

AMS 280: Major Themes in American Studies—"Civic America"

Fall Semester 2004
TU TH 3:00-4:20
Bessey Hall Rm. 113
Prof. David Cooper

Course Description: Who said it would be easy?

The Latin motto *E pluribus unum* ("One from many"), selected in 1776 for the Great Seal of the United States, has been both a source of inspiration and pride and, especially in recent decades, a cause of shattering controversy in America. A central question that has long troubled Americans is how—and whether—we should reconcile our many separate, communal, ethnic, and group identities with a shared identity we hold in common as Americans.

AMS 280 takes a close look at concepts (in particular, the notions of "pluralism" and "civil society"), historical and social movements, and grass-roots practices of American civic culture and public life that seek to make the tension in our democracy between "the many and the one" creative and productive. Source materials include critical and controversial readings, applied and theoretical arguments, studies of democracy in action, as well as close examination of relevant local civic issues and case studies drawn from communities across America, including the 2004 award-winning documentary film "Farmingville" by Carlos Sandoval and Catherine Tambini. We will also explore and practice traditional civic techniques of deliberative democracy and public forums that have given new life and possibility to healing divisions in American life brought on by our commitment to *E pluribus unum*. (AMS 280 students have been selected by the National Forum for Higher Education for the Public Good to test out a draft of a new booklet designed for public forums across the country on the topic "Who Should Go To College?")

AMS 280 students will also be given the opportunity to experience Civic America first-hand through active learning placements in local organizations and service agencies where citizen volunteers labor to make democracy and civil society work.

Course Format, Objectives, and Requirements

AMS 280 operates on a seminar and active learning format. Students are expected to be prepared for each meeting and to be active, thoughtful participants and leaders in group discussions. If a student cannot make it to class, he or she must notify the entire class. The professor reserves the right to lower a student's final grade by .5 after *three* absences.

In addition to essay type mid-term and final exams, two 3-5 page essays will be assigned. Students are also required to keep a Reading Journal in a standard composition notebook. Students can use their reading journals during in-class midterm and final exams. The

professor will schedule two individual grading conferences during the semester to review evaluations and to help students improve course performance.

Final grades are calculated as an equally weighted average of the two exams, the two essays, and the Reading Journal.

The Community Service Option

Service and citizen participation are key ingredients, as we shall see, in nourishing civil society and making Civic America work. As such, interested students may sign up for a volunteer placement in a local public and community service agency of their choosing. Placements are coordinated by MSU's Service-Learning Center, a division of Student Services. Students who select the Community Service Option must keep a separate Critical Incident Journal on their service experiences.

Students who select the service option may drop one essay or exam.

Course Readings

The following books are available from the Student Bookstore on Grand River Ave.:

James C. Crimmins, *The American Promise: Adventures in Grass-Roots Democracy*
Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*
Brian O'Connell, *Civil Society: The Underpinnings of American Democracy*
Martin Marty, *The One and the Many: America's Struggle for the Common Good*
David Mathews and Noelle McAfee, *Making Choices Together: The Power of Public Deliberation*

Contact Information

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AMS 280/001: "Civic America"
Fall 2004

	Tuesdays	Thursdays
1	8/31 <i>Introduction: Who Said It Would Be Easy?</i> Case Studies AP: 114-117 (San Jose, CA) AP: 75-79 (Chelsea, MA)	9/2 <i>Foundations of Civic Culture</i> Case Studies AP: 9-15 (Lobster Fishing in Maine) AP: 23-27 (Rock Climbing in Yosemite)
2	9/7 <i>Foundations of Civic Culture</i> Case Studies AP: 82-85 (Gallaudet University) AP: 32-39 (San Antonio, TX)	9/9 <i>Foundations of Civic Culture</i> Case Studies AP: 112-113 (Madison, WI) AP: 120-123 (Wolves in Yellowstone)
3	9/14 <i>Foundations of Civic Culture</i> [Prof. Cooper in Providence, RI]	9/16 <i>Foundations of Civic Culture</i> Case Studies AP: 168-171 (American River, CA) AP: 176-181 (Santa Fe, NM)
4	9/21 <i>Foundations of Civic Culture</i> Karen Casey, Director of the Center for Service-Learning and Civic Engagement Open Case Studies Essay #1 Assignment	9/23 <i>E Pluribus Unum?</i> DA: Foreword, 9-20, and Chap. 1, 23-43
5	9/28 <i>E Pluribus Unum?</i> DA: Chap. 2, 45-72, and Chap. 3, 73-99	9/30 <i>E Pluribus Unum?</i> DA: Chap. 4, 101-118, and Chap. 5, 119-138 Essay #1 Due
6	10/5 <i>Suburban Border Wars</i> Case Study: "Farmingville"	10/7 <i>Suburban Border Wars</i> Case Study: "Farmingville"
7	10/12 <i>Suburban Border Wars</i> Case Study: "Farmingville"	10/14 <i>Civil Society in America</i> Robert Putnam, "Bowling Alone" (online)

8	10/19 <i>Civil Society in America</i> CS: Chap 1, 1-9, and Chap. 2, 10-26	10/21 Exam Review
9	10/26 Exam	10/28 <i>Civil Society in America</i> CS: Chap. 3, 27-38, and Chap. 4, 39-55
10	11/2 <i>Civil Society in America</i> CS: Chap. 5, 56-75, and Chap. 6, 76-105	11/4 <i>Civil Society in America</i> CS: Chap. 7, 106-122, and Chap. 8, 123-126
11	11/9 <i>E Pluribus Unum!</i> OM: “The One,” 3-76	11/11 <i>E Pluribus Unum!</i> OM: “The Many,” 77-139
12	11/16 <i>E Pluribus Unum!</i> OM: “The One and the Many,” 141-225	11/18 Open Essay #2 Assignment
13	11/23 Open	11/25 Holiday—No Classes
14	11/30 <i>Forging Consensus</i> MC: 1-21	12/2 <i>Forging Consensus</i> MC: 22-31 Essay #2 Due
15	12/7 <i>Forging Consensus</i> Practice Public Forum: “Who Should Go To College?”	12/9 <i>Forging Consensus</i> Practice Public Forum: “Who Should Go To College?”

16	Final Exams: 12/13-12/17	
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