

Making a Difference: The Role of Active Citizenship in a Thriving Democracy

Brown College (FRPG 187A)

Fall 2009

Professors:

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Plenary/Seminar information:

Plenary: Tuesday/Thursday 10:10-11:40 Valentine 105

Seminar: Tuesday 2:20-3:50 Valentine 103

Food for Thought:

What should a thriving democracy look like? In an era of economic crisis, perhaps now more than ever we should be reflecting upon how well our democratic institutions meet the needs of its diverse citizenry and what role citizens should play in ensuring the health of these institutions. What does it mean to be a member of a society that proclaims a “government of the people, by the people, for the people?” As we wrestle with these questions, we’ll examine America’s founding principles and the fundamental debates over our core values as a nation. We will look at concerns about the wealth gap, racial tensions, a broken criminal justice system, a faltering public education system, and a disconnected citizenry. To enhance our engagement with these questions and to assume our role as active citizens, all of us will be volunteering in

the local community throughout the fall semester. We hope this experience will push all of us to ask: how can we make a difference? Should we?

An Overview of the Semester:

Units:

- 1) The Democratic Experiment – An exploration of the founding principles of the American Republic (Weeks 1- 4)
- 2) The Institutions – How is our democratic experiment faring:
 - a. Social Inequality (Weeks 5-6)
 - b. Education (Weeks 7-9)
 - c. The Criminal Justice System (Weeks 10-12)
- 3) Reform – What changes might we make to bring principles and practice closer together? (Weeks 13-14)

In addition, we will do community service throughout the semester as one means of exploring the issues we raise in class about the health of our democracy and the engagement of our citizenry.

What you'll be doing:

- 1) Tweeting for class (5%) Due: When assigned
- 2) Reading the newspaper (5%) Due: When assigned
- 3) Group presentation on your CBL placement (10%) Due: Tuesday, October 13
- 4) Learning Journal (25%) Due: Every Friday
- 5) Paper on Citizenship (15%) Due: Draft 1 – Thursday, September 17; Draft 2 - Thursday, October 1
- 6) Congressional Committee Presentation on Reform Bill (10%) Due: Tuesday, December 1
- 7) Reform Bill Paper (20%) Due: Draft 1 – Tuesday, November 5; Draft 2 – Thursday, November 17
- 8) Festival of CBL (10%) Due: Last week of classes

What you'll be reading:

- ❖ Robert Coles, *The Call of Service: Witness to Idealism*
- ❖ Chuck Collins and Felice Yeskel, *Economic Apartheid in America: A Primer on Economic Inequality and Insecurity*

- ❖ Jonathan Kozol, *The Shame of the Nation: The Restoration of Apartheid Schooling in America*
- ❖ John Edgar Wideman, *Brothers and Keepers: A Memoir*
- ❖ Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?*
- ❖ Diana Hacker, *A Pocket Style Manual* (5th Edition)
- ❖ Various and sundry other reading assignments that you'll find on our Angel site

The WHEN of it all:

UNIT ONE: The Democratic Experiment

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignment Due
August 24/Plenary	Advising CBL Aims/Objectives		
August 27/Plenary		West, "The Necessary Engagement with Youth Culture"	Journal Question 1
September 1/Plenary		Ricci, "The Republican Experiment" and "The Democratic Experiment" (ANGEL)	
September 1/Seminar	Effective Reading Strategies	Coles, "Introduction"	
September 3/Plenary		Wood, "The Public Good" (ANGEL)	Journal Question 2
September 8/Plenary		Kymlicka and Norman (ANGEL)	
September 8/Seminar	Citizenship Paper Workshop		
September 10/Plenary JOINT		Coles, Chapter 1	Journal Question 4

September 15/Plenary		Kymlicka and Norman	
September 15/Seminar	Citizen Paper Peer Review	Coles, Chapter 2	
September 17/Plenary		Obama, "A New Era of Service"	Journal Question 4
			Draft of Citizenship Paper Due

UNIT TWO: INSTITUTIONS

A. Social Inequality

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignment Due
September 22/Plenary		Collins	
September 22/Seminar	Writing Workshop: Collective Feedback	Hacker, pp. 1-6	
September 24/Plenary	*ALL FYP MEETING*		Journal Question 5
September 29/Plenary		Collins	
September 29/Seminar	Individual Meetings on Paper		
October 1/Plenary		Collins	Journal Question 6
			Final Draft of Citizenship Paper

B. Education

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignment Due
October 6/Plenary		Kozol	
October 6/ Seminar	Oral Presentation Workshop		
October 8/Plenary JOINT		Coles, Chapters 3 & 4	Journal Question 7
October 13/Plenary			CBL Placement Presentations
October 13/Seminar			CBL Placement Presentations
October 20/Plenary		Kozol	
October 20/Seminar	Research Workshop: Reform Bill Papers		
	* Meet in Library		
October 22/Plenary		Kozol, Glazer	Journal Question 8

C. The Criminal Justice System

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignment Due
October 27/Plenary		Crucible of Good Intentions	
October 27/Seminar	Writing Workshop: Grammar	Hacker, pp. 21-44	
October 29/Plenary		Davis	Journal Question 9
November 3/Plenary		Wideman	
November 3/ Seminar	Peer Review of Reform Bill Papers		
November 5/Plenary		Wideman	Journal Question

Final Draft Reform
Bill Due

UNIT THREE: REFORM

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignment Due
November 10/Plenary		Coles, Chapter 5	
November 10/Seminar	Writing Workshop: Using Evidence Effectively		
November 12/Plenary		Coles, Chapter 8	Journal Question 11
JOINT			
November 17/Plenary	Reforming Institutions		
November 17/Seminar	Poster Presentation Workshop		
November 19/Plenary	Reform Bill Presentation Workshop		Journal Question 12
			Final Draft of Reform Bill
December 1/Plenary	Congressional Committee on Reform Presentations		
December 1/Seminar	Congressional Committee on Reform Presentations		
December	Wrap Up		Journal Question

FESTIVAL OF CBL

Date	Topic	Readings	Assignment Due
December 8	Festival of CBL		
December 10	Festival CBL		Journal Question 14

***Brief Explanation of Assignments:**

- 1) **Tweeting:** It's important to think about the course as a coherent whole rather than a collection of individual meetings. To that end, after each class, we'll ask specific students to sum up our session using Twitter.com. The challenge will be to sum up class in a thoughtful way using only 140 characters. We'll review those summaries at the start of the next class as a way of connecting backward and moving forward. Each student will be responsible for tweeting several times over the course of the semester (dates to be assigned).
- 2) **Reading the Newspaper:** A good citizen is one who is informed. To that effect, we'd like you to read the newspaper to get a handle on international, national, and local news. We have *The New York Times* available to you for free on campus. In addition, we'd like you to look at the *Watertown Daily Times* (<http://www.watertowndailytimes.com/>). You may look at any other national or international news source. For each plenary session, we expect you to be prepared to talk about one article that you've read that has some relevance to the subject matter of the class. You will need to be able to summarize the article in 2-3 minutes. During each seminar session, we will randomly choose two or three students to present their articles. Each student will be asked to do this two or three times over the course of the semester. In your summary, in addition to

telling us what the article is about, we encourage you to think about how the article bears on what we're doing in class and what questions the article raises for you.

- 3) Group presentation on your CBL placement: Early on in the semester, you'll be responsible for working with the other students in your placement to create a presentation that informs the class about the work you're doing there. You'll be asked to address the history of your placement, the people it serves, its goals, and some of its challenges. The format of your presentation will be open; we encourage you to be creative!
- 4) Learning Journal: Over the course of the semester, you will be required to keep an interactive learning journal wherein you will address questions we pose about course readings and discussions, reflect upon your community service, and respond to specific comments and questions we raise in your journal. The journal is the place where you will synthesize the materials of the course. You'll soon discover that the processes of analysis, reflection, and synthesis are themselves the learning process. We'll collect the journals several times over the course of the semester.
- 5) Paper on Citizenship: You will be asked to define the citizen's role in a healthy democracy. (4-5 pages, at least two drafts.)
- 6) Congressional Committee Presentation on Reform Bill: During the last few weeks of the semester we will address the question of how to reform the various institutions we have examined over the course of the semester in the form of creating reform bills to be presented before Congress. You will work with a group of your peers on a specific institution and argue the details and merits your bill before the class.
- 7) Reform Bill paper: Each student will write his or her own individual paper on the reform bill presented to the class. (5-7 pages, at least two drafts.)
- 8) Festival of CBL: There are four FYPs doing community service as part of their course this semester. The Festival of Community Based Learning (CBL) is an FYP-wide celebration of the work you'll do in the community. During the last week of class, students will work with the others in their community service placement to create a presentation for the Festival of CBL.

*We will hand out detailed individual assignment guides during the semester.

Other Stuff you Need to Know:

The WORD Studio

The Munn Center for Rhetoric and Communication maintains The WORD Studio in ODY Library—a place to get feedback from peers on assignments in Writing, Oral communication, Research, and Design of visual projects. You can come for a consultation to plan a paper or presentation (you don't need anything but a blank piece of paper!); to find ways to improve the

ideas, organization, and style of a draft; to videotape and review a presentation rehearsal; to practice a PowerPoint presentation, and more. Peer tutors are not proofreaders or editors who silently “fix” your work for you; instead, they are trained to have a conversation with you about ways you can fix problem areas yourself and become better overall communicators. You may use The WORD Studio for consultations on assignments for any of your courses, although for FYP assignments you should first seek out our course mentor, John, during his office hours.

The WORD Studio is open Monday through Thursday, 8:30 a.m. to 11:00 p.m.; Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.; and Sunday, 1:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. You may also IM the Studio during regular hours with quick questions about grammar, citation, and style: *SLUword*.

First-Year Program Philosophy and Goals 2009-10

A residentially-based, interdisciplinary first-year program is an ideal environment for beginning the four-year process of developing the complex intellectual and social skills that are at the heart of a liberal education and the habits of considered values and engaged citizenship that such an education should produce. The First-Year Program (FYP) and First-Year Seminar (FYS) are the core of our institutional commitment to improving your ability to engage in critical inquiry and research, to design and deliver written, spoken and/or visual texts that demonstrate rhetorical sensitivity, and to be sophisticated readers, listeners, and viewers of the texts of others. We believe that these same competencies can help develop your ability to communicate across differences (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity, political views) as you find ways to live and learn together in the residence halls and as engaged and ethically reflective citizens both during and after your college years. These goals should be understood as the first step in our work with you over a four-year process of helping you to meet the University’s Aims and Objectives.

We hope to help you see that writing, speaking, research, and interacting with others are rhetorical endeavors. Effective communicators are, by definition, rhetorically sensitive. Rhetorical sensitivity means understanding that all communication, whether formal or informal, involves having to make choices about your messages, whether written, spoken, or visual. To become an effective communicator, you need to recognize that the creation of a meaningful and powerful message involves both a creator and an audience, and that therefore the voice you adopt in your communication, and the audience you imagine yourself communicating to, matter a great deal in creating your message. The choices you make in writing and speaking are central in determining how people read and hear your voice. Becoming conscious and reflective about those choices, and their ethical dimensions, is a central goal of the FYP and FYS.

Working with you so that you become more rhetorically sensitive means that you should be increasingly able to assess the requirements of a particular task and make intentional decisions about which mode or modes of communication and inquiry would be most effective in addressing it. To do so, you must develop specific writing, speaking, research, and

technological competencies. To accomplish these goals, the FYP and FYS will present you with assignments that ask you to engage in a process that involves **recognizing** the rhetorical situation, **planning** communication strategies to address the task at hand, **composing and presenting** the message, and then engaging in **critical assessment** of your own work and that of others. The results of that assessment process will allow you to rethink, restructure, and revise your work. We further recognize that this process is not linear and that the effective creation of texts requires that you move back and forth among these four elements of the message creation process. This is why we require that your writing and speaking assignments be “projects” that include preparatory exercises and multiple drafts or rehearsals, all of which ask you to continue to reflect critically on the choices you have made in constructing your message.

This process of increased rhetorical awareness and skill development is at the heart of the philosophical and pedagogical perspectives that inform the work of the FYP and FYS. Because this process both transcends and integrates a variety of specific skills, the program has a philosophical commitment to designing assignments that ask you to integrate various modes of communication in furtherance of the higher-level rhetorical goals in which they are situated.

To ensure that the program is meeting its stated goals, all FYP and FYS syllabi are read by other faculty in the program to determine if they include a variety of assignments that forward the writing, speaking, research, and literacy goals of the program. All FYP and FYS courses have to be approved by faculty in the program before they are offered.

Academic Integrity

All students at St. Lawrence University are bound by honor to maintain the highest level of academic integrity. By virtue of membership in the St. Lawrence community, every student accepts the responsibility to know the rules of academic honesty, to abide by them at all times, and to encourage all others to do the same.

Responsibility for avoiding behavior or situations from which academic dishonesty may be inferred rests entirely with the students. Students should be sure to learn from faculty what is expected as their own work and how the work of other people should be acknowledged.

Academic Dishonesty, according to the *Student Handbook*: includes any dishonest conduct in connection with any academic (including research) course, program, or work.

1. It is assumed that all work submitted for credit is done by the student unless the instructor gives specific permission for collaboration.
2. Cheating on examinations and tests consists of knowingly giving or using, or attempting to use unauthorized assistance during examinations or tests.
3. Dishonesty in work outside of examinations and tests consists of handing in for credit as

original work that which is **not** original, where originality is required.

4. Falsifying research methods, data, and/or results constitutes academic dishonesty.

The following constitute examples of academic dishonesty:

a) *Plagiarism*: Presenting as one's own work the work of another person—words, ideas, data, evidence, thoughts, information, organizing principles, or style of presentation — without proper attribution. Plagiarism includes paraphrasing or summarizing without acknowledgment by quotation marks, footnotes, endnotes, or other indices of reference (cf. Joseph F. Trimmer, *A Guide to MLA Documentation*).

b) Handing in false data, reports or results in connection with any research project or experiment.

c) Handing in a book report on a book one has not read.

d) Falsification of attendance records of a laboratory or other class meeting.

e) Supplying information to another student knowing that such information will be used in a dishonest way.

f) Submission of work (papers, journal abstracts, etc.) which has received credit in a previous course to satisfy the requirement(s) of a second course without the knowledge and permission of the instructor of the second course.

g) The above list is not exhaustive. In the event there is a question as to whether alleged conduct falls within the scope of the Academic Honor Code, the vice president and dean of academic affairs' determination shall be final.

Claims of ignorance and academic or personal pressure are unacceptable as excuses for academic dishonesty. Students must learn what constitutes one's own work and how the work of others must be acknowledged." (*St. Lawrence University 2008–2009 Student Handbook*, pp. 148–153.)

All intentional and unintentional acts of academic dishonesty may result in disciplinary action. Recommendations of disciplinary action may include a failing grade on the work in question, a failing grade in the course, disciplinary probation, suspension from the University, or expulsion from the University.

More information on academic integrity, including the Academic Honor Council's Constitution, can be found at: http://www.stlawu.edu/acadaffairs/academic_honor_policy.pdf. For information about academic integrity or the Academic Honor Council issues, contact the Dean's Office at x5993.