

**IDS 2338: Democratic Engagement and Public Leadership
Fall 2023**

This is an Online course.

Instructor:

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Office hours will be held virtually or in person on Tuesdays, from 2:30 PM – 4:00 PM and Wednesdays, from 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM. If office hours do not fit into your schedule, please email me to schedule an appointment. To access office hours, you may [sign up through Calendly](#) and join using the [Zoom link](#) or stop by in person. Office hours are first come, first-serve.

Course Texts:

There are no required or assigned textbooks or books for this course. Texts will consist of scholarly articles, current news articles, policy papers, and online resources. These will appear in the online Canvas course shell. Scholarly articles are listed in the course schedule below, under the weeks for which they are assigned. All scholarly articles can be accessed through the [UF Libraries website](#), if you need help navigating the library website, [tutorials are available here](#). From your computer, you will need to be on the [UF VPN Network](#).

Course Goals:

- Provide the background in U.S. History and Government for the context of understanding the individuals' role within a democratic republic.
- Through critical thinking, analysis, and evaluation, develop the skills to engage in productive civil discourse.
- Construct and defend a policy stance concerning a current social, political, or economic issue using basic academic research practices.
- Create a Civic Action Plan to address a pressing community issue.
- Reflect upon and evaluate methods of civic activism.

Course Objectives:

Beyond being a member of a nation or state, Merriam-Webster defines 'citizenship' as "the qualities that a person is expected to have as a responsible member of a community." What does citizenship mean to you within a democratic republic like the U.S.? Being a citizen conveys responsibilities everyone must meet in order to keep any democracy healthy and functioning. Citizenship is not a passive notion, but a dynamic active experience. To fulfill one's role as a citizen, it requires an individual to be both informed and engaged.

While it may not be unusual to have a pessimistic view of politics, it is no excuse for lack of participation. Often, we are left to feel powerless or unsure of how to act when it comes to advocating for those issues or policies we are concerned about the most. This course changes all of that by providing you with the tools, skills, and perspective on how to get informed and be active in public life. The U.S. system of

federalism provides opportunities to be involved in a multi-layered system of government that functions from the local to the national level.

Government is all around us, and that is not a bad thing. Policies are implemented every day at our local (city or county), state, or national levels that have an impact on our lives. We as citizens have a duty to be vigilant and active in expressing our opinions and beliefs to have an impact that benefits our communities. While political discussions tend to focus on Washington, D.C., there are avenues of action right here in your city or county and the state that you can play a role in changing. This course gives you the competencies to know how to be a productive citizen.

Modules will function like an in-person course, where all work is assigned at the beginning of the Module and expected to be completed by the end of the Module week, with the exceptions of the Public Policy Case Study and the Civic Action Plan.

Assignments:

Background Videos: these short (<15 min) videos provide in-depth background information on the selected topic of the Module. The videos offer insight into historical and contemporary policy debates, institutions, and democratic values and norms that support citizenship in the U.S. During 10 selected weeks (see the course schedule), you will take a short 10 question multiple-choice quiz on the topic of the week following each Background Video. The top 8 scores out of 10 quizzes will count toward your final grade. Percent of total grade: 15%

Class Discussion Forums: the forums will be central to the course, where you will provide analysis and discussion of the Module topic by synthesizing the readings, Background Video information, and any additional resources provided, by addressing and discussing a specific question with your classmates. You must offer an original response to the discussion question, as well as comment on your classmates' responses during the Module. Class Discussions will be alternated with the Weekly Assignments. Percent of total grade: 20%

Module Challenge Assignments: Non-Class Discussion Modules will have an assignment to reinforce the ideas and information presented in the Module. The assignment specifics will be provided in Canvas and will focus on the topic of that week. Each of these assignments will ask you to conduct research or interact with small groups of individuals in order to complete, as well as require you to reflect on how the assignment provided additional insight into making an impact in public or civic life. Percent of total grade: 20%

Public Policy Case Study Paper: This short essay (2 pages) will consist of a brief analysis on a specific public policy issue chosen from a list provided in Canvas. You will research one specific aspect of the issue, including finding resources, providing analysis, and making a policy recommendation. This brief paper will offer a summary, background, and analysis of this policy, as well as offer reflection on whether you believe the policy to be sufficient in solving the issue. This paper will be completed in the first half of the semester. SEE APPENDIX A FOR DETAILS. Percent of total grade: 20%

Civic Action Plan: This report will challenge you to take a proactive position by choosing an issue facing our local community, state, or country, then to research the issue, develop a policy solution, and construct a strategy on how you would seek to implement your solution. The Civic Action Plan will be graded according to the quality of your research, your analysis of a policy issue, and your construction

and written defense of a policy proposal for the issue. SEE APPENDIX B FOR DETAILS. Percent of total grade: 25%

Background Videos	15%
Class Discussion Forums	20%
Weekly Assignments	20%
Public Policy Case Study	20%
Civic Action Plan	25%

Grading Policy/Conduct/Evaluation:

I adhere to the University letter-to-grade conversion chart for all assignments and final grades. Grades ending in 0.5 or higher are rounded up to the nearest whole percentage point.

93 or above=A	90-92=A-	87-89=B+	83-86=B	80-82=B-	77-79=C+
73-76=C	70-72=C-	67-69=D+	63+-66=D	60-62=D-	< 60=E (failing)

Assignments are expected to be turned in on the due date. One letter grade per day (not class days) will be taken off for late assignments unless you have obtained prior approval for a different date due to special circumstances or have a documented illness or family emergency. Please do not hesitate to let me know if you have some type of special circumstance, but you must do so before the due date unless it is an emergency. Communication is key. Class participation, assignments, and make-up work will adhere to UF policies and standards, available here <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

This course offers a constructive environment in which students are free to offer their opinions and perspectives on a host of current issues. As we will be discussing controversial issues, about which many people have strong opinions and beliefs, mutual respect is critical. It is fine to challenge someone's ideas/positions, but not the individual. Personal attacks will not be tolerated. Being an engaged citizen means understanding civil discourse, and this class is grounded in treating one another with mutual respect.

The easiest way to reach me is to stop by during office hours or email me. If office hours are not convenient, I am always happy to set a time to meet. Please do not hesitate to contact me for a scheduled appointment. If you have any special needs, please let me know so that we can work together to make this class and your experience a success.

Students with Disabilities: If you have special needs, you must register with the Disability Resource Center, <https://drc.dso.ufl.edu/>, so that you can be provided the necessary accommodations to ensure your success. You must inform me at the beginning of the semester and provide me with a copy of your letter. I will work with you to be successful in this course.

Honor Code of Conduct: UF students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic honesty. Requirements, expectations, and violations can be found here: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/1617/advising/info/student-honor-code.aspx>. It is your responsibility to know UF policies and procedures, and you should hold yourself to the highest standards.

Helpful Links:

UF Counseling and Wellness Center: <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>

UF Writing Center: <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Course Evaluation: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

Course Schedule:

Please note: The module for each week will open each Monday by 5:00 PM. Any assignments from the week prior will be due by Monday at 11:59 PM. If Monday is a holiday, then the assignment is due Tuesday at 11:59 PM. Additional due dates are specified in the syllabus.

Prior to Week 1. (class begins August 23)

- Log on to Canvas and tour the course site, including the syllabus and grading policy.
- View the Course Introduction Video
- Review the Syllabus and contact me if you have questions

Week 1. August 23 – August 25: The Founding of American Government

Texts: *The Declaration of Independence*

Vincent Phillip Muñoz. (2003) "James Madison's Principle of Religious Liberty." *American Political Science Review* 97(1): 17-32.

David Armitage. (2001). "The Declaration of Independence and international law." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 59(1), 39-64.

- Background Video lecture: Founding Principles
- Week 1 Discussion Forum: The Declaration of Independence and the Ideals of American Civic Life

Week 2. August 28 - September 1: The Constitution

Texts: *The Constitution of the United States*

Robert Post. (2017). "The Classic First Amendment Tradition Under Stress: Freedom of Speech and the University." Public Research Paper No. 619, Yale Law School.

https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3044434

- Background Video lecture: The Constitution
 - Video Quiz

PEN America. (2016). "And Campus For All: Diversity, Inclusion, and Freedom of Speech at U.S. Universities." (excerpts)

FIRE. (2021). "College Free Speech Rankings."

Check out FIRE's data tool at <https://rankings.thefire.org/rank/explore>. Explore UF's data.

- Module Challenge Assignment: Freedom of Speech on Campus (short essay analyzing if there are limits to campus free speech)
- Assign Public Policy Case Study Paper

Week 3. September 5 - September 8: Federalism (September 4 is the Labor Day holiday)

Texts: *The Federalist Papers*, excerpts

The Anti-federalist Papers, excerpts

Greg Goelzhouser and David M. Konisky. (2020). "The State of American Federalism 2019-2020: Polarized and Punitive Intergovernmental Relations" *Publius* 50(3): 311-343.

Carol Weissert and Daniel Sheller (2008). "Learning from the States? Federalism and National Health Policy." *Public Administration Review* Special Issue.

- Background Video lecture: Federalism
 - Video Quiz
- Week 3 Discussion Forum: The Federal System and where to target action

Week 4. September 11 – September 15: Separation of Powers

Texts: The Interactive Constitution. "Scholar Exchange: Federalism and the Separation of Powers Briefing Document."

Constance Flanagan, Peter Levine, and Richard Settersten. (2009). "Civic Engagement and the Changing Transition to Adulthood."

- Background Video Lecture: Separation of Powers
 - Video Quiz
- Module Challenge Assignment: Generational Survey (you will survey 10 members across multiple generational groups and produce a short paper noting how common life experiences of different generations account for impacts on our public and political lives)

Week 5. September 18 – September 22: Checks and Balances

Texts: James Madison, Federalist No. 51. Feb. 8, 1788.

Matthew McCubbins and Thomas Schwartz. (1984). "Congressional Oversight Overlooked: Police Patrols Versus Fire Alarms." *American Journal of Political Science* 28(1), 165-179.

Kenneth Lowande and Rachel Augustine Porter. (2020) "Congressional Oversight Revisited: Politics and Procedure in Agency Rulemaking" *The Journal of Politics* 83(1): 401-408.

- Background Video Lecture: Checks and Balances
 - Video Quiz
- Week 5 Discussion Forum: Does oversight exist anymore, or are the checks checking and the balances balancing?

Week 6. September 25 – September 29: Congress

Texts: Congressional Management Foundation. (2013). "Life in Congress: The Member Perspective." *Selected Excerpts*

James M. Curry and Jason M. Roberts. (2022) "Interpersonal Relationships and Legislative Collaboration in Congress" *Legislative Studies Quarterly* 1-36.

- Background Video Lecture: Congress
 - Video Quiz
- Week 6 Discussion Forum: Collective action problems and Congress as representational

Week 7. October 2 – October 5: The Legislative Process (October 6 is UF Homecoming Holiday)

Texts: Janet Box-Steffensmeier, Dino Christenson, and Alison Craig. (2019). "Cue-Taking in Congress: Interest Group Signals from Dear Colleague Letters." *American Journal of Political Science* 63 (1). 163-180.

- Background Video Lecture: The Legislative Process
 - Video Quiz
- Week 7 Discussion Forum: Competing interests and influence in lawmaking

Week 8. October 9 - October 13: The Presidency

Texts: We the People Podcast. (2020). "The Constitutional Bounds of Executive Action." <https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/podcast/the-constitutional-bounds-of-executive-action> Listen to the podcast episode.

Sharece Thrower. (2017) "To Revoke or Not Revoke? The Political Determinants of Executive Order Longevity" *American Journal of Political Science* 61(3) 642-656.

- Background Video Lecture: The Presidency
 - Video Quiz
- Module Challenge Assignment: Write a brief paper (3-5 pages) responding to the two questions below. Use examples from the reading, podcast, and video assignments for this module.
 1. Explain how the presidential use of power has expanded.
 2. Discuss how this expanded power can have both positive and negative consequences.

Week 9. October 16 – October 20: The Supreme Court

Texts: Katy Harriger. (2011). "Judicial Supremacy or Judicial Defense? The Supreme Court and the Separation of Powers." *Political Science Quarterly* 126(2), 201-221

Bryce J. Dietrich, Ryan D. Enos, and Maya Sen. (2019) "Emotional Arousal Predicts Voting on the Supreme Court." *Political Analysis* 27: 237-243.

- Background Video Lecture: The Supreme Court
 - Video Quiz
- Module Challenge Assignment: Navigate to the Oyez.org website, a database of Supreme Court Cases and select "cases". Choose a case from this past term (2022-2023) and listen to the oral arguments. Prepare a one-pager with a short summary of the arguments, and offer your analysis of how the justices' questions preview their ruling.
- Assign Civic Action Plan
- **Public Policy Case Study Paper DUE Monday, October 16**

Week 10. October 23 – October 27: Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

Texts: The Interactive Constitution (2022). "Free Speech Throughout World History." Podcast Episode. <https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/podcast/free-speech-throughout-world-history>

Pavlos Vasilopoulos, et al. (2022). "Emotions, Governmental Trust, and Support for the Restriction of Civil Liberties During the Covid-19 Pandemic." *European Journal of Political Research*.

The Interactive Constitution (2022) "Three Election Law Cases and What They Mean for Democracy." <https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/podcast/three-election-law-cases-and-what-they-mean-for-democracy>

- Module Challenge Assignment: From the readings and the podcast, write a 1-2 page paper assessing the state of civil rights and liberties in the world today. What lessons from the European study can be applied to the United States? What are the major challenges to the full and free exercise of our civil rights and liberties?

Week 11. October 30 – November 3: The Media

Texts: Pew Research. "More Americans Now Say Government Should Take Steps to Restrict False Information Online." 2021 <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/08/18/more-americans-now-say-government-should-take-steps-to-restrict-false-information-online-than-in-2018/>

Pew Research "Partisan Divides in Media Trust." <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2021/08/30/partisan-divides-in-media-trust-widen-driven-by-a-decline-among-republicans/>

Leticia Bode (2016). "Political News in the News Feed: Learning Politics from Social Media." *Mass Communication and Society* 19:1, 24-48.

Elle Hunt, "What is fake news? How to spot it and what you can do to stop it." *The Guardian*, Dec. 17, 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2016/dec/18/what-is-fake-news-pizzagate>

- Background Video Lecture: The Media
- Week 10 Discussion Forum: The Media, “fake news” and how we make sense of where we get our information

Week 12. November 6 – November 9: Campaigns and Elections (November 10 is Veterans Day Obsvd)

Text: Ted Brader (2005). “Striking a Responsive Chord: How Political Ads Motivate and Persuade Voters by Appealing to Emotions.” *American Journal of Political Science* 49(2): 388-405.

Visit: The Museum of the Moving Image: The Living Room Candidate
<http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/>. Select any three presidential election years. Watch the commercials for all candidates running each year. Examine the accompanying electoral maps for the results (under the results tab).

- Background Video Lecture: Campaigns & Elections
- Module Challenge Assignment: Write a short essay (up to 4 pages) that seeks to answer the following questions, drawing on the recorded lecture, reading, and videos. Your essay should reflect your position on these issues as informed from the readings and resources available here.
 - Do political campaigns matter? If yes, in what ways? If no, why not?
 - Do campaigns engage the electorate in a positive or negative manner?
 - How does fundraising (money in politics) and the length of time for campaigns impact democracy?
 - Do campaigns force candidates or parties to be more responsive to their constituents?

Week 13. November 13 – November 17: Political Parties

Texts: Daniel Q. Gillion, Jonathan M. Ladd, and Marc Meredith. (2020). “Party Polarization, Ideological Sorting and the Emergence of the U.S. Partisan Gender Gap.” *British Journal of Political Science* 50: 1217-1243.

Podcast. 2020. “Parties, Platforms, Conventions, and the Constitution.”

<https://constitutioncenter.org/interactive-constitution/podcast/parties-platforms-conventions-and-the-constitution>

- Background Video Lecture: Political Parties
 - Video Quiz
- Week 13 Discussion Forum: Political Parties and how partisanship has come to dominate public discourse

Week 14. November 22- November 25: Thanksgiving Break

Week 15. November 27 - December 1: Political Participation

Texts: William A. Galston (2004), “Civic Education and Political Participation,” *PS: Political Science and Politics* 37(2), 263-266.

James Sloam (2012). "New Voice, Less Equal: The Civic and Political Engagement of Young People in the United States and Europe." *Comparative Political Studies* 47(5): 663-688.

Cheonsoo Kim and Soobum Lee. (2021). "Does Social Media Type Matter to Politics? Investigating the Difference in Political Participation Depending on Preferred Social Media Sites." *Social Science Quarterly* 102: 2942-2954.

- Background Video: Political Participation
- Module Challenge Assignment: Is the Information Free? (You will research an issue and file a Freedom of Information Act request to demonstrate your understanding of citizen oversight.)

Week 16. December 4 - 15: Final Reflections

Final reflections: The student will critique established institutions and challenge assumptions about public life.

Text: Theda Skocpol (1997) "The Tocqueville Problem: Civic Engagement in American Democracy," *Social Science History* 21(4), 455-479.

- Discussion Forum: How do you better understand your role within public society?
- **Civic Action Plan DUE Monday, December 11 @ 11:59 PM**

APPENDIX A: Public Policy Case Study

For this assignment, you will examine a specific policy issue from the list provided in Canvas. Then you will write a brief essay – 2 pages – that provides the background and history of the policy, the current policy in place, an analysis of the current policy, and your recommendations on improvement. Structure your essay based on the sections detailed below.

How to Write a Public Policy Case Study:

- The first section of any policy case study should provide the background and context for why the policy was needed, made, and implemented in the first place. This section is grounded in research showing the problem of the issue and how the policy is supposed to fix that issue.
 - For example: No Child Left Behind Act was developed as a means of updating the Elementary and Secondary Schools Act to address such educational issues of school inequalities, disadvantaged students, as well as establish standards-based education reforms as a means of assessment. Why were these reforms needed? What were the political arguments for and against them at the time? That is what this section will address. Focus on the arguments being made in favor of this policy, and what the critics were saying.
- The second section will offer a description of the specifics of the policy. This delves into what issues the policy was developed to address.
 - For example: with the No Child Left Behind Act, what were the specific reforms? How did this policy change what already existed, meaning, how was this different from the Elementary and Secondary Education Act? Specifically, you can focus on how standardized testing reshaped public education. For this portion, focus on a specific part of the policy, like the standardized testing.
- The third section provides an analysis of the current policy, meaning, has this policy achieved the goals it was designed for, or has it fallen short in some way? Base your response on the two previous sections that detailed the issues and politics surrounding the need for the policy and what the policy was designed to do.
- The final section is where you offer your own analysis and perspective on the policy and issue. Do you think the policy was good or bad? What recommendations would you make? Can the current policy be fixed, or should it be scrapped completely? If you were to fix or design a new policy, what would it be and why?

Your source material should be a mix of academic sources, government documents or web-based resources, news stories, advocacy organizations or think tanks. There will be plenty of source material on any of the policy issues listed in Canvas, so make use of a wide range of material.

APPENDIX B: Civic Action Plan

Step 1. Pick an issue that interests you. Think about what is impacting your local community or state and choose an issue that you want to research and address. Think about this as being something *you could have an impact on* as it will make the assignment more beneficial to you and enjoyable.

Many issues are large. For example, climate change is an issue that impacts everyone on the planet. However, it is likely that there are facets of this issue that can be addressed locally. As climate change encompasses many environmentally focused topics when it comes to solutions or actions, what could your city or county do to address one of these aspects? In New York City, there are efforts to address rising sea levels in lower lying areas of the Manhattan and Brooklyn waterfronts. Another example – homelessness is a national problem, but it is also a problem in Gainesville and Alachua County. What could our city or county do to better help those living among us who are homeless?

Step 2. Begin researching your issue. You will need to create a reading list with 5 to 7 sources, which will require reading throughout the semester. These sources need to include peer-reviewed articles or books, journalistic sources, and online resources. Compile these resources into a bibliography. The best starting place to find resources for your plan is through the UF Libraries - <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/> or through Google Scholar (login on the [UF VPN](#) network prior to searching). News articles, op-eds, websites, and online resources like advocacy organizations are good to use as well. You should have a variety of source materials. *Please remember that Wikipedia is not a source, but the articles cited within can be, so please research thoroughly and use appropriate citations.*

Step 3. Write your issue introduction. This is a one-page statement that identifies the issue, explains its importance, provides historical context, identifies competing views, and states your position. While this is a lot for one page, the goal is to be concise. In many cases professionally, the first page is all an elected official or other leader will have time to read.

Your one-page issue introduction should:

- identify the issue,
- explain why the issue is important,
- provide some historical context for the issue,
- identify competing views, and
- state your stance.

Step 4. Develop a policy solution to the issue you have identified. This is a statement of your goal for the issue that identifies a policy outcome you would like to see enacted. This includes what level of government – local (city; county) or state. You will provide your rationale for why you wish to see this policy goal achieved. Your policy goal is a recommendation or solution that is specific to and targets the issue you have chosen to address.

- Use evidence from your resources and source material. Make sure to cite your sources (use your preferred citation style, but it must be consistent throughout the paper).
- Write the statement in your own words. It is fine to include brief quotes from your sources if appropriate.
- Be cognizant of past and recent policy actions taken on this issue at the level you are proposing. In this way, your policy goal can coordinate with ongoing efforts, or change existing policy, depending on how you chose to frame it and what past policy actions exist.

Step 5. Develop a strategy for how you would seek to achieve/implement your solution in the real world. An effective strategy can make all the difference, and this course has helped you develop your citizenship skills, so what effective strategies would you take on to achieve your goal. For example, think about coalition building (see Step 6), use of media – online and traditional, fundraising, issue awareness, research/reports/polling or survey data and analysis – how would you seek to convince policymakers your idea has merit or influence public opinion? ***You should have 4 or 5 distinct strategy steps/goals at minimum.***

Step 6. Discover Allies and Opponents. For this section, you will identify a minimum of three allies and three opponents that you will face in your quest to enact your policy goal. Knowing who you can count on for support, and who you are up against, is important in any public policy fight. Provide a brief description of each of your Allies and Opponents, which includes why you see them as an ally or opponent, and how you would collaborate with them or neutralize their ongoing efforts to oppose yours.

Step 7. References. Provide a bibliography of all your sources, using whatever citation style you choose, so long as you are consistent in style throughout.

When finished, your Civic Action Plan will be 8-10 pages, 12pt Times New Roman font, double-spaced, 1-inch page margins. Please include page numbers and your name on each page.

The paper will include:

1. Issue Introduction
2. Statement of Policy Goal
3. Strategies
4. Allies and Opponents
5. References