

POLS 4645E: Applied Civic Engagement Syllabus

University of Georgia
Summer 2026, Thru Session

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Virtual office hours

Email me at any time Monday – Friday. I will aim to respond no later than 24 hours after the first contact and probably much sooner than that. Do not email through eLC. Please use my email address noted above. If you email after 5pm, I probably won't respond until morning.

Course description

Through online and experiential service-learning, students explore definitions of civic engagement as it relates to democratic citizenship and its historical context, identify and demonstrate methods of civic engagement that encourage civic life individually and within a community, and understand limits of engagement in society.

Technical requirements for the course

Having regular access to the Internet is necessary for completing course assignments. Reliable Internet service is also important because quizzes will be time sensitive. You will also need access to a computer where you can engage with course content like videos or podcasts.

Course objectives

Students will:

- Participate in experiential service-learning throughout the course.
- Develop working knowledge of civic engagement scholarship as it relates to political science and other related fields.
- Recognize, reflect on, and analyze personal values, experiences and potential for becoming civically and politically engaged.
- Demonstrate methods of civic engagement individually and in community.
- Identify engagement opportunities with a particular issue and relate local, national, and global social policy to the issue.
- Relate personal academic interests with civic interests, and plan steps to pursue these interests simultaneously.

Course texts

¹ Instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus as needed.

You are required to gain access to the book listed below.

- Zukin, et al, *A New Engagement*, 2006

All other assigned readings will be made available to you via eLearning Commons.

Learning Activities

Throughout the course, students should participate in the following learning activities: reading the text, viewing and interacting with the weekly outline, responding to discussion posts by professor and peers, completing exams, and engaging in their communities through activity and reflection.

These activities will be graded and should be completed by the due date listed on the syllabus and on the eLC calendar.

Assignments and grading

Online class discussion & reflection (10%)

The instructor will post two sets of discussion questions every week. One set will relate to the week's readings. Another set will ask students to reflect on how their personal civic engagement relates to the course material. Responding to the questions will help you understand the readings, prepare for the quizzes, and provide an opportunity for you to get to know your classmates and learn about their civic engagement experiences.

Online midterm exams (2 exams, 20% each, 40% total)

There will be two exams during the semester, taken through eLC. The exams will be timed and include a mix of different questions formats.

The exams are open book/notes. This means, students can reference the assigned books/readings for our class and their personal notes and outlines. This does not mean: communicating with a friend about their notes, using notes through shared documents, and/or Googling (which doesn't usually work out well).

Applied civic engagement portfolio (50%)

This is the applied part of the course, where students practice being civically engaged in an intentional way and document their experiences. Students will devote a significant amount of time to civic/political engagement over the course of the semester. This is your experiential learning requirement.

The portfolio includes:

- Civic/political engagement hours (10%): Participate in at least 10 hours of civic/political engagement with one or more civic/political organizations to be completed over the course of the semester.
- Public meeting report (10%): Attend and report on a public meeting (occurring during span of the course). You will virtually attend this public meeting for your selected municipality.
- Letter to an elected leader or community leader (10%): Students should write a one-page, focused letter/email to a mayor/commissioner/local leader about the most pressing need, as you see it, in your community.
- Write a final civic engagement report (20%): The student will summarize, analyze and reflect on the civic engagement experience. They will also integrate course readings.

This seems like a good place to remind students of the University of Georgia's **Academic Honesty Policy**: (<https://ovpi.uga.edu/academic-honesty/academic-honesty-policy>). If a student is dishonest in reporting their applied civic engagement, the student will fail the course. Please be clear and upfront about your engagement. If you run into any issues with obtaining documentation, reach out to your instructor ASAP.

Administrative Items

Missed deadlines

Assignments are due by 11:59pm on the date noted on the syllabus, unless otherwise stated. If you have a conflict with a due date, please come talk to me about it as soon as you know about it. This way we can work something out and your grade may not suffer. If you have an emergency conflict (i.e. personal, family or medical emergencies), you should e-mail me within two days of the missed due date to discuss the timely completion of the assignment. Documentation is required for make-up exams. If you miss a deadline for a non-emergency, most assignments can still be completed and will be accepted for up to a week—but they will be penalized a letter grade for every additional day late.

UGA Culture of Honesty policy

The policy is in place to encourage academic honesty among students, faculty and other members of the university community. You and I are responsible for knowing and complying with the policy and procedures. Academic dishonesty includes plagiarism,

cheating and much more. It's in your best interest to understand what constitutes dishonest work, as defined by the University.

Please carefully review the policy in its entirety here: <https://ovpi.uga.edu/academic-honesty/academic-honesty-policy>

Online Learning Environment

UGA eLC will host this course. You will need to check eLC at least a few times per week to be successful in the course. If you run into any problems with eLC, please contact the EITS Help Desk:

- 706-542-3106 (8am to 10pm M-Th, 8am to 6pm F, 1pm to 7pm Sat & Sun)
- helpdesk@uga.edu
- Submit a request for support at <http://www.eits.uga.edu/request>
- Chat with a representative from the Help Desk (8am to 5pm M-F), <https://confluence.eits.uga.edu/display/HDSH/Help+Desk+Support+%28HDS%29+Home>

Agreement

As an enrolled student in this course, you are agreeing to the policies listed above and to doing good, honest work. You are also agreeing to work with Dr. Bramlett to have a positive course outcome and learn about civic engagement through course assignments and experiences.

Students agree to not collaborate on exams. Any student caught cheating will fail the course, and academic dishonesty will be reported to the University. Exams will be open book but they will be timed. Students should be prepared to complete the exam in the time allotted.

Please stay in touch throughout the course. We will move quickly, so you should stay up to date on your assignments and communicate with Dr. Bramlett if a conflict arises.

Please indicate that you agree with these statements during the first week of class.

Course Outline and Schedule

What is civic engagement? What are the main ideas associated with civic engagement?

Week 1. Thursday, June 4 – Friday, June 12

- Readings
 - *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in America* By Sidney Verba, Kay Schlozman, Henry Brady
 - Chapter 1
 - Chapter 2
 - *Civic Engagement in Higher Education* By Barbara Jacoby et al, Chapter 1 "Civic Engagement in Today's Higher Education"
- Due Friday, June 12
 - Email instructor, indicating agreement to terms stated in syllabus
 - Submit discussion responses for the week

Week 2. Monday, June 15 – Thursday, June 18 (Holiday: Friday, June 19)

- Readings
 - *A New Engagement?* By Zukin et al
 - Chapter 1 "Introduction"
 - Chapter 3 "Engagement in Public Life"
 - "National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement: Campus Report, Student Voting Rates for University of Georgia"
 - "Youth Voting Rose in 2018 Despite Concerns over the State of American Democracy" by CIRCLE
 - <https://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/youth-voting-rose-2018-despite-concerns-about-american-democracy>
- Due Thursday, June 19
 - Submit civic engagement portfolio plan
 - Submit discussion responses for the week

Why civic engagement?

Week 3. Monday, June 22 – Friday, June 26

- Readings
 - *Democracy in America* By Alexis de'Tocqueville
 - Volume 1, Part 2, Chapter 6
 - Volume 2, Part 2, Chapter 5
 - *Bowling Alone*, Chapter 16 in "Introduction" to Section Four, "So What?"
 - "Political Outreach to Youth Effective in 2018 Midterms, But Many Still Left Out" by CIRCLE
 - <http://circle.tufts.edu/latest-research/political-outreach-youth-was-effective-2018-midterms>

- Due Friday, June 26
 - Take exam 1
 - Submit discussion responses for the week

What is the historical context of democratic citizenship in the United States, and how do different notions of democracy influence ideas of engagement?

Week 4. Monday, June 29 – Thursday, July 2 (Holiday: Friday, July 3)

- Readings
 - *Bowling Alone* By Robert Putnam
 - Chapter 1 "Thinking about Social Change in America"
 - Chapter 15 "What Killed Civic Engagement? Summing Up"
 - *A New Engagement?* By Zukin et al Chapter 2 "Coming of Age in a Post-Boomer World"
- Due Thursday, July 2
 - Submit public meeting report
 - Submit discussion responses for the week

Week 5. Monday, July 6 – Friday, July 10

- Readings
 - *A More Perfect Constitution* By Larry Sabato, Chapter 5 "A Citizenship of Service: Asking What We can do for Our Country...and Ourselves"
 - *Bowling Alone* By Robert Putnam, Chapter 23 "Lessons of History: The Gilded Age and the Progressive Era"
- Due Friday, July 10
 - Submit letter to elected official
 - Submit discussion responses for the week

Week 6. Monday, July 13 – Friday, July 17

- Readings
 - *What Americans Know about Politics and Why it Matters* By Michael X. Delli Carpini, Chapter 1 "From Democratic Theory to Democratic Practice: The Case for an Informed Citizenry"

- *A New Engagement?* By Zukin et al, Chapter 6 "Where Do Young People Stand Politically?"
- *The Politics of Millennials: Political Beliefs and Policy Preferences of America's Most Diverse Generation* By Stella Rouse and Ashley Ross, Chapter 9 "A Force in Waiting? Millennials and Political Engagement"
- Due Friday, July 17
 - Submit discussion responses for the week

What are the limits to engagement?

Week 7. Monday, July 20 – Friday, July 24

- Readings
 - *America: The Owner's Manual*, 2016 By Bob Graham and Chris Hand, Prologue, "Green Tea"
 - *The Turnout Gap*, By Bernard Fraga, Introduction
 - *Fragmented Democracy: Medicaid, Federalism, and Unequal Politics* By Jamila Michener, Chapter 1 "Medicaid, Political Life, and Fragmented Democracy"
- Due Friday, July 24
 - Submit documentation for civic engagement hours
 - Submit final civic engagement report
 - Submit discussion responses for the week

Week 8. Monday, July 27 – Wednesday, July 29 (last day of class)

- Readings
 - *Bowling Alone* By Robert Putnam, Chapter 24 "Toward an Agenda for Social Capitalists"
 - *A New Engagement?* By Zukin et al, Chapter 7, "Civic Engagement, Political Engagement, and Generational Change"
- Due Wednesday, July 29
 - Submit your discussion responses for the week
- Due Thursday, July 30
 - Take exam 2