

PS 108: ESSENTIALS OF CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh

Fall Semester 2022

Class meets 9:40-11:10, T/TH, Sage 3235

3 CREDITS

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Course Description: This course introduces the student to the obligations and benefits of active citizenship and participation in their communities. Theories of citizenship and citizen activity, policy analysis, the state of public policies at the full array of governing levels from local to global, and experiential activities within the community are featured. This is the gateway course to both the Civic Engagement Minor and the Civic Engagement emphasis within the Political Science Major.

Students will also learn how to influence government through lobbying public officials, creating issue groups, and influencing public opinion. Since this is a Quest III course, there is also an experiential component, in which students will work with one of several community partners in Oshkosh. This semester our course will work with the UW Oshkosh Center for Civic and Community Engagement. This course also serves as a gateway course to the Civic Engagement Minor. There are no prerequisites for this course.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- Connect knowledge to civic engagement and participation in civic life
- Identify and evaluate theories and assumptions relating to civic engagement and activism
- Learn how to effectively influence local, state, national, and international public policy processes
- Improve written and oral communication skills
- Participate in community life through co-curricular activities with a community partner

Course Readings: There is no textbook for this class. Instead your readings will be found on Canvas. The authors don't necessarily agree with each other and you need not agree with them either, but you do need to understand their arguments and be prepared to respond thoughtfully to them. Course readings will also include scholarly and personal stories about civility, engagement, activism, and public policy concerning elections and other "inputs" for our democracy.

Liberal Education is an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g., science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. A liberal education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings. (AAC&U; http://www.aacu.org/leap/What_is_liberal_education.cfm) Our approach to liberal education is articulated through the University Studies Program, but is similar to the general education programs of all other four year universities.

The University Studies Program: The University Studies Program (USP) is your gateway to a 21st century college education at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. This Quest III course is the last in a series of courses you will take to introduce you to the campus and all it has to offer, the vibrant Oshkosh community, and the challenges and opportunities of academic life as you pursue a liberal education.

In this course, you are addressing your third Signature Question: **How do people understand and engage in community life?**

Upon completion of Quest III, you will be ready to enroll in Connect, in which you will synthesize the three Signature Questions.

What is Civic Learning? Civic knowledge consists of an awareness and understanding of the various political and social processes that impact the nature and quality of life in local, state, national, or global communities. It also encompasses the cultivation of skills which may be useful in public life, like effective communication and ethical reasoning. Civic engagement means having an appreciation for and applying the values gained from civic knowledge in real world settings, directed at improving the quality of life in the communities of which one is a part. Civic knowledge and civic engagement emphasize learning, reflection, and action in order to create better communities.

Grading Scale and Assignments

I use a **93/90/87** grading scale in this course (which means that 93 is the cut-point for an A, 90 for an A-, 87 for a B+, etc.). Your grade will be determined by several assignments and exams, detailed as follows:

Exams: (40%) Students will have two exams, each worth 20% of their course grade. Exams will occur at midsemester and on the last day of class, and will consist of multiple choice and essay questions. The exam dates will be **October 18** (in class) and **December 13-15** (online).

Community-Based Learning: (20%) Students will complete **10 hours** of community-based learning with a community partner. Hours will be managed through a Google spreadsheet with the help of staff from the Center for Civic and Community Engagement. Students will have several options to choose from, including a range of opportunities to fit their schedules and interests.

Events and Reflections:

Constitution Day: (2.5%) Constitution Day Speaker. This talk will be Wednesday, September 14 at 6pm in Sage 1210. Speaker is Tricia Zunker, J.D.

Gubernatorial Candidate Townhalls and Essay (10%):

-Begin by learning about yourself: complete the following two quizzes, record their results, and comment on how well your beliefs fit with your party identification.

<https://www.people-press.org/quiz/political-typology/?groupID=MXZRM>

<https://www.people-press.org/quiz/political-party-quiz/>

-Next, attend the town hall events for BOTH gubernatorial candidates.

-Then write a paper that answers these questions: You should address your ideology and partisanship in one paragraph and then evaluate how well they connect with one another. Is there a specific area where your ideology and partisanship diverge? How well does your ideology match

what you heard during the lecture? How well do their policy goals align with yours? In which areas do you find agreement? Disagreement?

Your paper should be 3-4 pages, double-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins. Grades are determined not by what you believe, but by your ability to answer all questions and make connections between your quiz results and the talk. This paper is due on Canvas on **November 9** by Midnight.

Fireside Chat: Conversations with Civically Engaged Community Members (2.5%) Students will **attend at least one of these hour-long events**. There will be five opportunities to attend these talks, approximately one a month. Events will be advertised on the Center for Community Engagement's social media, on Canvas, and in the course calendar below.

Please speak with the instructor as soon as possible if you have a conflict with these events—they are required for course completion!

Improving Civic Engagement Essay: (15%) This essay will ask you to identify the root cause of disengagement in our democracy and recommend how we can foster more participation in our democratic system. You will build your argument using class readings and answer three related questions which define the scope, causes, and your preferred solution to democratic recession. Further information is provided in a separate hand out. This assignment is due on Canvas on **December 2** by Midnight.

Attendance and participation: (10%) The final portion of your grade in this class is your attendance and participation. Attendance is required for all classes. For each class that you miss, you will lose one percent of your total course grade. You are considered absent to class **if you show up after I have finished taking the attendance for the day**.

Please note that excused absences are three things: severe (i.e., hospitalized) illness, death in the family, and required school activities. With proof of this absence (for example, an obituary, note from a coach, etc.), I am happy to work with you to cover missed material and make up assignments. Common illnesses (colds, sinus infections, flu), personal travel, etc. are not excused absences.

For participation, I expect you to come to class having completed all assigned readings, prepared to speak up and answer questions, and contribute substantively to class discussions. There is no specific number of times you should talk, but you should make a concerted effort to be active and involved in the class. Failure to do so will negatively impact your participation grade.

Early Alert: Early Alert is a program that provides you with an Early Grade Report from faculty. Early Grade Reports will indicate if you have academic performance or attendance issues and specific steps you can take and resources available to help you improve. It is common for students to be unaware of or over-estimate their academic performance in classes so this will help you be aware early on of your progress and provide strategies for success in the classroom. You will receive an email during the 5th week of classes. It is important to read the entire email carefully. Your early alert assignment for this class will be your Vision Wall reflection essay.

Community-Based Learning: “In these programs, field-based “experiential learning” with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both *apply* what they are learning in real-world settings and *reflect* in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.” (High-Impact Practice, AACU, 2011)

You will be working with the UW Oshkosh Women’s Center for your community-based learning experience. Students will have the option of completing their hours through multiple hour special events. Additional opportunities will be available from Christine Ann Domestic Abuse Services as well.

The **UW Oshkosh Center for Civic and Community Engagement** is located in Pollock House (across from Albee Hall on Algoma) at 765 Algoma Boulevard. The University Studies Program is located in the same space. Our class will help create programming for the Center and attend their events. In doing so we will work with the Center’s Director, Mike Lueder, and student Civic Influencers and Civic Engagement Interns. More information about the Center is available here: <https://uwosh.edu/community-engagement/students-community/>.

Campus Resources: In the University Studies Program, we want you to be successful. Below is a list of campus services available to support your success. More information about these resources is available at: <http://www.uwosh.edu/home/resources>

Center for Academic Resources: The Center for Academic Resources (CAR) provides free, confidential tutoring for students in most undergraduate classes on campus. CAR is located in the Student Success Center, Suite 102. Check the Tutor List page on CAR’s website (www.uwosh.edu/car) for a list of tutors. If your course is not listed, click on a link to request one, stop by SSC 102 or call 424-2290. To schedule a tutoring session, simply email the tutor, let him/her know what class you are seeking assistance in, and schedule a time to meet.

Writing Center: The Writing Center helps students of all ability levels improve their writing. Trained peer consultants help writers understand an assignment, envision possibilities for a draft, and improve their writing process. They even help writers learn to identify their own proofreading errors. Students can make a free appointment or stop by to see whether a consultant is available. For more information, view their website (<http://www.uwosh.edu/wcenter>), call 920-424-1152, email wcenter@uwosh.edu, or visit them in Suite 102 of the Student Success Center.

Reading Study Center: The Reading Study Center is an all-university service whose mission is to facilitate the development of efficient college-level learning strategies in students of all abilities. The center offers strategies for improved textbook study, time management, note-taking, test preparation, and test-taking. For more information, email readingstudy@uwosh.edu, view the website (<http://www.uwosh.edu/readingstudycenter>), visit them in Nursing Ed Room 201, or call 424-1031.

Polk Library/Information Literacy: You have been introduced to Information Literacy in your Quest Speaking and Writing courses. As a reminder, Polk Library offers many professional librarians

who can help you find library resources for your research. Specifically, Ted Mulvey, the Information Literacy Librarian, is available to assist you as you access, evaluate, and use information in University Studies Program classes. Phone: 920-424-7329; email: mulveyt@uwosh.edu. You may also set up a research advisory session with a librarian at: rap@uwosh.edu.

Late Papers and Make-Up Exams: You have several papers due in this class. No extensions will be given on this assignment unless you are subject to one of the three excused absence instances above (hospitalization, death in the family, and required school activities) and can give me proof of this absence. All papers are subject to a penalty of one letter grade for each day they are late. You are welcome to turn the project in early if you are unable to on the day the assignment is due.

Please note that computer problems and printer problems are not accepted excuses for late papers. You should always, always, always back up your work and allow plenty of time for printing, and so computer problems and printer problems should not be an issue in handing in your project on time.

I will give a make-up exam in one of the excused absence circumstances above, but also with good reason if you know beforehand, provided you tell me you need a make-up exam *at least one week* in advance of the test. For instance, if you know at the beginning of class you must be out of town for a family event, I will give you a make-up if you tell me a week or more before the test date. The make-up test will contain different questions than the test given in class.

Office Hours: Some of my office hours are held on Microsoft Teams (MS Teams). This system is available to all UWO students. Faculty will be available during the hours noted on your syllabus. When logging into MS Teams, look closely at the status symbols for your instructor. A green dot by the professor's icon (which may be their picture or their initials) means they are available. A red dot means they are busy.

Generally, you are able to join office hour meetings and talk openly in the forum or use the chat function freely. At times, your instructor may be in a private meeting with a student during office hours, and will mark availability as "busy" (a red dot).

We hope that using MS Teams for office hours for all of our courses will help students become more accustomed to virtual office hours during the pandemic. The main point to remember is that we are available to you. Please use our office hours freely and often. We are here to help. Many faculty are also happy to set up meetings outside of office hours if students have conflicts with the posted times.

Expectations for Academic Honesty: A college education is intended to develop your skills, knowledge, and confidence. Graded assignments are designed to work on these items. Thus, to gain the skills, knowledge, and confidence of a college-educated person all graded work is to be your own. When you are directed to work alone, an assignment or test must be done by you, its primary ideas are to be your own, and any outside materials should be dealt with properly (quoted when using someone's words, and cited when quoting or referencing them in any other way). When your teacher directs you to work in teams, the work is to be done by the team. More information can be found here: <https://uwosh.edu/politicalscience/wp-content/uploads/sites/14/2020/08/Academic-Honesty.pdf>

Regrading: I will be glad to take another look at a paper or test you feel is not graded fairly, with the following conditions: you must speak to me about it during my office hours or by appointment,

you must wait 24 hours after the paper or exam is handed back, and you must tell me in writing why you think you deserved more points. The reason for this is that I would like for you to take the paper/exam home and carefully read and think over comments before we talk. If I feel your paper was graded unfairly, I'll change the grade in your favor, but I also reserve the right to lower your grade upon rereading the paper if, after reevaluation, I think you received too high a grade.

Reading Assignments: Reading assignments are given in the course calendar in this syllabus (below). Assigned reading for a class day is given as the "Reading Assignment" below each entry. I expect you to have done the reading for each class ahead of time, and I reserve the right to quiz you if I feel you are not doing the reading ahead of time. Reading assignments are subject to change, and any change will be announced in class.

Other policies: Please turn your cell phone off or onto silent mode before you enter the classroom. If I see you using your cell phone during class time I will warn you the first time, and mark you as absent after that.

Laptops are welcome for note taking in the classroom. However, I expect that if your laptop is out during class, you will be taking notes rather than checking your email, etc. These activities are distracting to those around you and can interfere with the learning of other students. If I notice that things other than note-taking are going on, you will be marked absent. Tests and other in-class assignments will be written in longhand.

Please do not pack up before I say that class is over. If this becomes a problem, pop quizzes or similar will be your new end of class activity.

I check my email often, and I am happy to answer questions via email. However, please use proper grammar, punctuation, and communication when emailing your professor. If you fail to do so, I will ask you to try again. Also, I am not able to answer questions about grades unless you are using your Oshkosh email address. All class announcements will be sent to your Oshkosh address.

Note: *Note to Political Science Majors:* Political Science majors should take Political Methodology (245) in either their sophomore year or the first semester of their junior year. Political Science 245 is a prerequisite for the senior capstone, Political Analysis (401), and cannot be taken concurrently. If you are currently a political science major or if you think you will be one of our majors in the future, it is important that you save your graded coursework from this class. If you have questions, please see me or any faculty member after class.

Grievance Statement: The Department of Political Science is committed to offering you a high-quality classroom experience, and we take your feedback very seriously. If you have concerns about anything related to this course, assignments, or teaching method, you are encouraged to first speak with your instructor directly. If you are not comfortable speaking with the instructor, you are invited to speak with the Chair of the Department of Political Science, Dr. James Krueger. He can be reached at kruegerj@uwosh.edu. Should he be unable to resolve your concerns, he will guide you to appropriate resources within the College of Letters and Science.

Disclosure statement: "Students are advised to see the following URL for disclosures about essential consumer protection items required by the Students Right to Know Act of 1990: <https://uwosh.edu/financialaid/consumer-information/>."

Note: If substantive changes are made in course syllabus, such as changes in schedule or assignments, notification will be provided in a timely manner and a revised syllabus made available.

Course Calendar:

Section 1: Who is an activist? Why are they needed in democracies?

Week 1: TH, Sept 8: Class introduction and syllabus
▪ Reading assignment: course syllabus

Week 2: T, Sept 13: Citizenship and democratic inputs
▪ Reading assignment: U.S. Constitution and Hudson, *American Democracy in Peril*, Chapter 1

▪ **Campus Partner Visit: Mike Lueder**

W, Sept. 14: Constitution Day Speaker – 6pm Sage 1210

TH, Sept 15: Our citizenship and political context today

▪ Reading assignment: Fox and Lawless, *Running from Office*, “Introduction” and “Socialization”

Week 3:

T, Sept 20: What exactly is political behavior? When and why does it happen?

▪ Reading assignment: Verba, et al. *Voice and Equality* Chapter 2 and Rosenstone and Hansen, *Mobilization, Participation, and Democracy in America* chapter 2

TH, Sept 22: Why do some people engage more than others?

▪ Reading Assignment Bekkers (2005)

▪ **Fireside Chat: 5pm, Pollock Living Room (attend one this semester)**

Section 2: The benefits of engagement for self and society

Week 4: T, Sept 27: Volunteering effects on volunteers

▪ Reading assignment: Wilson and Musick “The Effects of Volunteering on the Volunteer”

TH, Sept 29: Intern activism in government

▪ Reading assignment: [Intern Activism in Congress The New Yorker](#), Pew on Social Media Activism

Week 5: T, Oct 4: Does civic engagement prepare us for democracy?

▪ Reading assignment: : Theiss-Morse and Hibbing “Citizenship and Civic Engagement”

TH, Oct 6: Election engagement of young voters

▪ Reading Assignment: [Election Outreach to Young Voters - Circle](#)

▪ **Fireside Chat: 5pm, Pollock Living Room (attend one this semester)**

Section 3: threats to democracy

Week 6: T, Oct 11: Viewing politics as sport

▪ Reading Assignment: [Politics for power, not consumption](#)

TH, Oct 13: When is engagement toxic to democracy?

▪ Reading assignment: Berman “Civil Society and the Collapse of the Weimar Republic”

Week 7: T, Oct 18: **Exam 1**

▪ Reading assignment: prepare for the exam

TH, Oct 20: Gerrymandering legislative districts

▪ Reading assignment: <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2208.06968.pdf>

- Week 8: T, Oct 25: Fake news, social media use, and social networks
 ▪ Reading assignment: Kim, Hsu, and Zuniga (2013); Ribiero, et al. (2020)
 TH, Oct 27: Conspiracies about government and processes
 ▪ Reading assignment: Udani, Kimball, and Fogarty (2020)
- Week 9: T, Nov 1: What influences civility?
 ▪ Reading assignment: Kim and Kim (2019); Yamamoto, et al. (2020)
Section 4: The “how and why” of advocacy
 TH, Nov 3: Understanding how to advocate
 ▪ Reading assignment Libby “The Lobbying Strategy Handbook”, Chapter 1
 ▪ **Fireside Chat: 5pm, Pollock Living Room (attend one this semester)**
- Week 10: **T, Nov 8: ELECTION DAY – No Class**
 Some students will have poll working or other activities
W, Nov. 9: Gubernatorial Town Halls Paper Due
 TH, Nov 10: Understanding the public policy process
 ▪ Reading assignment: Anderson, *Public Policymaking: An Introduction* pgs 1-18
- Week 11: T, Nov 15: Nationalizing state politics
 ▪ Reading assignment: Grumbach *Laboratories Against Democracy*, Chapter 5
 TH, Nov 17: Advocacy as a communication process
 ▪ Reading assignment: Libby “The Lobbying Strategy Handbook”, Chapter 5 and
 Alinsky *Rules for Radicals* “Communication”
 ▪ **Fireside Chat: 5pm, Pollock Living Room (attend one this semester)**
- Week 12: T, Nov 22: Improving Civic Engagement Essay: Individual Discussions
 ▪ Reading assignment: Prepare your paper outlines, meet with me
TH, Nov 24: Thanksgiving Break
- Week 13: T, Nov 29: Agenda denial and case studies
 ▪ Reading assignment: Anderson, *Public Policymaking: An Introduction* 93-102, Libby,
 “The Lobbying Strategy Handbook” Chapter 4
 TH, Dec 1: Studying and framing your issue
 ▪ Reading assignment: Libby “The Lobbying Strategy Handbook”, Chapter 6
 ▪ **Fireside Chat: 5pm, Pollock Living Room (attend one this semester)**
F, Dec 2: Improving Civic Engagement Essay Due
- Week 14: T, Dec 6: Defining and Reaching Your Audience
 ▪ Reading assignment: Libby “The Lobbying Strategy Handbook,” Chapters 7 & 8
 TH, Dec 8: Summing Up Strategies of effective activism
 ▪ Reading assignment: Bobo, Kendall, and Max “Organizing for Social Change”
 Chapter 5
- Week 15: T, Dec 13: Test Review
 ▪ Reading assignment: Bring questions to the review session!
 TH, Dec 15: No Class – take second exam online
TH, Dec 15: Second Exam due by Midnight