

COMMUNITY POLITICS

POL SCI/URE-312, Fall of 2005

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Office Hours:
T TH, 9:30-11:30
Wed., 10-12 & 1-2
And By Appointment

Introduction

The objective of this course is to explore from several perspectives the dynamics of community politics in the United States. I will conceptualize community from several overlapping points of view. Community can be defined along racial, ethnic, religious and class lines, or bounded by geographic considerations, or shaped by policy interests. This course will examine just these forms of community, particularly as they have played out in American history and as they are playing out yet today. We will consider what these struggles about and within community mean for contemporary politics. Perhaps most critically, we will spend some time considering the many ways of thinking about the meaning of community in the United States. As part of this discussion we will devote some time to a careful consideration of democratic theory and community politics. The substantive topics we will consider include the agrarian revolt in the late nineteenth century, the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s in the United States, and such contemporary issues as ongoing efforts to rejuvenate older urban areas, the creation of religious community, and Native American attempts at community-building.

Course Requirements

Your grade in this course will be determined by your performance on three examinations. Each examination will count for 1/3 of your final course grade. Each of these essay examinations will run about a dozen pages or so. You will be given from seven to ten days to complete each examination.

Students who attend class regularly and participate in classroom discussions will be given some additional consideration when I am determining final grades. Students who fail to attend class on a regular basis will be subject to the following policy: I will take attendance at least once each week. Students who accumulate three or four absences will have their final grade reduced by 5%. Students who accumulate five to six absences will have their final grade reduced by 10%. Students who accumulate more than six absences will have their final grade reduced by 30%. For example, if a student has averaged an 85% on the examinations, but they have registered six absences, they will receive a 75% for the course.

My grading scale is as follows: A = 93-100, A/B = 88-92, B = 83-87, B/C = 78-82, C = 70-77, D = 60-69, and F = 0-59.

Those students who choose to do so can register for an additional credit of Independent Study. This option, which I will discuss further in class, will entail engagement in some form of community politics for roughly fifteen hours over the course of the semester, and the production of a brief paper that relates this experience to the themes of the course itself. This one credit of Independent Study will be graded on the basis of the brief paper.

Required Books

Harvard Sitkoff, The Struggle for Black Equality (1993, 2nd ed.)
Lawrence Goodwyn, The Populist Moment: A Short History of the Agrarian Revolt in America (1978)
Robert Booth Fowler, The Dance With Community (1991)
Margot Kempers, Community Matters (2002)
Robert A. Dahl, On Democracy (1998)

Course Outline

PART ONE: Thinking About Community

Week One: What is Community? What is Good, and Bad, About Community?

Readings: Fowler, Preface and chptrs. 1-3; Kempers, chptr. one.

On Reserve: K. Karst, "Citizenship and Nationhood."

Week Two: Diverse Images of Community

Readings: Fowler, chptrs. 4-9.

Weeks Three and Four: Democratic Theory and Community Politics

Readings: Dahl, entire book; *On Reserve:* Heilbroner, "The Ideology of Capital."

PART TWO: Contemporary Community Democracy in the United States

Week Five: Native Americans and Unitarians (!)

Readings: Kempers, chptrs. two and three.

Week Six: Community Politics and Urban America

Readings: Kempers, chptrs. 4-6.

*******EXAMINATION ONE*******

PART THREE: Populism and Democracy in the U.S., 1870-1900

Week Seven: Creating a Democratic Politics in the American Heartland

Readings: Goodwyn, Introduction and chptrs. 1-3

Week Eight: We the People Confront and Engage the Entrenched Status Quo

Readings: Goodwyn, chptrs. 4-6

Week Nine: Agrarian America versus Corporate America

Readings: Goodwyn, chptrs. 7-9 and Afterword

*******EXAMINATION TWO*******

PART FOUR: The Civil Rights Movement and the Promise of American Democracy

Week Ten: Up From Slavery—the Civil Rights Movement's Beginnings

Readings: Sitkoff, chptrs. 1-3

Week Eleven: The Rise and Decline of the Civil Rights Movement

Readings: Sitkoff, chptrs. 4-6

Week Twelve: What Next for the Civil Rights Movement?

Readings: Sitkoff, chptrs. seven and eight

Weeks Thirteen and Fourteen: Final Thoughts on Community Politics in the United States

Readings: Kempers, chptrs. 7-10.

********EXAMINATION FINAL********