**Issues in Civic Engagement**

Instructor: Chrys Margaritidis, Dean of Students, margaritidisc@ceu.edu

Department: School of Public Policy

Central European University

Course Status: Elective, 2 credits.

Office hours: QS Campus, room CD211. Regular office hours: Mon.15.00-17.00, by appointment

**Course Description**

Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.[[1]](#footnote-1) This course provides a forum for discussing a selection of topics on civic engagement through mainly contemporary literature. Topics discussed are the relationship between civic engagement and civil society, UN’s stance on civic engagement, transnational advocacy, youth engagement, ethical issues in civic engagement and contemporary challenges. This will be an interactive course requiring students to labor with the readings by answering questions posed online. Students are also asked to relate readings to their experience from their own communities in the form of thinking of ways they can help their community. Finally, a critical part of the course requires students to work with a local organization to create a project proposal for the needs of the organization and the local community.

**Learning outcomes**

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

* Understand core notions of citizenship and their connection to civic engagement.
* Develop the capacity to think critically about the context, impacts, challenges and opportunities of civic engagement activities, including those in which students lead or participate.
* Understand the contexts civic engagement takes place in - at different levels (local, national, global) and between/across state and non-state organizations/ groups, as well as in countries with different levels of political, socioeconomic development and diversities of population.
* Develop an understanding of the ethical implications of civic engagement activities, particularly for students engaged in civic engagement activities.
* Be able to prepare a project proposal for a local civic engagement project.

**Requirements**

Regular attendance, carefully completing the assigned readings before class, and active participation in seminar discussions and online will be expected. The instructors will regularly pose questions at the e-learning site and ask students for their feedback and views. Participation in the online forum will count towards the overall grade. In addition, there will be the following assignments:

1. *An in-class presentation*. Each (team of) students will give a 20-minute presentation on a selected topic. The presentation should include a brief exposition of the logic of an important argument from, or related to, the readings, and raise questions and potential criticisms for discussion. Students should prepare a power-point presentation. Please see below for more details.

2. *A Capstone Project*. Students will work in small groups with the local organizations in Vienna to create a project proposal that would address the organization’s need with the potential to bring positive change in the local community in Vienna. Submission deadline: April 4, 2021.

3. *Response papers:* Students will provide short response papers (500 words) to two selected themes:

a. “What it means to be a good citizen in …” and b. “Describe a contemporary or historical success story of civic engagement”

**Assessment**

20% class and online participation, 20% in-class presentation, 20% response papers, 40% capstone project proposal and presentation

**Grading criteria for the presentations**

A blank “Presentation Score Sheet” listing the evaluation criteria according to which presentations will be assessed can be downloaded from the course web site. It is most important that in-class presentations do not merely reproduce the readings: to earn at least a B+ grade, they must offer significant clarifications, raise important questions, and/or add the presenter’s own well-grounded opinions and arguments. Presentations will otherwise be assessed primarily according to their clarity, focus, soundness of arguments, and helpfulness in understanding the topic. Excessively long or rushed presentations (exempting time taken for questions or other interruptions) will be marked down 1/3 of a grade. Participation in the rest of the seminar will count equally with the presentation, and will be graded according to attendance, preparation, attention to others, and quality of contributions in class throughout the term.

**Grading criteria for the written assignments**

To earn a B+, the written assignment must clearly and concisely address the agreed question, must be written in good academic English. Insofar as these are relevant, the paper must demonstrate a solid understanding of the arguments from readings in the course as well as in-class presentations and discussions. Important principles and concepts should be clearly explained. The views of others should, where necessary, be charitably, clearly and succinctly reconstructed, and properly cited. The paper must show that you have analyzed and independently organized the material yourself in response to the question, rather than simply following the organization of in-class presentations or parts of the literature. To earn an A-, the assignment must demonstrate all the above plus evidence of genuine progress as a result of your own independent thinking, such as your own substantive evaluation and critique of the validity and soundness of the arguments of others, or your own original positive argument. If there are any problems with the exposition or arguments in the paper, these will be minor. Any obvious objections to your argument will have been anticipated and answered. Papers that earn an A will demonstrate all the above virtues, to the extent that they are nearly flawless in writing style, organization, exposition and soundness of arguments. While remaining entirely relevant to the question, such a paper will be ambitious in scope and will demonstrate an exceptional degree of understanding and insight into the topic.

**Course Schedule and Readings**

The schedule is not set in stone but is subject to change for pedagogical reasons as the course progresses! The course web site always includes the latest information.

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| Session 1, Jan. 20 | **Introduction**   * What is civic engagement? * Course goals, requirements, project proposal * Richard Taylor, Concepts of Citizenship in the Context of Political Education |
| Session 2, Jan. 27 | **Civic Engagement and Civil Society**   * Russell Dalton, Citizenship Norms and the Expansion of Political Participation * Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, vol. 2, part 2 chs 4-5   **Basics of Project Proposal** |
| Session 3, Feb. 3 | **Civic Engagement and Civil Society (cont.)**   * Robert Putnam, Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community * Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne, “Educating the “Good” Citizen: Political Choices and Pedagogical Goals,” PS, April 2004   **Organization Presentation** |
| Session 4, Feb. 10 | **UN Rights and Goals**   * Ulleberg: The Role and Impact of NGOs in Capacity Development (UN Report) * UN Sustainable Development Goals, 2015-2030, * **Organization Presentation** |
| Session 5, Feb. 17 | **Transnational Advocacy**   * Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, Transnational Advocacy in International and Regional Politics, http://courses.washington.edu/pbaf531/KeckSikkink.pdf. * Keck Sikkink Activists Beyond Borders on Footbinding and Women’s Voting (pp. 51-66)   **Organization Presentation** |
| Session 6, Feb. 24  Session 7, Mar. 3 | **Movie and Discussion: College Behind Bars, Mapping Project due**  **Youth Engagement**   * S. Sugita, Arab Youth: Civic Engagement and Economic Participation, UNESCO, <http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Beirut/pdf/YCE%20_EN.pdf>, pp. 7-23 (youth) * Global Youth Index and Report, Chapter 3, Youth and Public Participation, <http://cmydiprod.uksouth.cloudapp.azure.com/sites/default/files/2016-10/2016%20Global%20Youth%20Development%20Index%20and%20Report.pdf> * Cabrera, Matias and Montoya, “Activism or Slacktivism? The Potential and Pitfalls of Social Media in Contemporary Student Activism   **Organization Presentation** |
| Session 8, Mar. 10 | **Ethical Issues**   * Atlee, T., Buckley, S., Godec, J., Harris, R.-A., Heierbacher, S., Nurse, L., et al. (2009). Core principles for public engagement. National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation * Department of Sustainability and Environment. (2005). Effective Engagement: building relationships with community and other stakeholders. Book 1: An introduction to engagement. East Melbourne: Victorian Government Department of Sustainability and Environment   **Organization Presentation** |
| Session 9, Mar. 17 | **Contemporary Challenges**   * Julia Kreienkamp, “Responding to the Global Crackdown on Civil Society,” https://www.ucl.ac.uk/global-governance/sites/global-governance/files/policy-brief-civil-society.pdf ( pp. 1-12) * IDR Report: Addressing Civil Society’s Challenges: Support Organizations as Emerging Institutions   **Organization Presentation** |
| Session 10, Mar. 31 | **Capstone Project Presentations** |

1. Civic Responsibility and Higher Education, edited by Thomas Ehrlich, published by Oryx Press, 2000, p.vi [↑](#footnote-ref-1)