



“The vote is the most powerful nonviolent tool that we have in a democratic society.” John Lewis, (D), GA

**Voting Rights Capstone
Fall, 2012
CRN: 15246
Portland State University**

Syllabus is subject to change as necessary.

Instructor: Kristin Teigen
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Community Partner Contact: Caitlin Baggot, Executive Director, Bus Project
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Course Schedule: Monday and Wednesday, 10:15-12:15

Course Location: Broadway Housing Building, 224

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, by appointment

Course Description: There are over 8 million people, or 1/5th of the electorate, who are eligible to vote but who do not register. Further, out of the registered voters, generally ½ of those do not vote. This means that those people who are participating, who are weighing in on critical issues facing us all, are outnumbered by those who don't. In addition, less than one-half of 19-24 year olds do not register, while almost 95% of those over 65 do, meaning that the perspectives of a significant part of our national community are not heard.

This six credit Capstone course teaches the history of voting rights in United States while partnering with the Bus Project Foundation, which is a non-partisan, community-based organization dedicated to creating a vibrant democracy by engaging Oregonians in civic and political life. A key aspect of the Bus Project Foundation's activities is registering, educating, and activating new voters. It is these activities that will engage Capstone students.

Student Learning Objectives:

Students will:

- Demonstrate, through writing and oral presentations, an understanding the history of voting rights in the United States. *Critical thinking, social and ethical responsibility, variety of human experience*

- Identify, analyze, discuss and write about the barriers in place to voting *Critical thinking, social and ethical responsibility, variety of human experience*
- Experience the process of registering and activating new voters, building new skills of communication, compassion and insight. *Critical thinking, social and ethical responsibility, variety of human experience*

Grading Overview: Class attendance and participation is important and central to your success. Students may have two excused absences. Beyond that, your grade will be dropped by one grade per absence. Students are expected to be fully prepared, having read the required material and be ready for discussion, prior to each class.

Grading Criteria:

- **Participation – Community service, leading discussions, weekly assignments, quizzes and discussion in class (50%)**
- A collaboratively produced assessment, for the Bus Project, that analyzes reasons why citizens do not register and/or vote universally. (20%)
 - *Example: There are 500,000 young people in Oregon who are eligible to register to vote. Voter registration outreach by organizations like the Bus Project will reach only a small portion of them. How can the others be registered? What are the options? What do other countries do, and what is their corresponding voter turnout?*
- Weekly reflections on community service experiences (10%)
- An individual final paper that will document knowledge and reflect upon the history of voting rights and connections between present-day voter activism efforts. **Please consider turning in a draft of your paper for feedback on November 21st.** (20%)

Late Work

Turning in your paper and/or group project late will result in a ½ grade deduction per day. Other late assignments will affect your participation grade.

Community Service

Students are expected to complete **30-40 hours total** of community service. The Bus Project will be working with you to provide 4 possible shifts, of 2 *or more* hours per shift, for you to choose from. It is **highly recommended that** you schedule an activity as a team with one or more classmates.

This will include:

- **September 24-October 16th** -- Voter registration
- **October 17 – November 6** -- Voter outreach to get people to the polls
- **November 7 – End of Class** - Collaborative research project

Classroom Demeanor & Courtesy

- ♦ The issues raised in this class may be deeply felt and controversial. Disagreement and diversity of opinions and ideas are encouraged. It is expected that in trying to understand differences, students will learn and constructively engage with others. In order for this to be fruitful, this must be a *respectful* process. Disruptive, insulting or offensive behavior has no place in an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Students engaging in such behavior will be asked to leave.

Course Schedule

September 25 – Unique Community Service Opportunity! September 25 is National Voter Registration Day! The Bus Project will be registering people to vote at Pioneer Courthouse Square at 7:30am. Please consider attending -- there will be pie!

September 24

- Course Introduction
- Discussion – Working in Groups
- Overview of the Bus Project

Reading for the next class: Keyssar, Chapters 1- 2
McIntosh, “Unpacking the Knapsack of White Privilege”
Adair and Howell, “To Equalize Power Among Us”

Participation Assignment: Review the entire website for the Bus Project/Bus Project Foundation (<http://busproject.org/>, <http://busfoundation.org/>)

September 26

- Voter Registration Training with the Bus Project
- Discussion of Privilege/Oppression

Reading for the next class: Keyssar, Chapters 3- 4
Kousser in Gronfman/Davidson, “The Voting Rights Act and the Two Reconstructions,” pp 135-176.
Participation assignment: Research who is allowed to register to vote in Oregon and what the current restrictions are. Also, find out the elections schedule for Portland for the 2012-13 year.

October 1

- Community Service Feedback
- Participation assignment report-back
- Voting Rights Basics and History, Continued

Due: Weekly reflection on Community Service
Reading for the next class: Keyssar, Chapter 5
Participation Assignment: Delve further into *United States v. Cruikshank*

October 3

- Participation feedback
- Voting Rights History, Continued

Reading for the next class: Keyssar, Chapter 6
Participation Assignment: Review Century of Action Website (<http://centuryofaction.org>). Pick one essay and be prepared to summarize its key points.

October 8

- Community Service Feedback
- Participation Feedback
- Voting Rights History, Continued
- Guest Speaker: Jan Dilg, Century of Action

Due: Weekly reflection on Community Service
Reading for the next class: Keyssar, Part III, Davidson in Gronfman and Davidson, “The Voting Rights Act: A Brief History”
Participation Assignment: Prepare for quiz on Keyssar, Chapters 3 - Conclusion

October 10

- Quiz on Readings

- Voting Right Act and the Civil Rights Era – **Documentary on Selma March**

Reading for the next class: Gronfman and Davidson, pp 52-134 and entire Section III

Participation Assignment: Review <http://www.splcenter.org/civil-rights-memorial/civil-rights-martyrs> and be prepared to discuss those involved in voting rights.

October 15

- Community Service Feedback
- Participation feedback
- Voting Rights Act, continued

Due: Weekly reflection on Community Service

Reading for the next class: Thompson, Janice. “Improving Voter Participation: Oregon Challenges and Opportunities”

Participation Assignment: Review the Oregon Secretary of State Elections Site (<http://oregonvotes.org/>)

October 17

- Participation Feedback
- Oregon – How does voting work here?

Reading for the next class: Connery, Michael. *Youth to Power*. Chapters 1-5

Participation Assignment: Read Michael Connery’s Blog

October 22

- Community Service Feedback
- Participation Feedback
- Youth Voting

Due: Weekly reflection on Community Service

Reading for the next class: Connery, Michael. *Youth to Power*. Chapters 6-10

Participation Assignment: Review <http://www.civicyouth.org/official-youth-turnout-rate-in-2010-was-24/>, including the full fact sheet.

October 24

- Participation Feedback
- Youth Voting

Reading for the next class: Gamson, William. “Political Consciousness,” in *Talking Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 1 – 12. (available in PDF at <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/samples/cam031/92000766.pdf>) and

Participation Assignment: Review information, including all links on the site -- <http://votingrights.news21.com/interactive/election-fraud-database> and <http://www.ncsl.org/legislatures-elections/elections/voter-id.aspx>.

From one of these sites or another, bring in *current* article about voting rights restrictions. Be prepared to discuss how it may relate to the Voting Rights Act.

October 29

- Community Service Feedback
- History of Fraud in Voting
- Redistricting
- Current means of addressing potential fraud

- Paper overview

Reading for the next class: From this point forward, reading will focus on review and preparation for the group project and final paper (with one exception).

October 31 -- Open Day

Halloween -- Bus Project – Trick or Vote (Suggested Community Service Effort this day)

November 5

- Community Service Feedback
- Overview of polls, rhetoric and projections

Participation Assignment: Bring to class any voter turnout and results you can find.

November 7

- Reflection on the Election

November 6 – Election Day! Community Service Day!

Participation Assignment: Bring to class information regarding one or more category below.

November 12 – No Class – Veterans Day

November 14

- Community Service Feedback
- Election Analysis
- Reports of Fraud
- Turn-out

Participation Assignment: Research difference in turnout from presidential elections to non-presidential elections. Research difference between November and May elections in Oregon. Look at the past 20 years.

November 19

- Voting Behavior

Participation Assignment: Review Entire Website for Common Cause Oregon

November 21

- Report back on Common Cause Recommendations
- Discussion on possibilities

▪ **Paper First Draft Due**

Reading for next class: Berinsky, Adam J. “The Perverse Consequences of Electoral Reform in the United States.”

Participation Assignment: Find out all you can about the Electoral Reform Act

November 26

- Reforms

November 28

- Group Project

November 30

- Group Project

December 3

- Group Presentations and Course Evaluation

December 5

- Final Paper via email (by 5pm to kmteig@comcast.net) or to my box in University Studies.

Disability Access Information

If you require accommodations (e.g. special seating, interpreter, note-taker, etc.), please inform your instructor immediately. Students with disabilities should register with the PSU Disability Resource Center (503-725-4150, TTY or Relay 503-725-4178) to document their need for accommodations and obtain support services. I will work with you to arrange the supports you need in this class.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to adhere to college policies. Please take special note of policies regarding plagiarism and course withdrawal. The University's Code of Student Conduct may be found at <http://www.pdx.edu/dos/conduct.html>. In the PSU Student Conduct Code #577-031-0136:

Proscribed Conduct by Portland State University

The following constitutes conduct as proscribed by Portland State university for which a student or student organization or group is subject to disciplinary action:

- Obstruction or disruption of teaching, research, administration, disciplinary procedures or other University activities, including the University's public service functions or other authorized activities on University-owned or -controlled property, or any other location where teaching, research, administration, disciplinary procedures or other University activities take place.
- All forms of academic dishonest, cheating, and fraud, including but not limited to: (a) plagiarism, (b) the buying and selling of course assignments and research papers, (c) performing academic assignments (including tests and examination) for other persons, (d) unauthorized disclosure and receipt of academic information and (e) falsification of research data.

Required Reading

- Keyssar, Alexander. *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States*. New York, NY: Basic Books, 2009.
- Connery, Michael. *Youth to Power*. New York, NY: Ing Publishing, 2008.
- Gamson, William. "Political Consciousness," in *Talking Politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 1 – 12. Available in PDF at <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/samples/cam031/92000766.pdf>.
- Thompson, Janice. "Improving Voter Participation: Oregon Challenges and Opportunities," available at http://www.commoncause.org/atf/cf/%7Bfb3c17e2-cdd1-4df6-92be-bd4429893665%7D/IMPROVINGVOTERPARTICIPATION_080409.PDF
- Grofman, Bernard and Chandler Davidson, editors. *Controversies in Minority Voting*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institute Press, 1992.
- McIntosh, Peggy. "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," available at https://docs.google.com/Doc?id=dd323hvj_1204hbf24wcm&pli=1
- Adair, Margo and Sharon Howell. "To Equalize Power Among Us," available at <http://organizingforpower.wordpress.com/power/anti-oppression-resources-exercises/>.

- Berinsky, Adam J. “The Perverse Consequences of Electoral Reform in the United States.” *American Politics Research* 2005; 33; 471, available at http://votingtechnologyproject.org/sites/default/files/perverse_consequences_electoral_reform.pdf
- Barreto, Dr. Matt A and Dr. Gary M. Segura. “Latino Voters in the 2008 Election: A Post-Election Survey. *Naleo*. No Date Given, available at <http://www.naleo.org/downloads/Post-Election%20Survey.pdf>
- ey.pdf