

# Civic Learning & Democratic Engagement for Teachers

**Course Facilitators:** Carah Ong Whaley, PhD, [whaleycl@jmu.edu](mailto:whaleycl@jmu.edu), 202-378-3334 (texting encouraged!), Twitter: @CarahOng

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**Course Date, Time & Location:** Mondays & Wednesdays, 9:45-11:00 am Zoom, Madison Hotel 260,

**Office Hours:** By appointment via Zoom, Call or Burruss 243

## Course Description

This course examines scholarship and models of political learning and civic engagement to develop learning initiatives in P-16 curriculum. Through academic study, dialogues with practitioners, case studies, site visits, and hands-on activities, students will develop a critical understanding of the underlying theories and key ideas central to civic learning and democratic engagement, including: democracy, justice, “citizenship”, “community,” equity and inclusion, deliberation, compromise, mutual respect/civility, social capital, civic leadership, political knowledge, and efficacy. To promote creative approaches to teaching and learning to address public issues, coursework includes: weekly responses to assigned course readings; development of a civic learning module to be incorporated in curriculum; and engagement in experiential learning activities organized by the course facilitators.

We will explore the following questions: Why is civic education needed? What is the state of civic education? How can curriculum incorporate civic and political learning outcomes? How does civic learning relate to democratic and education theories? What constitutes a need for civic or political engagement? How do the ideas, beliefs and attitudes that political actors, institutions and the public hold about citizenship, participation, engagement, inclusion and democracy define situations of power and structure interactions between the public and political and civic institutions? How do political knowledge and efficacy relate to civic and political action? How can civic engagement foster more inclusion especially for communities that have been traditionally minoritized and marginalized? What are effective approaches to democratic deliberation? How does the media matter and what is the role of civic and citizen journalism? What is the role of technology and social media? How can civic learning and democratic engagement be incorporated at all ages of development and in different subject areas, including STEAM?

As part of this course, we will engage with political and civic actors outside of the classroom. This will provide an invaluable opportunity to learn about and discuss civic and political engagement from practitioners.

## Course Objectives

- 1) To develop a deeper understanding and knowledge of political learning and civic engagement through academic study, dialogues with practitioners, case studies, site visits, and hands-on activities and workshops.
- 2) To develop a better understanding of the underlying theories and key ideas central to political learning and civic engagement, including: democracy, “citizenship,” community, diversity, equity, inclusion, deliberation, mutual respect/civility, civic agency, leadership, collective action, political knowledge, and efficacy.
- 3) To better understand the state of civics education and how policies and systems structure political learning and civic engagement.
- 4) To ground students’ unique talents, passions and interests in academic theory and empirical data, and to develop each students’ capacity for leadership, self-direction and self-generation of ideas.
- 5) To engage in the broader Harrisonburg community and connect with local political and civic actors and institutions to better understand and connect the application of theoretical and empirical scholarship, and to creatively approach civic learning with the objective of addressing public issues and needs.
- 6) To develop creative ideas for political learning and civic engagement to implement in p-16 curriculum.

## Mutual Respect, Equity and Inclusion

As course facilitators and as people, we care deeply about the well-being of each of you. We are here to support you and to facilitate an inclusive and equitable learning environment for students of all backgrounds including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion and ability.

We seek to build a classroom experience that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives and experiences, and honors your identities, including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc. To help accomplish this:

- Please let us know your pronouns.
- Recognizing that words have the power to harm, we will use Black and Indigenous to signal respect for the shared identity, history, and experiences of people who identify as Black, African American and Indigenous.
- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with us. We want to be a resource for you.
- Through class conversations, structured or unstructured, we will have many opportunities to explore challenging issues and increase our understandings of different perspectives. Our conversations may not always be easy and sometimes we will make

mistakes in our speaking and our listening. Sometimes, we will need patience, courage and imagination to engage with course materials, our classmates, and our own ideas and experiences. Always, we will need respect for each other.

- We (like many people) are still in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something was said in class (by anyone) that was offensive or made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to us about it.
- Remember you can also submit anonymous feedback (which will lead to us making a general announcement to the class, if necessary to address your concerns). If you prefer to speak with someone outside of the course, we recommend talking with a trusted faculty member, your academic advisor or a peer. We can also direct you to appropriate JMU staff.

Much of political science is historically built on a small subset of privileged voices, and especially white male voices. While we have done our best to incorporate a range of scholarship, many readings were authored by those from privileged backgrounds. Furthermore, the course includes analyses of policies, and policymaking processes that often reflect and benefit the most privileged, which only enforces and exacerbates existing socioeconomic and racial inequities.

It is our intent to present materials and activities that are inclusive for students of all backgrounds. Course materials have been carefully selected to include a range of perspectives, especially those from traditionally minoritized and marginalized backgrounds. However, we acknowledge there will be both overt and covert biases in the materials due to the lens with which empirical and theoretical scholarship was written. Continuous integration of a diverse set of scholarship and experiences is important for a more comprehensive understanding of political science. We welcome and encourage feedback and suggestions (in person, electronically or through anonymous feedback) to improve the quality of the course materials and the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

## Indigenous Land and Enslaved Peoples Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the traditional Native inhabitants of the land on which James Madison University sits and from whom this land was stolen. The Shenandoah Valley has been home to various indigenous peoples for at least the past 15,000 years. These peoples include the Eastern Siouan-speaking ancestors of the Monacan and Manahoac peoples, as well as the Iroquoian speakers of the Page Culture, and the Algonquian speakers of the Keyser Culture. We honor their legacy and affirm their right to land and livelihoods.

We honor the enslaved peoples who built the wealth on which this university operates and who made countless but under-appreciated contributions to cultures, economies, and societies in the Shenandoah Valley, across the United States, and throughout the world.

**Course Honor Code:** “The free exchange of ideas depends on the participants' trust that others' work is their own and that it was done and is being reported honestly. Intellectual progress in all the disciplines demands the truthfulness of all participants. Plagiarism and cheating are attacks on the very foundation of academic life, and cannot be tolerated within universities.”

All work must adhere to the University’s policies regarding academic honesty. Plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. Cite all materials that are not your own. If you have doubts of what constitutes plagiarism, consult the [student honor code](#), and/or talk with us.

## Course Evaluation

Assignment	Weight
Participation in class discussions, workshops and experiential learning activities	30%
Reading assignments and responses to readings. Once you have completed the reading for class, choose a reading to write a discussion post with a scholarly analysis/critique ( <i>minimum of one paragraph; 100 words</i> ) and pose a question reflective of the content to discuss during class.	35%
Course Project	35%

## Key Dates

In addition to the key dates below, we will also have guest speakers. Additional opportunities will arise and we will give as much notice as possible.

Date	Description	Due
Ongoing	Participation in class discussions	
Ongoing	Reading assignments and responses to readings. Once you have completed the reading for class, choose a reading to write a discussion post with a scholarly analysis/critique ( <i>minimum of one paragraph; 100 words</i> ) and pose a question reflective of the content to discuss during class.	Weekly, Sundays at 11:59 pm for Monday class and Tuesdays at 11:59

		pm for Wednesday class
Tuesday, January 26, 12 pm	Workshop with EarthDay.org: Environmental Literacy and Civics	Submit screenshot for points by 11:59 pm
Wednesday, January 27, 4:30 pm	Workshop with Fifth House Ensemble: Building Responsive Programs Through Co-Creation and Civic Practice	Submit screenshot for points by 11:59 pm
Wednesday, February 3	Draft Learning Outcomes for curriculum module	Wednesday, February 3, 11:59 pm
Wednesday, February 10	Comparative analysis of state civic education policies with recommendations	Wednesday, February 10, 11:59 pm
Saturday, February 20, 11:45am-1:15 pm	<p><b>Interrupting and Responding to Racial Microaggressions in P-16 Education</b></p> <p>Moderator: <b>Kara M. Kavanagh</b>, <i>James Madison University, USA</i></p> <p>Zoom coordinator: Taimi Castle, JMU</p> <p><b>Joi D. Merritt</b>, <i>James Madison University, USA</i></p> <p><b>Oris Griffin</b>, <i>James Madison University, USA</i></p> <p><b>Monica B. Smith-Woofter</b>, <i>James Madison University, USA</i></p> <p><b>Emma Thacker</b>, <i>James Madison University, USA</i></p> <p><b>Mira C. Williams</b>, <i>James Madison University, USA</i></p> <p><b>Aaron Bodle</b>, <i>James Madison University, USA</i></p> <p><b>Ashley Taylor Jaffee</b>, <i>James Madison University, USA</i></p> <p><b>Kara M. Kavanagh</b>, <i>James Madison University, USA</i></p>	Screenshot due at 11:59 pm
Monday, March 8	Develop a classroom activity to facilitate age-appropriate conversations around hard history or a difficult issue to be implemented in a future class.	Monday, March 8, 11:59 pm
Monday, March 15	Develop a civic learning in STEM activity to be implemented in future curriculum and present in-class.	Monday, March 15, 11:59 pm
Monday, March 29	Develop a civix action activity linked to civic learning outcomes for implementation in future teaching. Consider how civic knowledge, skills and disposition can be developed through civic action. Consider what age-appropriate skills should be developed and which subject area you would like to link to.	Monday, March 29, 11:59 pm

Wednesday, March 31	Environmental Justice Experiential Learning Activity	
Monday, April 12	Develop a developmentally and subject area appropriate digital civics module for implementation in future classroom linked to learning outcomes.	Monday, April 12, 11:59 pm
Wednesday, April 21	Implement civic learning and action module for K-12 Harrisonburg Public Schools students at Horizon's Edge	Wednesday, April 21
Thursday, April 22	Earth Day - Join with JMU and community partners in Earth Day Learning & Engagement activities	
Wednesday, April 28	In-class knowledge and learning assessment	Wednesday, April 28

## Class Schedule and Assignments

Reading and listening assignments must be completed before in-class meetings.

### Week 1: Introduction and Overview

Wednesday, January 20:  
Course overview

### Week 2: Why Civic Education?

Monday, January 25: The Need for Civic Education

Rebecca Winthrop, The need for civic education in 21st-century schools, June 4, 2020, Brookings Institution

Lisa Guilfoile and Brady Delander, Six Proven Practices for Effective Civic Learning

JMU [Civic Engagement Learning Outcomes](https://www.jmu.edu/civic/_files/civic-engagement-learning-outcomes.pdf)  
[https://www.jmu.edu/civic/\\_files/civic-engagement-learning-outcomes.pdf](https://www.jmu.edu/civic/_files/civic-engagement-learning-outcomes.pdf)

Tuesday, 1/26: Workshop with EarthDay.org: Environmental Literacy and Civics

Wednesday, January 27: Developing learning outcomes

[Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric](#)

[National Assessment of Educational Progress \(NAEP\) civics assessment](#)

Jill Radsken, [Reframing Civics Education](#), Harvard Gazette

Alex Lin (2015) Citizenship education in American schools and its role in developing civic engagement: a review of the research, *Educational Review*, 67:1, 35-63, DOI: 10.1080/00131911.2013.813440

In class workshop: Developing and assessing learning outcomes

### **Week 3: Developing Learning Outcomes**

Monday, February 1:

Parker, W. C. , Lo, J. C. (2016). "Give Us Your Best Advice": Assessing Deep Political Learning. *Social Education*, 80 (4), 227 – 231.

[How do I assess my students' civic learning?](#)

Wednesday February 3:

**Due: Draft Learning Outcomes for curriculum module (you will have opportunity to revise).**

In class workshop: civic education policy analysis  
Michael Hansen, Elizabeth Levesque, Jon Valant, Diana Quintero, Chapter 2. An inventory of state civics requirements, The 2018 Brown Center Report on American Education.

Stephen Sawchuk, [How 3 States Are Digging In on Civics Education](#), Education Week

[Data: Most States Require History, But Not Civics](#), Education Week

[Civic Education Policies: State Profile - Virginia](#)

[Virginia Commission on Civic Education](#)

### **Week 4: The Role of the Teacher & Preparing the Classroom**

Monday, February 8: The Role of the Teacher

Stephanie C. Serriere (2014) The Role of the Elementary Teacher in Fostering Civic Efficacy, *The Social Studies*, 105:1, 45-56, DOI: [10.1080/00377996.2013.806291](#)

White, E. S., & Mistry, R. S. (2019). Teachers' civic socialization practices and children's civic engagement. *Applied Developmental Science*, 23(2), 183–202.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2017.1377078>

Wednesday, February 10: Democratic classrooms

Collins, J. , Hess, M. E. , Lowery, C. L. (2019). Democratic Spaces: How Teachers Establish and Sustain Democracy and Education in Their Classrooms. *Democracy and Education*, 27 (1), Article 3.

Erickson, J. D. , Thompson, W. C. (2019). Preschool as a Wellspring for Democracy: Endorsing Traits of Reasonableness in Early Childhood Education. *Democracy and Education*, 27 (1), Article 1.

Teaching Tolerance, [Democratic Classrooms](#)

Margaret Brower and Jodi Benenson, [Practicing Democracy in the Classroom: Equalizing Opportunities to Engage with Public Policies and Issues](#), Diversity & Democracy, Fall 2015

**Due: Civic Education Policy analysis comparing states**

Write a comparative analysis of at least two states' civic education policies. Include recommendations for best policies and practices.

**Week 5: Critical Questions**

Monday, February 15:

Gibson, M. (2020). From deliberation to counter-narration: Toward a critical pedagogy for democratic citizenship. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, 48(3), 431-454.

Gibson, M. L. (2018). [Scaffolding critical questions: Learning to read the world in a middle school civics class in Mexico](#). *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 62(1), 25–34.

[Tips For Staying Civil While Debating Child Prisons](#) by the Onion

Listen: [Critical pedagogy for democratic citizenship](#)

Wednesday February 17: \*No class, University "Break Day 1"\*

**Saturday, February 20, AAAD Conference panel: Interrupting and Responding to Racial Microaggressions in P-16 Education**

**Week 6:**

Monday, February 22:

Teaching Tolerance, [Teaching Hard History From the Beginning](#)

Watch: [The Forgotten Slavery of Our Ancestors](#)

In class practice: Interrupting and Responding to Racial Microaggressions in P-16 Education

Wednesday, February 24:

Select a season of the Teaching Hard History Podcast and listen:

<https://www.tolerance.org/podcasts/teaching-hard-history>

### **Week 7: Healing Centered Pedagogy**

Monday, March 1: Healing Centered Pedagogy

Shawn Ginwright, The future of healing: Shifting from trauma informed care to healing centered engagement

Eli Jimenez, Jessica Tokunaga, Jessica Wolin, Scan of the Field of Healing Centered Organizing: Lessons Learned, November 2019, Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions

Mara Chavez-Diaz and Nicole Lee, A Conceptual Mapping of Healing Centered Youth Organizing, Urban Peace Movement.

Wednesday, March 3:

[Speak Up: Opening a Dialogue with Youth About Racism](#), University of Southern California Rossier Institute

### [Hip Hop Civics Ed](#)

In-class workshop: facilitating difficult conversations

### **Week 8: Beyond social studies**

Monday, March 8:

Madden, Paul E.; Wong, Catherine; Vera Cruz, Anne C.; Olle, Chad; and Barnett, Mike (2017) "Social Justice Driven STEM Learning (STEMJ): A Curricular Framework for Teaching STEM in a Social Justice Driven, Urban, College Access Program.," *Catalyst: A Social Justice Forum*: Vol. 7 : Iss. 1 , Article 4.

Esmonde, I., Caswell, B. Teaching Mathematics for Social Justice in Multicultural, Multilingual Elementary Classrooms. *Can J Sci Math Techn* **10**, 244–254 (2010).  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14926156.2010.504485>

Due: Develop a classroom activity to facilitate age-appropriate conversations around hard history or a difficult issue to be implemented in a future class. Consider what age appropriate skills should be developed and how students might learn and practice those skills (e.g. journal entry, blogging, podcast, expression through art, etc.). Additional guidance will be given in class.

Wednesday, March 10:

[Statistics in Schools](#), U.S. Census Bureau

Tichnor-Wagner, A., Parkhouse, H., Glazier, J., & Cain, J. M. (2016). Expanding Approaches to Teaching for Diversity and Justice in K-12 Education: Fostering Global Citizenship Across the Content Areas. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 24(55–59), 1–31.

Condon, M., & Wichowsky, A. (2018). Developing Citizen-Scientists: Effects of an Inquiry-Based Science Curriculum on STEM and Civic Engagement. *Elementary School Journal*, 119(2), 196–222. <https://doi.org/10.1086/700316>

Review Project Ideas for Horizons Edge

### **Week 9: Experiential Learning & Action Civics**

Monday, March 15:

Nancy K DeJarnette and Maria Sudeck, Advocating for a Cause: Civic Engagement in the Elementary Classroom.

Alexander Pope, Laurel Stolte, and Alison K. Cohen, Closing the Civic Engagement Gap: The Potential of Action Civics, *Social Education* 75(5), pp 265–268

Due: Develop a civic learning in STEM activity to be implemented in future curriculum and present in-class. Consider how civic learning can be incorporated into a STEM studies subject. Consider what age appropriate skills should be developed and how students might learn and practice those skills.

Wednesday, March 17:

Gartland, S. (2020). Exploring Elementary Student Perceptions of Experiential Learning Within Critical Service-Learning. *Journal of Experiential Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1053825920980786>

Meira Levinson, *Action Civics in the Classroom*. *Social Education*, v78 n2 p68-72 Mar-Apr 2014.

Generation Citizen, Action Civics in School Districts

## **Week 10: Experiential Learning & Action Civics Continued**

Monday, March 22:

Hart D, Donnelly TM, Youniss J, Atkins R. High school community service as a predictor of adult voting and volunteering. *American Educational Research Journal*. 2007;44:197–219.

Kirshner B. Introduction: Youth activism as a context for learning and development. *American Behavioral Scientist*. 2007;51:367–379.

Wednesday, March 24:

Kornbluh M, Neal JW, Ozer EJ. Scaling-up youth-led social justice efforts through an online school-based social network. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 2016;57:266–279

Why Action Civics is Transformative for Environmental Education

In class workshop: Developing civic action activities

## **Week 11: Environmental Political Action**

Monday, March 29:

Brett L.M. Levy & Michaela T. Zint (2013) Toward fostering environmental political participation: framing an agenda for environmental education research, *Environmental Education Research*, 19:5, 553-576, DOI: [10.1080/13504622.2012.717218](https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2012.717218)

Environmental Protection Agency, Learning and Teaching About the Environment  
<https://www.epa.gov/students>

Due: Develop a civic action activity linked to civic learning outcomes for implementation in future teaching. Consider how civic knowledge, skills and disposition can be developed through civic action. Consider what age-appropriate skills should be developed and which subject area you would like to link to.

Wednesday, March 31:

Example lesson plan: Civic environmentalism  
Montessori [Care of the Environment and Earth](#) ideas

Environmental Experiential Learning Activity

## **Week 12: Digital Literacy is Digital Citizenship**

Monday, April 5:

Margaret Rundle et al., *Doing Civics in the Digital Age: Casual, Purposeful, and Strategic Approaches to Participatory Politics*. September 2015.

Kahne, J., & Bowyer, B. (2017). Educating for Democracy in a Partisan Age: Confronting the Challenges of Motivated Reasoning and Misinformation. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(1), 3–34. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216679817>

Joshua L. Kenna & Matthew A. Hensley (2019) Utilizing Social Media to Promote Civic Engagement in the Social Studies Classroom, *The Social Studies*, 110:2, 86-94, DOI: [10.1080/00377996.2018.1524360](https://doi.org/10.1080/00377996.2018.1524360)

Wednesday, April 7:

Harvard University, [Digital Civics Toolkit](#), go especially in-depth in the [Digital Civics Modules](#)

[NewseumED](#)

In class workshop: In-class workshop: Developing group module for implementation at Horizon's Edge for Harrisonburg City Public Schools students K-12

## **Week 13: YPAR Civics**

Monday, April 12:

Kristen P. Goessling (2020) Youth participatory action research, trauma, and the arts: designing youthspaces for equity and healing, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 33:1, 12-31, DOI: [10.1080/09518398.2019.1678783](https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2019.1678783)

Dana E. Wright (2020) Imagining a more just world: critical arts pedagogy and youth participatory action research, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 33:1, 32-49, DOI: [10.1080/09518398.2019.1678784](https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2019.1678784)

Due: Develop a developmentally and subject area appropriate digital civics module for implementation in future classroom linked to learning outcomes.

Wednesday, April 14:

Youthprise, [YPAR Tool Kit](#)

[Youth Participatory Action Research for the 8th Grade Civics](#), example lesson plan

Refine group module for implementation at Horizon's Edge for Harrisonburg City Public Schools students K-12

#### **Week 14: Theory to Practice**

Monday, April 19:

Practice group module for implementation at Horizon's Edge for Harrisonburg City Public Schools students K-12

Wednesday, April 21:

Horizon's Edge: Implement civic learning and action module for K-12 Harrisonburg Public Schools students.

Thursday, April 22, Earth Day - Join with JMU and community partners in Earth Day Learning & Engagement activities

#### **Week 15: Reflections, Evaluation, Conclusions**

Monday, April 26:

Sharing Student Work & Connecting to Decision Makers  
Reflection and feedback on Horizon's Edge implementation

Wednesday, April 28: \*Last Class\*

Conclusions, Knowledge and Experience Assessment