

iCitizen Project
PART 3: AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP APPRAISAL
POL 120 – Winter 2020

Overview. Most Americans take for granted the concept of citizenship. Being simply born on American soil entitles various rights and liberties, including the right to civically participate. However, the concept of birthright citizenship – even in democracies – is a relatively recent creation. In the past, many countries (even democracies) had stringent limitations on citizenship, including age, gender, military service, and property qualifications, among others. The right to be considered a citizen – a member of “We the People” – has usually been quite restrictive and divorced from simple birthright.

To explore this concept of citizenship, you will watch the 1997 film *Starship Troopers*, a story that explores an alternative conceptualization of citizenship. The film is based off the eponymous novel by Robert A. Heinlein, a coming-of-age story presented as a political expose on various topics, including the nature of citizenship and democracy. Unlike in the United States, the Terran Federation in *Starship Troopers* awards citizenship not through birthright but rather through services to the state. Even then, citizenship carries expectations with it, obligations that many American citizens may find antithetical – and downright unappealing.

View the Film. Before writing your essay, view the film *Starship Troopers*. The film is available for rent on both Amazon (\$3.99) and iTunes (\$3.99). Links to both are posted on Blackboard. Alternatively, you may purchase and read the book by Robert A. Heinlein (Amazon link provided on Blackboard). However, it is probably easier and cheaper for you to just rent the film. Both versions equally address citizenship themes throughout, although the film satirizes the Terran Federation as a fascist state more so than the book does. You should watch the film (or read the book) BEFORE you attempt the essay and do so on your OWN time (i.e. class time is not provided).

Your Mission. For this assignment, you will compare and contrast the citizenship systems in both the United States and the Terran Federation. Within your essay, answer the following questions:

1. **First, what is the primary difference between citizenship in the American system and citizenship in the Terran system?** Craft a strong thesis statement that summarizes the difference as an argumentative statement, where you’ll convince the reader of what the difference is by providing evidence.
2. **Second, what evidence in the movie and class readings/discussions supports your assessment of the primary difference between the two systems?** Develop your argument by exploring various features of citizenship in each system using citations to events in the film and class readings/discussions. Remember, you should be advancing your argument *while* comparing and contrasting; essays that simply compare and contrast will not receive full points.
 - a. You should address the following areas:
 - i. What must individuals do to secure citizenship? Is citizenship granted at birth? Can it be lost? How? Is naturalization process? How?
 - ii. What are the privileges and/or rights afforded to citizens only?
 - iii. What are the obligations of citizens? How is citizenship maintained?

b. Essays that do NOT engage with the film and class material will not receive full points.

Finally, you should also provide a conclusion summarizing your essay.

Technical Details. Your essay should:

1. Be double-spaced;
2. Be 3-5 pages in length;
3. Use a readable, 12-point font and normal margins;
4. Use citations to reference course materials and the film;
5. Have your name placed at the beginning of the paper; and
6. Be paginated.

Grading. In scoring your essay, I will use the following rubric (50 points possible):

A: Top-notch essays will provide argumentative comparisons guided by a thesis statement. Essays utilize strong internal organization and cogent argumentation, backed by significant and meaningful references to the film, class concepts, and class readings. Essays are properly formatted and sourced. Finally, essays are well-written, devoid of spelling, grammar, and other syntax errors.

B: Similar to “A” essays above but lack a clear thesis statement and persuasive argumentation. May suffer from incoherent organization, but lapses are minor. Arguments are present, but connections with course material and the film are weaker than “A” papers. Essays are properly formatted and sourced, with minor grammar and syntax errors.

C: These essays contain deficiencies relative “B” papers, especially pertaining to narrative organization and argumentation. Lack a strong thesis statement, while arguments rely on platitudes and trivial connections with course concepts, class readings, and the film. Numerous grammar and syntax errors make the narrative difficult to both follow and understand.

D: Like “C” papers above, these essays are missing elements, and may illustrate insufficient effort.

E: Off topic; not submitted; plagiarized.

Submission & Due Date. Submit a paper copy of your essay on **February 17, 2020 @ the beginning of class**. Submissions received after the due date OR emailed will not be accepted.