

Public Service 1000: Democratic Citizenship

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Subject/Discipline: [Political Science](#)

School: [University of Pittsburgh](#)

Project Area: Literacy/Tutoring

Spring 2006

PUB SRV 1000: Democratic Citizenship

Spring 2006, 5405 WWPH

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Sowda asked me if I would go back with her in a few years to visit her refugee camp. She said that if an American goes with her she will not get stuck there. She will not have to stay. I hadn't realized the power she felt that I possessed until that moment. My Americanism made me able to stand up to her country and my own government, in her mind. I had always thought that the Somalis would appreciate coming to the United States because of the safety we are able to offer them, I had not thought of their views specifically on us, its citizens.

- University of Pittsburgh Undergraduate, 2005

Overview

The quotation above indicates many of the themes central to this course: What is citizenship? Who may hold citizenship? Who does it exclude? What power(s) does it confer? How does it define 'us' and 'them'? How does it relate to and interact with worldviews and identities? How does it help us understand the good and the good life? Finally, and most importantly, how may our work and lives relate to this good life?

The course reflects an integrated approach to understanding. It is integrated in that it is interdisciplinary in terms of the texts upon which it draws and in that, as a service-learning course, it recognizes information gained through community interactions with professionals and non-professionals alike. It recognizes, in other words, that a local elementary-age refugee may have much to say about international migration, belonging, and citizenship. It also recognizes that these concepts are hotly contested in the academic literature, and therefore an attempt is made to draw upon diverse disciplinary sources of divergent political persuasions.

The service experience in this course – each student is tutoring a Somali refugee child for an average of eight hours per week – is significant, but it does not mean that the academic focus will only or exclusively be upon the Somali community in Pittsburgh. The course, in fact, is as much about students' perspective and experience of citizenship and community as it is about those concepts in the context of globalization and, also importantly, from the perspective of local Somali refugees.

Objectives

Student learning goals:

- Develop an understanding of citizenship as an approach to the public good.
- Develop an understanding of how contemporary citizenship policy affects people who, by choice or otherwise, migrate.
- Develop an understanding of basic research methods and their public application.

Evaluation

Midterm	15%	75pts
Final	20%	
100pts		
Community Agency Presentation 1	15%	
75pts		
Final Project/ Community Agency Presentation 2	15%	
75pts		
Service-Learning Presentation (between Feb. 20 and Spring Break)	5%	25pts
Discussion Board Entries (5 entries, each worth 25 points)		25%
125pts		
Class Participation	5%	
25pts		

Methodology

This course is explicitly a service-learning course. Such courses integrate academics with service and reflection to make analysis of theoretical content deeper and more meaningful. Several assumptions are integral to this teaching approach. The following selection includes those assumptions most meaningful to me.

First, students must be engaged members of the learning community. More so than in other courses students consciously commit to active learning. Because individual experiences and deliberative dialogue are central to the course, each student must continuously choose to attend and participate in every class.

Second, students must recognize the learning that takes place outside of the classroom and away from papers and texts. The issues raised in service-learning courses have multiple manifestations in the community. Of course interesting lessons may be gleaned from your service experience, but they may also develop through interaction with community members on the bus, on the sidewalk, or anywhere. Recognize that learning may take place anywhere and conduct yourself with appropriate alertness. Learning experiences may be integrated with your journaling or introduced in class.

Third, individual experiences and beliefs matter. Recognizing the learning that occurs through discussion with others and through experience is one of the key areas in which service-learning differs with the traditional educational model. At times, students long for 'the answer' from 'the authority' but this educational approach explicitly recognizes that there are diverse perspectives on every subject and experience. In that recognition

service-learning is an inherently democratic pedagogy. While I may introduce popular academic perspectives, students are urged to challenge those conceptions with information from their own experiences or perceptions.

Fourth, assumptions must be critiqued. This point may seem to contradict the previous assertion, but I see it as complementary. Subjecting beliefs and interpretations of experience to critical analysis makes them more meaningful and intellectually rigorous. Engaged education should cultivate a capacity for critical distance – the ability to critically analyze oneself and one’s traditions. All ideas – especially those put forward by the instructor – explored in the course should be subject to a serious critique.

Fifth, there is ‘a good’ worth seeking and celebrating. In line with the last assertion, this assumption should be critically analyzed as well, and I welcome that. Yet I do want to make clear that, despite analyzing many cogent arguments to the contrary, I remain convinced that efforts to do good and improve lives are important and meaningful. Being constantly critical of this possibility, however, remains essential, as human history is peppered with examples of the efforts of do-gooders gone awry. Nonetheless, let this be the first (and not the last) time I congratulate you on making a conscious decision to be part of something greater than yourself. The more people engaged in this consciously critical effort to improve the human experience the better. I look forward to working with you.

The Journal/ Discussion Board

Journaling is central to the service-learning experience. Good journaling integrates analysis of experience, attitudes, behavior, course content, and associated comprehensive questions. At the end of the semester, your journal should comprehensively represent your intellectual and experiential progress. If I ask a question at the end of one of your journal entries, you should respond thoroughly in the next entry. The journal is an interactive portion of the course, where you have the opportunity to carefully represent your thoughts. It differs from the reflective discussion we have in class because you have a distinct opportunity to cogently and methodically present your particular position.

At most basic, the journal provides a venue to record, sort, and hopefully analyze your service **experience**. Probe your experience by forcing yourself to think about how experience differed from expectations. You may go deeper by recording ways in which the service experience has changed your **attitudes**, or how your attitudes have been fortified. As you write it is good practice to continuously wonder and explain “**WHY?**” – even for assertions you feel border on obvious.

If you do experience a shift in your attitudes it may correspond with a shift in **behavior**. Recognizing how the service-learning experience does or does not affect your behavior is powerful, because it is probably one of the most reliable indicators of whether any attitudinal shift is actually meaningful. Recording why you did not change any behaviors is also interesting because, either way, analyzing behavior speaks to how your personal priorities interface with your public participation and experience.

Integrating **course content** with your reflective journaling demonstrates that you are participating as an active learner in a continuous learning experience. Considering course concepts in the context of journaling about community interaction and service experiences provides an opportunity to affirm or reject widely accepted academic concepts in the face of applied experience. You may suggest, for example, that rapid changes in technology have affected human interaction to the extent that old paradigms for interpreting community are no longer useful. Alternatively, you may recognize a particular course concept or skill as useful for your efforts in the community.

Service-learning experiences provide opportunity to interact very locally, but almost inevitably local experiences are strongly influenced by broad **comprehensive issues**. Often this refers to political questions, such as how policies are made, who influences the process, or how a particular policy affects a given community. These questions are crucial to think about in the context of service because, in the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "Philanthropy is commendable, but it must not cause the philanthropist to overlook the circumstances of economic injustice which make philanthropy necessary." A challenge throughout service-learning experiences is figuring out how to balance the comprehensive and local issues and needs. The first step in meeting that challenge is critically thinking through the comprehensive – local relationship in your journal.

Many students worry about how journal grades are assigned. Fundamental to journal writing is full participation. Carefully record your experiences, attitudes, behaviors, interaction with course content, and exploration of comprehensive questions. Respond thoroughly to questions you receive for your journal entries throughout the semester. It is absolutely crucial that you respond to inquiries I have about your entries. At the end of the semester your journal should clearly demonstrate a series of related reflective writings and critical responses to my comments. Advice for journal writing then is similar to advice for success in the course: participate fully, be responsive, and be thorough.

Discussion Board Entries

The description of good journal entries above should aid you in your discussion board essays, which should be between two and three double-spaced pages. Discussion board entries will be graded according to (1) the extent to which concepts from the reading are understood and communicated (10 points), (2) the extent to which relevant course discussion, personal beliefs, and service experiences are integrated (10 points), and (3) grammar, spelling, composition, and cogency of argument (5 points).

Democratic Discourse

Structured disagreement has an important place in any democratic setting. This course is on democratic citizenship, and the assumption in course discussion and discussion board entries is that you will conduct yourself in a manner that respects your classmates as citizens. This suggests you will recognize their right to hold opinions that differ from your own, as well as their right to attempt to persuade you regarding their position. They will owe you the same courtesy.

Democratic discourse expects participation from all perspectives, arguments based upon

evidence (which itself may run the gamut from empirical studies to individual perceptions), and a commitment to continued dialogue. The loudest voice or most incessantly insistent arguer does not necessarily bring the most compelling case. Students from all political perspectives and ideological persuasions should feel comfortable sharing their views in this course. Political attitudes are not graded. Class participation and competency with course content is.

Ad hominem attacks, or attacks at the person, are not a productive part of discourse and will not be tolerated.

Tardiness, Absenteeism, and Late work

Excessive repeated tardiness and absenteeism will be reflected in a drop in the course participation portion of the grade. All assignments must be submitted by the due date indicated in the syllabus. Late work will be reduced one letter grade for each day that it is late.

Service Component

The service component of this course is essential to understanding many of the concepts reviewed and discussed. Grades are not given for service outright but, like reading a textbook, the experience is absolutely necessary to digest the concepts completely. Students are expected to conduct themselves professionally and responsibly in the community. Specific training and orientation for the service component will take place, however, some rules and regulations are worth restating here.

- Always use your common sense in all service settings. If you have concerns notify the instructor and on-site service coordinator right away.
- Travel and walk in unfamiliar communities with at least one partner.
- The university and this program do not endorse taking clients anywhere in your own vehicle, or paying for any of their goods or services.
- Never enter unfamiliar homes or settings without at least one partner, and make sure someone else is aware of your destination and expected return time.
- Again, always use your common sense in all service settings. If you have concerns notify the instructor and on-site service coordinator right away.

Course Materials

- Rimmerman, Craig (2001) *The New Citizenship* (available in the bookstore)
- Numerous additional reading materials available online through the course webpage and associated links, as well as the library e-reserves system.

Course Schedule

WEEK 1 Introduction, syllabus, democracy, citizenship, service

Reading Assignments:

- “Civil Religion in America,” Robert N. Bellah (1967)
http://hrr.hartsem.edu/Bellah/articles_5.htm
- Rimmerman, p 1 - 28

Group 1 Discussion Board, Due Jan. 16 by 12:00 noon:

Based on your notes from class, your readings, and your current experiences, how does faith relate to US citizenship? How do you believe it should relate?

WEEK 2 Ideology, liberalism, nation, state, identity, other, service

Reading Assignments

- Harry Boyte and Nancy C. Kari, “The Roosevelt Memorial and the Problem with Liberalism”
<http://www.publicwork.org/pdf/workingpapers/the%20roosevelt%20memorial.pdf>
- Rimmerman, p29 -77
- Robert Putnam’s Bowling Alone (article)
- Peter L. Berger and Richard John Neuhaus, “Mediating Structures and the Dilemmas of the Welfare State”

Group 2 Discussion Board, Due Jan 23 by 12:00 noon:

Choose and respond to one of group one’s essays. Critique the argument and add to it as you see appropriate.

WEEK 3 Rights, responsibilities, participation, civil society

Reading Assignments

- Education for Democracy, Interview with Deborah Meier:
<http://www.publicwork.org/pdf/interviews/meier.pdf>,
- Lorde’s “Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference,” and
- Steele’s “I’m Black, You’re White, Who’s Innocent?”
- Kayla Meltzer Drogosz, “Citizenship without Politics? A Critique of Pure Service” http://www.ncl.org/publications/ncr/92-4/03_NCR92_4drogosz.pdf
- Dan Coats, Gertrude Himmelfarb, Don Eberly, and David Boaz, “Can Congress Revive Civil Society?”

Group 1 Discussion Board, Due Jan 30 by 12:00 noon

In light of your service experiences, other experiences, articles and course discussion, what is civil society and how does it affect community cohesion? What are some of the concept’s strengths and weaknesses?

WEEK 4 Americans hate democracy? Dangers of democratic classrooms?

Reading Assignments

Group 2 Discussion Board, Due February 6 by 12:00 noon:

Choose and respond to one of group one's essays. Critique the argument and add to it as you see appropriate, paying particular attention to whether – given the argument to which you respond – US citizenship-building policy makes sense.

Reading Assignments

- Bellah, et. al., *Habits of the Heart* (excerpt)
- David E. Shi, "The Searchers After the Simple Life"
- Boyte, "On Silences and Civic Muscle"
<http://www.publicwork.org/pdf/workingpapers/Silences%20and%20Civic%20Muscle.pdf>

WEEK 5 Vocation, Community

Reading Assignments

- PRC Press Page (all articles) <http://www.pittsburghrefugeecenter.org/news.htm>

WEEK 6 Visit from Community Representatives

Reading Assignment:

- Jonathan Crane (1998) *Social Programs that Work* Chapter 1, p1-42 (library e-reserves)
- University of Pittsburgh's Actions and Aspirations in Respect to Service-Learning

WEEK 7 Research Design, Effort for this Course, Teams

Assignment:

- Make appointment time with designated agency

WEEK 8 Test 1 – multiple choice, short answer, essay

Reading Assignments:

- “Renewing the Democratic Spirit in American Colleges and Universities: Education as Public Work” Boyte and Kari, <http://www.publicwork.org/pdf/workingpapers/renewing.pdf>
- Wendell Berry’s University Excerpt
- Rimmerman, p. 81 – 125

Group 2 Discussion Board, Due March 13 by 12:00 noon:

How does this service-learning experience relate to your goals, the university goals, and what you think are appropriate university goals in light of the readings?

WEEK 9 Schools, Universities, and Citizenship

Reading Assignments:

- “What the Culture Debate Needs is More Dirt, Less Pure Stupidity,” Salman Rushdie 12/20/05 *The Times Online* <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,1072-1918306,00.html>
- “The Case for Contamination” Kwame Anthony Appiah 1/1/06 *The New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/01/magazine/01cosmopolitan.html>

Group 1 Discussion Board, Due March 20 by 12:00 noon:

Choose and respond to one of group two’s essays. Critique the argument and add to it as you see appropriate.

WEEK 10 Globalization, Migration, and Citizenship

Reading Assignment:

- Read Chapter 9: Social Work Practice with Immigrants and Refugees in Lum, Doman (Ed.) Cultural Competence, Practice Stages, and Client Systems (library e-reserve)

Group 2 Discussion Board, Due March 27 by 12:00 noon:

Critique Rushdie and Appiah’s arguments. How do these arguments relate to the local Somali population and your experiences with them? Are the arguments relevant and applicable?

WEEK 11 Multicultural Community Membership, US Citizenship Policy

Reading Assignments:

- Border Issues
- Huntington

Group 1 Discussion Board, due April 3 by 12:00 noon:

Choose and respond to one of group two's essays. Critique the argument and add to it as you see appropriate.

WEEK 12 Presentations on Research to Date, Plan to Move Forward

WEEK 13 Research Development, Information-Sharing Plans, Review

WEEK 14 Multiple choice portion of exam 2 in class; final essays distributed in class, due by April 25 at 3:25.

WEEK 15 Finals Week: Final Due by End of Class

Service-Learning Presentation Guidelines

In Democratic Citizenship, spring 2005, we discussed the ideal focus and important components of a good presentation. This paper recalls that conversation and focuses accordingly. The presentation should:

- Be about the tutoring effort and courses; your experiences with each and opportunities for next year.
- Explicitly encourage others to take part and spread the word; every family will or will not have tutors next year based on recruitment this year!
- Be made to at least 12 people per person presenting (i.e. if you present with a partner you should have an audience of at least 24).
- Be between 5 and 10 minutes long, depending upon audience and setting.

Please remember:

- A sign-up sheet for people who would like to receive emails about this effort.
- Mention of all partners: Greater Pittsburgh Literacy Council, AmeriCorps, and the Public Service Program.
- Email workforgood@gmail.com for more information.
- Be prepared to say you don't know on topics outside of the presentation's main focus; it's important not to overstate or misrepresent our knowledge on the Somalis' history or situation.
- Confidentiality.

Grading Criteria: You must find a group to which you can present and let me know your presentation place and time. I may or may not attend. The evaluations below should be distributed to two people in the audience and completed by you. They will be considered as part of your grade and should be returned to me in the following class. Each of you must send me your presentation outline and handouts.

Presenter Name(s):

Evaluation

Creativity _____/5

Clarity _____/15

Compelling _____/5

Audience:

Date:

Completed by: _____ Audience Member _____ Presenter

Did you receive handouts? Y N

Were visual aids used and helpful? Y N

Was the presentation professional? Y N

Presenter Name(s):

Evaluation

Creativity _____/5

Clarity _____/15

Compelling _____/5

Audience:

Date:

Completed by: _____ Audience Member _____ Presenter

Did you receive handouts? Y N

Were visual aids used and helpful? Y N

Was the presentation professional? Y N

Presenter Name(s):

Evaluation

Creativity _____/5

Clarity _____/15

Compelling _____/5

Audience:

Date:

Completed by: _____ Audience Member _____ Presenter

Did you receive handouts? Y N

Were visual aids used and helpful? Y N

Was the presentation professional? Y N