Course Description

This course is designed to give students a broad introduction to public service. Students will explore the history of public service in American life, examine the contemporary erosion of interest in public service, explore different options for public service, and draw lessons from their own experience about how to increase the likelihood that more Americans will engage in public service during their lives. The course will also ask just what the term “public service” means—the course will focus on the broadest possible definition, which includes everything from voting, volunteering, and socially-responsible personal behavior to careers in government, nonprofits, and private firms.

The course is built around a simple model of public service in two dimensions. The first involves the duration/intensity of the experience—long-term v. short-term, occasional v. durable. Voting is a short-term engagement, while public service careers in government, nonprofits, and private firms tend to be longer-term. The second dimension involves the motivation for service—coercive v. by personal choice, required v. given freely. Volunteering tends to be given by choice, though service learning is a form of required volunteering, while the draft and other forms of national service involve coercion or strong incentives for participation.

GIVEN FREELY

Voting

LOW-INTENSITY

Service Learning

HIGH-INTENSITY

Careers

Draft
REQUIRED

The course is also designed to explore the range of alternatives for public impact, whether through traditional political participation (voting), personal volunteering and advocacy, careers in public service, service on nonprofit boards, and socially-responsible engagement in corporate careers. The course will argue that all citizens have the chance to engage in public service during their lives—the question is how to improve the odds that they will both make and sustain their commitment. Students will be asked to keep track of their own definitions of public service over the course of the semester, while answering a series of questions through journal entries in response to readings and discussion.

Course Requirements

Students are required to attend all classes and complete all assignments on time. The class will be built around discussion of the readings and journal entries. Readings are to be completed before class. There will be a final examination, a research paper making a single recommendation for increasing the amount of public service, which will be due on the last day of class. Students will also keep a journal that will be graded from time-to-time during the semester. Final grades will be based on the following formula. Each journal entry is to be no longer than two pages and preferably shorter (no more than 300 words), and the final research paper is to be no longer than ten pages (2,500 words).

10% class participation  
40% journal  
25% final exam  
25% research paper

Readings

There are required books in the course:

Bill Shore, *The Cathedral Within: Transforming Your Life by Giving Something Back*

Paul Light, *Driving Social Change: How to Solve the World’s Toughest Problems* (available on BB and in hard copy later in semester)

Russell J. Dalton, *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation is Reshaping American Politics*
Course Schedule

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PUBLIC SERVICE

Week 1a. Course Introduction
Week 1b. The Framer’s Intent
(January 25)

*U.S. Constitution*, on BB

*Federalist Papers*, Nos. 10 (“The Mischiefs of Faction”), 51 (“Checks and Balances”), and 70 (“Energy in the Executive”), online at http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menu/fed.asp

Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Book II, chapter 5 (Of the Use Which the Americans Make of Public Associations in Civil Life), and chapter 7 (Of the Connection between Civil and Political Associations), both online at http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/TocDem2.html

Dalton, *The Good Citizen*, chapters 1-3

JOURNAL ENTRY: WHAT IS THE CONSTITUTION’S VIEW OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION?

Week 2a. The Early History of Public Engagement
(February 3)


Week 2b. The Professionalization of Public Engagement

Skocpol, Rachel Cobb, and Casey Klofstad, “Disconnection and Reorganization: The Transformation of Civic Life in Late-Twentieth Century America,” *Studies in American Political Development*, Fall 2005, on BB

JOURNAL ENTRY: WHAT IS YOUR HISTORY OF VOLUNTEERING? WHAT WENT WELL? WHAT DIDN’T?

Week 3a. The Recent Erosion
(February 9)
Putnam, "The Strange Disappearance of Civic America," *American Prospect*, December 1, 1996, on BB

Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), *2008 Civic Health of the Nation*, on BB

Dalton, *The Good Citizen*, chapter 4

**JOURNAL ENTRY: HOW MUCH SOCIAL CAPITAL DO YOU GENERATE?**

Week 3b. The September 11 Response (and Katrina, too)

Shore, *The Cathedral Within*, chapter 1


**JOURNAL ENTRY: HOW DID SEPTEMBER 11 AFFECT YOUR DESIRE TO ENGAGE? WHAT ABOUT KATRINA?**

*Gordon Campbell*, United Way NYC (CONFIRMED)

Week 4a. Why Engage?
(February 16)

Shore, *The Cathedral Within*, chapters 4-7

**JOURNAL ENTRY: SHOULD THE NATION WORRY ABOUT NON-PARTICIPATION?**

Week 4b. How Engage?

Dalton, *The Good Citizen*, chapters 5-7

CIRCLE, *Millennials Talk Politics*, publication date unknown, on BB

**JOURNAL ENTRY: WHICH FORMS OF ENGAGEMENT ARE MOST ATTRACTIVE TO YOU?**

*Nancy Lublin*, chief older person and CEO, DoSomething.org (CONFIRMED)

**THE INVENTORY OF ENGAGEMENT**

Week 5. Defining Public Service Today
(February 23)
JOURNAL ENTRY: IS TAKING THIS CLASS A FORM OF PUBLIC SERVICE?

David Schachter, Wagner Associate Dean for Student Services (CONFIRMED)

Week 6. Variations in Service (March 2)


Dalton, The Good Citizen, chapter 8

Spend at least an hour visiting the Corporation for National and Community Service (www.nationalservice.org), the Hands-On Network (www.handsonnetwork.org), Idealist.org (www.idealist.org), the Peace Corps (www.peacecorps.gov), and the Partnership for Public Service (www.ourpublicservice.org), and examine and sort at least four different forms of public service.

JOURNAL ENTRY: WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF PUBLIC SERVICE?

Shannon Small, Wagner student, future Foreign Service Officer (CONFIRMED)

Week 7a. THE FIRST REALM OF SERVICE: Voluntary/Short-Term Engagement (March 9)

Bureau of Labor Statistics, Volunteering in America, December, 2009, on BB

Andreasen, Katya, The Young and the Generous, report on behalf of Network for Good, on BB

Browse the Serve America Act at http://www.opencongress.org/bill/110-s3487/text

JOURNAL ENTRY: WHERE DO YOU FIT IN THE SERVE AMERICA ACT?

Week 7b. Voting as Service

Dalton, The Good Citizen, epilogue
Cynthia Gibson, “Thinking Outside the (Ballot) Box,” *National Civic Review*, Summer, 2004, online on BB

**JOURNAL ENTRY: IS IT RATIONAL NOT TO PARTICIPATE?**

*Michael Waldman*, Brennan Center for Justice, brennancenter.org (CONFIRMED)

**Week 8a. Methods for Increasing Volunteerism**

(March 23)

Urban Institute, *Volunteer Management Capacity in America’s Charities and Congregations*, pages 1-24, on BB

Conference Board, *Boomers are Ready for Nonprofits but are Nonprofits Ready for Them?* May 2006, on BB

Spend an hour on the Guidestar website (www.volunteermatch.org) looking for four organizations that be a good place to volunteer.

**JOURNAL ENTRY: WHAT DRAWS YOUR ATTENTION TO A VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITY**

*Ruth McCambridge*, Nonprofit Quarterly, npqmag.org (CONFIRMED)

**Week 8b. Faith-Based Engagement**

Mary Jo Bane, “Keeping the Faith,” *Democracy*, Winter 2008, on BB


**JOURNAL ENTRY: WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE FAITH-BASED INITIATIVE SINCE 2009?**

**Week 9a. THE SECOND REALM OF SERVICE**: Required/Short-Term Engagement

(March 30)

Corporation for National and Community Service, *Health Benefits of Volunteering*, 2005, on BB

Spend at least an hour browsing the Corporation for National and Community Service website on best practices in service learning, online at http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/effective-practice
JOURNAL ENTRY: WHAT KIND OF SERVICE LEARNING HAVE YOU DONE?

Week 9b. What Students Learn (Read 3 of 4)

CIRCLE, *National Evaluation of Learn and Serve America*, entire, on BB


JOURNAL ENTRY: HOW DID SERVICE LEARNING AFFECT YOU?

*Ben Shuldiner*, Principal of NYC K546: High School for Public Service (CONFIRMED)

Week 10. Public Service and Profits (April 6)

Shore, *The Cathedral Within*, chapters 8-9

Michael Edwards, *Just Another Emperor*, Demos, chapters 1-3, on BB

JOURNAL ENTRY: ARE PROFITS OKAY?

*Miles Rapoport*, president of Demos, demos.org (CONFIRMED)

Week 11. Social Entrepreneurship (April 13)

Light, *Driving Social Change*, introduction, chapter 1

Light, *The Search for Social Entrepreneurship*, chapters 1 (section on declaring assumptions only), 4

JOURNAL ENTRY: WHAT IS YOUR DEFINITION OF SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP?

*Darell Hammond*, KaBoom! (NOT CONFIRMED)

Week 12a. **THE THIRD REALM OF SERVICE**: Voluntary/Long-Term Engagement (April 20)

Light, *Driving Social Change*, chapter 2
Grace Davie, “Social Entrepreneurship: A Call to Action,” on BB

JOURNAL ENTRY: WHAT ARE YOUR OPTIONS FOR CHANGING THE WORLD?

Week 12b. Places to Work

Light, *Driving Social Change*, chapter 4

Light, *A Government Ill Executed*, chapter 5 on BB

Light, *The Content of Their Character: The State of the Nonprofit Workforce*, on BB

JOURNAL ENTRY: WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS AND COSTS OF A PUBLIC SERVICE CAREER?

Ami Dar, Idealist.org (CONFIRMED)

Week 13a. Creating Social Change

(April 27)

Light, *Driving Social Change*, chapter 3

JOURNAL ENTRY: WHAT IS THE MOST DIFFICULT STEP IN CREATING SOCIAL CHANGE?

Week 13b. Making a Difference

Partnership for Public Service, “Service to America Medals” profiles, read six 2007 medal winners and read their stories online at http://servicetoamericamedals.org/SAM/

Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government “Innovation in Government Award Winners,” read the entire pamphlet online at http://content.knowledgeplex.org/streams/ksg/AshInstitute/KSG-10-07_24pgs_LoResPg.pdf, then pick six award winners and read their stories online at http://www.innovations.harvard.edu/award_landing.html

Stephen Goldsmith, former director of the Ash Institute’s Innovation in Government program and now Deputy Mayor for Operations, NYC (NOT CONFIRMED)

Week 14. **THE FOURTH REALM OF SERVICE**: Required/Long-Term Engagement Papers Due
(May 4)

Shore, *The Cathedral Within*, chapter 10

*Ellen Schall*, Dean, Wagner School (CONFIRMED)