Political Engagement:
Facilitating Greater Participation in Civil Society

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Speaker Biographies

Elizabeth Hollander

Liz Hollander currently serves as a Senior Fellow at the Tufts Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service and in that capacity does research, writing and consultation with the Dean regards college student civic engagement. From 1997 to 2006, Hollander served as Executive Director of Campus Compact, a national organization of over 1100 college and university presidents committed to the civic engagement of their students and their campus. Prior to that Hollander had a 30 year career in Chicago in community development, including serving as the city's Planning Director under Mayor Harold Washington and overseeing the design/build competition for the city's new central library. Hollander has a BA with honors in Political Science from Bryn Mawr College and honorary degrees from DePaul and Milliken University.

http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/?pid=224

Nancy Kranich

Nancy Kranich served as President of the American Library Association in 2000-2001, focusing on the role of libraries in democracies. Most of Nancy’s library career was based at New York University, where she was Associate Dean of Libraries. She also worked in public libraries in Bridgeport and Windsor, CT, and Madison, WI. After retiring from NYU, Nancy authored: The Information Commons: A Public Policy Report as a Senior Research Fellow at the Free Expression Policy Project in New York. Prior to moving to New Jersey, Nancy lived and worked for several years as a civic librarian in State College, PA, fostering civic engagement, consulting with libraries and policy organizations, serving on the public library board, and lecturing at several universities. At Rutgers, Nancy is splitting her time between teaching Library and Information Science and working as Special Projects Librarian. Next semester, she is teaching E-Democracy. Nancy leads ALA's civic engagement membership initiative, moderates public forums, and
serves on the board of the National Issues Forum Institute. She is currently completing a fellowship on Edemocracy at UW-Milwaukee. Among her publications are: Libraries and Democracy: The Cornerstones of Liberty (Chicago, ALA, 2001); “Civic Partnerships: The Role of Libraries in Promoting Civic Engagement;” “Academic Libraries as Hubs for Civic Engagement,” (The Democracy Imperative, University of New Hampshire, 2009), and several other articles on civic engagement in public, academic and school libraries.

http://www.nifi.org/about/kranich.aspx

Holly Sorensen and Joanne Griffin

Holly Sorensen is the Assistant Director of the Des Plaines Public Library in Des Plaines IL. Previously she held the position of Head of Adult Services at Des Plaines. Holly received her MLS from Dominican University, and has been a public librarian in Illinois for over twenty years.

Joanne Griffin has worked in public libraries for fifteen years. For the last seven years she has been a Reference Librarian for the Adult Services department at the Des Plaines Public Library. She is also the Liaison to the Des Plaines Business Community.

Holly and Joanne worked on the FY 2006 LSTA-funded Building Community through Creative Conversations program.

Foundational Works


Almond and Verba’s extensive survey and analysis compares political cultures and attitudes in the United States, Mexico, Italy, England and Germany. They identify three types of political culture: parochial, in which citizens have little interest in or knowledge of their political system; subject, in which citizens obey the state but do not participate in politics; and participant, in which citizens both understand and take part in the governance of their state. The Civic Culture seeks to identify the characteristics within a political culture that promote, or squelch, active participation and engagement by the citizenry. While the statistical methods used in the analysis are now considered dated, The Civic Culture remains significant as one of the first works to delve into how culture and behavior – and not simply political institutions or constitutions – helps shape democracy and encourage political participation.


De Tocqueville’s two-volume philosophic travelogue reflects on the nine months he spent in the United States, examining aspects of American life, culture and customs and how they contribute to the young nation’s democratic state. De Tocqueville was convinced that democratic systems would eventually
supplant the monarchies of Europe, but suspicious of the potential terror of “mob rule.” He sought to learn why representative government had succeeded in the United States while experiments in popular rule had failed in his native France. Democracy in America thus focuses a great deal on the relationship of local government, political participation, and the tendency of Americans to form civic and religious associations. This rich “associational life” of Americans was a key factor in the success of their democratic state in de Tocqueville’s estimation. Democracy in America has endured as an important work in American history, political science, and the study of civil society.

**Putnam, Robert D. Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community, Simon and Schuster, 2000.**

Originally written as an article for the Journal of Democracy in 1995 and later expanded into a book, Putnam analyzes the decline of “social capital” in the United States and its effects on participatory democracy. Taking de Tocqueville’s theory that American civic associations are an important indicator of the health of our democracy, Bowling Alone posits that the dropping membership numbers in social and civic organizations (such as the Rotary or – as the title suggests – bowling leagues) bode ill for the strength of American democratic institutions. Putnam finds numerous causes for the reduction in civic engagement, including: post-Watergate political cynicism; the rise in importance of technology and media in Americans’ lives; changing family structures; and the demographic shift of Americans from urban or rural areas to suburbia. Bowling Alone continues to be widely read, cited and critiqued by those who are interested in issues of civil society and civic engagement.

**Civic/Political Engagement and Deliberative Forums**


This paper addresses the issue of youth and political engagement. The main message being discussed is the means for increasing involvement. There are two scenarios that are evaluated; allowing for the disconnection of youth from conventional politics and teaching youth that their voices can be used to steer politics through classroom education and youth programs. The paper also makes suggestions to politicians, government officials, educators, policymakers, new organization and many more, on how to involve and inspire youth to get involved in political decision making.


This paper discusses the skills that communities can use to get involved in the process of deliberation. The purpose is to allow these communities to come together to decide the fate of their communities by involving them in the decision making process. It discusses the elements to a public deliberation which include framing the issue so the public can better understand and evaluate the issues; convening the process with all stakeholders; and having skilled moderators to manage tension and conflicts when/if
they arise. Two public engagement projects are used as examples; Missouri and the issue of land use planning and in a pilot project in a Catchment Management Authority in New South Wales, Australia.


This study analyzes two different claims about how churches are engaged in politics. One claim is that white evangelical Protestant churches serve to mobilize their members into politics and the other claim is that they encourage withdrawal from political life. The study concluded that at a national level, there are some who do volunteer within their church for political reasons and therefore are more mobilized than others. In the end, it seems that political engagement and religions have a close connection.


This is an empirical research study examining the relationship between deliberation and its effects on citizens. The study examines the types of deliberation, structures of decision-making and situational specificity and concludes that citizens who are involved in face-to-face deliberative decision-making have higher levels of internal political efficacy relative to the specific deliberative situation.


This paper examines the gender gap in political engagement between men and women. There are several possibilities that are examined in this study as to why this issue exists however, this study concludes that men are more engaged in politics than women are. In spite of such findings, this study also concludes that there are many factors such as income, critical resources offered to men and women, and raising families that hinder political involvement.

**Implementation/Engagement in Different Educational Settings**


Caputo provides both a general overview and specific relevant points regarding the obstacles, improvement, and future of implementing and successfully administering civic engagement in higher education. He assesses the relevancy of civic engagement from the student’s perspective as well as addressing obstacles faced by organizations outside higher education.


This book examines all contexts of civic engagement in undergraduate education. The authors provide practical and useful examples of pedagogy, curriculum, faculty involvement, and institutional
responsibility needed to prepare undergraduates for moral and civic responsibility. Especially interesting is the examination of how civic engagement is approached and taught at twelve undergraduate institutions.

This study at Texas A & M University, Corpus Christi, examines whether student’s civic engagement level is changed when The New York Times (NYT) is a required element in general education political science courses. They find that reading of the NYT increased the relevancy of class material for students and positively impacted attitudes toward community involvement. The study also found students’ attitudes towards politics were not significantly changed.

Murphy (Dartmouth College) argues that civic education is a broad reaching concept which is learned rather than taught. In his argument he looks at the differences and similarities between liberal and conservative ideas of civic education and assesses that both have a goal of civic virtue. Murphy suggests that civic virtue is derived from a variety of learning opportunities outside of traditional education including parents, job, peers, and church.

This is a study of the use of civic engagement pedagogy in higher education. The study compares students’ attitudes and skills before and after taking specific courses which use a “Democratic Classroom” approach. The “Democratic Classroom” pedagogy is summarized as “instructional techniques that serve to promote student engagement in the classroom itself.” The study finds students’ attitudes toward civic engagement increased in the “Democratic Classroom.”

Information Literacy and Political/Civic Engagement

Highlights the many ways that educators can educate students in citizenship and civic engagement. Addresses the acquirement of skills, learning goals, and role of higher education in producing informed citizens. Libraries in turn can develop information resources and events which support the activities on campus.
Elaborates on the role of Libraries in facilitating civic engagement through a variety of ways, including utilization of space, provision of information services, and organization of programs. Gives examples of how libraries can integrate services into civic engagement, including National Issues Forums.

Focuses on the role of libraries in the new digital society, and how the information commons model supports the production of an information citizenry and promotes civic engagement through education, safe spaces for deliberation, information resources, tailored programming and information literacy.

Lilburn, Jeff. 2007. Challenging the Conditions that Make Alternatives Necessary: Librarians, the News Media and the Information Literate Citizen. Progressive Librarian (30) (08): 3-17
This essay challenges librarians to move beyond the implied acceptance of the status quo of passive "good citizenship" and employ a critical pedagogy when teaching information literacy. Librarians are encouraged to critically examine the imbalances of economic, political, and social power that current information media relies on, and to become the force that can catalyze and transform learners into truly engaged and informed citizens.

This article argues that the concept of media literacy is strengthened when it is understood as media criticism. After briefly tracing the development from concerns about television in the early 1950s to the Aspen Institute's 1992 call for media literacy, the article overviews several types of television criticism to illustrate how criticism embraces and moves beyond mere literacy to provide a vehicle for citizen empowerment and engagement. The conclusion reflects on the ethical impulse in media criticism and on how moral engagement with television by literate and critical citizens can serve to democratize public sphere policy debates over communication in the public sphere.

Service Learning

This is an introduction to a special issue of PS: Political Science and Politics which explores the use of “community based service experiences as vehicles for teaching student about politics.” Essays in the collection focus on various aspects of service learning, including its (sometimes unclear) effects on political attitudes, advocacy and social engagement. Articles range from more theoretical studies of service learning to more specific case studies and illustrations of its application.
Freyss, Siegrun Fox. “Learning Political Engagement from the Experts: Advocacy Groups, Neighborhood Councils, and Constituency Service.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 39 (2006): 137-145. Freyss reflects on his experiences introducing students to a variety of political institutions and means of interest articulation (local interest/advocacy groups, community-based programs spearheaded by local government, and district offices of elected officials). He discusses the rationale, process, and assessment of the service learning component for his American Government course. He concludes that many students were “invigorated” by their participation in service learning and gained a deeper appreciation and understanding of the nexus between citizen engagement and public policy.

Hepburn, Mary A., Richard G. Niemi and Chris Chapman. “Service Learning in College Political Science: Queries and Commentary.” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 33 (2000): 617-622. Hepburn et al. reflect on a number of significant questions in the field, including the rationale for service learning in political science, service learning expectations, the characteristics of quality of service learning programs, and the broader implications for civic engagement. The authors provide a rather detailed literature review of the growth and development of service learning programs and why/how they may serve important functions for increasing tolerance, diversity, and appreciation for collaborative and democratic problem solving. Towards the end of their review, the authors consider the ability of service learning, which has primarily been incorporated in non-political science courses, can address and achieve the ideals of civic engagement and responsibility.

Rimmerman, Craig A., ed. *Service Learning and the Liberal Arts: How and Why It Works*, Lanham: Lexington, 2009. The essays in this edited volume focus on successful applications of service learning models and activities in a variety of liberal arts courses (ethics, arts, history, public policy, and economics, among others). A number of the essays also provide some advice and lessons learned from the introduction of the service learning pedagogical approach.

Smith, Elizabeth S. “Learning about Power through Service: Qualitative and Quantitative Assessments of a Service Learning Approach to American Government.” *Journal of Political Science Education* 2 (2006): 147-170. Smith reflects upon the introduction of a service learning component to her American politics course at Furman University. The incorporation of service learning involved overcoming a number of obstacles (logistical, curricular, individual-level) and difficult means of assessment. Smith provides substantial qualitative data from several sources (students and the community organization) and the results of a quasi-experiment as to the efficacy of the module in achieving certain goals (learning about power and citizenship, meeting the needs of the community organization, and learning the facts).

van Assendelft, Laura. “City Council Meetings are Cool: Increasing Student Civic Engagement through Service Learning.” *Journal of Political Science Education* 4 (2008): 86-97. (Adapted from abstract) This article examines the growing body of literature on service learning as a pedagogical tool within political science. It also reports the results of a service learning experiment used in a course on state and local politics. Students completed service learning projects that combined community service,
attendance at local political meetings, and interviews with elected officials [. . .] The vignettes presented . . . highlight the potential benefits of incorporating service learning into political science courses, including enhanced civic engagement and understanding of the policymaking process.

**Volunteerism**


The authors’ goal is to demonstrate the role that businesses can play in social change. The book provides case studies of business men and women that are giving back to their communities and to the world. The philanthropic endeavors profiled in this book include activities such as starting new organizations or foundations, contributing money, donating labor and expertise, etc. Each chapter profiles a different business leader, and includes an interview and bibliographic notes. An appendix provides an annotated directory of “Resources for Giving Back.”


This book is a collection of papers presented at two symposia on community charity hosted by Syracuse University’s Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. The first symposium addressed volunteerism, and the second dealt with financial contributions. The chapters on volunteerism cover topics such as the effectiveness of AmeriCorps in building civic engagement, the challenges of developing successful corporate and service partnerships at City Year, the impact of corporate community service programs, and the performance of volunteer centers. References follow each chapter.


The aim of this book is to measure how volunteering contributes to civil society, and more specifically to social cohesion and political democracy. To find the answer to this question, the contributors analyze data from multi-national surveys and other sources, and examine the similarities and differences in volunteering between countries around the world. With this global perspective, the book also seeks to provide information on the motivations of volunteers, the ideals volunteers seek to promote, and relationships of volunteers to fellow volunteers and to the people they serve.


In this recently published book, Morris provides an historical perspective on the relationship between voluntary organizations and the welfare state. The analysis covers the time period from the 1930s through the 1970s. The book concludes with the admonishment that looking forward, we should not assume that voluntary organizations will suffice as surrogates for public programs: “The scale and scope
of voluntary sector resources remain a small part of the frayed public social safety net, a lesson that the voluntary agencies of the midcentury took to heart” (Morris, 229).


Musick and Wilson conduct a sociological examination of volunteers and volunteerism. The authors examine the demographic characteristics of volunteers, motivations for volunteering, the social context of volunteering, and the consequences of volunteering. The authors’ data supporting their findings are available online at [http://www.iupress.indiana.edu/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=41769](http://www.iupress.indiana.edu/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=41769). Includes extensive endnotes and references.


With this collection of studies the editors seek to challenge the predominant conception of volunteering as unpaid labor. Contributors analyze volunteerism from the vantage point of its relationship with leisure. The studies also provide an international perspective, with contributions coming from Britain, Brazil, Canada, Australia, The Netherlands, and the US. The following themes are explored: establishing long-term commitment, changing volunteer lifestyles, politics of volunteering and active citizenship, and encouraging the next generation. References follow each chapter.

**Relevant Web sites and Links**

- **American Democracy Project** ([http://www.aascu.org/programs/adp/](http://www.aascu.org/programs/adp/)) – American Association of State College and Universities (AASCU) initiative “to produce graduates who are committed to being active, involved citizens in their communities.”

- **Center for Deliberative Democracy** ([http://cdd.stanford.edu/](http://cdd.stanford.edu/)) – Center “devoted to research about democracy and public opinion obtained through Deliberative Polling®…Deliberative Polling is a technique which combines deliberation in small group discussions with scientific random sampling to provide public consultation for public policy and for electoral issues.”

- **Center for Media Literacy** ([http://www.medialit.org](http://www.medialit.org)) – Independent, non-profit educational organization that was incorporated in 1989, but grew out of the publication *Media & Values*, founded in 1977. Its core mission is to serve as a "primary source for understanding the role and impact of media and popular culture on society, on young people in school and on each of us as individuals and citizens of a democracy".

- **CIRCLE: The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement** ([http://www.civicyouth.org/](http://www.civicyouth.org/)) – Located at the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University, CIRCLE “conducts research on the civic and political engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 25…. [It] has provided training and technical assistance to at least 300 organizations, mostly direct providers of services to youth.”
• **Civic Engagement: Available Resources**
  (http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/publications/crlnews/2006/jan/civic.cfm) – A C&RL News “Internet Resources” article that “brings together Internet sites related to the broad topic of civic engagement with an emphasis on civic engagement and higher education.”

• **Deliberative Democracy Consortium** (http://www.deliberative-democracy.net/) — A global network of researchers and practitioners working to advance deliberative democracy. Through information services and global collaboration the DDC champions the application of deliberative tools for citizen engagement in a range of decision-making contexts.

• **Deliberative Democracy, Australian National University**
  (http://deliberativedemocracy.anu.edu.au/) – Provides information on deliberative research.

• **The Democracy Imperative: Mobilizing Higher Education for Deliberative Democracy**
  (http://www.unh.edu/democracy/) – “TDI is a national network of multidisciplinary scholars, campus leaders, and civic leaders in the fields of democratic dialogue, public deliberation, and democracy-building….Our mission is to strengthen public life and advance deliberative democracy in and through higher education.”

• **Great Decisions** (http://www.greatdecisions.org/) – “Published annually, the Great Decisions briefing book highlights eight of the most thought-provoking foreign policy challenges facing Americans today. Great Decisions provides background information, current data, and policy options for each of the eight issues and serves as the focal text for discussion groups….The format of the discussion program is intended to promote thoughtful discourse, to bring people together to express their ideas and opinions, and to learn from others—culminating in the opinion balloting process.”

• **National Coalition for Dialog & Deliberation (NCDD)**
  (http://www.thataway.org/) – The “dialogue and deliberation community” is a community of practitioners, organizations, researchers, public officials, activists, artists, students, and others dedicated to solving problems through honest talk, quality thinking and collaborative action. NCDD provides the infrastructure needed to work together to increase both individual and our collective impact.

• **National Issues Forum**
  (http://www.nifi.org/) – “Network of civic, educational, and other organizations, and individuals, whose common interest is to promote public deliberation in America that provides citizens the opportunity to consider a broad range of choices, weigh the pros and cons of those choices, and meet with each other in a public dialogue to identify the concerns they hold in common. “ Web site includes access to many publications, such as the issue books, developed each for use in the forums, that are “clearly written nonpartisan booklets that describe the problem and present citizens with the advantages and costs of alternative policy choices.”

• **OpenForum.com.au**
  (http://www.openforum.com.au/) – An online collaborative think tank, which invites people from all walks of life to engage with the political process, by participating directly in policy debates with politicians, business people, academics, senior public servants, and other interested parties.

• **Tomorrow’s Europe**
  (http://www.tomorrowseurope.eu/) – Information on the first Europe-wide Deliberative Poll.