

**MC/POLI 2030**  
**Civic Engagement, Media and Youth**  
Spring 2011  
Dr. Rosanne Scholl | Dr. Regina Lawrence  
10:40 – 11:30 MWF | Tureaud 109

---

Dr. Scholl ([rscholl@lsu.edu](mailto:rscholl@lsu.edu))

204 Hodges

Office hours: Mon. 11:45 – 1:45

(or by appointment)

---

Dr. Lawrence ([lawrenr@lsu.edu](mailto:lawrenr@lsu.edu))

240 Hodges

Office hours: Wed. 1:00 – 3:00

(or by appointment)

---

### **Course Overview**

This course is designed to introduce students to a wide variety of theories and practices of civic engagement, and to provide students with the understanding and skills necessary to become more meaningfully engaged citizens. In this class, students will consider a range of perspectives on what it means to be a “good citizen,” and develop a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which contemporary young Americans engage (and do not engage) in different kinds of civic or political activities and public service. The media (traditional and “new”) are one of our main foci, as we explore the structural, informational, and attitudinal factors that shape people’s ability and willingness to actively engage in civic life. We will consider, for example, the relative value of activities like regularly keeping up with public affairs by reading a newspaper versus producing and sharing one’s own commentary on current events through the Internet.

This course will offer both an empirical and conceptual backdrop to current problems of citizenship, and also challenge students to examine and develop their own practices of citizenship. More broadly, as a class we will consider questions concerning whether there really is a “crisis” of youth disengagement in American democracy, and critically analyze the leading policy initiatives for stimulating greater youth involvement in public affairs.

### **Required Text and Reading Materials**

Required textbooks (available in the LSU student bookstore):

Wattenberg, M.P. (2007), *Is Voting for Young People? With a Postscript on Citizen Engagement*. New York: Pearson-Longman.

Dalton, R. J. (2009), *The Good Citizen*, revised edition. CQ Press.

Additional required reading materials will be posted to this course’s Moodle site in pdf format.

## General Education and Learning Objectives

This course fits within the **Social Sciences** area of general education at LSU. As such, the general education learning objectives relevant to this course are:

- The different levels of association, from friends and family, to economy and polity, even to civilizations of global significance.
- The patterns by which societies organize how people relate not only to each other but to the world around them, ranging from relations to their physical environment to relations to the divine.
- The diversity of cultures, across time and space, as well as universal social characteristics and global networks.
- Patterns of imagined best societies as well as discoveries of unintended consequences.

### Course Assignments and Grading (percentages in parentheses indicate value toward final grade)

*Paper #1: Personal Reflections on Civic Engagement.* Students will compose a brief paper (2 pages) reflecting on their existing concept of “citizenship” and where it comes from (e.g. family discussions; primary/secondary classrooms; personal role models; etc.). (10%)

*Essay on the “Dutiful/Informed Citizen” Ideal:* In this 3-4 page essay, students will describe the “dutiful/informed” model of citizenship, discuss its historical development and its promised benefits to democracy and describe evidence of declines in levels of citizen information. (15%)

*Mid-term exam:* This in-class exam will test students’ understanding of changing trends in and various challenges to engaged citizenship presented in the opening weeks of the course. (20%)

*Civic engagement initiative presentation:* Working in small groups (3 students each), students will prepare a brief presentation on a civic engagement initiative of their choice. The aim of this assignment is to expose students to a wide array of current citizenship practices and activities. Each group will conduct research on a particular group whose members are engaging in some form of civic engagement and/or trying to enhance or promote civic engagement at the local, regional, national, or international level. (15%)

*Second Reflection Paper:* In an approximately 2-page paper, students will report and reflect on a civic activity they have engaged in this term. Students will be allowed to choose their activity; successful papers will explain 1) how that activity counts as “civic engagement” and 2) how the experience related to what the student learned from readings, lectures, and other materials in this course. (10%)

*Pop quizzes:* Periodically throughout the term a pop quiz will be given to test your comprehension of basic material from the required readings. (10%)

*Final combination Take-home/In-class exam:* Students will articulate and defend a thesis on the current state of youth civic engagement, drawing from course readings, lectures, films, and other materials. **Final exams must be turned in personally at our scheduled exam day and time (Wed. May 11<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m.), at which time additional exam questions will be administered.** (20%)

More specific descriptions of assignments will be posted to the course’s Moodle site as the term progresses.

*Grading:* An A-range grade will be given to work that goes substantially beyond the formal requirements of the assignment by showing originality, creativity, and strength of argument, organization, and conception. A B-range grade will be given to work that fulfills the assignment with noticeable, but not thorough, achievement in these areas. Such work might also include flawed reasoning and organization as well as stylistic problems (sentence structure, spelling, vocabulary, use of scholarly conventions, etc.). A C-range grade will be given to work showing genuine effort that largely fulfills the assignment requirements but displays substantial weaknesses in several of the above areas. D work may meet some or all of the minimum requirements of the assignment in a perfunctory fashion, but shows considerable weaknesses in the areas above. An F grade indicates failure to fulfill the assignment.

A summary of assignments and point values (based on 200 total course points) appears below.

Opening paper: Personal Reflections on Civic Engagement	20 pts.	Due Friday Jan. 28 <sup>th</sup>
“Dutiful/Informed Citizenship” paper	30 pts.	Due Monday Feb. 16 <sup>th</sup>
Midterm Exam	40 pts.	Friday March 18 <sup>th</sup>
Civic Engagement Initiative presentation	30 pts.	Week of April 11 <sup>th</sup>
Second Reflection Paper	20pts.	Due Friday April 29 <sup>th</sup>
Pop quizzes	20 pts.	periodically
Final Exam	40 pts.	Wed. May 11 <sup>th</sup> , 5:30 p.m.

At the end of the course, your total will be converted to a letter grade using the following cut-points: 200-186 = A, 170-185 = B, 154-169 = C, 138-153 = D, 0-137 = F

*Extra credit opportunities:* Students may earn up to 2% (4 pts.) of extra credit. Opportunities for extra credit will be announced throughout the semester, including:

- Attending the 2011 Breaux Symposium, *In the Name of Democracy, For Crying Out Loud*, on March 29<sup>th</sup> in the Holladay Forum of the Journalism Bldg. (details to be announced)
- Participating in research in the Manship School Media Effects Lab:

- How to use the MEL system to earn extra credit: <http://www.lsu.edu/faculty/msand/Subject%20Pool%20FAQ.doc>
- Sign up for a time to earn MEL extra credit here: <http://lsu-manship.sona-systems.com/>
- Map to MEL lab, where some (not all!) extra credit opportunities take place: <http://www.lsu.edu/faculty/msand/MELmap.pdf>

### **Additional Course Policies**

Class sessions: Students will be expected to arrive in each scheduled class having read all materials assigned for that day and ready to discuss those materials with others. Cell phones must be turned off in class. (For your safety, one of your instructors will keep a phone subscribed to LSU's emergency text message service available in class at all times.)

Civility: In order to ensure an atmosphere in which all students feel comfortable, it is of the utmost importance that students treat each other with respect. It is inevitable that we will encounter political issues in the course on which not everyone will agree. In fact, one of the goals of this course is to help students develop skills in engaging in civil discussion of such issues. Toward that end, incivility or other behaviors that may discourage individuals from airing reasonable opinions on course content will not be tolerated.

Team teaching: Prof. Lawrence and Prof. Scholl are both professors for this course. It's like getting two for one! No matter whether you are enrolled in Poli 2030 with Prof. Scholl or in MC2030 with Prof. Lawrence, you may correspond by e-mail, attend office hours, and ask questions about the material or the course with either instructor. Both professors will grade some of the work of all students. We will work carefully to ensure that evaluation is equitable. This course has interdisciplinary material, instructors and enrollment; we think this characteristic will benefit all three.

Late work/missed assignments: Late work will not be accepted in this class, nor will student absences be accommodated, unless students provide documentation consistent with LSU's PS-22 ([http://appl003.ocs.lsu.edu/ups.nsf/4d8b193f0753c7e48625714000672ba4/D45654A11F8AC79686256C250062AE4D/\\$File/PS+22+revision+8+2007.pdf](http://appl003.ocs.lsu.edu/ups.nsf/4d8b193f0753c7e48625714000672ba4/D45654A11F8AC79686256C250062AE4D/$File/PS+22+revision+8+2007.pdf)).

Students with disabilities: Students with disabilities are encouraged to meet with one of the course instructors at the beginning of the term to discuss reasonable accommodations. Information on LSU's resources for students with disabilities can be found on the Office of Disability Services webpage. <http://appl003.lsu.edu/slas/ods.nsf/index>

## Class Schedule

### Section 1

#### Introduction to Civic Engagement

Wednesday, January 19: Welcome, introductions, and course themes. What does “civic engagement” mean to you?

*Readings:* Syllabus (on Moodle).

Friday, January 21: An introduction to the study of citizenship and civic engagement.

*Readings:* Russell Dalton, *The Good Citizen*, chapters 1 & 2

Monday, January 24: The Social Roots of Citizenship Norms and Political Socialization

*Readings:* David Jackson, *Entertainment & Politics*, “Introduction: Political Socialization and the Entertainment Media”

### Section 2

#### Historical Ideas and Practices of Citizenship: How Did We Get Here?

*The central thread running through this section of the course is that citizen engagement is shaped and constrained by historical, political, social and media context. To understand why some forms of civic engagement are declining and new forms are developing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we need to understand how the current context has evolved.*

Wednesday, January 26: American Citizenship in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century

*Readings:*

“Good Citizens and Bad History,” by Michael Schudson

“Rock, Paper, Scissors: How We Used to Vote,” by Jill Lepore (both on Moodle)

Friday, January 28: From 19<sup>th</sup>-century Partisan Engagement to 20<sup>th</sup>-century Dutiful Citizenship

**Opening paper: Personal Reflections on Civic Engagement due Friday Jan. 28<sup>th</sup>.**

*Readings:*

“The Great Disintegration,” from Steven Schier,

*By Invitation Only: The Rise of Exclusive Politics in the United States* (on Moodle).

Note: Only pages 42 – 73 are required reading for today.

Monday, January 31: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Citizenship and the Informed Voter Ideal

*Readings:* Michael Schudson, “America’s Ignorant Voters”

<http://www.princeton.edu/~ccameron/KoreaIIE/IIE337/Schudson.America.pdf> (link also on Moodle)

Wednesday, February 2: The Informed Citizen Ideal: Promise and Problems  
*Readings:* Wattenberg, *Is Voting For Young People?* Introduction

Friday, February 4: The Decline of Informed Citizenship  
*Readings:* Wattenberg, *Is Voting For Young People?* Chapters 1 - 3

Monday, February 7: The Decline of Political Engagement among Youth  
*Readings:*

- Wattenberg, *Is Voting For Young People?* Chapter 4
- *Census Bureau data on voting by different groups:*  
<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/historical/index.html>  
Spend some time exploring these numbers and come to class ready to discuss whether voting has declined and whether young people really do vote less.

Wednesday, February 9: Declining Norms of Dutiful Citizenship  
*Readings:* Wattenberg, *Is Voting For Young People?* Chapters 5 and 6

Friday, February 11: The 2008 & 2010 Elections and Young American Voters  
*Readings:*  
Russell Dalton, *The Good Citizen*, Epilogue (pp. 179-200)  
CIRCLE, “Youth Turnout,” <http://www.civicyouth.org/youth-turnout-about-20-comparable-to-recent-midterm-years/> (link also on Moodle).

Monday, February 14: Declines in Social Capital  
*Readings:* Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, chapter 3

### Section 3

Why the Decline? Explaining the Demise of the Dutiful/Informed Citizen Model  
*This section of the course focuses on the variety of factors that arguably have contributed to a decline in conventional engagement, with a particular focus on political participation and the role of the mass media.*

Wednesday, February 16: Causes of the Decline in Dutiful/Informed Citizenship: Is Falling Trust in Government a Symptom or a Cause?

#### **“Dutiful/Informed Citizenship” paper due Monday Feb. 16<sup>th</sup>**

*Readings:* Pew Research Center, “Public Trust in Government, 1958-2010.”  
<http://people-press.org/trust/> (link also on Moodle). Spend some time exploring this interactive picture of the levels of trust Americans have expressed toward government over time.

Friday, February 18: Socioeconomic Barriers to Political Engagement  
*Readings:* Verba, Schlozman & Brady, *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*, chap. 10: “Resources for Politics: Time & Money”

Monday, February 21: Was it Television's Fault? Sitting at home on the couch: Evidence for and mostly against time-displacement as the cause in the decline of engagement

*Readings:* Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, chapter 15

Wednesday, February 23: The Changing Media System: Media Fragmentation & The Decline of Accidental Exposure

*Readings:* Markus Prior, "Divided By Choice: Fragmentation and Political Inequality in the Post-Broadcast Media Environment" (on Moodle)

Friday, February 25: The Changing Media System: The Rise of Partisan Media

*Readings:* Farhad Manjoo, "Why Facts No Longer Matter" and "Reality' Is Splitting," from *True Enough* (on Moodle)

Monday, February 28: Contemporary Challenges to Informed Citizenship: What Does It Mean To Be "Informed"?

*Readings:* Bill Kovach & Tom Rosenstiel, selections from *Blur: How to Know What's True in the Age of Information Overload*

[Note: the selections are portions of chapters—do not be concerned about the missing pages.]

Wednesday, March 2: Information & Engagement

*In class:* Today we will view the Frontline documentary *Vaccine War*.

*Readings:* Farhad Manjoo, "The New Tribalism: Swift Boats and the Power of Choosing" from *True Enough* (on Moodle)

Friday, March 4: Discuss *Vaccine War*.

*Readings:*

- Associated Press, "Study Linking Vaccine to Autism Was Fraud, Journal Reports" [http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2011/01/05/health/AP-EU-MED-Autism-Fraud.html?\\_r=1&scp=1&sq=autism%20vaccine&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2011/01/05/health/AP-EU-MED-Autism-Fraud.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=autism%20vaccine&st=cse) (link also on Moodle)
- CNN, "There 'weren't two sides' to autism-vaccine link debate, author says" <http://amfix.blogs.cnn.com/2011/01/11/there-really-werent-two-sides-to-autism-vaccine-link-debate-says-author/> (link also on Moodle)

Monday, March 7: NO CLASS – MARDI GRAS

Wednesday, March 9: NO CLASS – MARDI GRAS

Friday, March 11: Politics as an Obstacle to Engagement

*Readings:* Schier, *By Invitation Only* (see week #2 above), pp. 76 – 88.

Monday, March 14: The Rise of Non-traditional Sources of News: Young people and political entertainment.

*Readings:* Jones, *Entertaining Politics*, chapter 2 (on Moodle).

Wednesday, March 16: Catch-up and review.

Friday, March 18: **MID-TERM EXAM**

#### Section 4

From Dutiful to “Actualizing” Citizenship?:  
Contemporary Transformations in Citizenship Norms and Practices

Monday, March 21: The American Tradition of Citizen Dissent

*Readings:* “Introduction” and “the Global War on Terrorism,” from Robert Mann,  
*Wartime Dissent in America* (on Moodle)

Wednesday, March 23: The Activist/Dissenting Citizen: From Civil Rights to the Anti-War  
Movement to the Tea Party

*Readings:* “Stability, Civility, and the Foundations for the New Citizenship,” from Craig  
Rimmerman, *The New Citizenship*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (on Moodle)

Friday, March 25: A Different Take: The Transformation (Not Decline) of American Youth  
Engagement

*Readings:* Review Dalton, *The Good Citizen*, chapters 1 & 2 (see week #1 above)

Monday, March 28: New Meanings and Measures of Citizenship and Engagement

*Readings:* Dalton, *The Good Citizen*, chapters 3 - 5

Wednesday, March 30: Attitudes toward Government among American Youth

*Readings:* Dalton, *The Good Citizen*, chapters 6 & 7

Friday, April 1: Toward an “Actualized” Citizenship

*Readings:* No additional readings for today; review Dalton chapters

Monday, April 4: The Dalton/Wattenberg Debate: Is There Really a “New Engagement” Among  
American Youth?

*Readings:*

Dalton, *The Good Citizen*, chapters 8 & 9

Wattenberg, *Is Voting for Young People?*, chapter 8

Wednesday, April 6: Actualized Citizens Online? Consumer Activism and Activist Fandom

*Readings:*

- “Civic Engagement: Bridging Differences to Build a Field of Civic Learning,”  
by Lance Bennett and Chris Wells (on Moodle).
- *Additional article about political consumption TBA*



Friday, April 8: Actualized Citizens Online? The 2008 Presidential Election  
*Readings:* View Winograd and Hais, “A Moment of Transformation”  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLTnHALVHkE> (link also on Moodle)

## Section 5

### WHAT CAN BE DONE?: Initiatives to Strengthen Future Civic Engagement

Monday, April 11: **Student presentations on Civic Engagement Initiatives**

Wednesday, April 13: **Student presentations on Civic Engagement Initiatives**

Friday, April 15: **Student presentations on Civic Engagement Initiatives**

April 18 – 22: SPRING BREAK; NO CLASS

Monday, April 25: Suggested Reforms: The Political System

*Readings:*

Peter Levine, *The Future of Democracy: Developing the Next Generation of American Citizens*, chapter 10, “Institutional Reforms” (on Moodle);

Wattenberg, *Is Voting for Young People?*, chapter 7

Wednesday, April 27: Suggested Reforms: The Media

*Readings:* Levine, “Institutional Reforms” (see above)

Friday, April 29: Suggested Reforms: The Educational System

**Second Reflection Paper on Civic Engagement due Friday April 29<sup>th</sup>.**

*Readings:* Levine, “Institutional Reforms” (see above)

Monday, May 2: The Individual

*Readings:* Paul Loeb, *Soul of a Citizen*, chapter 2: “We Don’t Have To Be Saints” (on Moodle).

Wednesday, May 4: Concluding debates

- 1) A Decline, or a Transformation, In Youth Engagement?
- 2) What Reforms Make Most Sense?

Friday, May 6: LAST DAY of CLASS! Exam review session. No new material will be covered. Attendance is optional.