marital status, national and ethnic origin, political affiliation, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, veteran status, family medical or genetic information, as well as other forms of sex discrimination not covered by the University’s Policy on Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Other Forms of Interpersonal Violence.

The University of Virginia is committed to accessible education. If you have a documented disability or you believe you have a disability and would like information regarding academic accommodations/adjustments in this course, please contact the Student Disability Access Center.

**Honor Code:** “The free exchange of ideas depends on the participants' trust that others' work is their own and that it was done and is being reported honestly. Intellectual progress in all the disciplines demands the truthfulness of all participants. Plagiarism and cheating are attacks on the very foundation of academic life, and cannot be tolerated within universities.”

All work must adhere to the University’s policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. You must cite all material that is not your own. If you have doubts of what constitutes plagiarism, consult the student honor code, and/or talk to me.

**Classroom Etiquette**

In order to facilitate the best possible learning environment, I ask that you respect a few basic ground rules:

- We will be dealing with interesting and sometimes controversial issues in class,
and will regularly engage in lively debates. This is the essence of a political science class. It is important that you respect one another and the instructor. Remember that differences of opinion can provide an opportunity for intellectual growth.

- I will start class on time and expect you to arrive to class on time. I make important announcements at the beginning of class as well as take attendance. In addition, people coming in late could disrupt the professor and their fellow students.
- Many students prefer to take notes with their laptops. This is fine; however, I expect you to refrain from activities unrelated to the class (e.g. Social Media, email, messaging and other internet activities). I reserve the right to ask you not to use your computer if I suspect you are engaging in these activities.
- Please remember to turn off your cell phone.

Class Schedule and Assignments

Week 1: Introduction and Overview

Wednesday, January 18: Course overview and expectations

Friday, January 20:

Assignment: Identify a political or civic engagement project for the semester. All students will meet individually with the instructor to develop their project.
- What constitutes a need for civic or political engagement? What do you see as a problem in your community that could be improved by civic or political action?

Week 2: What are civic and political engagement?: Founding Principles and Recent Trends

Monday, January 23: Founding Principles
Alexis de Tocqueville, “Of the use which the Americans make of public associations in civil life”; “Relation of Civil to Political Association”

Theda Skocpol, “The Tocqueville Problem: Civic Engagement in American Democracy”

Wednesday, January 25:
John Dewey, “The Search for the Great Community”

“An Interview with Robert Putnam on Bowling Alone: America’s Declining Social Capital”
Week 3: What are civic and political engagement?: Founding Principles and Recent Trends (Continued); How has our understanding of democracy changed? What are social capital and civic infrastructure and how can they foster more effective citizen participation?

Monday, January 30:


Wednesday, February 1:


Week 4: How do political knowledge and efficacy relate to civic action?

Monday, February 6:


Wednesday, February 8:
David Davenport and Hanna Skandera, “Civic Associations,” Hoover Institution Press.

**Week 5: What is the relationship between partisan polarization and political and civic engagement?**

Monday, February 13:


Wednesday, February 15:


**Week 6: What are democratic deliberation, civility and compromise?**

Monday, February 20:


Wednesday, February 22:
**5:30-7:30 pm Welcome Reception with MENA Leaders for Democracy Fellows**
Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, “The Mindsets of Political Compromise”

Tina Nabatchi and Greg Munno, “Deliberative Civic Engagement: Connecting Public Voices to Public Governance”

**Friday, February 24, 8:00 am – 7:00 pm: Learning trip to Richmond**

**Week 7: Why media matters**

Monday, February 27:
Michael Hamill Remaley, “Fifteen Things Every Journalist Should Know About Public Engagement”


Wednesday, March 1:


Friday, March 3, 3:00-5:00 pm: Civic and Political Engagement in Comparative Perspective, Dialogue with MENA Leaders for Democracy Fellows

Week 8: Spring Break – No Class

Week 9: What is the role of civic and citizen journalism?

Monday, March 13:


Wednesday, March 15:


Browse Charlottesville Tomorrow at http://www.cvilletomorrow.org/

Friday, March 17, 10:30 am – 12 pm: “Citizens’ Eye View of Journalism and Local Politics” with Brian Wheeler and Sean Tubbs of Cville Tomorrow at City Space on the Downtown Mall
Week 10: What are civic and political leadership?

Monday, March 20, 5:00-5:45 pm & 7-8:30 pm: “Civic and Political Engagement in Local Political Institutions”; Meeting with Charlottesville Mayor Michael Signer; Observe City Council Meeting

Wednesday, March 22:


Friday, March 24, 9 am-12 pm: Service Project with the International Rescue Committee New Roots Program

Week 11: What is the role of technology and social media?

Monday, March 27:


Wednesday, March 29:


Browse: https://www.digital-democracy.org/

**Week 12: What is the value and role of citizen engagement in social innovation?**

Monday, April 3:


Wednesday, April 5:


**Week 13: What impact do civic and citizen engagement have in policy and administrative processes?**

Monday, April 10:

Wednesday, April 12:

**Week 14: What impact do civic and citizen engagement have in policy and administrative processes?** (Continued)
Monday, April 17:

Wednesday, April 19:


**Week 15: Student Presentations of Civic and Political Engagement Projects**

Monday, April 24: Read and Critique Your Colleagues Project Analyses or Op-Eds; Panel Presentations in Class

Wednesday, April 26: Read and Critique Your Colleagues Project Analyses or Op-Eds; Panel Presentations in Class

**Friday, April 28: Learning trip to Washington D.C. 7 am – 7 pm.**

**Week 16: Conclusions**
Monday, May 1: Read and Critique Your Colleagues Project Analyses or Op-Eds; Panel Presentations in Class