

## U.S. Culture: Citizenship July 2008 [DRAFT]

### Definition

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Citizenship encompasses not just national identity or the rights that one gains as a legal member of society (voting, civil rights, or civil liberties), but also the responsibility of individuals and groups to get informed about issues and participate in governing American society. In education circles, this movement to produce students who both learn (cognitively understand) and practice citizenship is captured in the idea of *active citizenship*.

Put more simply, “Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference.” [Ehrlich, *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*]

### Rationale

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Simpson’s mission statement articulates our commitment to graduate individuals who live up to the ideals of social responsibility and local/global citizenship. <http://www.simpson.edu/about/mission.html>

*Civic knowledge and engagement* is one of AAC&U’s Essential Learning Outcomes. According to the document that has guided LPWG in curricular discussions [*College Learning for the New Global Century*], “vigorous efforts are needed to build new understanding that civic development – in all the forms described here – is an essential rather than an elective outcome of college.” [http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/GlobalCentury\\_final.pdf](http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/GlobalCentury_final.pdf)

“The need to vote and the importance of becoming informed and active citizens are values so widely recognized and so fundamental to our system of government...the least colleges can do to fulfill this responsibility is to offer their students an intellectual foundation that will enable them to vote and participate in public life...Citizenship is *not* just another option for students to pursue or not as they choose.” [Bok, *Our Underachieving Colleges*, Ch. 7]

### Criteria for Approving Proposals

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**Learning Outcome:** Students will expand their knowledge of political, social, economic, or other critical public issues in the United States, and develop the skills to become more engaged in the civic life of their communities.

For a course to be designated a *U.S. Culture: Citizenship* course, it should:

- Foster knowledge of important issues in American civic and political life
- Highlight individuals or groups, historic or contemporary, who model the skills of active citizenship
- Critically evaluate how we define citizenship and the pathways to social change in the United States

Given the participatory nature of citizenship, it is encouraged that a course:

- Give students the chance to engage, inform, or improve the campus or community through an “integrative” learning experience (civic or service learning, community-based research, problem-based learning project).

### Source Information on Similar Requirements at other Good Schools

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- Pace University, *Civic Engagement and Public Values*. This core category is designed “to aid students to be involved and responsible in the community, to act with informed awareness of contemporary issues in historical context.” Students take one course on citizenship in the disciplines. Courses have a community-based element integrating learning with a form of service. [http://www.pace.edu/page.cfm?doc\\_id=16063](http://www.pace.edu/page.cfm?doc_id=16063)
- Butler University, *Indianapolis Community* (NEW core category). Students take a course that integrates classroom knowledge with active engagement in the community. <http://www.butler.edu/core/?pg=4242>
- Chatham University, *Citizenship and Civic Engagement* (required course for all students). It encourages “multifaceted knowledge about U.S. political, economic, and social issues coupled with the acquisition of

abilities that foster effective participation in civil society. Courses *may* include service learning and/or experiential learning components.” <http://www.chatham.edu/documents/20072008AcademicCatalog.pdf>

- Loyola University, *Civic Engagement* (core category). <http://www.luc.edu/core/civiccourses.shtml> [syllabi]
- Tusculum College, *Theory & Practice of Citizenship* (required core course & service learning project).
- U. of Illinois at Springfield, *Individuals and Civic Life* (core category).
- Indiana University NW, *Ethics and Citizenship* category (NEW core category).
- U. of Illinois at Chicago, *Cultural Awareness and Citizenship* category (NEW core category).

### Examples of Classes

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The Center for Vocation and Integrative Learning, SUSI, and other members of campus have expertise or resources to help faculty integrate the learning goals, skills, or experiences into new or existing disciplinary courses. Political Science, History, and Sociology are a natural fit, but a review of citizenship requirements at other colleges shows that civic issues transcend disciplinary boundaries (for examples, see the above link to Loyola University syllabi).

#### Related Course Topics or Sub-Topics

#### Potential Civic-Impact Components?

Multiple DEPTS and topics with ties to citizenship or policy issues	Education, awareness raising, promoting engagement, or lending research expertise
BIOL – Environmental Crises (water, energy, pollution) & Policies	Projects to solve a local policy problem [Ex. = EPICS Program at Notre Dame]
ECON – Public Sector Econ, Poverty/Development, Consumerism	Financial literacy classes, public research
EDUC – Civics Teaching, Urban Education, Access & Disparities	Civic projects for local or global schools
HIST – U.S. History, Citizenship/Immigration, the Founding Era	Informed citizens, work in public history
PHIL – Democratic Theory and Practice, Applied Ethics courses	Knowledge of democracy or social issues
POSC – U.S. Politics, Citizenship, Public Policy or Issues courses	Mobilize or inform “the public” on issues
SOC – U.S. Social Problems, Social Movements, Social Policies	Social action, research (SUSI, non-profits)

### Teaching Resources

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Anne Colby, *Educating for Democracy: Preparing Undergraduates for Responsible Civic Engagement* (workbook with pedagogy/project examples). [http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/files/elibrary/educating\\_for\\_democracy/docs/](http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/files/elibrary/educating_for_democracy/docs/)

Robert Hollister, “Infusing Active Citizenship Throughout a Research University” (details the innovative programs of the *Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service* at Tufts University). <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/?pid=426>

### Assessment Resources and further reading

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American Association of State Colleges and Universities, “Individual and Campus Assessment Tools for Civic Engagement.” [http://www.aascu.org/programs/adp/toolkit0104/Assessment/Campus\\_Assessment\\_Tools.pdf](http://www.aascu.org/programs/adp/toolkit0104/Assessment/Campus_Assessment_Tools.pdf)

Anne Colby, *Educating Citizens: Preparing America's Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility*.

Campus Compact, “Presidents' Declaration on the Civic Responsibility of Higher Education” (Simpson College became a signatory in 2007, joining over 300 other colleges). <http://www.compact.org/resources/declaration/>

Derek Bok, “Preparation for Citizenship” (Chapter 7) in *Our Underachieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Our Students Learn and Why They Should Be Learning More*.