What factors determine how individuals participate in politics? Assuming political participation matters, how come some people become active while others choose not to get involved? What role does early socialization and learning from a variety of sources—the family, schools, peers—compared to later experiences—attending college, starting to work, the events of the day—play in influencing our actions? Assuming people do get involved, what are the advantages and disadvantages of alternative ways to participate within the system? Outside the system? And what difference does it all make anyway: in what ways do our actions actually have an impact? On what? How much?

These questions—about why and how people participate and about advantages and disadvantages of alternative forms of participation—take on additional meaning if we place them in the broader context of the concept of citizenship. What does it mean to be a “good” citizen? What are the obligations and responsibilities of a citizen and where does political participation fit in to this bigger picture? What consequences do different ideas about citizenship have in a democracy?

And in light of recent events—ranging from traditional processes of democracies such as our upcoming presidential primaries and ultimate election, the focus and attention on the Occupy movement and the dramatic democratic uprisings in the Middle East—these questions are of more than theoretical importance. Who chooses to participate in primaries and caucuses can dramatically impact outcomes. The Occupy movement raises questions about the role of protest in a democracy, and events in the Middle East highlight the changing role of the “people”. At bottom, it all comes back to what it means to be a “citizen” and how much difference individuals can make.

Focusing on literature on political socialization (our early learning) and participation, this course will examine and debate these important questions. In addition to describing a standard set of topics (voting, participating in groups), some special topics worthy of our consideration include how to motivate more young people to become interested in
politics, the potential for deliberative democracy and differences in participation by important demographic groups.

In addition, this course is a capstone course for political science majors. It will meet this requirement in two ways. The course will ratchet up your understanding of the tried-and-true concept of political participation (covered in other classes) by integrating aspects of participation into broader considerations of citizenship.

Since this is a writing intensive course, a second (and perhaps fairly intimidating) purpose of this course is to focus on your writing. You will be asked to produce 4 short (approximately 3 page) and one longer (approximately 12 page) papers. In recognition of the fact that many students find writing not such a happy experience, we will engage in a variety of activities designed to facilitate learning and make everyone more comfortable with the job at hand, e.g. affording opportunities for practice and engaging in discussions about specific strategies to make writing easier.

Learning Objectives

a) Identify key theories, controversies and relevant debates
b) Compare/contrast the advantages/disadvantages of alternative forms of political participation and their consequences
c) Compare/contrast alternative ways of engaging in “citizenship”.
d) Locate yourself on a continuum: How do you see yourself as participating in politics? as a “citizen” more generally?
e) Incorporate other viewpoints into your ideas
f) Connect current events and controversies to the theories/controversies being covered in class

BOOKS


- Article Packet available on Blackboard; give or take, especially because this is a 400-level course, you can expect there will be reading due for each class.

Course Requirements

1. **Short Papers, 30%:**
   There will be 4 short (approx. 3-page) papers on various topics due throughout the semester (see table at end of syllabus for dates). These papers will ask you either to reflect and react to material we have discussed in class or ask for original research building on and deepening your understanding of class material.

2. **Research Paper, 25%:**
   Approximately 12 pages long, this final research paper will be on a topic of your choice. In order to complete this assignment you will also be required to submit writing along the way: statement of topic, set of sources, preliminary draft (introduction section), and a more complete draft.
3. **Attendance, class participation, quizzes, 45%**

There will be *two kinds of quizzes*: every other Friday there will be a 15-20 minute quiz on the readings from the last two weeks. Toward the end of the semester these quizzes will additionally include material from earlier in the class. There will also be approximately five pop quizzes throughout the semester. (Grading: reading quizzes, 30%; consistent participation, attendance, and pop quizzes 15%). (Expect more quizzes if you don’t read!)

**Attendance.** This course has a great deal of in class and collaborative work. You have to come to class. Each person is allowed one unexcused absence. Any other absence must be excused by the instructor before the absence or excused afterwards based on a medical note. Any unexcused absences after that will count against you.

**Plagiarism:** The strength of the university depends on academic and personal integrity. In this course, you must be honest and truthful. Plagiarism is the use of someone else’s work, words, or ideas as if they were your own without giving the original author credit by citing him or her. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please contact me before submitting assignments for grading and/or reference the undergraduate bulletin at: [http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html](http://www.albany.edu/undergraduate_bulletin/regulations.html)

Plagiarism violations will result in disciplinary action.

**Students with Disabilities:** If you need any class accommodations due to a disability, please utilize University resources as needed, and please let the professor know well in advance of any assignments requiring accommodation(s). It is a function of the University to provide such accommodations as needed.

**Topics and Readings (dates subject to change contingent on progress)**

**Part I: Learning to be a Citizen**

What does it mean to be a “good” citizen? How have ideas about citizenship changed over time and what are the implications of those changes? What do political scientists think is happening to citizenship and political participation today?

1/18-1/20  **Introduction: Citizenship and Participation**

1/23-1/25  **The state of citizen engagement?**

Milner (2010), *The Internet Generation: Engaged Citizens or Political Dropouts*. Chpt. 1

1/27  **CQ Researcher Issue: Bilingual Education vs. English Immersion**
Part II: The Political Socialization of Young People and the Agents That Shape It.
How important is politics to children? What do children learn/know about politics, how do they learn it and from whom? In what ways, if any, do our early learnings shape our participation and attitudes in later life?

1/30* Overview
Dawson, Prewitt and Dawson (1977), Political Socialization, ch. 3 (The Political Self), ch. 4 (Political Learning during Childhood and Adolescence)
*First Possible Paper Due

2/1 Agents of Socialization and What We Learn from Them: Family and Schools: Dawson et al, Political Socialization, ch. 7 (The Family and Political Socialization), ch. 8 (Education, the School and Political Learning)

2/3 Learning as a Teenager*
Niemi and Junn (2005), Civic Education: What Makes Students Learn, ch. 2 (What High School Students Know about Civics), ch. 3 (How Students Learn about Government)
CQ Researcher on “Student Rights”
*First Reading Quiz

2/6-2/10 Other Facets of Socialization
Dalton, The Good Citizen, ch. 2 (The Meaning and Measurement of Citizenship), ch. 3 (Forming Citizenship Norms)
CQ Researcher: Reality T.V.
CQ Researcher: Internet Thinking
Gilligan, Carol In a Different Voice, Ch. 1, 2

Part III: The Many Dimensions of Political Participation
What are some advantages and disadvantages of different ways to participate in politics? Which types of participation are most effective? When is non-participation ok? Are there ever circumstances where we should even work against the existing system?

Voting and Campaigning: Waste of time or time spent making a difference?
2/13 Controversial History of voting in U.S: McGlen and O’Connor et al. (2005), Women, Politics and American Society, ch. 1 (The Struggle for Political Rights, pp 21-42)

2/15-2/17 **Does voting matter?**
Voting debate and theories of voting: Macedo, *Democracy at Risk*, ch. 2 (National Electoral Processes)

2/20 No Class

2/22 **Voting and Citizenship: Who is and who should be allowed to vote?**
**Choose one of the following:**

2/24-2/27 **Ways to get out the vote:**
Green and Gerber (2008), *Get out the Vote: How to Increase Voter Turnout*, experiments on mobilization: Introduction: ch. 1 (Introduction: Why Voter Mobilization Matters); ch. 2 (Evidence versus Received Wisdom); ch. 3 (Door-to-door Canvassing)

2/29 Dalton, *The Good Citizen*, ch. 8 (In Tocqueville’s Footsteps)

3/2 Wrap up

**Interest Groups and Organizations**

3/5-3/9 **Group Formation, Strategies, Problems, Individual Transformations?**
Read three of the following chpts:
 Chapters from Cigler and Loomis (2007), *Interest Group Politics*, ch. 2 (the enduring power of the NRA); ch. 3 (politics of tribal recognition); ch. 4 (interest groups and advocacy for the disadvantaged); ch. 5 (big-money donors to environmental
groups), ch. 11 (is corporate lobbying rational or just a waste of money?); ch. 16 (emerging issues, new organizations: interests groups and the making of nanotechnology policy)

3/12-3/16   **No Class**

**Participating in Local Politics and Local Activity**

3/19-3/23   Macedo, *Democracy at Risk*, ch. 3 (The American Metropolis)
CQ Researcher on “Confronting Warming”,
Macedo, Democracy at Risk, ch. 4 (Associational Life and the Nonprofit and Philanthropic Sector)


**Participation on the college campus**

3/26   Campus life: Geoffrey D. White (2000), *Campus Inc.: Corporate Power in the Ivory Tower*, Read any two chpts:
      chapters by Kniffin (ch. 2, The Goods at Their Worst), Parenti (ch. 6, The Myth of the Liberal Campus), Zaidi (ch. 13, Spook School: The CIA at RIT), Price (ch. 15, Wiring the World)


**New age participation**

Dissent. 56:4;10-14.


CQ researcher: Blog Explosion

**Part IV: Alternative forms of participation**

Redefinitions, New Directions, from Deliberative Democracy to Civil Disobedience, Protest and even Revolution

4/2   Individual, non formal, non acknowledged forms of participation

4/4-4/6 **Deliberative democracy and democratic innovations**  

4/9 No Class

4/11-4/13 Research and Writing workshop (reading tba)

**The other extreme: Social movements, Protest Politics, and Civil Disobedience**

**Civil Disobedience**


4/18 Bring in article of your choice on the “Occupy Movements.”

4/20 Suzanne Staggenborg. “Social Movements.” chpts 1, 3, Conclusion and table.

4/23 Suzanne Staggenborg. “Social Movements.” Chpts. 4-8 (read one.)


4/27 International Movements  

4/30 No Reading

5/2 CQ Global Researcher Separatist Movements


5/7 Wrap Up and Conclusion
### Short Paper Topics and Deadlines*

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<td>Topic 6: Deliberative Democracy</td>
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*Please note that although you have choice of topics, you are required to hand in at least 2 of the three page papers BEFORE Spring break March 12-16.

*Paper topics can only be submitted on the due dates outlined, they will not be accepted past this date.

### Research Paper Deadlines:

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