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## Inspiring Active Citizenship in the Community from within the Classroom

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Inspiring Active Citizenship in the Community from within the Classroom

Nathan Halm

Honors Project

Submitted to the Honors College at Bowling Green State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with University Honors

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## **Introduction**

In my time at BGSU I have taken an immense interest in local politics, civics groups and bridging the gap between students on campus and residents of the community of Bowling Green. Through involvements in several organizations both on and off campus I have seen the potential for students to make an impact on the community outside the classroom time and time again. The main question my project addresses is as follows: Can utilizing experiential learning techniques amplify the classroom's ability to develop active citizens and challenge political stereotypes (divisiveness, hobbyism, apathy etc.)? Additionally, can young people gain skills in the classroom through experiential learning that change their perspective on political participation and make them likely to remain active citizens in the future? Through addressing these questions I aim to provide a roadmap for future researchers and faculty for ways to develop connections between campus and community while showing students different perspectives on effective methods for political participation and community engagement. I have participated in experiential learning projects throughout my time at BGSU as a student and these experiences are among the most memorable of my academic career. In addition to the impact experiential learning has had on me personally, the prior literature on civics education has confirmed its efficacy in moving students to become active participants outside the classroom.

If educators and universities utilize effective methods to convey active citizenship as a core value and skill students gain in their undergraduate career, we can begin to address the lack of youth involvement or representation in our politics. By showing students who may feel left out, dismissed, or overlooked in the political environment effective engagement methods they may begin to take it upon themselves to join organizations or groups or even run for office one day rather than embrace apathy. Just as students learn the functionality of our government and

political process, I find it to be necessary to present students with ways to get involved and impact the political process. Throughout this paper I will outline the steps I took to introduce new concepts to students regarding political participation and community engagement. The successes and failures of my project will be analyzed, and I will also discuss the implications of the work done in the Spring semester of 2022. This project was merely one attempt at approaching the concept of active citizenship from within the classroom. There is no doubt that there are more effective strategies to carry out my specific project and entirely different methods as well that can accomplish a similar goal. By starting the conversation on how educators can better reach students who feel left out, for a myriad of reasons, of the modern political environment we can find ways to increase participation in our democracy, a goal that enriches us all.

### **Literature Review**

The literature on experiential learning, civics education and youth political participation provides a robust background for the project at-hand. Looking to norms and patterns of behaviors across a generation can provide insight into that generation's attitudes and priorities. Specifically, when looking at younger millennials (and especially generation z) a pattern of behavior emerges that makes this generation distinct from previous cohorts. Researchers describe political behavior and civic norms among two different categories: duty-based citizenship and engaged citizenship. Simply put, young people are more and more likely to view civic duties and political participation as an avenue for self-expression, personal engagement and social justice whereas older generations are much more inclined to view aspects of civic engagement as responsibilities and obligations rather than personal reflections of values (Dalton, 2006). Not only are these attitudes very different in the mindsets they instill in people, but they affect our

political environment as well. Young people today are much more likely to donate to candidates and causes they believe in rather than older generations did when they were younger (Tich College, 2019). Young people are taking a more hands-on approach to political engagement rather than traditional methods such as voting, townhall attendance, or writing to an elected official. These hands-on actions include debating issues on social media or even in-person, protesting and organizing petitions (Tich College, 2019).

Young people wanting to be more and more hands on would lead one to believe that young people are aspiring for involvement in government. Research shows more and more young people are indeed running for public office but this increase in candidates is not reflected in the current slate of officeholders (Sundström & Stockemer, 2020). Researchers find that several biases and systemic obstacles exist to prevent young candidates from achieving elected status. Of these obstacles include the practical reality of young people's early adult lives mainly consisting of schooling and job training to establish a financial and professional foundation. The time and money it takes to successfully run for office is a prohibitive factor on its own for young people with blossoming career goals, not to mention for those that wish to start a family. But perhaps a more intentional bias resides in the races that young people actually end up running in when they can run for office. Regulations such as voting and candidacy ages outright restrict young Americans from running for Congress or other offices and limit when younger generations can have an influence on institutional power. Researchers studying young people's political participation in the UK came to this conclusion, "Young adults are still rather an anomaly in parliaments and, if we do not change course, they may become even more indifferent to the representative system. They may realize that the political class neglects their agenda and that representatives bear little resemblance to them." (Sundström & Stockemer, 2020). By

underrepresenting young people in elected office, we see a cycle of apathy as younger generations see an older and older government not reflective of their lived experiences or values. This reinforces the cycle with apathetic young people less likely to engage in running for local office, leading a volunteer group, or simply learning the ins and outs of local government (Hersh, 2020).

To fight apathy and the underrepresentation in elected office it is important to engage students and young people early and through creative and engaging methods. As Sundström and Stockemer establish, young people are a very committed voting block when it comes to voting for those in their age group, the problem is that the number of young people who do vote is small comparative to other blocks. Especially when looking at midterm, off-year, and local elections. To combat this, civics education teachers and scholars of related curricula use more modern and engaging methods to encourage early and consistent voting such as critical thought on news sources and volunteering at the polls or with campaigns. Consolidating efforts around public universities in Michigan leading up to the 2008 election, researchers sought to synthesize the most successful elements of these types of classes: “By keeping an eye on the end goal of greater civic engagement and civic literacy, American government instructors at OCC’s Auburn Hills campus have discovered the best means *is* the end, and that practice moves everyone” (Farrah & O’Connor, 2008). A key finding here is that one of the best ways to get students to volunteer or more personally engage in local politics or civics groups is to have them do it in the first place. Experiencing the work often done later in life by most Americans when students are young and more passionate about social justice and social change has promising effects. This emphasis of *doing* rather than studying will be revisited throughout the review of the literature.

Examples of experiential learning projects presented in the literature include a student's issues forum, space for students to discuss current events from differing perspectives, working with existing student governmental structures and student-run news organizations (Farrah & O'Connor, 2008). Using broad categories of projects and emphasizing collaboration between organizations and institutions such as community civics groups and neighboring colleges are also key (Homana, 2018). Utilizing existing community partnerships and engaging students along with educators in ongoing community efforts to advocate for issues or increase civic and political participation. Simply put, keeping definitions broad allows for students to fine tune projects for their individual interests and drives. This increases the amount of individual engagement and the odds that the individual will carry on in their involvements (Elder & Hofrenning, 2007). Adding engaged faculty and strong community leaders has also produced wildly successful effects on youth engagement. Faculty at the University of South Dakota point out that peer leaders via student-led organizations and activities are important in engaging new students into involvement but faculty advising is key. Faculty and community leaders that align student engagement with political and civic engagement is important in keeping organization efficacy as well as maintaining a culture of civic engagement (Molina, et al., 2008). At the University of South Dakota, the Political Science Department facilitates a course on campaigns and democracy which requires students to work directly with local campaigns for eight hours a week up until election day. This course emphasizes practical skills and knowledge students gain while working in a dynamic campaign environment. It is experiences like these coupled with strong student organizations that galvanize a student body to become active citizens.

Other scholars look for more key factors in the success of civics education and experiences. Finding that individual relevance, self-reflection and critical thought is vital for

young people to form lasting relationships with volunteering and political participation. “in order to reach more students and also engage the insights and models of more fields of study. We need not only social science majors, but also future engineers, natural scientists, business people, doctors, journalists, and artists who are both competent in their professional roles and also are active, effective citizens.” (Hollister, et al. 2008). It is a collaborative project, each person has unique passions and ways they relate to politics, finding that link is what is important and that can only be done by integrating civics education into other core curricula. Emphasizing the broad array of service learning and civic education experiences has also proven to be more successful in engaging students and young people. Leaving experiential projects largely up to the individual so they can pursue what they are most interested in allows them to relate more effectively to the project at-hand (Homana, 2018). It also becomes evident that structure is important as well such as experience with government-like structures through student government or in-class simulation,

“Creating councils and volunteer organizations with the potential for students to solve problems can build a positive sense of commitment and identity. These results also suggest the value of learning communities that involve students in collaboration. By cultivating an active voice in discussion students practice skills required in real life problem solving. An essential mechanism may be the opportunity to observe adults in political and civic activities,” (Homana, 2018).

Experiential learning in and of itself has proven to be of the most effective pedagogical methods of conveying lessons and class material of this subject matter to its students. Relying on a few key signifiers of a successful experiential project educators can facilitate tangible hands-on experiences for students to learn from first-hand, “five themes:

learners are involved, active, participants; knowledge is situated in place and time; learners are exposed to novel experiences, which involves risk; learning demands inquiry to specific real-world problems; and critical reflection acts as a mediator of meaningful learning.”

(Morris, 2019). Civics education courses can utilize experiential strategies to go beyond that of a normal classroom environment, “Students felt more knowledgeable as a result of their experiences and expressed a much higher level of interest in following and discussing politics, characteristics predictive of higher civic involvement.” (Elder & Hofrenning, 2007). Incorporating experiences and individual student interests into curriculum is not only a more creative outlet for students but it also seems to serve an empirical goal of cultivating a more active citizenry.

With so much of the literature looking for ways to remedy an apathetic population and presenting efficacious participatory alternatives, I found it important to find text that responsibly diagnoses the participatory problem in the first place. Perhaps the most influential prior literature on our current state of political engagement is in Eitan Hersh’s work *Politics is for Power*. In it, Hersh lays out several frameworks for how most Americans engage in the modern political landscape, especially with the advent of technology influencing our political participation. Hersh outline a concept called *Political Hobbyism* which aptly describes a common behavior among both young and old Americans and how they view politics. Hersh succinctly describes the behavior here:

“Over some two hours I fold [laundry] half-heartedly as I watch TV and clutch my phone. I refresh my Twitter feed to keep up on the latest political crisis, then toggle over to Facebook to read clickbait news stories, then over to YouTube to see a montage of juicy clips from the latest congressional hearing. I then complain to my

family about all the things I don't like that I have seen. What I'm doing, that isn't politics. What I'm doing I call political hobbyism," (Hersh, 2020).

Hersh offers solutions to hobbyism by going out into the community and engaging with voters and elected officials, by volunteering and campaigning, by attending meetings and even by supporting school fundraisers. Hersh comments on apathy from younger college-educated Americans and their lacking a sense of responsibility to their communities. Those college-educated Americans often times think of themselves as community leaders but they often do not engage as such in local civics. Rather than joining in on Twitter arguments or sharing videos on Facebook Hersh would rather see this cohort of college-educated young adults volunteer for campaigns, sit in on city council meetings, organize neighbors to increase voter turnout etc. This is what Hersh sees politics as, a pursuit of power to change minds and improve communities, not as a red vs blue argument (Hersh, 2020). This book has been pivotal in energizing new organizers and activists around the nation and will be featured heavily in my project.

The literature on civic education and youth involvement in the political participation is strongly in favor of implementing experiential learning projects that can be adapted to individual student's interests into civics curriculum. This is way educators interested in increasing youth involvement in the political process can take steps towards that goal in their own classrooms and institutions. With the backing of the literature outlined prior I utilized these concepts in creating my project.

## **Methods**

To merge the goals of the Honors College at BGSU and my passion for active citizenship I sought to innovate the ways in which civic education was conveyed in the classroom. This innovation is based on literature in the field of civics education as well as service learning and has also been informed by my experiences in the classroom both as a student in the Honors College as well as a facilitator in the Marvin Center for Student Leadership and Civic Engagement at BGSU. In short, to inspire active citizenship I chose to create and facilitate an Honors seminar course with a focus on experiential learning while based in course texts and readings to center learning outcomes on community engagement and political participation. The direct application of my research question was a unique opportunity I saw as essential in satiating my curiosity on student-focused community engagement and active citizenship.

The first steps in constructing the seminar began in the Spring of 2021, more than a full calendar year removed from syllabus day of Spring 2022. I began originally with an idea of using a classroom setting to combine the two main elements of what came to be the full seminar course. The experiential learning project and the course text, *Politics is for Power* by Eitan Hersh. The experiential learning project was not only inspired by my personal experiences with hands-on learning and service-learning projects, but it also became pivotal to several classes I had taken in my undergraduate career thus far. In *Critical Thinking about Great Ideas* from Spring 2019 students concluded with a final project in which we were all assigned to embark on an “outrageous act of everyday rebellion”, inspired by Gloria Steinem’s work *Outrageous Acts and Everyday Rebellions* and my political science course: *Politics, Policy, and Poverty* featured a community project in which students worked with local organizations to advocate for policy solutions approaching different aspects of poverty in the region. As for the second element, Hersh’s work had a profound impact on my view of political participation, community

engagement, and it had a unique application to young people that I saw as extremely empowering and perspective-shifting. I knew early on that if I wanted to convey the same reactions and reflections to students that I had to the book, then I would need to pull heavily from Hersh's writings. With these two key aspects in mind, I began to construct the syllabus for the Honors 3000 course: *Political Advocacy and Citizenship*.

Over the course of the late spring and early summer of 2021 I met several times with my advisors Dr. Justin Rex and Professor Michael Schulz, to begin an outline of topics that would be covered week-to-week during the spring semester of 2022. (The syllabus used for the course is viewable in the Appendix). With the readings divided up and Hersh's work becoming even greater of a focal point of the class, all that was left was to clarify how to introduce and frame the other vital aspect of the seminar the experiential learning component. A reemerging theme of my experience crafting and applying the syllabus to the classroom was the ever-expanding definition of community engagement and active citizenship. I wanted to base the experiential project around a model that was adaptable to evolving definitions as well as concrete enough to apply to course readings and even the student's prior experiences in service and community-oriented work. The last aspect of the community project that I saw as essential to capture the essence of what I wanted the class to embody is the ability for students to "make it their own". Based in literature and lived experience, it becomes evident that projects and assignments based around student-specific passions and areas of interest become most successful. To not prescribe a definition or subject matter but to again ground the project in a tangible conceptualized model, I chose to make the Social Change Wheel (Iowa and Minnesota Campus Connect) the basis for the experiential learning project. This diagram is available in the Appendix.

For student assessment and outcomes, I established five key learning outcomes (to be analyzed later) and created several written assignments for students to complete throughout the course. To end the semester, I planned for students to present on their final project to condense takeaways from the readings and in-class discussions with the skills and knowledge gained through the experiential project. I also wanted to show any changes in perspective or attitude to active citizenship or participatory behaviors through a pre- and post-class assessment given on the first and last day of class. These assessment methods would prove vital to establishing strengths and weaknesses of the implementation and of the material used to convey core course concepts. The written assignments: Journal Entries and the Pre- and Post-Class Assessments are available in the Appendix.

## **Results**

In the course syllabus I outlined five different learning outcomes derived from work done with Dr. Rex and Prof. Schulz as well as other civics education curricula such as Tufts University's Student Civic Learning Outcomes. To evaluate the efficacy of the course overall I wanted to compare student responses to material and in-class discussion to the learning outcomes I had set from the beginning. Table 1 shows learning outcomes and corresponding student responses that demonstrate an understanding of the learning outcome. In Table 1 I present a variety of perspectives and takeaways from the student perspective from throughout the semester. It is important to note some differences in perspective that were cause for healthy debate in the classroom. Aside from these direct quotes the outcomes of the community projects themselves, in my view, was evident of another success of the course. Students were able to make the project their own and something they uniquely cared about and were inspired by. Projects took up a wide variety of themes and topics while all engaging in the community and

political process in their own unique ways. By allowing the freedom for students to choose their project, not only did they have the opportunity to engage in a topic they genuinely care about but the experience itself had a greater opportunity to be meaningful while accomplishing good work in the community.

Table 1

Learning Outcome	Student Meeting Learning Outcome	Students Diverging from Learning Outcome
Be able to critically examine their personal values, attitudes and beliefs about participation in our political system nationally, locally, online, and in-person.	<p>“I read about things going on in politics, and I do my best to make sure that I am looking at sources that are more credible so that I am not getting false information, but I frankly do not do much about what I read.”</p> <p>“It was all about self-soothing and believe[d] that I was morally superior to people who did not post. It created a disconnect between my world on social media and the actual world.”</p>	Note: Each student seemed to demonstrate the critical thought necessary to examine their individual relationships with political engagement.
Ground themselves and their values with methods and strategies for acting upon those values while considering personal strengths or weaknesses that enhance their action.	“I mentioned that I am not one for public activity, but rather investigative methods to engage. Hence why I thought it would be better for me to interview some of the more influential people in Wood County instead of attempting to engage in the public sphere.”	“I do not have any expectations for this project, and only wish to investigate whether our dishes could be poisoning us or not. If nothing significant is found in terms of leaching for my lead project, I am not sure what I will do instead, perhaps start attending Green Party meetings and try to get involved with an on campus or off campus environmental organization.”
Identify problems that are addressable via local government and local action. Understand possible courses of action to address said problem through government or community organizations.	“I have helped with projects to help make my school greener when I was in high school and middle school, so I figured I would enjoy doing that on campus as well. It is also something that seems sustainable in my life with my schedule, and I would be able to continue my involvement even after this class is over.”	“I currently don’t have a project prepared but I have a few ideas. I have been struggling to find actions that are political engagement.”
Understand competing perspectives about effective political action, organizing, and social change and developing a sense of solidarity with those working towards similar goals.	<p>“Young people have a unique perspective on how governments should function, what values should be considered in law and justice.”</p> <p>“I think about Americans being politically engaged are college students protesting the war in Vietnam in the sixties or high school students today putting on the March for Our Lives demonstrations.”</p>	“I never saw community service in general as a form of political engagement. With this last class and chapters discussing how one can employ community service in a form to gain political power, I found it interesting. I never intend to do that with where I volunteer though for a few reasons... I do not want power, even if it is small or local”
Be able to participate politically through media, elected officials, and/or community organizations to promote local involvement on the issues they care about.	“if I support a movement or want something passed in congress I need to start locally. Everything starts at the smallest local level. My second main takeaway I had from this class is that politics are just like everything else we do in life, they're habit and routine. Before the class I thought I had to be a part of protests and live and breath politics in order to be involved, but there are simple ways to get involved and to implement it into my weekly life.”	“However, many students do not participate in politics even with the fewer responsibilities and more time. I know the reason that I haven’t participated in politics is because I have limited time and I used to feel that I did not understand the political landscape well enough to participate.”

## Discussion

As stated earlier one of the main challenges and developments when implementing the course came as the experiential project was introduced to students and project ideas began to form. Many students found difficulty in nailing down a concrete topic or idea to pursue, this drove me to offer several examples in class of project topics as well as generally expand the definition of what active citizenship and community engagement meant in the scope of the class. As this definition expanded to be more applicable to every student, ideas became clearer and project subjects started to diversify. I anticipated a fair amount of traditional political involvements (voter registration initiatives, working with local parties or candidates, etc.) but these traditional avenues quickly became the minority of projects. Most projects focused on connecting campus life and students to a part of the community that held similar values. For example, one project created a new position within a prominent student organization entirely dedicated to communicating and collaborating with community organizations on matters of local government and civics outreach. Another, sought to bring environmental awareness from a student organization to community members concerned about environmental issues in the region. This change in scope of projects was not a sign of weakness or even of particular strength, it simply was an unforeseen change that in retrospect, is supported by the prior literature. Researchers have been quick to point to young people's likelihood to feel left out of the political arena or discussion (Sundström & Stockemer, 2020).

Overall, students made their final projects truly their own and expanded upon my assumptions of political participation among young people. Journal entries and post- and pre-class assessments made clear of a perspective shift from Hersh's *Hobbyist* diagnosis to a critically thinking active citizenship. I do not believe that this one experience will mean that

students in the course will go on to become non-stop volunteers or supporters of community organizations, but I do believe that this course planted a seed and set an example of how one can become involved in their community through a plethora of methods. No matter what issue or topic a student is drawn to, there is a way to connect that passion to a community need or organization that values similar issues. This class has shown me that it is possible to connect the goals of empowering students to impact the world with community needs and local issues in a way that builds the relationship between campus and community and for that I am proud to have had the opportunity to embark on this project.

### **Implications for Further Research**

As an undergraduate student with a passion for active citizenship and uplifting students to branch out from the campus environment, I view this project as a successful test of innovative methods to encourage that style of behavior. I would be remiss though to consider this a completely robust and finished subject matter. There are some key limitations and areas of further application that I would encourage future researchers and implementors to take advantage of. The first being time, the seminar course of Spring 2022 was a 1-credit hour course, and this was a limiting factor on how much ground we could cover in class on the reading material as well as expectations for time spent outside of the classroom on experiential learning projects. With more time dedicated to the course more can be done week-to-week to encourage consistency in project time commitments and clarification on course content. More time outside the classroom especially would allow a greater development and refining of experiential projects and perhaps would result in a greater impact on student experience.

It also must be said that this was my first attempt at creating a syllabus and applying a course outline to a weekly classroom. Those with more experience than I may have more success

at using the classroom environment to facilitate deeper discussions, learning and conveying of course concepts as well as utilizing the space for project development. Without a learning curve of being relatively new to classroom facilitation I do believe that the work can be improved, and the course further refined. It is also important to note that introducing the experiential projects with a more inclusive and encompassing definition of active citizenship and community engagement may also improve outcomes as most students from this semester seemed disinterested with traditional political activity and sought to create new avenues for participation. I hope that more work can be done on this topic in the near future because I believe this is a space vital to combat apathy among young people in a time where we face unique challenges within our democracy and society at-large. This project provides a promising framework for future classes at Bowling Green State University and other universities in the United States interested in empowering students to impact their communities at the local level.

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## **Appendix**

*Social Change Wheel model used in class*



*Social Change Wheel 2.0 by Iowa & Minnesota Campus Compact is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 4.0*

**Social Change Wheel 2.0 Toolkit Page 4**

*Syllabus used in Spring 2022*

**HNRS 3000- Political Advocacy and Citizenship  
Spring 2022 Syllabus**

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## Course Inspiration

Students and young people have a unique passion and interest in social justice and social change. One of the aims of this curriculum is to connect that passion and energy for social justice and change to the institution of local politics. Using lessons and experiences of renowned organizer and labor activist Jane McAlevey and readings from research and work of Professor Eitan Hersh of Tufts University this course will show the power of organized action and the need for young people to get involved in the political arena at the local and structural level. Existing evidence and literature in the area of civics education show that young people and students who are educated in a class dedicated for civics-based learning and especially in settings where experiential learning is encouraged/required, have higher rates of voter participation and civic involvement. In this course students will be tasked with pairing their passions and interests with bettering their communities, exchanging disengaged cynicism with locally involved optimism.

Experiential learning will be a strong component of this course. It is monumentally important for us to experience the “boots on the ground” side of political action. Far, far removed from the twitter battlegrounds and angry posts on Facebook. By experiencing in-person political engagement and directly participating, students will gain first-hand knowledge of how they directly impacted the local political environment. By participating locally, the school-community relationship grows, and students can find organizations and causes they align with in the community in which they learn, live, and work. Community service and involvement in community groups is one of the strongest indicators of voter participation and civic engagement in adult life. Starting this community service and involvement in local politics early in one’s life can set them up for an adult life with flourishing involvement opportunities. Through learning about different methods of political engagement and practicing these methods in-person it is the goal of this course to challenge students to consider getting involved and staying involved locally with the issues they care about.

## Learning Outcomes

**At the end of this course students will...**

1. Be able to critically examine their personal values, attitudes and beliefs about participation in our political system nationally, locally, online, and in-person.
2. Ground themselves and their values with methods and strategies for acting upon those values while considering personal strengths or weaknesses that enhance their action.

3. Identify problems that are addressable via local government and local action. Understand possible courses of action to address said problem through government or community organizations.
4. Understand competing perspectives about effective political action, organizing, and social change and developing a sense of solidarity with those working towards similar goals.
5. Be able to participate politically through media, elected officials, and/or community organizations to promote local involvement on the issues they care about.

**Reference: Tufts University's Student Civic Learning Outcomes**

## **Course Materials**

1. *Politics is for Power* by Eitan Hersh: The main text for the course
2. *A master class in organizing: Vox Conversations* feat. Ezra Klein & Jane McAlevey to be found on canvas.
3. Other materials such as news articles, websites, podcasts that will supplement class material which will be provided via canvas.

## **Assignments**

1. Start and end of class assessments ----- 10% of course grade
2. Journal entries ----- 20% of course grade
3. Experiential Learning Project ----- 40% of course grade
4. In-class discussion and participation/reading --- 30% of course grade

## **Experiential Learning Project**

The cornerstone of our course will be practicing one of the different methods and approaches to politics in the real world. We will introduce the social change wheel in class to center the projects. Students will be asked to take part in a project in the BGSU, Bowling Green, Wood County, or broader community that embraces at least 2 elements listed on the social change wheel. These projects could range from volunteering on a local campaign, attending a city council meeting and voicing concerns, raising awareness and a plan of action for an issue you care about, etc. All projects will be approved by Dr. Rex and Nate before starting the project.

It is expected that these projects will span over the course of multiple days and/or several experiences so please plan accordingly and be prepared to spend time outside of class on this assignment. These projects are also meant to be truly meaningful to you! So please try to find something you are particularly passionate about even if it is not listed or brought up in class. Throughout the semester students will be asked for updates on their projects during in class

discussion, these times will be used to help workshop and even plan projects with some group input. At the end of the course students are expected to present on their projects to tell the group the inspiration behind it, the actual experience, and what the student may have learned by completing the project.

With COVID continuing to be an important matter of public health and safety, this may alter available opportunities for involvement and political engagement. If you have significant difficulty finding project ideas due to these circumstances either out of concern for personal safety or any other factor, please contact Dr. Rex or Nate

## **Weekly Course Outline**

### **Week of January 13<sup>th</sup>**

- **Start of class assessment.**
- **Intro**
- **Goal of the course: Challenge your perspective on what politics is and ways to practice it.**
- Intro to Local Gov, Wood County Specifics. All politics is local, why a micro view is helpful and effective

### **Week of January 20<sup>th</sup> (MLK Jr Day)**

- **Discuss Hersh Intro (1-15)**
- What is political hobbyism?
- Organizing

### **Week of January 27<sup>th</sup>**

- **Discuss Hersh Chapter 1-2 (15-28)**
- Media and deep canvassing
- Campus political life

### **Week of February 3<sup>rd</sup>**

- **Discuss Hersh Chapter 3-4 (29-45)**
- Young people lack political participation in certain areas and thrive in others.
- Journal Entry #1

### **Week of February 10<sup>th</sup>**

- **Listen to Jane McAlevey's appearance on Vox Conversations**
- Local political involvement, students attacking institutional power
- End of this week: deadline for project proposals

### **Week of February 17<sup>th</sup>**

- **Discuss Hersh Chapter 5-6, *Voice of Westmoreland* (46-58)**
- Angela case study

- Reflection on Vox Conversation
- Intersection of age and political action and influence.

### **Week of February 24<sup>th</sup>**

- **Discuss Hersh Chapter 7-9 (59-86)**
- Nakh case study
- **McAlevy's podcast with Ezra Klein: Takeaways and relating back to Hersh**
- Contrast the different political approaches from this reading.

### **Week of March 3<sup>rd</sup>**

- **Discuss Hersh Chapter 10-12 (87-108)**
- Demographics of political involvement
- Community project update
- Journal entry #2

### **Spring Break**

### **Week of March 17<sup>th</sup>**

- **Discuss Chapter 15 (127-135)**
- Empathy and its role in politics, deep canvassing
- Are organizers more empathetic? Should they be?
- Is politics seen as an extension of empathy?

### **Week of March 24<sup>th</sup>**

- **Discuss Chapter 16 (135-146)**
- Can hobbyism lead us on to become locally involved?
- Strengths of political hobbyism?
- Project updates

### **Week of March 31<sup>st</sup>**

- **Discuss Chapter 17 (147-160)**
- Carol case study
- The structure of the county party.
- What does the structure Hersh describes, or lack thereof, implicate for young people?
- Journal Entry #3

### **Week of April 7<sup>th</sup>**

- **Discuss Chapter 20 (182-199)**
- The case for political machines and their role in limiting hobbyism
- Last project update before presentation

### **Week of April 14<sup>th</sup>**

- **Discuss Chapter 21-22 (199-219)**

- The hierarchy of political involvement.
- End of class assessment
- Journal entry #4

**Week of April 21<sup>st</sup>, Last Day of Class**

- Presentations on experiential projects

**Week of April 25<sup>th</sup> (Exam Week)**

- NO CLASS

*Pre-Class Assessment given on the first day of class*

1. What is your level of current civic engagement? (1 being not engaged and 5 being extremely engaged)

1      2      3      4      5

1. Please describe behaviors or actions you have or are currently taking demonstrating your political and civic engagement.

3. Indicate which of the following best describes your political participation (choose as many as applicable.)

- I do not really participate in politics
- I watch news or read informative social media posts regarding political issues
- I follow political figures on social media/receive news subscriptions to stay informed
- I repost and talk about the issues I care about with family and friends
- I vote and make sure my friends and family vote in all or most elections
- I donate to politicians or causes that I care the most about
- I volunteer my time with candidates and causes I care the most about
- I participate in direct service work to fulfill needs in my community

1. In your opinion, what are the best ways for student and young people to participate politics?

1. In general, how would you describe your view on political participation

*Post-Class Assessment given on the last day of class*

1. What is your level of current civic engagement? (1 being not engaged and 5 being extremely engaged)

1      2      3      4      5

1. Please describe behaviors or actions you have or are currently taking demonstrating your political and civic engagement.

3. Indicate which of the following best describes your political participation (choose as many as applicable.)

- I do not really participate in politics
- I watch news or read informative social media posts regarding political issues
- I follow political figures on social media/receive news subscriptions to stay informed
- I repost and talk about the issues I care about with family and friends
- I vote and make sure my friends and family vote in all or most elections
- I donate to politicians or causes that I care the most about
- I volunteer my time with candidates and causes I care the most about
- I participate in direct service work to fulfill needs in my community

1. In your opinion, what are the best ways for student and young people to participate politics?

1. In general, how would you describe your view on political participation

6. Feel free to share any additional notes on how this course as affected your views on political participation, community engagement, local politics, and active citizenship that was not addressed in prior questions.

*Journal Entries used as written assignments throughout the semester*

**Journal Entry 1 Prompt:** Please write 100-500 words on how the first few chapters of *Politics is for Power* has or has not changed your mindset on political engagement. General thoughts and reflection on the text and in-class discussion are also welcome.

**Journal Entry 2 Prompt:** Please write 100-500 words on your experiential project, some brief inspiration behind it and why you chose it. If you have planned when the experience will take place, please expand upon that as well. If you have expectations going into the project, please explain. General thoughts and reflection on the text and in-class discussion are also welcome.

**Journal Entry 3 Prompt:** Please write 100-500 words answering this question, "What role do students and young people play in political engagement? Are students and young people in a unique position when it comes to political engagement in comparison to other groups? Why or why not?" General thoughts and reflection on the text and in-class discussion are also welcome.

**Journal Entry 5 Prompt:** Please write 100-500 words on how this class and the course texts has or has not changed your mindset on political/community engagement. Feel free to touch on your experiential project as well. General thoughts and reflection on the text and in-class discussion are also welcome.

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