HOW & WHY TO TEACH CIVIC & POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES

Elizabeth A. Bennion
Professor of Political Science
Indiana University South Bend

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Outline

Q1. What is civic engagement?
-- What should we call it?

Q2. How should I teach it?
-- Is there a "right" and a "wrong" way to teach it?
-- A "best" way?
-- Are low stakes experiences worthwhile?
-- Short-term? Limited hours? Transactional?
-- What if am I teaching online? During a pandemic?

Q3. What does it look like?
-- Different forms of community-based, experiential learning
-- Short-term vs. long-term projects
-- Examples from across the disciplines

Outline

Q4. Why should I teach it?
-- Benefits to students
-- Benefits to faculty
-- Benefits to community

Q5. Are you asking me to teach politics?
-- Yes, and no . . .
-- Yes, you can!
-- Yes, you should!

Q6. How do I assess student learning outcomes?
-- Decide whether you want to assess knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions
-- Use backward design: start with the outcomes
-- Use active verbs
-- Decide how you will assess each learning outcome
-- Attend the workshop to learn more!

Q1. What is civic engagement? What should we call it?

- Community engagement
  - Volunteering, public service, community-based research, community-based learning, **service-learning**

- Democratic engagement/Political participation (active citizenship)
  - Petitioning, protesting, lobbying, campaigning, voting, etc.

- Different institutions/disciplines use different terms
  - Academically-based community service, service-learning, community service-learning, community-based learning, community-engaged learning

Language Matters, but . . . Key Points:

- Academic service-learning/community-based learning must include reflection that stimulates learners to integrate experience and observations with existing knowledge, to examine theory in practice, and to analyze and question their assumptions and beliefs

- Academic service-learning/community-based learning should address the root causes of the issues that underlie the need for service while motivating students to engage in future civic and political action

REMINDER: When working with community partners use asset-based language to imagine what's possible. Talk about goals and aspirations.

Q2. How should we teach it?
Best Practices:

Meaningful Service

- Service-learning actively engages participants in meaningful and personally relevant service activities

Link to Curriculum

- Service-learning is intentionally used as an instructional strategy to meet learning goals and/or content standards

Reflection

- Service-learning incorporates multiple challenging reflection activities that are ongoing and that prompt deep thinking and analysis about oneself and one's relationship to society

Best Practices:

Diversity

- Service-learning promotes understanding of diversity and mutual respect among all participants

Student Voice

- Service-learning provides students with a strong voice in planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning experiences with guidance from instructors

Partnerships

- Service-learning partnerships are collaborative, mutually beneficial, and address community-defined needs/goals

Best Practices:

Progress Monitoring

- Service-learning engages participants in an ongoing process to assess the quality of implementation and progress toward meeting specified goals, and uses results for   improvement and sustainability

Duration and Intensity

- Service-learning has sufficient duration and intensity to address community needs [i.e. achieve community goals] and meet specified outcomes

Source: K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice
National Youth Leadership Council (nylc.org)

Also see: Service-Learning Essentials: Questions, Answers, and Lessons Learned
Barbara Jacoby (2015: Jossey-Bass)
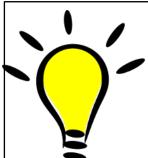
Are low-stakes options worth doing?

- Partnerships may be transactional or transformational
- Service commitments can be minimal or substantial
- Partnerships can be brief/situational or sustained over time

Should you "skip it" if your partnerships will be merely transactional, your service commitment or engagement hours are minimal, and your partnerships are brief, situational, or non-existent?

It depends.
--Check your desired learning outcomes
--Check the community partners' desired outcomes

To learn more about transactional versus transformational partnerships see

Enos, S.L., & Morton K. (2003). Developing a theory and practice of campus-community partnerships, in B. Jacoby (Ed.), *Building Partnerships for Service Learning*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

What if I am teaching hybrid or online, during a pandemic?

- Community-engaged learning is still possible.
  - -- Some students (e.g. nursing) may still work in clinics
  - -- Some can meet with community partners virtually
  - -- Some can present/host/perform virtually

- Students in asynchronous classes can engage.
  - -- Map engagement opportunities, including political
  - -- Participate in virtual or face-to-face engagement
  - -- Menu-based approach

Example: Intro to U.S. Politics: city council, neighborhood association, campaign, LTE, volunteer at local agency, federal rule change, oral arguments, letter to elected official, etc.

https://educate.apsanet.org/civic-action-projects-for-your-100-online-covid-19-adapted-courses

Q3. What does it look like?
What forms might it take?

- Course-centered:
  Field courses/fieldwork, study abroad, community service-learning, studios, laboratories, thesis, capstones, simulations, problem-based learning, external projects/contracts, productions/exhibitions, workshops, community-based research(needs assessment, power map, etc.)

- Program-centered:
  Conferences, competitions, artistic productions and exhibitions, tutoring, involvement in faculty research or other community-based research centers/grants

- Workplace-centered:
  Co-ops, internships, practicums, placements, work-study

Source: Bennion, E. (2015). Experiential education in political science and international relations, in Handbook on Teaching and Learning in Political Science and International Relations, Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.

What about complex, long-term projects tackling "wicked problems"?

Local Example (Bloomington-Normal)

- The **Action Research Center** at **Illinois Wesleyan University** provides a model of **community-based action research** that opens civic engagement opportunities to students from disciplines across the campus.

- A pedagogy focused on **project-based, problem-based, and place-based learning**

- **Rubrics** assess mastery level: novice, proficient, mastery

Examples: **To learn more talk to Deborah Halperin** (faculty panelist)
Writing Fiction: fiction inspired by veteran's stories
Spanish for Social Justice: Toxic threats to pregnancy and early childhood

Examples across the Disciplines

- Examples compiled from
  Quick Hits for Service-Learning:
  Successful Strategies by Award-Winning Teachers
  M.A. Cooksey and Kimberly T. Olivares (Indiana University Press, 2010)

Examples across the disciplines . . .

- **Education** - Application of child welfare theories and concepts through participation in an after-school program and junior high special education classroom. **Tutoring/mentoring**.

- **Education/Counseling/Social Work/Public Health** – Explore socio-cultural identities, develop respect for others and the situatedness of all identities in a Health Services Agency and Sickle Cell Agency. **Public outreach/education, client intake interviews, goodie bag creation, reading program, brochure creation.**

- **Education/Psychology** – Learn about the intricacies of play while **updating exhibits** to be more developmentally appropriate, accessible, and attractive, at a local discovery center.

- **Education/Sociology/Sustainability/Public Policy/Economics** – Conduct a **community needs assessment and/or asset-based community development** plan working with local neighborhood associations.

- **Physical education/Exercise Science/Public Health** – Encourage lifetime exercise and physical activity after a natural disaster by creating an **afterschool program** meeting the physical and social needs of displaced youth. (Similar: afterschool literacy program)

- **Education/English/World Languages** – College students sharpen their academic and career skills while working with 4th- 6th grade English learners as part of **The Stories Project**. College students tell folktales which children represent in clay or paint before writing or dictating a new story based on the abstract image. (Similar: Scribes and Sages, Translate for Toddlers)

- **Criminal Justice/Gender Studies/Pre-Law** – College students worked with the county Sexual Assault Crisis Team to produce a detailed, but accessible **information booklet** about the legal rights of, and resources available to, people who have experienced sexual assault.

- **Sustainability/Marketing/Fine Arts** – College students work with local children and elders to convert **trash bags to handbags** at a local community center, encouraging entrepreneurship, conservation, and intergenerational communication.

- **Sustainability/Plant Science/Agriculture** – College students work with local farms and schools to plant gardens, to provided necessary labor for small organic farms, and create community gardens that provide unsheltered people, and others, with **healthy food**.

More Examples:

- **English Composition / Sustainability – work with local agency and write about the environment and citizenship**, urban environment, humans and nature, the global environment, or environmental sustainability

- **Public Speaking** – research and deliver a **one-hour workshop** for elementary children attending the **Safe Harbor afterschool program**

- **World Languages** – create language appropriate **resource guides for new immigrants**

- **Social Work/Gender Studies** – conduct a **quality of life study** based on the experiences of members of the local **LGBTQ** community

- **Photography/History/Gerontology** – students work with resident of a facility on an **oral history and photo exhibit**; residents are presented with tape, transcript, and framed photo. Three exhibits: class, campus, care facility.

- **Music** – students learned to play the therapeutic harp and reflect on their experiences providing **music therapy at a local hospital** and/or **hospice**

- **Art** – students teach art and conduct **art therapy** with county jail **inmates** awaiting release or transfer to a federal facility

- **Financial Planning/Accounting/Economics –** students participate in the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance **(VITA) program**

- **Management/Business Consulting/Marketing/Public Relations** – students work with **community-based organizations** to produce a strategic plan, technology assessment, program analysis, organizational design, needs assessment, or marketing plan

- **Public Health/Dental Hygiene/Nursing/Radiography/Exercise Science** – plan and implement a **community health fair** including educational materials and free services: sealant clinic, immunization clinic, STD testing, health screenings, exercise demonstrations, and more. (Similar: Health Careers Fair)

- **Architecture -** research, design, and fabricate an **ampitheater and shade canopies** for a **reclaimed park**

- **Architecture/Interior Design** – assess community needs and design a **Hospitality House** to serve the needs of people experiencing **homelessness**

- **See more examples at apsanet.org/teachingcivicengagement or Campus Compact website.**

Q4. Why should I teach it?

- **High Impact Practice**
  --Students invest time and effort; participate in active, challenging learning experiences; experience diversity; interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters; receive more frequent feedback; and discover the relevance of their learning through real world experiences (Kuh, 2008).

- **Well-documented Student Benefits:**
  --**personal growth and development**: moral/spiritual growth: empathy, efficacy, personal/social responsibility, commitment to service during and after college

  --**academic learning**: increased retention and understanding of course content, ability to apply theory to practice, sharper critical thinking and problem solving skills

  --**interpersonal outcomes**: work harder, be more engaged, gain skills in communication, leadership, and collaboration; more likely to pursue career related to service; greater career satisfaction; less likely to stereotype

  --**college experience**: greater satisfaction; more likely to persist and graduate

Sources: Jacoby 2015

- **Benefits to Faculty:**
  - Reinvigorate your teaching
  - Connect with colleagues across campus
  - Engage students more deeply in learning
  - Enjoy more meaningful relationships with students
  - Contribute to your community
  - Opportunity for community-engaged research: SoTL, SoE
  - New audience. New excitement. New relevance.

- **Benefits to Community:**
  - New energy and assistance to delivery services
  - Fresh approaches to problem solving
  - Enhanced capacity to conduct and use research
  - Access to institutional resources
  - Data to leverage grants and other funding
  - Budgetary savings
  - Increased visibility
  - Ability to educate future generation of civic leaders
  - New networks and opportunities for partnerships

Q5. Are you asking me to teach politics?

- Public purpose of higher education: Educating for Democracy

- Civic Health Index – Democracy in Peril

- Community service/volunteerism and service-learning do not necessarily lead to political action
  Example: Students may be passionate about tutoring children in underprivileged schools, but do not recognize need to address the root causes of their underachievement or feel empowered to do so.

- Students may shun politics in favor of direct service and volunteerism.

- **Public policy** affects every field and profession; politics affects our personal lives, public lives, professional lives, and communities.

- Young people vote at lower rates than older cohorts in the electorate.

- At a minimum, join forces with your local POLS profs & ADP reps.

Q6. How do I assess learning outcomes?

Backward design: start with the desired learning outcomes
-- Decide what you want to assess
   knowledge, skills, and/or dispositions
-- Create measurable objectives
-- Use active verbs: tell us what students will be able to do
-- Decide how you will promote each SLO (assignment/activity)
-- Decide how you will assess each SLO (artifact/method)
-- Think about how you will use the assessment data

-- **Attend the afternoon workshop to learn more!**
   New Course. New Activity. New assessment strategy.

Learn more by reading my chapters on assessing civic learning outcomes at
www.apsanet.org/teachingcivicengagement