CIVIL SOCIETY  
IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE  

SPEA V-524  

Fall 2014  

SPEA PV 277  

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**Description of course:** How unique are the American traditions of philanthropy and voluntarism? Alexis de Tocqueville believed they were among the United States’ most distinguishing characteristics, responsible in no small measure for the success of “democracy in America.” Yet, increasingly, scholars are discovering seemingly analogous traditions and institutions in other countries, or different ones that their advocates say are superior. Moreover, to promote democracy and economic growth, individuals and organizations ranging from billionaire George Soros and the World Bank to grassroots activists and student groups are trying to develop the institutions of “civil society” in countries where they have seemingly been absent (such as those of the former Soviet Union or in China). Whether or not civil society and democracy can take root in the Middle East or Afghanistan has become a major issue in American foreign policy.  

This course will examine the state of “civil society” throughout the world. It will look at the mix of arrangements different societies and cultures use to address common concerns (such as providing social services, dealing with ethnic conflict, or achieving self-governance), how voluntary organizations are established and function outside the United States, and the conditions under which the traditions of philanthropy and voluntarism can be nurtured. It will also consider whether or not “civil society” is a universal feature of social life – and always a desirable one – and whether or not it is on the rise – or waning – as an idea and a reality. Not least important, by scrutinizing the experience of other countries and cultures, the course aims to give students a greater understanding of the nature of – and possibilities for “civil society” in the United States.  

**Readings:** The following books should be in the bookstore or can be purchased online:  

*Asef Bayat, Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East,*

The following book is recommended for purchase:


This book is expensive, but it contains an excellent set of essays on many of the issues we will be discussing by leading scholars:


Most of these books are available less expensively in one or another kind of electronic edition.

A number of chapters, reports and articles from books, magazines and journals will also be discussed. These will be online or uploaded to OnCourse.

Formidable as this reading list is, it barely scratches the surface of the many (and growing number of) worthwhile books and articles about civil society in other countries. The required readings are mostly “classics” and some particularly timely recent publications, designed not only to inform, but to provoke, entertain, and generally stimulate thinking. I have also created a supplementary reading list on which I have placed other publications that have come to my attention, organized by course unit. Students are welcome to suggest others. Students with special interests in topics, countries, or cultures that are not covered by books on these lists, or who wish to delve more fully into any of the topics that are, should not hesitate to consult the instructor.

Thanks to support from IU’s African Studies and Program, I had the use of a recent SPEA graduate to identify a large number of books and articles related to civil society in Africa. The full list, including annotations on each of the selections, will be
found under “Further Reading” under the Syllabus tab. I haven’t checked all the links personally, so if you find any broken ones, please let me know.

All students should be familiar with and comfortable using OnCourse. The course will make extensive use of this tool, including for all course-related communications. Students should also plan on reading *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* regularly. Although it is online in university libraries, the instructor, who is also a regular contributor to that publication, will try to arrange for students to have an electronic subscription to it for the duration of the course. Students will also be enrolled for Guidestar Premium through its education program.

As much as possible, the class will be conducted as a mixed lecture-seminar, with as little lecturing as possible. However, last summer, as part of an online version of this course, I prepared some “video lectures” for many of the units. I have placed a link to the online folder that contains these. They are in a format that should be playable on both Windows and Apple machines.

You are expected to do the required reading before the class in which we will be discussing it. Those who have not done the reading will be at a big disadvantage and the seminar portions of class will be less valuable for you. Each student will choose serve as a discussion “starter” for at least two units of the class (see below).

The Echo Class Capture system will be used in this course. It will record everything that goes through the computer console, including lectures, videos, and Power Points. (However, the microphone is uni-directional and will generally not pick up student comments and questions.) Recordings will be posted on OnCourse after each class and will be available to students throughout the semester.

**Requirements:** In addition to attending and participating in class, as well as completing assigned readings, students will be required to pass a take-home final exam. The exam will be distributed at the final meeting of the class and due one week later.

Each student will also be required to complete a short (10 pages) analysis of an aspect of civil society in a comparative perspective. As appropriate, the analysis should draw relevant comparisons to the United States. Full details of this assignment will be posted on the web-site and discussed in class. I will permit students to work in small groups, but will give only one grade for the members of the group. Topics must be approved by the instructor.

Doctoral students who are taking this class for credit are required to submit a research-based term paper instead of taking the final exam and writing the comparative analysis.

For each unit of the syllabus, students will also be asked to prepare short (1000 words or less) essays in response to a question the instructor will pose. In addition to
enhancing class discussion, these papers are meant to assist students in improving their abilities to write succinctly and persuasively. They will be reviewed and critiqued by the instructor.

I will post a sign-up sheet under the course wiki for you to select the units of the course for which you would like to write an essay; I would like at least one student to be prepared for each unit. Each student is required to write at least two of these papers, but can write more and the instructor will count the two highest grades.

In *Democracy in America*, Alexis deTocqueville – who would undoubtedly have been a blogger if he lived 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, English-language publications, the instructor has created a Class Blog in the Forums section of OnCourse for students to post clippings (not tv or radio broadcasts) 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 in a comparative perspective. Students are encouraged to comment on the clippings and a few minutes of each class will be devoted to discussing the most interesting.

Students who post 10 original and relevant clippings, or particularly insightful and worthwhile comments, will receive an “A” for this portion of the course, with fewer clippings and comments resulting in proportionately lower grades. Press releases, think-tank reports, or clippings from publications that primarily serve the philanthropic or nonprofit world, such as *The Chronicle of Philanthropy*, will not earn points, though students should not refrain from posting them.

Students taking this 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 *roughly* as follows:

- Class attendance and participation -- 10 percent
- Clippings -- 10 percent
- Short papers -- 20 percent
- Civil society 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 academic
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rules and requirements. A link to IU’s academic policies will be found on OnCourse, as well as a statement of the instructor’s attendance, tardiness, and grading policies.

**Syllabus**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 29</td>
<td>Introduction: When Things Fall Apart</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Movie: <em>Lord of the Flies</em></td>
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<td>September 5</td>
<td>What is Civil Society? Why Study It Comparatively?</td>
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<td>September 12, 19</td>
<td>The Importance of Being Civic</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alexis deTocqueville, “Conclusion: On the Three Races that Inhabit the United States” (Volume I, Part 2, Chapter 10) and “On the Use Which the Americans Make of Associations in Civil Life,” (Volume II, Part 2, Chapter 5) <em>Democracy in America</em>. Online on OnCourse</td>
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<td>For response, see: President Obama’s Speech to the United Nations, September 24, 2013. Online on OnCourse.</td>
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September 26

**Civil Society and Democracy: The Role of Civic Virtue**

Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*


October 3  

**Democracy for All?**

Joshua Kurlantzick, *Democracy in Retreat: The Revolt of the Middle Class and the Worldwide Decline of Representative Government*


October 10  

**Fall Break**
October 17  
Civil Society and the Economy: The Role of Trust
Francis Fukuyama, Trust.

October 24  
The Challenge of Economic Development
Charles Kenny, Getting Better: Why Global Development is Succeeding and How We Can Improve the World Even More
Muhammad Yunus, Banker to the Poor, Public Affairs, 2003, chapters 7 – 9. Online on OnCourse.


October 31

Civil Society and the State


November 7

The Dilemmas of Humanitarianism


November 14

Civil Society and Ethnic Conflict


November 21

Civil Society and Muslim Exceptionalism

Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East, Second Edition*


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Jason Brownlee, et. al., “Why the Modest Harvest?” *Journal of Democracy*, 24:4, October 2013. Online on OnCourse. (This edition of *JOD*, which is available through the library, has several articles on the aftermath of Arab Spring.)


December 5
Student Reports on Papers

December 12
Conclusion: The Future of Civil Society


December 12
Papers Due

December 19
Final Exam Due