Educational Studies 303
Becoming Citizens: Youth identity and civic action
Trinity College     Spring 2013
M 1:15-3:55pm        McCook 305

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Course Description

How do young people from diverse social backgrounds develop a sense of themselves and their responsibility to others? How and why do some become committed to work for social change, while others do not? This course examines how citizenship is understood, experienced, and practiced by youth—young people ages 15-24—in diverse social contexts. Drawing on a body of qualitative research and the Trinity College context, this course will investigate these key questions: Are youth today civically disengaged and apathetic, as many critics say, or are they engaged in different ways? How do youth from different social backgrounds experience and develop citizenship differently? How does the experience of privilege or disadvantage affect young people’s civic engagement and identities? Do high school and college campuses provide supportive contexts for young people’s civic identity development? We will examine how “youth citizenship” is framed by educational institutions, the media, the private sector, and youth themselves, exploring such areas as youth activism, community service and service-learning, immigrant activism, and political participation, as distinct expressions of citizenship. Students will engage in an ethnographic research project that explores these questions on the Trinity campus.

Course objectives:

Students will:
1. Analyze the culture of Trinity College as it influences students’ social and civic identities
2. Understand how youth citizenship and civic identity are defined by scholars in the field, policymakers, educators, and youth activists
3. Understand how different civic learning programs and participation in service or activism shape students’ civic identities
4. Reflect on and further develop your own civic identity and civic commitments

Required Readings:

Three books are required:


Additional readings will be made available in class, in a course reader or on Moodle.

Possible campus/community spaces to explore:

Trinfo Café  
Office of Community Service and Civic Engagement  
Stop the Raids  
Cultural houses  
Posse Plus Retreat (Feb. 8-9)  
Trinity International Hip-Hop Festival (April 4-7)

Course Requirements and Policies

1) Readings and participation

This class will be conducted as a participatory seminar, in which our primary goal is to engage with a body of literature in citizenship education and our local context at Trinity. Class discussion will be shaped by the norms of mutual responsibility, support, and participation. Students will be expected to do the assigned readings and come to class prepared to participate in discussion. Each student will be required to facilitate at least one 15-20 minute discussion on a selected reading in the syllabus. Each student will also be required to write two 1-2 page response papers for two different readings on the syllabus. Guidelines for facilitators and reviewers will be distributed in class.

Since we meet only once a week, it is paramount that you attend all class sessions. As a seminar, participants hold a responsibility to one another in the collective endeavor of teaching and learning. The rotation of facilitation responsibilities among students ensures our collective investment in and accountability for the quality of our learning together. If you must miss class for illness or a family emergency, please inform me in advance by e-mail. One excused absence will not adversely affect your grade as long as you keep up with your readings and turn in on time anything that is due on the day you miss. More than one absence, excused or unexcused, will adversely affect your participation grade in addition to any other adverse effects it may have on your work for the class.

2) Community research

A central part of students’ course experience will involve investigating course questions through observations and interviews on the Trinity campus and in the Hartford community. Through this research we will explore what kind of context Trinity is for forming citizens; what
values, norms and relationships structure Trinity students’ lives; and how Trinity students develop their civic identities in this context. Assignments will include a short (5-page) paper due mid-way through the semester on the Trinity College context; two short profiles of student and civic leaders, based on in-depth interviews; and a final paper analyzing a program of civic learning or civic engagement at Trinity or in the greater Hartford community. Specific guidelines for these assignments will be distributed in class and/or posted on Moodle. We will also discuss techniques for ethnographic observation and interviewing in class.

Assignments and assessment:

1) Participation (including facilitator roles): 20%
2) Reading response papers (2) 2 X 10 = 20%
3) Identity reflection (Students reflect on their own civic identity development and the factors that have influenced them): 10%
4) Analysis of the Trinity College context (based on ethnographic observation) 15%
5) Profile of a Trinity student leader, based on in-depth interviews 5%
6) Profile of a community leader (may include Trinity alumni) 5%
7) Analysis of a civic program at Trinity/Hartford 25%

Course Readings

Jan 28: Introduction to the course; overview of the syllabus

Feb 4: Foundational concepts: Youth, civic identity and social capital


Visit and conversation with Carlos Espinosa, Director, Trinfo Café (2:45pm)

I. Sociocultural Influences on Youth Identity Formation

This section examines important sociocultural influences on youth identity formation, including school contexts (high school and college campuses), law enforcement, the media and consumer culture, and the socializing influences of race, class and gender. What cultural values infuse our notions of citizenship? How does the experience of privilege or disadvantage and discrimination affect young people’s civic engagement and identities?
Feb 11: The culture of achievement


Facilitators: __________________, ________________
Reviewers: __________________, ________________

*Personal identity reflection paper DUE in class

Feb. 18: Higher education and campus racial climate


Facilitators: __________________, ________________
Reviewers: __________________, ________________

Guest speakers: Candace Simpson (Class of 2012), Urban Teaching Corps, Karina Torres (Class of 2012), Lehigh Valley Dual Language Charter School

Feb. 25: Race, class and gender


Chapters 2 and 3 in The Hip-Hop Generation Fights Back.

Facilitators: __________________, ________________, ________________
Reviewers: __________________, ________________, ________________

Guest speaker: Lindsey Eichler, Public Allies
**Mar. 4:** Lost in Transition


All students read Introduction, Chapter 1 “Morality Adrift,” and Chapter 5, “Civic and Political Disengagement.”

Jigsaw activity for remaining three chapters: “Captive to Consumerism,” “Intoxication’s ‘Fake Feeling of Happiness’”, and “The Shadow Side of Sexual Liberation”.

“Psychodemographic Types of First Year Students”: Data from the Office of Institutional Research and Planning, Trinity College

Facilitators: __________________, __________________ (Chapt 1), __________________, __________________ (Chapt 5)

Reviewers: __________________, __________________, __________________

Guest speaker: Dr. J. Hughes, Director of Institutional Research and Planning

**II. Making citizens: Approaches to Civic Education**

In this unit we will examine various approaches to citizenship education, including civic education, service-learning, and participatory action research. What visions of citizenship and the good society underlie these different programs? What cultural values infuse them?

**Mar. 11:** Civic education


Facilitators: __________________, __________________, __________________

Reviewers: __________________, __________________, __________________

Guest speaker: Stacey Lopez (Class of `11), Coordinator, Vision Academic Mentoring Program

*Thurs. Mar. 14:* “Observing the Trinity context” paper due by 4:00pm

**Mar. 18:** NO CLASS – Spring Break
Mar. 25: Participatory action research with youth


Facilitators: __________________, __________________, __________________

Reviewers: __________________, __________________, __________________

Guest speakers from Institute for Community Research (ICR) in Hartford

April 1: Service learning and campus social life


Facilitators: __________________, __________________, __________________

Reviewers: __________________, __________________, __________________

Guest speaker: Joe Barber, Director of Community Service and Civic Engagement

April 8: Forming ‘Global Citizens’: Citizenship across borders


Facilitators: __________________, __________________, __________________

Reviewers: __________________, __________________, __________________

In class: Kony 2012 video

### III. Youth Activism and Civic Engagement

How are young people organizing to assert their voice and to make change in their communities and society? What strategies do they use, and what resources support them? How does the experience of being a racial minority, and/or an undocumented immigrant, shape young people’s civic engagement and activism?

**April 15:** Youth of color activism

Chapters 4 - Conclusion in The Hip-Hop Generation Fights Back: Youth Activism and Post Civil Rights Politics.

Facilitators: __________________, __________________, __________________

Reviewers: __________________, __________________, __________________

**April 22:** Immigrant youth activism


Facilitators: __________________, __________________

Reviewers: __________________, __________________

Guest speakers: Lucas Codognolla, Connecticut Students for a Dream and Pornpat Pootinath (Class of ’14), Stop the Raids
April 29: Mexican-American Studies in Arizona

Acosta (2009), “Political and Civic Engagement in a Raza Studies Classroom”

Facilitators: ____________________, ____________________
Reviewers: ____________________, ____________________

In class: Precious Knowledge film screening
Reflections and wrap-up

Monday, May 6: Final papers DUE by 12:00 noon