



Ithaca College
Honors Program
Civic Engagement Seminar: Service, Community, and Social Action
HNRS 25000
Spring 2023

Course Information

Course Description: What is civic engagement? What are the goals of civic engagement in higher education? What does civic engagement look like in the Ithaca area community and/or your “home” community? How can various forms of civic engagement contribute to meeting the needs of communities and/or creating social change in different ways? What are the roles and responsibilities of individual citizens in addressing the pervasiveness of injustice and inequality in our society? How do our personal experiences influence the ways in which we understand social issues, and how does this understanding shape our motivations and forms of engagement? What does civic engagement look like during a time of pandemic? This course draws on theory, research, and direct experience to explore numerous forms of civic engagement and evaluate the opportunities and challenges each offers in working towards positive social change.

This course aims: to develop a more complex understanding of what civic engagement entails; to reflect on the ways that civic engagement can complement other kinds of learning; and to develop a greater sensitivity about the needs and gifts of our communities and their citizens. This course also requires students themselves to engage in their community through social action, and critically reflect on their experience. Students will have the opportunity to examine their own personal motivations and experiences with civic engagement, as well as gain a deeper understanding of how our social identities can influence our social action efforts.

Credits: 3

Course Meeting Times and Locations:
Tu. & Th., 2:35-3:50pm
Center for Natural Sciences, Room 119

Faculty Contact Information:
Dr. David Harker
dharker@ithaca.edu
Office Hours: PRW 305, By Appointment

Student Learning Outcomes:

This course will examine the tactics and strategies of current and past efforts to bring about social change in the United States by engaging in collaborative, community-based efforts. In order to learn how to do social action well, we will also examine and explore the basics of social movements, as well as theories and examples of critical service learning. An exciting part of this course is that you will directly shape the Honors Program's commitment to community engagement, and potential social action projects for future Honors students in this course.

What is unique about this course is that it is designed to *do social action*. Instead of just reading about it in a book, you will learn about how to bring about social change by *doing* it. Of course, we will still use "book knowledge," but my hope is that this knowledge will be challenged by what you're learning in your social action projects, and that you will develop a more critical and deeper understanding of public issues and community change through action and reflection. Thus, this course is an action-oriented, solutions-based, course on civic engagement.

Another unique and exciting aspect of this course is that you will be joining a network of students all around the country engaged in Social Action courses based on this design idea. The author of one of the readings we will use, *Change! A Student Guide to Social Action*, Scott Myers Lipton, has taught variations of this course for several years, and his students at San Jose State University have created concrete change, including: campaigns to create college access programs at SJSU; to raise the California minimum wage; to raise awareness of and education about homelessness; to end the sale of sweatshop-made college apparel; and much more. Instructors of these types of social action courses meet via webinar every few weeks to share experiences, best practices, and stories of our students' progress.

One more note: my background is in Sociology, so I will draw on one of the most famous American sociologists, C. Wright Mills for context. Mills once said that, "personal troubles cannot be solved merely as troubles, but must be understood in terms of public issues - and in terms of the problems of history making." For example, if in a nation, there is just a small minority of the population in poverty, then it is the individual's personal trouble, and for its relief we might look to the character of the person and her or his skills. But if in that nation, there are over 38 million people in poverty (like in the United States, [see citation here](#)), then that is a social problem, and relief must come from a change in social structure (i.e., the arrangement of society). Mills called this approach to understanding reality – the relationship between self and society, the balance of personal characteristics and public social structures - the *sociological imagination*, which I will ask you to use throughout this course.¹

Social Action Projects:

All students will be involved in social action. This will require a minimum of 1½ to 2 hours per week of community-based work (25 hours minimum over 15 weeks). If you do not do more than 25 hours this semester, you will not receive higher than a C on the overall journal grade, since it is difficult to do reflection if you are not doing social action. Of course, if you want to do more community work, that is great.

So far, your Honors colleagues in this course chose social action projects based on the issues of food security and nutrition; mental health; sexual assault on college campuses; juvenile incarceration; climate change; political engagement/voting; providing access to health and hygiene products; providing economic resources to students in need; and educating IC students about sustainability efforts on campus. Two years ago, students in this course were an integral part of getting the IC Pantry up and running, and connecting it with other food security efforts on campus.

¹ C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), 226.

It will also be possible to do your social action on campus (although you will be required to involve an external partner), so all students should be able to work it into your schedule. In addition, class time will be dedicated to your projects, so you will be able to do some planning and organizing in class. During the third class, you will brainstorm various social action projects, and then select one to work on. The requirements for the projects are: (1) that you have a minimum of 3 students on your team; (2) you have passion for the issue; (3) your project tries to change some type of policy, program, or issue; and (4) you work with a community partner. We will discuss possible social action projects on the 3rd day of class.

Readings and Other Course Materials:

This semester, we will utilize a variety of scholarly chapters and articles, as well as more journalistic sources and various other forms of media. We will also have guests throughout the semester that may require particular background readings to prepare. Additional readings will also be assigned depending on your feedback and the directions your social action projects take. If you have suggestions, or come across relevant materials, please feel free to share! Readings, for the most part, will be posted on Canvas, as will most assignments and other updates.

GRADING AND COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

There are four graded course requirements. They include discussion questions, journals, participation, and a final report and presentation.

Discussion Questions (15% of total grade)

The purpose of these assignments is to encourage your engagement with the course readings, and generate class discussion. Throughout the semester (roughly every other week), you will be asked to submit at least three discussion questions based on the readings (and your experience in the course). These will be due on Canvas the morning of class, so I have time to compile and organize them.

Journals (35%)

In most of higher education, you generally demonstrate that you understand the ideas from the course in an exam. This class is different; in this class, short journal assignments take the place of exams. Importantly, the journals are where you demonstrate your knowledge of the text in light of your social action experiences. Therefore, you must integrate the text with your community work throughout each journal. With no integration of text, you cannot receive above a C on your journal. Each journal will be worth 5 points, and there will be 7 journal assignments throughout the semester (roughly every other week). Late journals will be accepted, but 1/3 of a grade will be deducted for each school date it is late.

Participation (20%)

The purpose of evaluating your participation is to encourage and reward students who prepare for, and engage in, the course material and concepts. Thus, you will be evaluated on the extent and quality of your participation in the class. Your classroom participation grade will be based on the following criteria:

Excellence (A) requires that you regularly play a leadership role in the large class discussion and small group discussion, apply the text, discuss points articulately and respond intelligently to other's views; ask insightful questions, and take responsibility for the direction of the class discussion and your team discussions.

Above average (B) requires that you participate regularly in the large class discussion and your team, demonstrate good knowledge of the text, discuss points articulately and respond intelligently to other's views; ask insightful questions, but you do not take a strong leadership role in the overall class discussion and the direction of your team.

Average (C) requires that you follow the discussion in the large class and your team, make occasional comments, have a basic knowledge of the text, and sometimes ask questions in the large group, small group, and your team.

Below average (D) requires that you attend class, but rarely participate.

Failure (F) requires that you usually attend class, but do not participate.

At the end of the course, you will be asked to evaluate your level of participation, as well as your teammates. This evaluation will be taken seriously when participation grades are determined.

In addition, you are required to complete at least 25 hours of social action work (1.5 to 2 hours a week) as part of a group project. I will ask you to keep a log to track this work, using an online form that I will share.

Campaign Notebook (20%) and Final Presentation (10%)

For the final exam, students give a group presentation that evaluates your team's component of the social action project. This presentation will be accompanied by a "notebook" of your campaign, so another team can pick up and continue your project in the future.

Grading Scale:

Since the various parts of the course add up to 100%, each percent equals a point. For example, your participation is 20% of your grade; thus, this assignment is worth 20 points. The scale that I use to measure your work is the following:

93-100=A	88-89=B+	78-79=C+	68-69=D+	59 & below =F
90-92=A-	83-87=B	73-77=C	63-67=D	
	80-82=B-	70-72=C-	60-62=D-	

Other Information:

1. **Extra Credit:** There will be extra credit opportunities throughout the semester for participating in events or programs related to the course. To receive the extra credit, the opportunity must be approved by me, you need to go to a campus or community event, and then write 3-4 paragraphs reflection paper: (1) describing what you saw and heard (i.e., the major points and key lessons of the event), and (2) integrating your insights with the readings/concepts of our course. To receive full credit, the extra credit must be turned in 1 week after the event. You can go to a total of 8 extra credit events.
2. **Paying Attention and Electronic Devices:** I understand that you all have a lot going on, and any class offers the opportunity for a lot of distractions. Please pay attention to the course, the instructor, and your classmates throughout our meeting times. If I notice a lack of attention, I will contact you out of class to address it, and it will affect your participation grade. You can and should take notes as needed, but otherwise should not be on your laptop or phone unless doing research during group work time.

3. Office Hours: Office hours are generally used to help clarify information from lectures, discussions, group activities, readings, or social action projects. I will not have set office hours this semester, but please get in touch with me to schedule a time to meet individually or as part of a small group.
4. Late Papers: The late policy for any work is a point removed from the total grade for each day (24-hour period) that it is late. Please let me know if advance if you face a challenge submitting an assignment on time, and I am happy to work with you.

Assignment Schedule & Important Dates

1/26	<i>Journal #1 due before class</i>
2/2	<i>Discussion questions #1 due before class</i>
2/9	<i>Journal #2 due before class</i>
2/16	<i>Discussion questions #2 due before class</i>
2/23	<i>Journal #3 due before class</i>
3/2	<i>Discussion questions #3 due before class</i>
3/9	<i>Journal #4 due before class</i>
3/14 & 3/16	NO CLASS (Spring Break)
3/23	<i>Discussion questions #4 due before class</i>
3/30	<i>Journal #5 due before class</i>
4/6	<i>Discussion questions #5 due before class</i>
4/13	<i>Journal #6 due before class</i>
4/20	<i>Discussion questions #6 due before class</i>
4/27	<i>Journal #7 due before class</i>
5/4	Last Day of Class <i>Discussion questions #7 due before class</i>
5/11	Final Exam Period, 1:30-4:00pm Final Presentations

Course/Academic Policies

Attendance Policy:

Current Ithaca College Attendance Policy:

Students at Ithaca College are expected to attend all classes, and they are responsible for work missed during any absence from class. At the beginning of each semester, instructors must provide the students in their courses with written guidelines regarding possible penalties for

failure to attend class. These guidelines may vary from course to course but are subject to the following conditions:

- In accordance with Federal Law, students with a disability documented through Student Accessibility Services (SAS) may require reasonable accommodations to ensure equitable access. A student with an attendance accommodation, who misses a scheduled course time due to a documented disability, must be provided an equivalent opportunity to make up missed time and/or coursework within a reasonable time-frame. An accommodation that affects attendance is not an attendance waiver and no accommodation can fundamentally alter a course requirement. If a faculty member thinks an attendance-related accommodation would result in a fundamental alteration, concerns and potential alternatives should be discussed with SAS.
- In accordance with New York State law, students who miss class due to their religious beliefs shall be excused from class or examinations on that day. The faculty member is responsible for providing the student with an equivalent opportunity to make up any examination, study, or work requirement that the student may have missed. Any such work is to be completed within a reasonable time frame, as determined by the faculty member.
- Any student who misses class due to a family or individual health emergency or to a required appearance in a court of law shall be excused. If the emergency is prolonged or if the student is incapacitated, the student or a family member/legal guardian should report the absence to the Dean of Students or the Dean of the academic school where the student's program is housed. Students may consider a leave of absence, medical leave of absence, selected course withdrawals, etc., if they miss a significant portion of classwork.
- A student may be excused to participate in local, state, or federal elections. The student is responsible to make up any work that is missed due to the absence. Any such work is to be completed within a reasonable time frame, as determined by the faculty member.

A student may be excused for participation in College-authorized co-curricular and extracurricular activities if, in the instructor's judgment, this does not impair the specific student's or the other students' ability to succeed in the course.

For all absences except those due to religious beliefs, the course instructor has the right to determine if the number of absences has been excessive in view of the nature of the class that was missed and the stated attendance policy.

Students should notify their instructors as soon as possible of any anticipated absences.

Accommodations for Students via Student Accessibility Services:

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodations will be provided to qualified students with documented disabilities through an interactive process. Students seeking accommodations must register with Student Accessibility Services and provide appropriate documentation before accommodations can be provided. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive, so timely contact with Student Accessibility Services is encouraged. To discuss accommodations or the accommodation process, students should schedule to meet with a SAS specialist. 607-274-1005 | sas@ithaca.edu.

Students may register with SAS at the following link:

<https://elbert.accessiblelearning.com/Ithaca/ApplicationStudent.aspx>

Ithaca College Standards of Academic Conduct:

The Ithaca College Policy Manual describes the Standards of Academic Content embedded in the Student Code of Conduct. It is the responsibility of every student and faculty member to be familiar with, and comply with, these expectations for rigor, authenticity, trust, and honesty in academic work. You may find the full policy at the following web link:

<https://www.ithaca.edu/policy-manual/volume-vii-students/71-general-student-policies/714-standards-academic-conduct>

We will discuss this policy more thoroughly in our course. As the Policy Manual states, “Because Ithaca College is an academic community, ignorance of the accepted standards of academic honesty in no way affects the responsibility of students who violate standards of conduct in courses and other academic activities.”

Additional Policies and Resources

Mental Health and Stress Management Support via CAPS:

The Ithaca College Center for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) promotes and fosters the academic, personal, and interpersonal development of Ithaca College students by providing short-term individual, group, and relationship counseling, crisis intervention, educational programs to the campus community, and consultation for faculty, staff, parents, and students. Their team of licensed and licensed-eligible professionals value inclusivity, and they are dedicated to creating a diverse, accessible, and welcoming environment that is safe and comfortable for all those they serve and with whom they interact. CAPS sees students in-person at their offices in the Hammond Health building, but Telehealth meetings through Zoom can be arranged in some circumstances. Staff in the office will answer questions by phone at 607-274-3136; please leave a voicemail if you do not reach a live person. You can also reach the office via email at counseling@ithaca.edu. CAPS hours remain Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. After-hours connections to a live counselor are available by calling the CAPS number and following the prompts.

In the event I suspect you need additional support, expect that I will express to you my concerns. It is not my intent to know the details of what might be troubling you, but simply to let you know I am concerned and that help, if needed, is available. Remember, getting help is a smart and courageous thing to do.

Title IX:

Please note that if you disclose an experience related to sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, dating violence, and/or stalking, sexual harassment or sex-based discrimination, your professor can inform the Title IX Coordinator, lkoenig@ithaca.edu, of all relevant information, including your name. The college will take initial steps to address the incident(s), protect, and support those directly affected, and enhance the safety of our community. The Title IX Coordinator will work with you to determine the best way to proceed. Information shared in class assignments, class discussions, and at public events do not constitute an official disclosure, and faculty and staff do not have to report these to the Title IX Coordinator. Faculty and staff should be sure that access to campus and community resources related to sexual misconduct are available to students in the case these subjects do arise. Any other disclosure to faculty and staff needs to be reported to the Title IX Coordinator. For more information: <https://www.ithaca.edu/share>

Academic Advising Availability:

Students are asked to consult with their faculty advisor, or the advising contact within their school, for all advising matters. Faculty advisors will be able to assist students with most advising questions, or they may collaborate with the dean's office for more complicated matters. Students can find the name of their assigned faculty advisor in Homer or in Degree Works. Additionally, below is a list of advising contacts in deans' offices.

Business	Katy Hall, Academic Services Coordinator, khall2@ithaca.edu
H&S	Jim Riegel, Academic Services Coordinator, hsadvising@ithaca.edu
HSHP	Michelle Lang, Academic Services Coordinator, mlang@ithaca.edu
Park	Kristin Morse, Academic Services Coordinator, kmorse@ithaca.edu
Music, Theatre & Dance – Center for Music	Shannon Hills, Academic Services Coordinator, musicacademicsupport@ithaca.edu
Music, Theatre & Dance – Center for Theatre & Dance	Mary Scheidegger, Theatre Operations Coordinator, scheideg@ithaca.edu mailto:scheideg@ithaca.edu

Health and Safety

The health and safety of our entire campus community are important. For this reason, please know that I will expect that we all follow the most current health and safety guidance from the College for COVID- 19, Monkeypox, or any other public health issue. Please be aware that health and safety guidance might change, in accordance with local or national guidance, during the semester.

Each of us has a responsibility to self-monitor our health to identify any symptoms that may be concerning.

- Information on COVID-19 symptoms is available here: (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/modules/symptoms-testing/list-of-symptoms.html>)
- Information on Monkeypox symptoms is available here: (<https://www.cdc.gov/poxvirus/monkeypox/symptoms.html>)

If you are experiencing symptoms of concern, please reach out to Hammond Health Center at 607-274- 3177 or a trusted health provider to have your symptoms assessed for next steps.

If you are not able to attend class due to your symptoms, I ask that you email me as soon as possible. This class does not offer dual instruction. However, I will work with you to identify alternative ways to make up missed work if that is possible given the expected duration of your absence from class. Please see the attendance policy section of this syllabus for more information on class attendance and how we can work together if you must miss class due to illness.

Religious Observances

At Ithaca College, we uphold diverse religious and spiritual traditions - each with its own set of beliefs, practices, and observances that are part of our community. If you anticipate needing accommodations for attending class, taking exams, or submitting assignments due to a religious observance, you can work directly with me to accommodate your needs. Please share the potential dates with me by the end of the second week of class so we can plan for your success in our class.

The Office of Religious and Spiritual Life is also available to support you as you navigate your religious observances at IC. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life at spirituallife@ithaca.edu. More information on religious observances and accommodations at IC is available [here](#).

Bias Impact Reporting Form

The [Bias Impact Reporting Form](#) is intended to provide students, staff, and faculty with a centralized way of accessing resources if they experience or witness a bias incident on campus, via social media, virtually, or at a college-affiliated event. This process is a tool that is being used in addition to formal complaint options.

The information submitted is used to identify patterns of behavior and address areas where culture is counter to the College's values of respect, accountability and equity. The reports will help the college to be more strategic when educating and/or preventing acts of bias in the future.

The Bias Impact Reporting Form is not an immediate response service and may take up to three (3) college business days to receive confirmation of submission. The information you provide in this form will be forwarded to [members](#) of the Bias Impact Resource Team.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging:

We are each responsible for recognizing one another and the many identities that make-up our community at Ithaca College. In committing to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging, we must also make the time to learn how hateful ideologies like racism, antisemitism, homophobia, agism, ablism, xenophobia manifest in ourselves and in the lives of those we encounter, from everyday microaggressions to the larger systemic violence that is built into the worlds we navigate.

Contrary to many misperceptions about the college experience, the “real world” is not just out there, waiting; it is also right here in Ithaca, on our campus. We must go beyond acknowledging injustices and inequities, **and share responsibility and accountability** for advancing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in all its forms while lifting up students, staff, and faculty from historically underrepresented and underserved communities. To create a more vibrant a future, we must be courageous and tireless in building an intentional community of mutual respect. We must encounter one another and engage in rich, collaborative, intersectional partnerships that uphold values in authenticity and strengthen our shared humanity.

Honest dialogue around diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging and accessibility can be challenging and uncomfortable, and it is necessary in preparing our students for success in an ever-evolving global society.

Basic Needs Awareness

Access to basic needs such as food and safe shelter are vital to your successful academic experience. If you are experiencing challenge affording groceries, accessing sufficient food to eat every day, or finding stable, safe housing, I want you to be aware of resources available to all members of our Ithaca College community. You can learn more about these resources at the following links. You may also reach out to the [Dean of Students](#) for support.

Working for Food Security (food resources)

<https://www.ithaca.edu/student-affairs-and-campus-life/working-food-security>

Financial Security Support (a range of resources)

<https://www.ithaca.edu/student-affairs-and-campus-life/supporting-financial-security>

Writing Center

Located in 107 Smiddy Hall, the Writing Center provides students with the opportunity to work on effective strategies for all types of written work including essays, research papers, cover letters, applications, and creative writing. Students in all disciplines — humanities and sciences, business, health sciences and human performance, communications, and music — can bring assignments at any stage in their process, whether prewriting, drafting, or editing, and in one-on-one conferences, they will receive guidance on the writing, revising, and editing process so that they can develop confidence as independent thinkers and writers. The Writing Center is staffed by trained peer tutors as well as Department of Writing faculty. The Writing Center offers Zoom tutoring as well as in-person appointments. More information about the Center's hours, policies, and appointments is available at 607-274-3315, or consult the [Writing Center webpage](#).

Tutoring and Academic Enrichment Services

As a supplement to faculty advising and office hours, Tutoring and Academic Enrichment Services offers exceptional peer resources free of charge. Learning Coaches provide content-specific peer tutoring in a variety of courses. Peer Success Coaches mentor students who wish to develop collegiate-level academic and social engagement skills. To access these courses and for more information, please visit us at <https://www.ithaca.edu/tutoring-services>.