

# **POLITICAL DELIBERATION, SPRING 2008**

## **COMM 417/POL SCIENCE 455**

**Course Times/Location:**  
**Mon/Wed 8:30-10:20 SMITH 205**  
**Friday sections 8:30-12:20, various rooms**

**Course website: [courses.washington.edu/com417](http://courses.washington.edu/com417)**

Professor: John Gastil, 331 Communications Bldg., 543-4655

Office hours: M/W 10:30-11:30am

Teaching Assistant: Whitney Anspach, 340S Comm Bldg.

Office hours: M/W 1-2pm

Contact email for both of us: [com417@u.washington.edu](mailto:com417@u.washington.edu)

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### **COURSE SUMMARY**

A wave of theory and research has developed the idea that the ideal form of government is a “deliberative democracy.” This course introduces you to a wide range of perspectives on political deliberation and sharpens your skills at a wide range of deliberative processes—from informal political conversation to legislative debate. You will participate directly in forums discussing current issues, analyzing and critiquing media coverage of the Presidential election, and write about different forms of deliberation that could help us address difficult public policy issues. If the course is successful, you should end the quarter with: (a) a clearer understanding how deliberative processes work; (b) a bit more talent at taking part in deliberative processes effectively; (c) the ability to recognize when contemporary practices fall short of the deliberative ideal; and (d) some ideas for how to make our political process more deliberative.

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### **ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING**

Student grades will be based upon a midterm (20% of total grade), final (35%), two short papers (5% each), a final paper (20%), and class participation (15%). In addition, extra credit may be awarded for various extra assignments offered during the quarter. The midterm will cover the first three units of the course, and the final will cover the remainder. The first short paper will analyze media content, and the second will review scholarly writing on deliberation. The final paper will propose a new deliberative approach to making public policy, but we won't discuss the details of this assignment until after the midterm.

Class participation will be assessed based on both involvement in large-class discussions and Friday sessions, but the grade will be based primarily on active participation in the Friday activities. You should attend every one of the scheduled classes unless an emergency prevents you from doing so. When in class, you should listen attentively, and you should speak up when you have questions or wish to express an idea or viewpoint. Be sure to participate actively in all in-class activities, and always feel free to raise questions during lecture.

If you are unable to attend an exam due to medical illness or family emergency, contact us as soon as it is possible to do so. Be sure to schedule your travel such that you'll be present for the final exam. Makeup exams are only available for excused absences on exam day. Assignments turned in late result in a loss of one assignment-grade level per day late; turning it in the same day as the deadline (but after the time due) results in the loss of one grade level.

Though it could probably go without saying, I expect you to do your own work. Note that material copied from the Internet must be referenced with footnotes or some other form of citation, just as is true for material that you get from books, articles, and other media. Any cheating on tests, plagiarizing on your assignments, or submitting others' work as your own will result in a score of zero for the exam or assignment, and disciplinary action will be taken, typically resulting in a permanent notation on your transcript. For more details on this, refer to the UW website on plagiarism/cheating, which has all the ugly details (<http://depts.washington.edu/grading/issue1/honesty.htm#misconduct>).

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### **EXTRA CREDIT**

Extra credit assignments can be completed any time during the quarter. Doing one extra credit assignment gives you a tie-breaker: when your final grade score is calculated, if your score is just below the cutoff for a decimal grade, you get rounded up to the next decimal. Doing two extra credit assignments gives you a slightly larger bump-up at the end of the quarter. Two assignments are available:

- (1) Write a 2 page, single-spaced analysis of a work of fiction or popular program (movie, album, book, radio or TV show, etc.) relevant to the course material. This short paper should provide a brief synopsis of the media's content, then describe in detail how it illustrates or relates to one or more concepts and theories in the class. The movie previews listed on the syllabus might give you some ideas, but I'm especially interested in works with which I am not already familiar. To submit this assignment, email your completed paper to [com417@u.washington.edu](mailto:com417@u.washington.edu).
- (2) Post a page on wikipedia relevant to deliberation and related programs or concepts in the course. The wikipedia is an online encyclopedia that people often use as a basic reference tool. Your job is to add a page for a term that's not yet in the wikipedia (e.g., Citizens' Jury, but see People's Jury), significantly improve an existing page (e.g., "deliberative democracy" at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deliberative\\_democracy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deliberative_democracy)), or improve the indexing among related but currently scattered terms. To do this assignment, you must first get instructor approval: send an email to [com417@u.washington.edu](mailto:com417@u.washington.edu) explaining what you wish to do on the wikipedia, along with links to any relevant pages.

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### **DSS**

If you would like to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact Disabled Student Services, 448 Schmitz, 543-8924 (V/TDD). If you have a letter from disabled Student Services indicating that you have a disability requiring academic accommodations, please present the letter to me so that we can discuss the accommodations you might need for class.

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### **READINGS**

The readings for the course are available at the University bookstore:

- Gastil, John. 2008. *Political Communication and Deliberation*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gastil, John, and Peter Levine (Eds.) 2005. *The Deliberative Democracy Handbook: Strategies for Effective Civic Engagement in the Twenty-First Century*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

Chapters from the primary texts are referred to by PCD (*Political Communication and Deliberation*) and DDH (*The Deliberative Democracy Handbook*), along with a number indicating the required chapter. Thus, “DDH 2” refers to the second chapter in the *Handbook*. Additional readings and handouts found on the 417 website should be read before section and printed out for your use. Please remember to do each reading before the class in which that reading is discussed.

<b>UNIT 1</b>		<b>DEMOCRACY AND DELIBERATION</b>	<b>READINGS</b>
M	Mar 31	Overview of deliberation and democracy	
W	Apr 2	Democracy and deliberation	PCD Preface & 1; DDH 1
F	Apr 4	Self-inventory of deliberation	
M	Apr 7	Discussion as the heart of democracy	PCD 2
W	Apr 9	Discussion programs, online and off	DDH 3, 14-15
F	Apr 11	NIF forum	Discussion guide (417 website)
<b>UNIT 2</b>		<b>MEDIATED DELIBERATION</b>	<b>READINGS</b>
M	Apr 14	Deliberating in the mass media	PCD 3
W	Apr 16	Public journalism and electoral experiments	DDH 4 & 13
F	Apr 18	Media analysis training	Sample article (417 website)
<b>UNIT 3</b>		<b>DELIBERATIVE ELECTIONS</b>	<b>READINGS</b>
M	Apr 21	Conventional politics and deliberative reforms	PCD 4
W	Apr 23	Deliberative electoral reforms Presentation of media analysis results <i>Short paper #1 due at start of section</i>	DDH 5 & 7
F	Apr 25	Exam review	Review Qs (417 website)
M	Apr 28	Midterm	
<b>UNIT 4</b>		<b>DELIBERATIVE GOVERNANCE</b>	<b>READINGS</b>
W	Apr 30	Deliberation within govt. institutions	PCD 5
F	May 2	Budget committee deliberation	
M	May 5	Bringing government and citizens together Final budget deliberations, in full assembly	PCD 7
W	May 7	Practical reforms	DDH 6, 11-12
F	May 9	Discussion of final paper assignment <i>Short paper #2 due at start of section</i>	Assign. description (417 website)
<b>UNIT 5</b>		<b>DELIBERATIVE COMMUNITIES</b>	<b>READINGS</b>
W	May 12	Building a deliberative community John Spady & King County Community Forums	PCD 8
W	May 14	Civic reforms to build community	DDH 8-10, 18
F	May 16	Dialogue session	Discussion guide (417 website)

## SCHEDULE (Continued)

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<b>UNIT 6</b>	<b>JURY DELIBERATION</b>	<b>READINGS</b>	
M	May 19	<i>Meet in teams outside class to discuss final assignment</i>	
W	May 21	Deliberation in the jury room	PCD 6
F	May 23	Mock jury session	Jury instructions (417 website)
M	May 26	Holiday (Memorial Day, Towel Day)	
W	May 28	Adding a jury to international governance Perry Deess & Colin Lingle, World Court	PCD 9
F	May 30	Work on final paper in section	

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<b>UNIT 7</b>	<b>THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC DELIBERATION</b>	<b>READINGS</b>	
M	Jun 2	Overviews of deliberation	DDH 2, 17, 19
W	Jun 4	Integrating the elements of deliberative democ.	PCD 10
F	Jun 6	Final exam review <i>Final paper due at start of section</i>	Review Qs (417 website)

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### **FINAL EXAM**

TUESDAY, JUNE 10, 8:30-10:20 in SMITH 205