CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC POLICY
IN THE UNITED STATES

Graduate Public Affairs V523

Fridays, 1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

SPEA V274

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Description of Course: This course explores the relationship of civil society (particularly that part of it known as “the nonprofit sector”) and government: how the nonprofit sector affects public policy, how public policy affects the nonprofit sector, and what the consequences for society as a whole are. Although it will discuss issues familiar to students of economics, law, history and other disciplines, the course is primarily rooted in political science and policy analysis. It will explore a variety of theories and concepts from these fields, such as the meaning of the “public interest,” the nature and extent of civic participation, the role of interest groups in the policy-making process, and the division of responsibilities between the private sector and government (as well as among various levels of government). Particular attention will be paid to current controversies in which the nonprofit sector is involved, such as the impact of changes in government spending and tax policy, the nature and legitimacy of nonprofit advocacy, the role of faith-based organizations in providing public services, and whether or not nonprofit organizations should be more closely regulated.

Course Requirements: In addition to attending and participating in class, as well as completing assigned readings, students will be required to pass a final exam. The exam will be distributed on the final day of classes and due on the day on which the course’s exam would
normally be given. Doctoral students who are taking this class will be expected to submit a research-based term paper of no less than 20 pages instead of an exam.

In order to give students an opportunity to practice applying the concepts studied in this course to a real-world situation, each student will also be required to complete a short (up to 10 pages) analysis of how a nonprofit with which he or she is familiar is affected by public policy, or affects public policy, either generally or with regard to a particular issue. The purpose of this requirement is to assist students in integrating the topics covered in this course with “real world” experience, or to enable them to explore topics not covered in the course. The subject for this analysis must be approved in advance by the instructor, who can also provide assistance in identifying nonprofit organizations or issues which students might wish to analyze. Toward the end of the semester, students will be asked to present an oral report on what they are studying for discussion with their classmates and the instructor. A written version of the analysis will be due at the last session of class. Students are permitted to work in small groups, but the same grade will be assigned to all members of the group.

For each unit of the syllabus, several students will also be expected to prepare short (five pages or less) essays in response to a question the instructor will pose. Based on many years of experience, the instructor has concluded that one of the best predictors of professional success is the ability to write succinctly and persuasively on a topic one has not chosen. In addition to enhancing class discussion, these papers are meant to assist students in developing that skill. These papers will be reviewed and critiqued by the instructor. Each student should expect to write at least two of these papers. Students may choose which questions to answer and can write on more than two, if they wish. I will count the two highest grades.

In Democracy in America, Alexis deTocqueville – who would undoubtedly have been a blogger, if he were alive today -- noted the close connection between civil society and newspaper readership. (See Volume II, Part 2, Chapter Six.) Since many of the topics covered in this course, as well as others that are relevant to the course’s themes, are frequently discussed in widely available publications, the instructor has created a Class Blog in the Forums section of OnCourse for students to post clippings that they believe other members of the class would be interested in. Students should also include a brief explanation of the relevance of the clipping to understanding civil society and public policy in the United States. (Simply summarizing the clipping is not sufficient.) Students are encouraged to comment on the clippings and a few
minutes of each class will be devoted to those that are the most interesting. Students who post 15 original and relevant clippings or comments that add a new dimension to the discussion during the semester will receive an “A” for this portion of the course, with fewer clippings resulting in proportionately lower grades. Clippings from publications that primarily serve the philanthropic or nonprofit world, such as *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, newsletters, think-tank studies, and public relations releases will not gain points, though students should not refrain from posting them, if they merit doing so.

Students taking the course should be familiar with the nature, scope and functions of voluntary institutions in the United States.

**Grading:** The grade each student receives in this class will reflect a balanced appreciation of the totality of his or her work. However, the various course requirements will count *approximately* as follows:

- Class attendance and participation -- 10 percent
- Clippings – 10 percent
- Short papers – 20 percent
- Public policy analysis – 25 percent
- Final exam – 35 percent

While the instructor encourages students to discuss the course, exchange ideas, and critique each other’s work as much as they desire, he also expects that all work submitted for grading will be done in a manner consistent with the university’s rules on plagiarism. A link to IU’s academic policies will be found on OnCourse.

Students who have special needs that might affect their participation in this class should alert the instructor to them. He will try to make appropriate accommodations or direct students to IU resources that might be helpful to them. Information about the Writing Center is posted on OnCourse.

**Readings:** Neither the topics covered in this course nor the assigned readings come close to exhausting the wealth of material relevant to an examination of “civil society and public policy in the United States.” Nor is there any single book one can read for an overview of the subject, not
least of all because on many issues, different commentators have widely differing viewpoints.

The instructor has tried to select readings that are manageable in quantity, reasonably accessible to busy students, and worth studying and discussing. (Some, in fact, might have been assigned in other courses students have taken, but are included because they bear further attention.) Students who are interested in learning more about particular issues (including viewpoints that might be at odds with those presented in the assignments or class), or, in doing their paper, find themselves addressing issues that are not covered in the syllabus, should not hesitate to contact the instructor for additional citations. The instructor also welcomes student visits during scheduled office hours or by appointment.

The following books should be available in the bookstore or other booksellers:


Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life*, 2004.*


We will also be drawing extensively on:


In addition, a number of chapters from *The Nonprofit Sector: A Research Handbook, 2nd Ed.*, will be made available to students in the course through OnCourse. E-books are available via the library web-site for asterisked books. To help you navigate through the syllabus, I have indicated with a “#” those items that deserve your priority attention.

All students should be familiar with and comfortable using OnCourse and the library electronic reserve system. The course will make extensive use of these tools. Students should also plan on reading *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* regularly. Although it is available in university libraries, the instructor, who is also a regular contributor to that publication, has arranged for students to have an electronic subscription to it for the duration of the course.

I have uploaded a number of readings to the Resources tab of OnCourse. There are also a number of web-links in the syllabus. The electronic reserves of the IU library will also contain some of the course readings. Please let me know if you have any problems finding readings or if the links are broken.

Students are expected to have completed assigned readings before attending class, including for topics covering more than one session. My lectures and our discussions will build on the assigned readings, but will not simply recapitulate them.
# Syllabus

**January 15**

**Introduction: What is the Public Interest and Who Serves It?**

**January 22**

**Civil Society and Government: Friends or Foes?**


- Publius (Madison), “The Utility of the Union as a Safeguard against Domestic Faction and Insurrection,” *Federalist Papers*, IX, X, and LI.


**January 29**

**February 5**

**Civil Society and Public Policy in U.S. History**


February 12

The Uneasy Case for Tax Exemption


#Evelyn Brody and John Tyler, How Public is Private Philanthropy? The Philanthropy Roundtable. Online at Oncourse.


#Rob Reich, et. al., Anything Goes: Approval of Nonprofit Status by the IRS, Stanford University Center on Philanthropy and Civil Society, 2009.
Online at OnCourse.


February 26
March 5

Civil Society and Public Policy in the Age of the Welfare State

#C. Eugene Steuerle and Virginia A. Hodgkinson, “Meeting Social Needs: Comparing Independent Sector and Government Resources,” in Boris and
Steuerle, eds., pp. 81-106.


#Steven Rathgeb Smith, “Governmental Financing of Nonprofit Activity,” in Boris and Steuerle, eds., pp. 219-256.


March 12 Policing the Samaritan
March 26


American Civil Liberties Institute, Blocking Faith, Freezing Charity: Chilling Muslim Charity in the “War on Terrorism Financing.” June 2009. Online at OnCourse.

Selections from testimony and recommendations on nonprofit accountability.

Selection from 9/11 Commission on charitable financing of terrorist groups.

April 2 Politics, Anyone?

#Jeffrey M. Berry with David F. Arons, A Voice for Nonprofits, Brookings, 2005

Ed. Online at OnCourse.


April 9  Student presentations

April 16  Civic Engagement


April 23  

**Civic Dis-engagement**


#Jill Horwitz and Joseph Mead, “Letting Good (and Bad?) Deeds Go Unpunished: Volunteer Liability Protection Laws and Volunteering,”


April 30

**Conclusion: The Future of Civil Society in the United States**

**PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSES DUE**


May 7 FINAL EXAM TO BE DISTRIBUTED

FINAL EXAM DUE