

Barnard College
Political Science Department
Fall 2007

Instructor: [Lorraine Minnite](#)
Office: 401 Lehman Hall
Office hours: Wed. 4-6 PM
lcm25@columbia.edu

POLS BC3300 COLLOQUIUM ON PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY

Course Meeting Time and Place

Tuesdays, 6:10 - 8:00 PM
Room 809 Altschul

Course Description

This course broadly examines how ordinary Americans collectively struggle to effect social change. "Political participation" is unconventionally defined to incorporate different modes of action, from legitimation and consensus building practices (i.e., voting) to actions that directly challenge state and economic power (i.e., social movements). Of primary interest is the interaction between what political science treats as opposing forms of popular politics - i.e., the formal vs. informal, institutional vs. non-institutional, and system-stabilizing vs. system-challenging ways people "participate" in modern democracies. We will first assess competing normative perspectives on the role and scope of political participation in democratic societies, paying careful attention to questions related to the distribution of power under conditions of inequality. From there, we will examine the means by which social groups have expressed demands and expanded participation in the state and civil society in pursuit of their goals. Along the way, we will read case studies of rural poverty and the labor movement, the Southern civil rights movement, and the rise of the New Right. To examine relevant questions about social change, we will analyze the political impact of these movements on individuals, public policy, and political institutions. The course concludes with an inquiry into democratic prospects in the U.S. and a globalizing world.

Course Requirements and Grading

The purpose of the course is three-fold: to introduce you to debates in the literatures on democratic theory, political participation, voting rights and social movements; to give you tools for analyzing the world around you; and to provide a forum for the further development of your critical thinking, reading, writing and speaking skills. It is imperative that you bring reading assignments to class, come prepared for discussion, and that you complete writing assignments on time.

Grades will be based on my evaluation of your attendance, participation in class discussions, completion of weekly writing assignments, your research paper and presentation. The components of the grade break down as follows:

Class Participation

1) Regular participation in class discussion (20%)
You must regularly demonstrate a familiarity with the assigned readings. This requirement raises an interesting question for participation theorists. Should people be forced to participate? The answer for us is yes. We can discuss why.

2) Regular written preparation for weekly discussions (20%)

Each week you will write a short commentary on a question raised by that week's reading assignment and pose your own question for discussion.

Commentaries must be posted on our Courseworks page by 9 AM on class days (Tuesdays). Good questions are a foundation for analytical thinking. Here is where you get the opportunity to develop your skills in formulating social scientific questions. The purpose of the assignment is to give you time to develop and organize your thoughts about the readings prior to class so that our discussions are as lively as possible. I will evaluate the quality of your weekly commentaries and issue a cumulative grade reflecting both your oral and written contributions to class discussion, in lieu of a mid-term exam.

Research Paper

The major requirement of this course is a research paper on a topic related to the course themes (60%). You may investigate a theoretical question, write a literature review essay, conduct research into any of the social or political movements that have been important to American political development, or take up any other analytical problem identified in the literature on popular participation in American electoral politics and social movements.

Your topic must be approved by me; therefore, a topic statement and preliminary bibliography are due **October 2**. The topic statement should be no more than two pages long. The preliminary bibliography should include at least twelve sources, annotated to indicate the significance of the work for your topic. Unless you plan to write a theoretical paper or a literature review essay, at least four of your sources should be primary ones (i.e., newspaper accounts, reports, legislation, court decisions, government documents and the like). You may reference books on the syllabus, but at least eight of your secondary sources (scholarly books and articles related to your topic) must be new.

A research design and expanded annotated bibliography are due **October 23**. The research design should address the research question your paper will answer or a hypothesis your paper will test; how your topic is situated in the political science literature; how you will carry out your research (what types of evidence will be used); and, a preliminary outline of the major subheadings of your paper.

The final paper is due **December 11**. The paper will be no more than 25 pages long (typed, double-spaced, 10 or 12 pt. font, one inch margins all around), and should include an introductory section addressing your central question or hypothesis and why it is important; a literature review section that explains how your question relates to the larger literature on the subject (your secondary sources); your argument and its development (usually in several subsections), and a conclusion that addresses the research question with which you started. Provide a complete bibliography and any appended tables, charts, etc. at the end.

Depending on the size of the class, we will schedule brief presentations of student research in-progress throughout the month of November. Please use *The Chicago Manual of Style* for the formatting of your paper (you may refer to Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses and Dissertations*, 7th Rev. Ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007) for a modified version of the Chicago style). Failure to observe these rules could reduce your grade.

Reading Schedule

Note: All reading assignments are required. All of the material for this course is on Reserve at the Barnard College library or on our Courseworks page. The following books have been ordered at Book Culture (formerly Labyrinth Books), 536 West 112th Street:

John Gaventa, *Power and Powerlessness: Quiescence and Rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1980).
Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2nd ed., 2007)
Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001)
Jeffrey Toobin, *Too Close To Call: The Thirty-Six-Day Battle to Decide the 2000 Election* (New York: Random House, 2002)
Dennis F. Thompson, *Just Elections: Creating A Fair Electoral Process in the United States* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002)
Frances Fox Piven, *Challenging Authority: How Ordinary People Change America* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006)

Other readings posted on our Courseworks page include excerpts from:

James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990)
Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, "Rulemaking, Rulebreaking and Power," in *A Handbook of Political Sociology: States, Civil Societies and Globalization*, edited by Thomas Janoski, et al. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005)
Rebecca B. Morton, *Analyzing Elections* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006)

Reading assignments should be completed by the dates indicated below.

- | | |
|----------|---|
| Sept. 4 | Overview of the course |
| Sept. 11 | The hidden question of power in debates on participation and democracy
Gaventa, chapters 1-3 |
| Sept. 18 | The "third dimension of power," "infra-politics," and "rule-breaking:" theories of political quiescence and action under conditions of inequality
Scott, chapters 1, 2 and 7
Piven and Cloward, "Rulemaking, Rulebreaking and Power" |
| Sept. 25 | Modern American social movements and the vote
Payne, chapters 1-2
McGirr, Introduction and chapters 1-2 |
| Oct. 2 | Democracy and inequality?
Gaventa, chapter 5
Payne, chapters 3-5 |
| Oct. 9 | Movement biographies: accounting for the form
Payne, chapters 6-9
McGirr, chapters 3-4 |

- Oct. 16 **Movement biographies: challenge, response and transition**
Gaventa, chapters 6-7
Payne, chapters 10-11
McGirr, chapter 5
- Oct. 23 **Movement impact**
Gaventa, chapters 8-9
Payne, chapters 12-14
McGirr, chapter 6
- Oct. 30 **Movement legacies and electoral politics**
Morton, chapters 2-3
- Nov. 6 **HOLIDAY**
- Nov. 13 **The 2000 Election**
Toobin, entire book
- Nov. 20 **Democratic reform through "electoral justice" or movement
"disruption?" (part 1)**
Thompson, Introduction and chapter 1
Piven, chapters 1-2
- Nov. 27 **Democratic reform through "electoral justice" or movement
"disruption?" (part 2)**
Thompson, chapter 2
Piven, chapters 3-4
- Dec. 4 **Conclusions**
Thompson, Conclusion
Piven, chapters 5-6

© [Lorraine Minnite](#)