

Summer Laboratory for Social Change
POLS 3960, 3 credits
One-week intensive, all-day course held May 11-15, 2015
Summer 2015 in OSH 255 at the University of Utah

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We have frequently printed the word Democracy. Yet I cannot too often repeat that it is a word the real gist of which still sleeps, quite unawakened, notwithstanding the resonance and the many angry tempests out of which its syllables have come, from pen or tongue. It is a great word, whose history, I suppose, remains unwritten, because that history has yet to be enacted – Walt Whitman

Course Description and Goals

The goal of this course is to provide students with an interactive, one-week intensive seminar which includes an overview of the most salient social problems and an opportunity to hear from and to engage with top local community leaders. This course will require students to select a pressing contemporary social issue and provide an independent assessment of that issue in a 12-15 page research paper that will: (1) consider the historical dimensions of the problem; (2) address the theoretical issues at stake; (3) critically assess the most recent data/research available; and (4) offer alternatives/solutions to the problem under investigation.

Suggested research topics will be discussed on the first day of class, but the general fields of inquiry include the following:

- (1) Local Politics/Community Involvement
- (2) Gender and Race
- (3) Economic Inequality
- (4) Environmental Issues
- (5) Education
- (6) Government Accountability and Governance
- (7) Approaches to Social Change (nonprofits, social responsibility, Bcorps, social movements)

Expected Learning Outcomes:

- Learn the fundamentals of democratic theory and the challenges for civic involvement today;

- Design and conduct an original research project dedicated to a persistent public problem;
- Collaborate with community organizations and leaders to translate academic research into usable action plans;
- Develop the skills necessary for effective oral and written communication of ideas;
- Develop an understanding of the complexity of social change.

Course Requirements

This course is both writing intensive and one that demands active student participation in classroom discussions. Toward these (interrelated) ends, the requirements of this course are as follows:

- **Attendance and Participation: 15%.** This one-week intensive seminar places a premium on your attendance and active participation each day. Every student is expected to come to **EVERY** class *prepared* to actively contribute. *This is not a lecture course.*
- **Two Reading Quizzes: 10% each.** These short reading quizzes will test your understanding of the required readings assigned in this course. Reading quizzes will be given through Canvas and due by midnight on:
 - **Monday, May 11** (for Monday and Tuesday readings)
 - **Wednesday, May 13** (for Wednesday and Thursday readings)
- **Research Proposal: 15%.** A Research Proposal is an initial statement of the research question that you want to address in your final research paper. In approximately one page, your typed proposal should address the following three questions: (1) what issue or controversy is at stake in this paper; (2) what is the relevance or significance of this question/controversy; (3) what 6-8 journal articles do you anticipate drawing on to address your research question.
 - **5-10 minute oral presentation due in class on Friday, May 15. (5%)**
 - **1 page written proposal with references due on canvas on Friday, June 5th by 11:59 PM. (10%)**
- **Literature Review: 20%.** A literature review is a selective, critical discussion of some of the most relevant scholarly research that deals with your paper topic. Your review will consist of a short summary and critical discussion of at least five **scholarly** sources (such as journal articles, books, or monographs) that directly pertain to your research topic. Please see me if you have questions about the materials that would be most relevant for your project. Approximately 6 pages.
 - **Due on Canvas: Friday, June 26th by 11:59PM.**
- **Rough Draft: 20%.** A rough draft of your final research paper should contain: (1) a solid introduction that states the research question and its significance; (2) revised literature review incorporating feedback; (3) an argument and support for

the argument; (4) conclusion that includes your final position on the question; and (5) reference page.

- **Due on Canvas: Friday, July 17th by 11:59PM.**
- **Final Research Paper: 20%.** A 12-15 page paper reflecting your independent and original research on a topic related to this course.
 - **Due on Canvas: Friday, August 7th, 2015 by 11:59PM.**

* **Please Note:** There are no exceptions to any of these deadlines, there are no “make-ups” or “extra credit” options available for this course, and the Marriott Library Research Session and the in-class Writing Workshop are **mandatory** for this class (*you will fail the attendance and participation grade for this class if you do not attend these sessions*).

Required Readings:

The following required book is available at the University Bookstore

Democracy at Risk: How Political Choices Undermine Citizen Participation, and What We Can Do About it, Stephen Macedo, et. al., Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005).

Reserve Readings:

All other required readings for this class are available at the Reserve Desk of the Marriott Library.