

RHETORIC AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT
COMRT 360
Fall 2008
11:00-11:50am M, W, F Ruter 109

PROFESSOR: Vesta Silva
OFFICE: 104B Arter

EMAIL: vsilva@allegheny.edu
OFFICE PHONE: 332-4385

OFFICE HOURS: In Arter 104B: Mon, 9:00-10:30am. Tue, 11:00am-noon. Thu, 11:00am-noon.
Fri, 9:00-10:30am. And by appointment.
In the Learning Commons: Monday, 7:00-9:00pm

COURSE TEXTS & MATERIALS

Alexis de Tocqueville. *Democracy in America*.
Tim Jordan. *Activism!: Direct Action, Hacktivism and the Future of Society*
Course Readings Packet
Additional readings/materials as assigned

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The health and vibrancy of American democracy continues to be a source of anxiety for scholars, political pundits and politicians. Americans, the argument goes, continue to withdraw from civic life for an array of reasons resulting in the demise of democratic deliberative politics. In an effort to combat the erosion of civic life, American colleges and universities have placed increasing emphasis on incorporating civic engagement and service learning as part of a liberal arts curriculum. In doing so many colleges and universities claim they are returning to their original mission which was to prepare students for civic rather than professional lives. This course is designed to interrogate the discourses concerning demise of civic life and the role of colleges and universities in promoting civic virtue through a curriculum that emphasizes civic engagement.

This course is also part of an extraordinary four-course collaboration for Allegheny College's 2008-2009 Year of Health. Students in this course will work throughout the semester with a team composed of students from Environmental Science (FSENV 201), Geology (GEO 108), and Political Science (POLSCI 236) to study the central theme of water and environmental health and produce a practical community-focused project which embodies the ethic of civic engagement. Students in each course will be asked to participate in a joint field trip, attend common speakers and special events, complete a team project, and present your work at an evening dinner event.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To learn about various ways of defining citizenship, public opinion, and civic engagement.
2. To develop a greater understanding of the processes of participatory democracy and its critiques from a rhetorical perspective.
3. To gain a greater understanding of the complexity of public controversies and to learn how to take responsible action.
4. To participate cooperatively with diverse others in order to engage your community.
5. To engage critically with difficult and challenging texts.
6. To write and speak effectively in large and small group contexts.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Cooperative Civic Engagement Project (paper/project/presentation)	25%
Cultural Activism Project (paper/project/presentation)	25%
Civic Engagement Response Papers (2 @ 10% each)	20%
Lead Reading Discussion	10%
Participation and Class Activities	15%
Water Field Trip	5%

Detailed assignment sheets will be handed out in class for all major assignments.

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE

The success of this course, like any communication event, depends on mutual respect. Being respectful of others (of their spoken and written discourses) does not imply agreement or consent. It does, however, oblige all of us to take each other's arguments and beliefs seriously, as well as demanding that we be responsible for our choices in language. Any and all **responsible** positions are welcome.

No one should be made to feel unwelcome or uncomfortable for reasons of race, gender, religion, ethnicity, political affiliation, sexual orientation, or because their expressed position differs from your own. Please work to make our classroom a forum for responsible and considerate exchange. If you have concerns about the classroom environment, please speak to me after class, in my office, or via e-mail.

ATTENDANCE POLICY/LATE WORK

Attendance at all class sessions is expected and, in general, late work will not be accepted. Although there is no direct penalty for absences, failing to attend virtually all class periods will adversely affect the participation portion of a student's overall grade. Consistent lateness is a sign of disrespect for the course and your student colleagues and will not be tolerated.

Students are expected to make every effort to notify me in advance if they are going to miss class for any reason. In the case of Allegheny College excused activities, it is a student's responsibility to make arrangements with me prior to the absence. In the case of illness, students should notify me by email as soon as is practically possible.

Students are responsible ensuring that I receive assignments on time. If a student is absent the day an assignment is to be handed in, it is his/her responsibility to make arrangements to have it turned in to me on or before the day it is due. Except in extraordinary circumstances, **I will not accept assignments via email.** Missing a speech or presentation will generally result in a grade of **zero** for that assignment.

While technology has radically changed many parts of college life for the better, students should recognize that it can also pose serious threats to their ability to complete class assignments on time. It is a your responsibility to ensure that all computer files are properly saved, backed up, and that assignments are printed in advance of the class period in which they are due. Malfunctioning computer equipment will not be considered as a legitimate reason for failing to hand in an assignment on time.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

The quality of your participation in class discussions and activities will constitute a significant portion of your final grade for this course. While I understand that students can actively participate in class in a number of ways, thoughtful, timely verbal contributions to class discussion are an important factor in determining your overall participation grade. Your participation includes: 1) Your attentive

and active participation in all class activities; 2) Preparedness for class (all needed materials are brought, all minor assignments completed and ready, etc.); 3) Completion of all readings and readiness to offer thoughtful contributions to class discussion; 4) Active involvement in all small group work situations; and 5) A work ethic that demonstrates both concern for your own development and for the development of the skills of your classmates. Participation cannot be made-up. Grades for class participation will be determined as follows:

- A: These students attend all or virtually all class periods and make thoughtful contributions to discussions on a frequent basis. These students showcase careful preparation for each class, demonstrate a rigorous interaction with the readings, and offer insightful, well-reasoned, and critical commentary that advance discussions in productive ways for the entire class.
- B: These students attend all of virtually all class periods and make consistent contributions to class discussions. While these students may not speak up everyday, like the A student, they demonstrate that they have prepared for class, completed the readings, and make genuine efforts to productively advance class discussions and activities.
- C: These students miss several classes (for whatever reason) or make irregular contributions to class. This includes students who may be particularly active for short periods of time followed by periods of silence. If students miss several classes, to earn a C, it is expected that they make frequent contributions that productively advance class discussions. If students do not participate regularly it is expected that they are attending virtually every class and making at least some effort to participate in class activities.
- D/F: These students miss a number of class periods and/or make little effort to engage in class discussion or class activities.

ASSIGNMENT GRADING

Assignments for this course will be evaluated according to a standard A through F scale.

100-93 =A	76-73 =C
92-90 =A-	72-70 =C-
89-87 =B+	69-67 =D+
86-83 =B	66-60=D
82-80 =B-	59 and below=F
79-77 =C+	

The following is a brief sketch of what qualities correspond to each letter grade in this class.

- C's are average, it means you are doing the work; A C indicates that you met *all* of the criteria on a given assignment and have done adequate work. C's are not cause for alarm—they mean that you are doing okay.
- A grade in the B range shows that you have done more than what is required. It may mean that you have done extra research or exceptional analysis on an assignment or that you have produced a piece of discourse that is stylistically innovative, interesting, or creative.
- An A performance is a superior performance in this class. To get an A, your work illustrates that you are seeing and thinking beyond the surface level in your reading, writing, research, and speaking as well as show particular skill in composing your work. An A performance includes being consistently engaged in class activities, challenging your own assumptions, and being a critical consumer and creator of information.

- You will earn a D if you have not completely fulfilled the goals of an assignment or your finished product is poorly written or produced (including numerous typos, grammatical errors, or other structural problems).
- An F will be given in cases where a student's work completely fails to fulfill the required elements of an assignment, a student misses a performance, or produces an assignment that is so poorly constructed as to be largely incomprehensible.
- Students will receive a zero for failing to complete an assignment. Students who receive a zero will find it very difficult to successfully complete the course.

Students are ALWAYS encouraged to meet with me about assignments BEFORE the assignment is due. I am happy to provide feedback on ways to improve your work at any stage of the assignment process, but keep in mind, I am unlikely to change a grade earned on an assignment after the final version has been turned in. While I recognize that effort and ability play important roles in the production of finished work, ultimately it is the performance of the final product that will determine your grade on a given assignment. If you do have concerns about the grade you have earned on an assignment, you may contact me by phone, email or office hours so that we may discuss the issue.

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students should recognize that plagiarism includes **both** the intentional substitution of non-original work **and** the unintentional use of undocumented source material. Ignorance, accidents, or non-intent are not exceptions to these guidelines. It is crucial that if you have any concerns about documentation that you make them known prior to the due date of a particular assignment. As a general rule when in doubt about giving credit for an idea, concept, quotation, etc. you should cite it. Plagiarism or cheating in any form will warrant a zero on the assignment and may result in more serious penalties including an investigation by the Honor Committee and a hearing in front of the Academic Integrity Board.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you have a disability that may require modification of seating or class requirements, please arrange to speak with me as soon as possible so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

COURSE SCHEDULE

The following is a tentative schedule, subject to change depending on our needs.
Be sure to complete the readings listed for each day *before* that class session.

DATE	TOPIC	ASSIGNMENTS
Aug 29, F	Introduction	Rhetoric and Democracy
Sept 1, M	Defining the Public	Habermas "The Public Sphere"
Sept 3, W	Public Opinion & its Problems (Classic)	Lippman, "The World Outside and the Pictures in our Heads" from <i>Public Opinion</i>
Sept 5, F	Combining Lippman & Rhetoric	Roberts-Miller, "Democracy, Demagoguery, and Critical Rhetoric"
Sept 8, M	Course Collaboration: Water in Pennsylvania	MEET in QUIGLEY 101 (11:00-12:15) Watch: <i>Water: An Endangered Resource</i> Read: Gertner, "The Future is Drying Up"
Sept 10, W	Case Study: Thinking about the Scope of Water	Read: Water Controversies section of your Course Packet
Sept 12, F	Preparing for your Field Trip	Short Meeting (11:00-11:25)
SEPT 13, Saturday!!	Field Trip to Woodcock Dam	
Sept 14, Sunday	Michael Cohen water talk 6:00pm (details TBA)	
Sept 15, M	A Traditional Citizenship Solution to the Problems of Democracy	Ackerman & Fishkin, "The Holiday" from <i>Deliberation Day</i> *
Sept 17, W	A Rhetorical Solution to the Problems	Ivie, "Rhetorical Deliberation and Democratic Politics in the Here and Now" *
Sept 19, F	Civic Engagement, American Style	Tocqueville, <i>Democracy in America</i> . Pp. ix-xii, 220-227
Sept 22, M	American Style, Continued	Tocqueville, pp. 590-613 *
Sept 24, W	From Tocqueville to Today → Losing it???	Putnam, "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital" * Team Project Topic DUE (on Sakai)
Sept 26, F	Looking at the Data on American Engagement	Skocpol, "The Tocqueville Problem: Civic Engagement in American Democracy" *
Sept 29, M	Rediscovering Engagement (A progressive citizen model)	Loeb, <i>Soul of a Citizen</i> , Chapter 1 *
Oct 1, W	Rediscovering Engagement, continued	Loeb, <i>Soul of a Citizen</i> , Chapter 3 *

Oct 3, F	From Engagement to Activism (A social justice model?)	Jordan, Chapter 1
Oct 6th, M	Transgression and Political Action	Jordan, Chapter 2 *
Oct 8, W	Course Collaboration	MEET in Carr 200
Oct 10, F	Taking it to the Streets	Jordan, Chapter 3 * Civic Engagement Response Paper DUE
Oct 13, M	Fall Break	
Oct 15, W	Culture Jamming	Jordan Chapter 5 *
Oct 16, Thu	John Sutphen Presentation	Location and time TBA
Oct 17, F	Tricking Culture	Harold, “Pranking Rhetoric: ‘Culture Jamming’ as Media Activism” *
Oct 20, M	Civic Dangers of Branding	Watch: <i>No Logo</i>
Oct 22, W	Pleasure Politics	Jordan Chapter 4 *
Oct 24, F	The Dangers of Pleasure Politics → Consumers, not citizens	Watch: <i>The Merchants of Cool</i>
Oct 27, M	The Harm of Media?: Television	Hart, “Easy Citizenship: Television’s Curious Legacy” *
Oct 29, W	Course Collaboration	MEET in Carr 200
Oct 31, F	The Harm of Media?: Internet	Sunstein <i>Republic.com 2.0</i> pp. 1-10, 19-45 *
Nov 3, M	No Harm from Media?	Seong-Jae Min, “Online vs. Face-to-Face Deliberation: Effects on Civic Engagement” *
Nov 5, W	Media actually helps Democracy	Papacharissi, “Democracy online: Civility, Politeness, and the Democratic Potential of Online Political Discussion Groups”
Nov 7, F	Community-based media as activism and resistance	Guest Lecture
Nov 10, M	Cultural Activism Presentation	
Nov 12, W	Cultural Activism Presentation	
Nov 14, F	Cultural Activism Presentation	
Nov 17, M	Citizenship and Education	Kymlicka, “Citizenship and Education” * Team Project Report DUE
Nov 19, W	Citizenship and Education, Continued	Citizenship activity
Nov 21, F	Mission of the University: Creating Citizens	Sax, “Citizenship Development and the American College Student” *

Nov 24, M	What is the Relation Between Higher Education and Society?	Kezar, "Obtaining Integrity? Reviewing and Examining the Charter Between Higher Education and Society"*
Dec 1, M	A Case for Teaching Civic Engagement	Brisbin Jr, & Hunter, "Community Leaders' Perceptions of University and College Efforts to Encourage Civic Engagement" *
Dec 2, TUE	Team Project Presentations & Dinner	5:00pm-9:00pm (location TBA)
Dec 3, W	Limits of Teaching Civic Engagement	Butin, "The Limits of Service-Learning in Higher Education" *
Dec 5, F	Limits of Teaching Civic Engagement Continued	Bickford & Reynolds, "Reframing Volunteerism as Acts of Dissent" *
Dec 8, M	Thinking about Your Own Civic Engagement	In class presentations
Dec 10, W	Your Civic Engagement, Cont.	In class presentations Civic Engagement Response Paper DUE

* These days are available for student directed discussion