

## **Grassroots Democracy: Social Change through Social Movements - Bowling Together**

Honors Civic Engagement – YFE 211U  
Syllabus, Spring 2010

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Office hours: T-Th – 11:15- 1:00 and by appointment

M - 5:30-6:00

### **Course Description:**

A little over a year ago, we witnessed an election unlike any other in the history of our great nation, where the youth of America rallied against the status quo and voted, in record numbers, to let their voice be heard, and elected our 44<sup>th</sup> President, Barak Obama. In fact, much of what Barak Obama's campaign was about reflects another time in our history, the 1960's, when ordinary people, especially college students, rallied against the status quo through grassroots movements in order to reform our social justice system – inequality, racial discrimination, war veterans, etc. We will approach this course by looking at grassroots movements and discussing how these movements affected/effected change and impacted lives.

This course is really two courses in one: First, this is a course about civic engagement, where we will explore and reflect on the complexities of serving, learning and scholarship and their role in facilitating social change. Second, this is a course about social movements, where we will explore how ordinary citizens join together as a collective group to promote change. The reality, of course, is that they both are about democracy in action. During the semester we will discuss some of the key grassroots movements during the last 50 years, and we will explore how these movements have been impacted by historical, cultural, social, educational, economic, and political factors. To understand the dynamics of (grassroots) social movements is to understand the core values of our nation.

### **Course Objectives:**

The proposed course seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- It will lay a basic foundation of the democratic process
- It will engage students in this process as they embark on their own campus 'movement'
- It will enable students to better understand those forces that affect social change
- It will enable students to better understand the rhetoric of social change
  
- It will teach students to become better citizens as they learn what it means to become civically engaged

- It will enable students to participate in the research process: planning, designing, writing (both a proposal and a grant), funding, and assessment.
- It will enable students to better understand what it means to be a servant-leader
- It will enable students to experience civic engagement, appreciate excellence and better understand who they are as American citizens

**Course Texts:**

***Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* by Robert D. Putnam**

**Course handouts (provided by instructor)**

**[Tentative films: The following films will be shown throughout the semester]:**

Films – [If you want to recommend an appropriate film, please do so].

Woodstock

Berkeley in the Sixties

Eyes on the Prize

Making Sense of the Sixties

Erin Brockovich

**Course Expectations, Requirements and Projects:**

**I. Expectations:**

- All students are expected to attend every class and every Voices of Innovation lecture. Tardiness to class or a lecture is not acceptable.
- All students are expected to keep up with assigned readings. You will then be prepared to respond to the reflective question based on these readings at the beginning of every class and you will be able to participate in the class discussions during class.
- All students will meet together on a timely basis to determine, plan and develop your campus-based project; this project requires an equal time commitment from everyone so that no one is doing the ‘lion’s share. This project is a group effort – every member of the group must do his/her share.
- All assignments are due on the day required. There is no late work.
- The mid-term and final exams must be turned in on the required days.

**II. Requirements:**

- **Mid-term exam – 15%**
- **Final research paper (exam) – 20%**
- **Weekly reflection writing based on the readings. Question will be given at the beginning of each class – 10%**
- **Three projects – # On-campus group project – 15%; Presentation of grassroots project – 15%; Op-ed letter to the editor project – 10% = 35%**
- **Class participation (and attendance) – 15%**

### **III. Projects:**

1. On-campus 'grassroots' group project – You will identify an issue on campus that you believe can enhance the campus or community in positive ways. You will design the project, develop the action plan (including any public relations or press release-type tasks to get the word out about this project), explain the measurable outcomes, determine the cost of carrying out the project, and present the project to the class. More information will be provided on this project.

2. Each of you will choose a Grassroots movement to explore, discuss and analyze. You will write a 10-15 page paper (this paper will be your final exam) about this movement and present your findings to the class. These presentations will enable the class to learn about several other movements that have taken place in the last half century. You may choose one of the following movements or you may choose another one that is of particular interest to you:

Sexual revolution and the counterculture

Music movements

Pro-choice movement

Pro-life movement

Antiwar movement

AIDS movement

Anti-poverty movement

Anti-gun violence movement

Gay and lesbian movement

Immigrant rights movement

Anti-immigrant movement

Prison reform movement

Student rights movement

Animal rights movement

3. Each of you will write one op-ed letter to the editor of the *Lion's Eye* or the *Philadelphia Inquirer* (or to any other newspaper) explaining why your grassroots project merits the attention of students/citizens. (Due March 16<sup>th</sup>).

### **Reflective Writing:**

Reflection is a crucial component of the civic engagement process. It allows us to think deeply, to understand and to make sense of our engaged lives. Throughout the class, we will be reflecting individually, in the form of written reaction papers at the beginning of each class (based on the assigned readings), and collectively, in the form of class discussions. Because reflection is a deliberate and conscious act, it requires effort. It is this effort that can help us grow as individuals: Reflection enables us to better understand social problems and to seek better solutions to these problems. This is what engagement is all about.

**Classroom Citizenship:**

Your class attendance is essential to your success in the course and is required as part of your grade. You are allowed only two unexcused absences. For every two classes beyond those two that you miss, your final grade for the course will be lowered half a grade. Also, please be prompt; extensive or repeated lateness will be considered an absence.

Class participation is also necessary and required. This includes contributing to the class discussion and actively listening to the thoughts and comments of your peers. Please make the classroom a place where students can speak their minds. We will have full-class discussions, as well as small group work. We will occasionally have short in-class writing assignments that will be included in your class participation grade.

Finally, as a matter of respect and common courtesy to your classmates and me, please **TURN OFF YOUR CELL PHONE during class time.**

**Academic Integrity:**

All students are expected to act with civility, personal integrity; respect other students' dignity, rights and property; and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their own efforts. An environment of academic integrity is requisite to respect for self and others and a civil community.

Academic integrity includes a commitment to not engage in or tolerate acts of falsification, misrepresentation or deception. Such act of dishonesty include cheating or copying, plagiarizing, submitting another persons' work as one's own, using Internet sources without citation, fabricating field data or citations, "ghosting" (taking or having another student take an exam), stealing examinations, tampering with the academic work of another student, facilitating other students' acts of academic dishonesty, etc.

Students charged with a breach of academic integrity will receive due process and, if the charge is found valid, academic sanctions may range, depending on the severity of the offense, from F for the assignment to F for the course.

**Note to students with disabilities:**

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, it is Penn State's policy to provide reasonable academic adjustments for students with documented disabilities. If you have a disability-related need for modifications in this course, contact Sharon Manco, 610-892-1461, 127 Vairo Library, [sam26@psu.edu](mailto:sam26@psu.edu). This notification should occur by the end of the first week of the semester. Students may visit [www.equity.psu.edu/ods/](http://www.equity.psu.edu/ods/) for complete information.

**Course Schedule [Subject to change]:****Week 1 - January 12, 14:**

- a. Syllabus and discussion of projects.
- b. In-class reflective essay: [2 pages] If you could change one thing in your personal life, on campus, in your community, in the nation or in the world, what

- would it be and why? How would you go about initiating this change?
- c. Film: Making Sense of the Sixties: part 1 – Seeds of the Sixties

**Homework Assignment –**

Interview - Interview a parent(s) or other significant person/people in your life who 'lived' through the 1960's. Write a 2 page paper on their thoughts, memories, etc., It would be appropriate for you to ask them what they remember most about the decade, what (if any) they did to help change 'the system,' what stereotypes were associated with the decade, how they're youth is different from the youth of today, etc. Keep in mind that this is a course on civic engagement, so anything that they can provide in terms of social movements and/or social change (especially the grassroots type) would be of great interest. We will share these in class January 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Assigned Readings for January 19<sup>th</sup>:**

**Chapters 1: BA**

**The Drum Major Instinct – Martin Luther King Jr.: handout**

**What We Don't Talk About When We Don't Talk About Service – handout**

**Week 2 - January 19, 21:**

Reflection. Share interviews with class. Discuss readings.

- a. Understanding the role language plays in social movements and in bringing about change: Defining civic engagement [servant-leader philosophy], reflection, grassroots, and social movement
- b. Overview of social movements from the 1960's to the present.

**Assigned Readings for February 26<sup>th</sup>:**

**Chapter 4: BA**

**Week 3 - January 26, 28:**

Reflection. Continue discussion on Social Movements overview. Discuss final grassroots project assignment (handout). Discuss readings.

**Assigned Readings for February 2<sup>nd</sup>:**

**Will You Die With Me? My Life and the Black Panther Party: handout on Angel**

**American Women Who Shaped the Civil Rights Movement: handout on Angel**

**Theme for English B – handout**

**Freedom Summer**

**Coming of Age in Mississippi (excerpts)**

**The Struggle for Black Equality**

**Week 4 - February 2, 4:**

Reflection. Discuss Readings. Discuss the *Civil Rights Movement*.

Film - *Eyes on the Prize: Part I*

**Assigned Readings for February 9<sup>th</sup>:**

**Chapters 6, 7, 8 & 9: BA**

**Week 5 - February 9, 11:**

Reflection. Discuss Readings. *Women's Movement*

Film – *Making Sense of the Sixties-Part IV: Breaking Boundaries*

**Assigned Readings for February 16<sup>th</sup> :**

**Chapters 14, 15: BA**  
**Tim O'Brien: The Things They Carried**  
**Tim O'Brien: On the Rainy River**  
**Long Distance Running**

**Week 6 - February 16, 18:**

Reflection. Discuss Readings. *Peace Movement* (Vietnam)

Guest speaker: Dr. Paul A. Orlov

**Assigned Readings for February 23<sup>rd</sup>:**

**Chapters 22, 23: BA**  
**Go North Young Man**  
**A Bright and Shining Lie**

**Week 7 - February 23, 25:**

Reflection. Vietnam (continued); Give out Mid-term exam – due March 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Film – Vietnam: A Television History: The Homefront

**Assigned Reading for March 16: Woodstock**

**Week 8 - March 2, 4:**

Mid-term exam due. Discuss final grassroots project (how the process is going). The Counterculture.

Film: *Woodstock*

**Week 9 - March 9, 11: Spring Break**

**Week 10 - March 16, 18:**

Op-Ed letter to the editor due.

Counterculture continued. (Possible guest lecture on Abbie Hoffman)

Film: *Steal This Movie*

**Assigned Readings:**

**Chapter 24: BA**

**The Strange Disappearance of Civic America – Robert Putnam: handout.**  
**don't think of an elephant – George Lakoff: handout.**

**Week 11 - March 23, 25:**

Reflection. Discuss Readings.

Film: *Berkeley in the Sixties*

*Conservative/Progressive Movements*

**Assigned Readings for March 30:**

**Chapters 10, 11, 12, & 13: BA**

**Week 12 - March 30, April 1:**

Reflection. Discuss Readings. *Conservative/Progressive Movements continued.*

*Environmental Movement*

**Week 13 - April 6, 8:**

Reflection. Discuss Readings; *Environmental Movement*  
Film: *Erin Brockovich*

**Week 14 - April 13, 15:**

Looking Back at the Sixties

Film: *Making Sense of the Sixties: Part V: Picking Up the Pieces*

**Week 15 – April 20, 22:**

Student 'Movement' Presentations

**Week 16 - April 27, 29:**

Grassroots Presentations and Final Discussion.

**Final Exam:** Grassroots research paper (10-15 pages) due during finals week