

**CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL ISSUES
COURSE SYLLABUS
CENTER FOR TALENTED YOUTH**

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1. To enable students to gain a basic understanding of the contours of America: social, economic, and political.
2. To question “society” in order to understand how and why society is a dynamic structure filled with diverse entities with subjective positions and perspectives.
3. To excavate the origins of America’s institutional, social, political, and cultural strengths and weaknesses.
4. To explore how we construct our knowledge of the world from within American culture.
5. To test and strengthen our ideas of civic duty by using our intellectual tools and personal experiences as lenses for understanding self within modern-day society.

REQUIRED TEXTS¹:

Hayes, Bill. *Active Citizenship Today: Field Guide, Second Edition*.(Los Angeles: Constitutional Rights Foundation, 2005).

Keilburger, Craig. *Free the Children: A Young Man Fights against Child Labor and Proves that Children can Change the World*. (New York: Harper Perennial Publishing, 2000).

Additional Readings will be distributed throughout the session.

CLASS PREPARATION AND PARTICIPATION:

This class will strive to be a balance between lecture, discussion, and projects of a varying nature. I expect every student to be prepared to participate actively in the intellectual work of this course. The assigned readings are meant to not only be read but critically analyzed.

ATTENDANCE:

Attendance is mandatory and will be taken at the beginning of each class period.

¹ Please note that readings will be added throughout the session.

Unit One: Social Justice, Democracy and Society

Unit One will articulate the meaning of social justice and its role in American democracy. In addition, this unit will explore how and why individual and communal experiences vary within the same construct of American democracy.

Day 1:

Exploring multicultural identity within democratic America--

Readings:

Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology, "Introduction;"

Patricia Hill Collins, "Shifting the Center" in Patricia Hill Collins and Margaret Andersen, *Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology* (Thomson Wadsworth Publishing, 2004).

Robert Takaki, "A Different Mirror" in Patricia Hill Collins and Margaret Andersen, *Race, Class and Gender: An Anthology* (Thomson Wadsworth Publishing, 2004).

Activity:

"Creating Your Pop-beads of Identity"

Journal Experience:

Walking in Someone Else's Shoes

Day 2:

Defining the Responsibilities of Citizenship—

Readings:

"Declaration of Independence"; "US Bill of Rights"; Susan B. Anthony's, "Women's Right to Vote"; Black Panther's "Ten-Point Plan"; "UN Declaration of Human Rights."

Activity:

Prepare your own Code of Citizenship that outlines your own ideals for community participation, rights and "equality."

Journal Experience:

Respond to the varying perspectives of community ideals.

Day 3:

Fieldwork: Community Mapping

Reading:

Gerda Lerner, "Neighborhood Women and Grassroots Human Rights," *Women's America: Refocusing the Past* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Activity:

Mapping Your Ideal Community

Day 4:

Defining Community Disparities—
PBS—*Race: The Power of Illusion*

Activity--

“Walking in My Families’ Footsteps” Visual Project

Day 5:

Our Daily Bread Service Project

Unit Two: Defining Community Identities/ Acknowledging Community Needs

Unit Two will define the meaning of a community as well as the existence of community strengths and weaknesses. Once the politic of varying communities within the surrounding area is articulated, students will pinpoint the ongoing needs of studied communities.

Day 6:

Readings:

Courtney Martin, “The Problem with Youth Activism,” *The American Prospect* (November 19, 2007).

http://www.prospect.org/cs/articles?article=the_problem_with_youth_activism

Carolyn Goossen, “Peacekeepers Embedded on Campus,” *WireTapMagazine* (June 22, 2007).

<http://wiretapmag.org/activism/43139/>

Vicente Garcia, “Opinion: Why I Campaign for College Tuition Relief Now!,” *WireTapMagazine* (March 24, 2008).

<http://wiretapmag.org/stories/43472/>

Anand Gopal, “Go Tell It on the Mountain,” *WireTapMagazine* (June 25, 2007).

<http://wiretapmag.org/stories/43134/>

Activity:

The Class Race

Journal Experience:

PBS’ *Chicano!* Response

Day 7:

Maryland Food Bank

Day 8:

Viewings:

Great Debaters; Iron Jawed Angels

Journaling Experience:

What makes an activist?

Activity:

Creating a S.M.A.R.T. Goal

Day 9:

Washington DC Trip

Day 10:

Introduction to the Social Justice Plan

Unit Three: Finding Your Social Justice Passion and Creating Your Social Justice Plan

As a culmination of the course, each student will be required to pinpoint a social justice issue they can be passionate about and outline a social justice plan based on academic research, a legitimate SWOT plan, a “creative piece,” and a reasonable timeline.

Day 11:

What is your SWOT plan?

Activity:

Power Analysis Game

Day 12:

Final Project Research Library Day

Day 13:

Parks and People Fieldtrip

Day 14:

Research Con't

Presentations Begin

Day 15:

Last Class

Center for Talented Youth:
Youth and Society

Social Justice Final Project

The goal of CTY's Youth and Society course is to strengthen students' understanding of strategies they can employ to positively impact their home communities reflective of their social justice interests and passions. This is accomplished by answering three main questions:

- What am I working to remedy?
- How do I plan to remedy this local concern using my field of expertise?
- How do I expect my efforts will positively affect my community in the long run?

What am I working to remedy?

Answering this question is more commonly known as launching a **CAMPAIGN**. A campaign is defined as...

- A coordinated set of activities and actions designed to address an issue and achieve a specific goal within a defined time frame.

How do I plan to remedy this local concern?

Answering this question is more commonly known as creating a **STRATEGY**. A strategy is defined as...

- A plan to organize a group of people to initiate immediate change.

ALL STRATEGIES SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

- a. A clear statement of **what** you desire to be remedied.
- b. An articulation of **who** you plan to benefit as a result of your actions.
- c. A listing of individuals, institutions, organizations, who could feasibly **assist** in the completion of your campaign.
- d. An organized set of **tactics** or plans to complete your goal.

*A Step by Step Guide to
Creating a Social Justice Plan*

A. Identify your social issue.

- a. Ask yourself:
 - i. Is my topic too broad?
 - ii. Can it be achieved within a reasonable timeframe?
 - iii. What is a reasonable time frame for me? Two weeks, two years, twenty years?)

B. Research

- a. Who are my key players within this issue?
 - i. What is my target population?
 - ii. Who are my individual, institutional and organizational allies?
 - iii. DO I HAVE ANY OPPONENTS?
 - iv. Who can be swayed to assist in my efforts?
- b. What resources are available in my community to assist me in completing this campaign?

C. Analysis

- a. Define long and short term goals
- b. Develop a Power Analysis OR how does your campaign fit into the big picture of your community?
- c. Discuss the various approaches to completing your campaign
- d. Honestly discuss the challenges to completing your campaign

D. Developing a Plan of Action

- a. Create a campaign message, slogan, cheer or jingle
- b. Develop a concrete timeline of events working toward your campaign goal
- c. Assign tasks to your colleagues and campaign allies
- d. Publicize your campaign through media, small gatherings, community talks, rallies, etc.

E. Mobilization

- a. Stick to your campaign timeline
- b. Develop a retention strategy to continually encourage your colleagues assisting in your campaign
- c. Develop a recruitment program to expand your support base
- d. Constantly reward and praise even the smallest achievement toward your end goal
- e. Network, network, network OR do not “pave a new road to Baltimore if one already exists.”☺

F. Evaluation

- a. Create a system to evaluate whether your campaign is positively affecting the community as you planned.