

Introduction to Civic Studies
Tufts University
Fa24-CVS-0020-01

Instructor: Peter Levine, Lincoln Filene Professor and Academic Dean.
Email: peter.levine@tufts.edu.

Summary

Civic Studies is an interdisciplinary field of study that focuses on critical reflection, ethical thinking, and action for social change. People who think and act together to improve society must address problems of collective action (how to get members to work together) and deliberation (how to reason together about contested values). They must understand how power is organized and how it operates within and between societies. They must grapple with social conflict, violence, and other obstacles to peaceful cooperation. When tensions arise within a group, people face questions of justice and fairness, and they must confront questions about appropriate relationships to outsiders of all types. This introductory course explores ethical, political, and theological frameworks for understanding how people can and should organize themselves to improve societies. Readings are drawn from philosophy and political theory, political science, economics, the history of social movements, and other disciplines. This course provides theoretical grounding for Civic Studies majors and for other students interested in social change.

Final letter grades will be calculated on the following basis:

- Up to 50 points for attendance and class participation, with a possibility of up to 5 extra points for excellent participation (see [rubric](#))
- Up to 63 points for complete and on-time short reflection essays, with 21 opportunities to earn an extra point for an exceptional essay (for a theoretical maximum of 84 points)
- Up to 39 points for 3 group projects
- Up to 9 points for the final group presentation

Total points will convert to course letter grades as follows:

- 175 or more: A+
- 160-174: A

- 150-159: A-
 - 140-149: B+
 - 130-139: B
 - 120-129: B-
 - 110-119: C+
 - 110-119: C
 - 100-109: D
 - Below 100: F
-

Sept. 3

Introduction to the course and instructor. Many of the issues we will discuss are introduced on this [learning map](#), which is an optional reference for you. The three main categories of issues are:

1. Problems of collective action: How to establish incentives and rules so that people cooperate well, whether in everyday life and stable institutions or within social movements that strive for change.
2. Problems of discourse: How to communicate about contested issues and listen to others and how to organize good discussions.
3. Problems of identity-based exclusion and injustice: How to change who is included and on what terms.

To introduce major themes of the course, we'll watch the first [7 minutes of this film](#), together and discuss what we observe in small groups and whole class.

Please take the [student survey](#) before Sept. 10.

Sept. 5: No class (Peter Levine is away)

Sept. 10

A Case Study: The Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-6)

In class, students will form small groups to discuss tactics and strategies in this case.

Required readings

- [Case Study: The Montgomery Bus Boycott Case Study: The Montgomery Bus Boycott](#)
 - Episode 1 of “Eyes on the Prize, ["Awakenings, 1954-1956"](#). (Note: Presents racist violence in an explicit way.)
-

Part I of the Course: Problems of Collective Action

Sept. 12

- Ezra Klein and [former Tufts professor] Maryanne Wolf, "This is your Brain on 'Deep Reading': It's Pretty Magnificent," New York Times, Nov. 22, 2022--listen to the [audio](#). or read a [transcript transcript](#).
- Amelia Hoover Green, "[How to read political science: a guide in four steps..](#) "

In class, we will simulate a “tragedy of the commons.” Then we will discuss some general principles of game theory and their application to real-world problems.

Sept. 17

Elinor Ostrom’s solutions to the Tragedy of the Commons

- Selections from the works of Elinor Ostrom. Please read [1-37 of this PDF 1-37 of this PDF](#) for Sept 18.
- Watch a required [pre-recorded lecture \(17 minutes\)](#) -- the lecture entitled "Part 1: principles"

Discussion of the lecture and readings.

Sept. 19

Ostrom continued

- Selections from the works of Elinor Ostrom. Please read [38-65 of this PDF 38-65 of this PDF](#) for Sept 20.
- Watch a required [pre-recorded lecture \(11 minutes\)](#) and submit a [one-paragraph response](#), due by Sept 19 at 11:59 pm.

In class: discussions in small groups and the whole class.

Sept. 24

Ostrom and the example of police reform

How to provide public safety without discrimination and injustice in a society with a deep history of racism.

- Review [Ostrom's Design Principles](#). (also in the previous readings)
- Roge Karma, "[How cities can tackle violent crime without relying on police.](#)" (Vox, August 7, 2020)
- Genesee Keevil, "[Four officers, no weapons, no charges: A Yukon First Nation's solution for keeping the peace.](#)," Globe & Mail, June 23, 2019. ([PDF](#) PDFversion in case you have trouble with the link.)
- Aaron Vansintjan, "[What Elinor Ostrom's Work Tells Us About Defunding the Police.](#)," June 18, 2020

In class: discussions in small groups and the whole class.

Sept. 26

Social capital as part of the solution

- Robert D. Putnam, "[Community-Based Social Capital and Educational Performance Community-Based Social Capital and Educational Performance](#)," in Ravitch and Viteritti, eds., *Making Good Citizens*, pp. 58-95
- Pierre Bourdieu, [Forms of Capital](#), 1986 (excerpt)
- Rodney Hero, "[Social Capital and Racial Inequality in America Social Capital and Racial Inequality in America](#)," *Perspectives on Politics*, 2003, pp. 113-122.

Optional: [An 18-minute explanatory video](#). by Peter Levine.

[First group assignment is due.](#)

Oct. 1

Spectators and organizers

- Eitan Hersh, "[Politics is for Power, Not Consumption.](#)," Boston Review
- Hahrie Han, Matthew Baggetta, and Jennifer Oser, "[Organizing and Democracy Organizing and Democracy](#)," *Annual Review of Political Science* (2024)

Part II of the Course: Discussing good ends and means

Oct. 3

Habermas and Deliberative Democracy

- Peter Levine, [What Should We Do? A Theory of Civic Life \(2022\)](#), 86-103 [What Should We Do? A Theory of Civic Life \(2022\)](#), 86-103
- Jürgen Habermas, "[The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article, The Public Sphere: An Encyclopedia Article](#)," *New German Critique*, 3 (1974), pp. 49-55
- Required [pre-recorded lecture](#)

Oct. 9

Updating and critically assessing Habermas' model

- Danielle Allen, "[Reconceiving Public Spheres: The Flow Dynamics Mode Reconceiving Public Spheres: The Flow Dynamics Model](#)"

In class: mostly small group discussion

Oct 10

How does deliberation work in practice?

- [The Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review.](#)
- [Participatory Budgeting.](#)
- [Panchayat Raj.](#)
- [YIAGA Africa: Youth participation in Nigerian Politics.](#)
- James Fishkin and Larry Diamond, "[This Experiment Has Some Great News for Our Democracy.](#)", *New York Times* (October 2nd, 2019)

Oct 15

Other forms of discourse: testimony and empathy

- Lynn Sanders, "[Against Deliberation](#)".
- Emily McRae, "[Empathy, Compassion, and 'Exchanging Self and Other' in Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Ethics Empathy, Compassion, and 'Exchanging Self and Other' in](#)

[Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Ethics](#)” for Handbook of Philosophy of Empathy (Routledge), edited by Heidi Maibom, 2017.

Oct. 17

How can we design for deliberation?

- Tina Nabatchi, Matt Leighninger, *Public Participation for 21st Century Democracy* (2015), [chapters 8 and 10](#) [chapters 8 and 10](#).

Oct 22

Black Republican Thought

- Required pre-recorded [lecture](#) (12.5 minutes)
- Melvin L. Rogers “[Race, Domination, and Republicanism](#) [Race, Domination, and Republicanism](#)” in *Difference without Domination: Pursuing Justice in Diverse Democracies*, edited by Danielle Allen and Rohini Somanathan (University of Chicago Press 2020)
- A [one-paragraph response](#) is due by Oct 24 at 11:59 pm

Oct. 24

Meet at the Tufts University Art Gallery (on the Medford campus) for a class visit to [Tomashi Jackson: Across the Universe](#),

(Note that the short written response is due on Oct . 27, three days *after* the visit. If you miss class, you should visit the exhibition at a different time and do the response.)

[Second group project is due.](#)

Part III of the Course: Exclusion and Oppression Related to Identity

Oct. 29

An influential defense of “identity politics”

- [The Combahee River Collective Statement](#). (1977)

Oct. 31

A current reflection

- Olúfẹ̀mi Táíwò, [Being-in-the-Room Privilege: Elite Capture and Epistemic Deference.](#)”

Optional: Táíwò’s article is an excerpt from his 2022 book *Elite Capture: How the Powerful Took Over Identity Politics (And Everything Else)*, which is readable but too long to be required in full for this course.

[Third group assignment is due.](#)

Nov. 5

Guest speakers from the Tufts University Prison Initiative at Tisch College (TUPIT).

Nov 7

Social Movements

- Charles Tilly, "[Social Movements, 1768-2004 Social Movements, 1768-2004](#)"
- Marshall Ganz, "[Why David Sometimes Wins: Strategic Capacity in Social Movements Why David Sometimes Wins: Strategic Capacity in Social Movements,](#)" in Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper, *Rethinking Social Movements: Structure, Meaning, and Emotion* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004) pp.177-98.

Nov. 12

What happens when people experience diversity?

- Take an implicit bias test here: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>.
- Craig et al., "[The Pitfalls and Promise of Increasing Racial Diversity: Threat, Contact, and Race Relations in the 21st Century.](#)” *Current Directions in Psychological Science*
- Elizabeth Levy Paluck, "[The contact hypothesis re-evaluated.](#)” *Behavioural Public Policy*
- Han, H., & Arora, M. (2022). [Igniting Change: An Evangelical Megachurch’s Racial Justice Program Igniting Change: An Evangelical Megachurch’s Racial Justice Program.](#) *Perspectives on Politics*, 1-15.

Nov. 14

Community Organizing

- Maria Avila, *Transformative Civic Engagement Through Community Organizing*, [chapters 2 and 3 chapters 2 and 3.](#)

- Fisher, Dana R., Oscar Berglund, and Colin J. Davis. 2023. “[How Effective are Climate Protests at Swaying Policy—and what could make a difference?.](#)”

Nov. 19

- Ramachandra Guha, *Gandhi: The Years that Changed the World* (2018), [Guha Gandhi Guha Gandhi](#)
- Gandhi, *Satyagraha* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing Co., 1951): excerpts in this [PDF PDF](#)
- Gandhi, Notes, May 22, 1924 - August 15, 1924, in *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*(Electronic Book), New Delhi, Publications Division Government of India, 1999, 98 volumes, [28, pp. 307-310](#) [28, pp. 307-310](#)
- Watch this [pre-recorded lecture.](#)

Nov. 21

Does nonviolence work? Does violence work?

- Enos et al., “[Can Violent Protest Change Local Policy Support? Evidence from the Aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles Riot.](#),” American Political Science Review
- Wasow, Omar. “[Agenda Seeding: How 1960s Black Protests Moved Elites, Public Opinion and Voting.](#)” American Political Science Review.
- Required [pre-recorded lecture](#) and a one-paragraph [response](#), due by Nov 28 at 11:59 pm.

Dec. 1: Presentation slides are due

Dec. 3: Student presentations in class

Dec. 5: Student presentations in class