Senior Seminar, fall 2016

**21st Century Democratic Citizenship: An Interdisciplinary Approach**

HONC 4310, CRN 15788

McAlister 303, Tuesday and Thursday: 9:25 - 10:50

**Instructor: Prof. Peter J. Mehl** **Email:** [**peterm@uca.edu**](mailto:peterm@uca.edu)   
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Office hours: TTH, 9:40-12 Cell: 269-8391 (emergencies)   
The best way to meet with me is by appointment, call or email to set one up.   
Virtual office hours: 8am-9pm. I check email regularly and can almost always respond within a few hours.

**Course description**:

This course will provide a comprehensive set of tools for understanding and participating in a 21st century democracy. One major purpose of higher education is an informed citizenry; for democracy to flourish there must be citizens who can critically evaluate the views, the policy proposals, of those who aspire to lead them. Any 21st century democratic citizen will be to a large extent a global citizen. Therefore, this course will have a significant global dimension, despite the fact that it is designed for Americans.

There will be three central themes: first, understanding *social and* *political psychology* is essential for effective participation in a diverse pluralistic world.  Second, *political economy*: the most pressing issue of our time is *economic inequality*—it threats our democracy as it does struggling democracies around the world.  Third, we need a sound *public philosophy* that will guide us as we make *normative* decisions, such as, what sort of world *should* we be making? These themes together take us into the deepest issues in politics: human nature, human rights, human flourishing, and the meaning of democracy and equality.

Finally, since democracy is not a spectator sport, we will be engaged in the *polis* (the social political community). This course will include civic engagement or what is sometimes called *advocacy service-learning*: “Educating others about topics of public interest – projects that aim to create awareness and action on some issue that impacts the community.”  In general, service-learning is defined as “a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities.” So we will try to advance not only our knowledge but our civic skills, those skills necessary to democratic participation: working in groups, organizing to accomplish tasks, communicating, working out differences of perspective on public issues, and implementing positive outcomes.  We will do this by helping with a campus-wide project I started with the help of an Honor College Junior Seminar last semester: *The Campus Election Engagement Project*, ([www.campuselect.org/](http://www.campuselect.org/)). See UCA’s site too: <http://uca.orgsync.com/org/rockthevote/> Participating in this project means we will help register students to vote, but (more importantly) we will dialogue with others on the issues, the candidates and why elections matter. More on this below.

*“As I would not be a slave, so I would not be a master. This expresses my idea of democracy. Whatever differs from this, to the extent there is a difference, is no democracy.”*

Abraham Lincoln

**Learning outcomes**:

* Demonstrate an understanding of social and political psychology.
* Demonstrate an understanding of our political economy, economic conditions, and why inequality threatens the fabric of a democratic society.
* Demonstrate an understanding of some central issues in social and political normative thought.
* Demonstrate an understanding of the positions of the candidates for the U.S. presidency.
* Demonstrate an understanding of some major issues facing American society.
* Be able to apply ethical and social/political perspectives to these issues.
* Be able to engage with others in the public, to collaborate and communicate to achieve positive outcomes.

**Required Readings:**

* Jonathan Haidt’s *The Righteous Mind*: *Why Good People are Divided by Religion and Politics* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, paperback edition, 2013) is a study in social and political psychology that will help us understand human nature, our propensity to conflict and how we can better negotiate such a diverse world.
* Joseph Stiglitz’s *The Price of Inequality: How Today’s Divided Society Endangers our Future* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012), is a comprehensive look at the deep inequality in our society, how it threatens the future of our democracy and what we can do about it.
* Martha Nussbaum’s *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Belknap Press, 2011) provides what I think is a cogent political philosophy that addresses human aspirations and what sort of world we should strive to realize.
* Jessamyn Conrad’s *What You Should Know about Politics But Don’t: A Nonpartisan Guide to the Issues that Matter,* 3rd edition, (Arcade Publishing, 2016) serves as a general resource for thinking about the issues and the candidates’ positions.
* Materials and pieces accessed on our Blackboard course page or on the internet.

Supplemental Readings

Rawls, J. A. (1971). *A theory of justice.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Nozick, R. (1974). *Anarchy, state and utopia* (New York: Basic Books)

Sandel, M. J. (2009). *Justice: what’s the right thing to do?* Array, New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Sandel, M. J. (2012). *What money can't buy: the moral limits of markets.* Array, NewYork: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

Bellah, R. N. (1985). *Habits of the heart: individualism and commitment in*

*American life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Haidt, J. (2006). *The happiness hypothesis: finding modern truth in ancient wisdom*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Nussbaum, M. (1997) *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hudson, W. E. (2017) *American Democracy in Peril* (Los Angeles, CA: CQ Press, an imprint of Sage Publications)

**Internet Resources**

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://plato.stanford.edu>

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>

Haidt: Righteousmind.com

<http://www.civilpolitics.org/>

National Issues Forum: https://www.nifi.org/

<http://reclaimdemocracy.org/>

<http://votesmart.org/>

League of Women Voters: <http://lwv.org/>

<http://www.factcheck.org/>

<http://www.politico.com/>

<http://truthinmedia.com/>

<http://journalistsresource.org/>

<http://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics>

<http://www.ontheissues.org/default.htm>

<http://www.demos.org/>

Financial Resources:

<http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/index.cfm>

<https://www.nationalpriorities.org/>

Presidential Candidates:

Donald Trump: https://www.donaldjtrump.com/

Hillary Clinton: <https://www.hillaryclinton.com/>

Gary Johnson: https://johnsonweld.com/

Jill Stein: http://www.jill2016.com/

Political Revolutionary: Bernie Sanders: <http://www.berniesanders.com>

TED Talks:

Haidt: Moral Roots of Conservatives and Liberals

**VIEW**: <http://www.ted.com/talks/jonathan_haidt_on_the_moral_mind>

Hanauer: A successful capitalist issues a warning!

**VIEW**:<http://www.ted.com/talks/nick_hanauer_beware_fellow_plutocrats_the_pitchforks_are_coming?language=en>

Varoufakis: An economist warns about capitalism swallowing democracy

**VIEW**:<http://www.ted.com/talks/yanis_varoufakis_capitalism_will_eat_democracy_unless_we_speak_up>

**Always come to class prepared. Thoughtfully READ the assigned readings BEFORE class, and be prepared to discuss the assigned readings.**

**Class Attendance is required.**   
I take roll regularly. Participation counts and you cannot participate if you are not here. If you have an emergency let me know as soon as possible. If you simply skip class, it will result in loss of participation points; 10 points each time.

**Participation (aka communication and collaboration activities)**  
This course will be a constant opportunity to discuss morality, political philosophy, economic inequality, and whatever else we might discover is relevant to thinking about our democracy and the matters we confront. Most of our class time will be spent with careful but creative discussion of such matters. I encourage you to ask questions and participate in the discussion; indeed, I require it! Course participation means raising questions, responding to my questions, responding to peers, collaborating together, etc. Sometimes I will structure our discussion so that students will be randomly chosen to orally summarize a point or argument found in our book. Other times we will break into groups to discuss an issue or case, and I will ask for an oral summary of the discussion.

**Civic Engagement Activities: Making a Difference for Democracy**

As we learn how to think about social and political issues, and about the positions of candidates on issues, we will share our knowledge and perspectives in a learning dialogue with others. For one thing, we will host *public deliberative forums* with others at UCA and in the Conway community. Using National Issues Forums materials, we will focus on Economic Inequality & Opportunity and how to respond intelligently to it: see: <https://www.nifi.org/en/issue-guide/making-ends-meet-how-should-we-spread-prosperity-and-improve-opportunity>

I will provide a list of activities for you to engage with others in the *polis.*

**Writing . . . is thinking deeper.**  
There will numerous specific writing assignments all collected in “electronic journals.” Most entries will reflect on our readings, but some entries will be related to general civic topics and activities. I will provide specific questions for critical reflection, but you can also augment these with your specific reflections. Journals will be checked regularly.

Other writing: In addition to our overarching issue of economic inequality, each of you will delve in depth into one issue that is crucial to American society; and using our “political toolbox,” examine it, (considering where the candidates for president stand on it), and where you stand on it.

At least once a week, read an article in a news/media site of your choice, on the presidential campaign and reflect on it given our reading to date. That is, bring Haidt’s views to bear on our political situation, then later Stiglitz and Nussbaum.

Various other small exercises for your journals, such as, doing a “fact check” on claims of the candidates and defending a position you disagree with!

**Grading Written Work (Journal entries, etc.)**

* Minimal and purely perfunctory responses; questions not fully answered. Grade D
* Adequate responses, questions answered but begging for development. Grade C
* Good responses from a mind seriously engaged with the course material; questions answered in depth and readings well integrated. Grade B
* Insightful connections with other material covered in class and/or brought in from personal experience but pertinent to the material under consideration. Questions answered in depth and readings very well integrated; Issues explored in a critical, creative and comprehensive manner. Grade A

**Exams**  
There will be three exams over Haidt, Stiglitz and Nussbaum.

**Course Grade**

**Journal entries (includes S-L reflections)** 200 pts

**Haidt exam** 100 pts

**Stiglitz exam** 100 pts

**Final oral exam over Nussbaum** 100 pts

**Research paper**  100 pts

**Course participation** 100 pts

TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE 700 points

Course Grade Scale: Grades are determined against the standard grade scale. Above 90% of total possible points is an A, 80% - 89.9% a B, 70% - 79.9% a C, 60% - 69.9% a D, below 60% is an F.

**Extra Credit**: Extra credit assignments may be available as events on campus and in the community appear. I will announce these opportunities in class and by email. Maximum of 10 points added to your total points for each extra credit assignment. I will ask you to write a one-page summary with your critical evaluation of the event. Your summary is due by the next class period.

**In Class Rules**: No eating in class; drinking is okay. Use of laptops is allowed but only for note taking and when we are all researching a topic. **Please stow away and silence cell phones.**

We do not receive wisdom, we must discover it for ourselves, after a journey through the wilderness which no one else can make for us, which no one can spare us, for our wisdom is the point of view from which we come at last to regard the world.” Marcel Proust

**Tentative Course Schedule**

Thursday, August 18th

Introduction to the course, discussion of activities and student interests; Who is here? What are the most important issues for the U.S. today? How do we engage within the *polis*?

We will typically discuss what you have read in class. Be sure to keep up with your journal entries; they should be completed before we move on to the next topic.

**Our Social and Political World**

Tuesday, August 23rd

ISSUE: The place of civic activity in our lives.

READ: *Civic Virtues for Work and Action*, Ronan and Barker (on Blackboard under Resources)

JOURNAL: Ronan and Barker article: First impressions? A “civic identity” provides motivation to act; what is your civic identity; communities claim you? What are your worries about society? How will you engage to deal with them?

Thursday, August 25th

ISSSUE: Deliberative Democracy

READ: *Does Deliberative Democracy Work?*, David M. Ryfe (on Blackboard)

JOURNAL: What is Deliberative Democracy? Can we do some as a class? With peers? With others in the Conway community? What are the challenges?

**Social and Political Psychology: The Challenges of Democratic Citizenship**

Tuesday, August 30th

Haidt, *The Righteous Mind*, Part One: *Intuitions Come First, Strategic Reasoning Second*,

READ: Introduction and chapter 1. (Optional, Conrad, chap. 9, *Culture Wars*)

JOURNAL: After the first chapter, what do you think are the roots of morality? Do you think Haidt is right about morality as involving more than harm and fairness or has he simply discovered examples of “unenlightened” morality? Could it be that humans advance in moral understanding, just as they do in their scientific understanding of the world?

Thursday, Sept. 1st

READ: Chapter 2

JOURNAL: How should the two sides of human nature relate; does Plato, Hume or Jefferson have it right? Reflections on the “harmless taboo examples;” do they make the point Haidt wants to make? Explain the social intuitionist model of morality and think about implications for political dialogue.

Tuesday, Sept. 6th

READ: Continue with chapters 3 and 4

JOURNAL: In the six research findings that illustrate the claim *Intuitions Come First*, (pp. 64-78), the intuitive moral foundations usually are related to harm or fairness (and not the other foundations); is this a problem for Haidt’s argument? What is Haidt’s reservation about Hume; are you convinced? Chapter 4: Who is right, Plato or Glaucon?

Thursday, Sept. 8th

Section Two: *There’s More to Morality than Harm and Fairness*

READ: Chapters 5 and 6

JOURNAL: Are you one of the WEIRD people? If so, are you going to try to change? If not, why not, and how did you escape?! Is Haidt right about how religion really functions? Can you be WEIRD and religious? Be sure to grasp Haidt’s moral foundations theory. Do WEIRD really people lack the emotions and virtues of the three “right leaning” moral modules?

*Begin entries (weekly) in your civil journal on media article on presidential contest using Haidt’s theories*.

Tuesday, Sept. 13th

READ: Continue with chapters 7 and 8

JOURNAL: Find examples of the five (now six) moral foundations in popular culture and share your reflections. Also find examples of how Clinton and Trump fit into the theory.

Thursday, Sept. 15th

Section Three: *Morality Binds and Blinds*

READ: Chapter 9, only pp. 219-226 and pp. 253-255, (this chapter is an extensive look at the science behind the human moral sense) and all of chapter 10.

JOURNAL: Have you ever experienced “the hive switch,” what Durkheim called “collective effervescence?” If so share and reflect on your experience, if not, see if you can find an example in popular culture for reflection. Specifically, how does this experience related to one’s moral perspective?

**September 19-23 is Rock the Vote Week on campus.**

Tuesday, Sept. 20th

READ: Continue with chapters 11 and 12 (12 is more important for our purposes.)

JOURNAL: Defend a position on a social issue that you disagree with. For example, if you are pro-choice (liberty foundation?), then defend the pro-life (sanctity foundation?) position; that is, make your best care for being pro-life on the abortion issue.

Thursday, Sept. 22nd

Assessing American Politics and the Presidential Candidates using Haidt.

READ: “Revolt of the Masses,” David Brooks, (NY Time article); and Elkins & Haidt,

“Trump supporters think about morality differently than other voters” (see Blackboard). See also Haidt’s website: righteousmind.com

JOURNAL: Your reflections on the articles.

Tuesday, Sept. 27th NO CLASS! (Work on take-home Haidt exam)

**Political Economy: Inequality and Democracy**

Thursday, Sept 29th

READ: Stiglitz, *The Price of Inequality,* preface to the paperback edition, andChapter 1; supplemental, Conrad, *The Economy*, pp. 34-54

Guest: Dr. Cantrell

JOURNAL: What has happened in America since WWII as regards income and wealth distribution? What is rent seeking? Provide an example. Why is American no longer the land of opportunity?

Tuesday, Oct. 4th

READ: Stiglitz, chapters 2 and 3; supplemental, Conrad, *Taxes*, pp. 54-73.

JOURNAL: forthcoming

Thursday, Oct. 6th

READ, Stiglitz, chapters 5 and 6; supplemental, Conrad, *Elections*, especially, pp, 21-33.

Guest: Dr. McGarity

JOURNAL: What does Stiglitz have to say about voting? Why is it declining? What is social capital? How can we revive our fading democratic society? Chapter 6: Compare the psychological views here to Haidt’s views.

Tuesday, Oct. 11th

READ: Stiglitz, chapter 8

JOURNAL: Do a fact check exercise using one candidate (two claims, one of which is economic) and two fact check websites. Do the two websites agree? What did you learn?

Thursday, Fall Break ☺

Tuesday, Oct. 18th

READ: Stiglitz, chapter 10

JOURNAL: forthcoming

Thursday, Oct. 20th

Preparing for our Deliberative Forums:

READ: “Making Ends Meet: How Should We Spread Prosperity and Improve Opportunity”

Tuesday, Oct. 25th

On-campus public forums with select student group this week.

JOURNAL: Record your initial impressions, and then deeper reflections on the forum using our class discussions and readings so far.

Thursday, Oct. 27th

Continue with preparation for deliberative democracy forums.

**Thursday Evening Presentation “Voters in a Democracy: Realities and Possibilities,” by Dr. Brennan, Business Building auditorium, 7PM.**

TENTATIVE DATE: Saturday, Oct 29th, Public Forum at Faulkner Co. Library with CoHO

JOURNAL: Reflections on the forum

**Political Philosophy: Nussbaum and the Capabilities Approach**

Tuesday, Nov 1st

READ: Nussbaum, Chapters 1 and 2

JOURNAL: Does Vasanti’s situation compare to conditions in the US? In Arkansas? Think of an example to make the distinction between internal capability, combined capability and basic capability clear.

Thursday, Nov. 3rd

READ: Chapter 3

JOURNAL: Compare Nussbaum’s criticisms of the GDP approach to Stiglitz.

Tuesday, Nov. 8th **ELECTION DAY**

READ: Chapter 4

JOURNAL: Nussbaum affirms Political Liberalism; what exactly is it? The ten capabilities are designed to be affirmed by all people, but do you think all people really can or will? Do we (can we) have a near universal consensus around them?

Thursday, Nov. 10th

ISSUE: Post-election discussion

Tuesday, Nov. 15th

READ: chapter 5

JOURNAL: Nussbaum defends her CA against the charge of cultural bias. How does she do?

Thursday, Nov. 17th

READ: chapter 6

JOURNAL: Nussbaum claims that "today's world contains inequalities in basic life chances that seem unconscionable from the standpoint of justice" (115). What does she say about the situation, and what are your views?

Tuesday, Nov. 22nd

READ: chapter 7

JOURNAL: In her most philosophical chapter, she defends Aristotle on some points and not on others. What does she affirm in Aristotle and what not? In the early modern period, she notes that the American founders used Adam Smith’s thought. What did they draw from his thought? Is Smith a libertarian as often argued? What did Thomas Paine contribute to the debate about the proper role of government in the new America?

Thursday, Thanksgiving ☺

Tuesday, Nov. 29th

Chapter 8, at least through p. 157, more if there is time

Thursday, Dec. 1st

Concluding discussions

Final Exam: 8AM, Tuesday Dec. 6th

**Academic Integrity:** The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the Student Handbook. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. *Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.*

**An Emergency Procedures Summary:** (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

UCA adheres to the requirements of the **Americans with Disabilities Act**. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, contact the Office of Disability Support Services at 450-3135.

**Title IX****Disclosure**: If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to "student-on-student" or "employee-on-student"), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on those specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit: <https://uca.edu/titleix>. *Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.*

Other academic policies can be found in the Student Handbook.