

Civic Engagement and Social Institutions

Fall, 2008

PA 410U, Wednesdays, 5:30—9:15PM

Neuberger Hall Room 352

Dr. Steve Johnson, Instructor

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Office hours, by appointment

Urban Center Bldg., ask at front desk

Course Description

This course is a part of the Leadership for Change cluster. In this course we will explore the relationship between livable, just, and sustainable communities and civic engagement opportunities through social institutions and the importance of social capital--that is the value of social relations and networks--for a healthy civic infrastructure.

Course structure and student responsibilities

The course will involve reading from the required text, *Bowling Alone in America* by Robert Putnam. Additional articles and documents may be assigned during the term related to assignments.

The description of assignment and grading considerations are as follows:

1. Reflection journal and class participation (40 points)

Attendance in class is required. A two (2) point deduction will be made for every class missed (up to 10 points total). Active participation in class discussions and exercises is an essential element of learning in this class.

The journal will consist of three parts. (1) Summary and reflection from the weekly reading assignments. A summary of each chapter of (1-2 paragraphs), and 1 reflection per week (1-3 paragraphs). (2) Class notes, in whatever form, but readable, (3) At least 1 news clipping per week or summary of other media content that reflects course content, highlights an issue brought up in class. The clipping or content should be in the journal along with a 1-2 paragraph reflection about the clipping. Students may be asked to discuss their news finding. The journal should be kept in a binder and well organized.

1 and #2 commence from first week until November 28th # 3 from 2nd week until November 28th.

Summaries and reflections from weekly readings should be turned in by end of class period of each week via email. You may have one "excused" reason for not turning them in.

Midway through the term (October 24) students will turn in their class journals for assessment. Final journal will be turned in by Friday, November 30th.

Assignments sent via email should have a consistent header consisting of assignment name and date.

2. Field Experience. (40 points) Students in groups of 2-3 will conduct civic engagement and social capital assessments of (1) a public space and (2) a social institution. The methods to be used for assessment will be discussed in class. The assignment will include observations, interviews, and research. Groups will make brief presentations of their work.
3. Term paper. (20 points) Each student will write a paper (10 pages) based on a theme or issue brought forth in the class readings or discussions. Assignment should include reading at least three additional articles or chapters from books. Paper should be double spaced, 12 point type size. Other format requirements will be discussed in class, as will ideas for paper topics. Students will turn in abstract and/or outline for their paper by the 4th week of the term.

Warning: A pop quiz may be utilized to assess student progress.

Course Schedule

Wednesday, September 26, Introductory lecture, explanation of course, group assignment

Wednesday, October 3, BA, chapters 1, 2, 3

Wednesday, October 10, BA, chapters 4, 5, 6

Wednesday, October 17, BA, chapters 7, 8,9. **Abstract of paper due**

Wednesday, October 24, BA, chapters 10, 11, 12

Wednesday, October 31, BA, chapters, 13, 14, 15 **Turn in journal for assessment**

Wednesday, November 7, BA, chapters 16, 17

Wednesday, November 14, BA, chapters 18, 19, 20

Wednesday, November 21, BA, chapters 21, 22, scan appendix, Group presentations and all assignments due.

Wednesday, November 28, BA chapters 23, 24, appendix. Group presentations

Friday, November 30, all assignments due

Required Text:

Bowling Alone in America, Robert Putnam. Simon & Schuster, 2001, and occasional articles related to assignments. Also, selected materials on reserve in PSU library.

Facilitator's Guide to Participatory Decision Making, Kaner, et al. Selected sections will be made available to the class.