

**iCitizen Project**  
**PART 2: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT EXPERIENCE**  
**POL 120 – Winter 2020**

**Overview.** *Democracy* today often equates with representative forms of government and is synonymous with popular sovereignty. Much political debate focuses on whether the American political system is democratic enough – and how far, exactly, the people’s collective influence and direct participation should extend. Voting is just one method of civic engagement; participating in civil discourse, attending governmental meetings, and conversing with fellow citizens are other, potent examples of political action. Civic participation, therefore, is the lifeblood of democratic governance; a government “by the people, for the people,” is only true to the extent that citizens actively engage. Democracy can be chaotic – especially in a federal system which offers myriad opportunities to participate beyond voting.

**Directions: Attend a Local Government Meeting**

Attend a local government meeting, either in person or via recording, composing an essay where you reflect on the experience. For this assignment, a local government means a meeting of the legislative board (e.g. a council, a commission, a board of trustees, etc.) for any of the following: village, township, city, county, or school district. You need attend only ONE (1) meeting and write a single reflection paper. Additionally, I encourage you to choose a local governmental body which you have an interest in. If the body offers an opportunity for public comment, I encourage you to speak during it. Remember: this assignment is about getting you to be an active participant!

**How to attend a meeting.** First, identify which local government (“municipality”) council meeting you would like to attend. Most local governments hold either monthly or biweekly meetings depending on the jurisdiction’s size. For instance, county commissions tend to meet biweekly, while township and school boards tend to meet only monthly. Check the municipality’s website for a listing of meeting dates and whether meetings are recorded or not. Given the frequency of meetings, you should PLAN AHEAD if you choose to pursue this option. Alternatively, you may also watch the recording of a meeting (if available) as an alternative to physically attending.

Some major, local municipalities and their websites (click on the name for the link) [NOTE: You may choose other local governments not listed here]:

- [Genesee County Board of Commissioners](#)
- [Livingston County Board of Commissioners](#)
- [Oakland County Board of Commissioners](#)
- [Flint City Council](#)
- [Swartz Creek City Council](#)
- [Flushing City Council](#)
- [Howell City Council](#)
- [Fenton City Council](#)
- [Brighton City Council](#)
- [Linden City Council](#)
- [Clarkston City Council](#)
- [Flint Community Schools Board of Education](#)
- [Carman-Ainsworth Community Schools Board of Education](#)
- [Swartz Creek Community Schools Board of Education](#)
- [Hartland Consolidated Schools Board of Education](#)
- [Howell Public Schools Board of Education](#)
- [Fenton Area Public Schools Board of Education](#)
- [Brighton Area Schools Board of Education](#)
- [Linden Community Schools Board of Education](#)
- [Clarkston Community Schools Board of Education](#)
- [Hartland Township Board](#)
- [Flint Charter Township Board](#)
- [Flushing Charter Township Board](#)
- [Fenton Charter Township Board](#)
- [Brighton Charter Township Board](#)
- [Handy Township Board](#)
- [Putnam Township Board](#)

**Write a reflection paper.** After attending (or viewing) your chosen local government meeting, compose a 2-3-page reflection essay where you discuss the following questions. Your essay should be structured in a way that not only demonstrates that you attended the meeting but also extensively references class concepts and readings. Reflections that only address the questions without incorporating examples from the meeting AND class concepts/readings will not receive full points.

Things to address in your reflection essay:

1. What government meeting did you attend? When was it held?
2. Was the meeting well-attended? Did anyone speak during the public comment portion? What issues were brought up by the public?
3. What issues or items were addressed during the meeting? What decisions did the elected officials take? Do you agree/disagree with the decisions taken? Explain.
4. Do you believe the elected body represented the community's interests? Why or why not? It is okay to consider your own opinions here relative the board.
5. What are your overall thoughts on the meeting? Surprised with anything which transpired? Any improvements or changes you would like to see? What is your overall assessment of local government in America?

**Technical Details.** Your reflection essay should:

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

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

**A:** Superior reflections will address the questions above through a formal essay that is guided by a thesis statement. Reflections contain strong internal organization and cogent argumentation, backed by significant and meaningful references to class concepts and readings. The reflection papers are properly formatted and sourced. Finally, reflections are well-written, devoid of spelling, grammar, and other syntax errors.

**B:** Similar to "A" reflections 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 are weaker than "A" papers. Reflection papers are properly formatted and sourced, with minor grammar and syntax errors.

**C:** These reflections 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 and readings. Numerous grammar and syntax errors make the narrative difficult to both follow and understand.

**D:** Like "C" papers above, these reflections are missing elements, and may illustrate insufficient effort.

**E:** Off topic; not submitted; plagiarized.

**Submission & Due Date.** Submit your completed reflection essay in class BY **April 8, 2020 @ the beginning of class.** Submissions received after the due date OR emailed will not be accepted.