

Democratic Citizenship

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Overview

Democratic Citizenship is only open to those students who have agreed to tutor Somali refugee children for between six and ten hours per week throughout the spring semester. The topic of Democratic Citizenship has incredible scope, and this course is focused explicitly around the components most relevant to the Somali refugee experience. In particular, students will investigate the nature of national identity, briefly explore the historical development of liberal citizenship while considering attendant rights and responsibilities, and address the question of citizenship in multicultural context. Finally, students will review contemporary policies that explicitly relate to citizenship and the Somali refugees.

Objectives

- Students will develop a working definition of democratic citizenship.
- Students will grasp the historic development of national identity.
- Students will have an understanding of and consider commitments to their individual civic responsibilities.
- Students will comprehend some of the major challenges for citizenship today, with specific attention to increasing statelessness and growing attachment to national identity in polyethnic states.
- Students will have an enhanced understanding of the City of Pittsburgh and the Somali Refugee Population.

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.

Evaluation

- Assigned and evaluated journal/discussion board entries 30%
- Class participation 10%
- Presentation 25%
- Exploratory Ethnography 10%
- Final (Take-home, Essay) 25%

Required Course Materials

- Selected readings provided by instructor
- New Citizenship, Craig Rimmerman
- Multicultural Citizenship, Will Kymlicka
- Imagined Communities, Benedict Anderson
- Citizenship and Social Class, T.H. Marshall
- Personal Journal

Schedule

1/11 Syllabus Overview, Review of Service to Date, Democratic Citizenship

Read pps 1 – 82 in Anderson. Discussion board: How does language relate to Anderson's development of national identity, and how does this relate to your tutoring with the Somali children?

1/18 Visit from Khadra Mohammed (1:00), Director, Pittsburgh Refugee Center. Identity.

Read pps 1 – 27 (Chapter 1, Sections 1 and 2) in Marshall and pps 1 – 28 in Rimmerman. Discussion board: How does the construction of citizenship that (T.H.) Marshall cites from (Alfred) Marshall on page 8 relate to Rimmerman's articulation of citizenship? To what extent do you feel such overarching background ideologies have affected your decision to serve this semester?

1/25 Visit from Sarah Maruccio (2:00), English as a Second Language Instructor with Pittsburgh City Schools. Historical development of citizenship.

Read Kymlicka 1 – 34. Discussion board: What are Kymlicka's three forms of group differentiated rights and are they helpful for the Somalis' experience?

2/1 Multicultural Citizenship, Ethnography Discussion

Read Kymlicka 35 – 49 and 152 – 172 with reading to be distributed in class. Discussion board: What aspects of their identity have Somali Bantu individuals (alone or as a group) given up because they currently reside in the United States? Take a position with or against Kymlicka to indicate whether being forced to give up particular cultural practices is fair to the Somalis.

2/8 What is Tolerance? Internal Restrictions and External Protections

Read Chapter 9: Social Work Practice with Immigrants and Refugees in Lum, Doman (Ed.) Cultural Competence, Practice Stages, and Client Systems
Discussion board: In what ways have you noticed US policy positively or negatively affecting the experience of the Somalis with whom you are working?

2/15 US Policy & the Somali Refugee Experience

Read pps 49 – 74 in Kymlicka and 29 – 77 in Rimmerman. Discussion board:
How do these two authors' proposals relate and to what extent do you feel they are each justified?

2/22 Rethinking Citizenship.

Discussion Board: What has been most challenging and most rewarding about your service so far? Describe each of these things in detail.

3/1 Presentations.

Read pps. 75 – 151 in Kymlicka and Chapter 12: Building a Village of Kindness in Pipher, Mary The Middle of Everywhere: Helping Refugees Enter the American Community (distributed in class). Discussion board: What is the value of multiculturalism and how can you relate it to the Somalis' presence in Pittsburgh?

3/8 Spring Break

3/15 Approaches to and arguments for Multiculturalism

Read pps. 83 – 112 in Anderson and 173 – 195 in Kymlicka. Discussion board:
To what extent is America encouraging official nationalism or civic education today and do you find that advisable? What things about American identity do you believe are most important to share (if any) with newly arrived immigrants or refugees? Why?

3/22 Inculcating Citizenship

Read pps. 27 – 85 in Marshall. Discussion board: How is freedom related to the concept of social rights Marshall introduces and how might that affect the Somalis as well as citizenship in America considered more broadly?

3/29 Ethnographies Due. Beyond Liberalism.

Read pps. 86 – 155 in Marshall. Discussion board: Carefully observe the neighborhood where you tutor and relate its features to Marshall's description of British social class.

4/5 Citizenship and Social Class

Read pps 113 – 206 in Anderson. Discussion board: How does self-determination relate to the arguments put forth by Kymlicka and Anderson?

4/12 Beyond the state.

Read pps. 79 – 125 in Rimmerman. Discussion board: How is Rimmerman right or wrong about the pertinence of service-learning to the development of a new citizenship?

4/19 Conclude, Review for final

Discussion board: To Be Announced.

4/26 Final