

iCitizen Project
PART 2: “SERVICE GURANTEES CITIZENSHIP” APPRAISAL
POL 120 – Fall 2018

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.

For this assignment, you will write an essay that examines how *Starship Troopers* presents citizenship, comparing it with modern American practice. Before writing your essay, do the following:

1. **Read the excerpt on *Starship Troopers* and democracy posted on Blackboard.** This piece provides a quick overview of the film and its political topics, including a quick review of various models of citizenship. You should use this piece as a reference frame when viewing the film and writing your essay.
2. **View *Starship Troopers*.** *Starship Troopers* is available for rent on both Amazon (\$3.99) or 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).

Directions. Write an essay that is composed of the following parts:

1. **Introduction/Thesis.** Introduce your reader to the topic, providing a thesis statement that clearly articulates your paper’s argument. Your argument should revolve around the idea of citizenship at a conceptual level – or, put another way, what it *means* to be a citizen (qualifications, expectations, etc.). This need not be long; a substantive paragraph (5-7 sentences) will suffice.
2. **Describe the film.** Provide a summary of the movie (or book) (major characters, facts, setting, conflicts, etc.). Remember that your reader may not be familiar with the film (or book), so provide enough detail demonstrating that you viewed (read) it. This section should be no more than a page long.
3. **What is American citizenship to you?** What does it mean to be an American citizen? How does one become a citizen? How are citizens’ interests represented in government? Do citizens have rights? Obligations and duties? Explain. You may elect to use the various models you read about before to structure your answer.

4. **What is citizenship in the Terran Federation?** How does one become a citizen? How are citizens' interests represented in government? Do citizens have rights? Obligations and duties? What about civilians? Explain.
5. **Civic Virtue.** Compare and contrast American citizenship with the model espoused by the Terran Federation. How is modern United States citizenship similar and different? Provide examples. Additionally, consider the following in your analysis: During the classroom scene (at the start of the film), Mr. Rasczak asks the class "What is the moral difference, if any, between the citizen and the civilian?" Recall Johnny Rico's response: "The difference lies in the field of civic virtue. A citizen accepts personal responsibility for the safety of the body politic, of which he is a member, defending it, if need be, with his life. The civilian does not." What is your interpretation of this statement? Does "civic virtue" exist in the United States? How so?

At minimum, you should reference the following items within your answer: (a) the FILM (or book); (b) the Locke reading; and (c) the Declaration of Independence. Superior responses will also reference other readings that we have done in class (e.g. the Federalist papers).

Technical Details. Your essay should:

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

Grading. In scoring your essay, I will use the following rubric (100 points possible):

1. **Thesis:** A good thesis statement is clear and tells the reader what the paper argues. Theses should appear in an introduction that provides a broad overview of the paper's topic and communicates to the reader "where" s/he will end up at the end.
2. **Argumentation:** Essays should strive to provide accurate representations of American and Terran Federation citizenship while incorporating class concepts, discussions, and readings. Such examples should be used logically and persuasively to advance the author's thesis. Furthermore, all components of the essay are adequately addressed within the essay.
3. **Organization:** Arguments should follow a logical layout, preventing the reader from becoming "lost" or unsure. Paragraphs should be of sufficient length (i.e. 5-7 sentences). The essay also appears aesthetically pleasing.
4. **Veracity:** Top-notch essays will prove their arguments with sufficient and appropriate evidence, while ensuring that such evidence is properly cited.
5. **Articulation:** Well-written essays will be devoid of spelling, grammar, and syntax errors. Essays should strive to follow the format guidelines above.

Submission. Submit your completed essay on Blackboard using the SafeAssign link under the iCitizen tab. SafeAssign will perform a plagiarism check. **NO EMAILED ASSIGNMENTS WILL BE ACCEPTED.** NOTE: Make sure your document is submitted as a WORD Document (.docx or .doc); failure to do so will delay grading. If you encounter difficulties with uploading your file, please email me as soon as possible.

Due Date. Monday, 11/5/18 @ 11:59 p.m. via Blackboard