

Course Syllabus

CAS/POL S 409: Democratic Deliberation

Course Summary

A wave of theory and research has developed the idea of “deliberative democracy,” which describes a political system involving broad public participation, serious deliberation on issues, and thoughtful policymaking. This course introduces you to recent theory and research on deliberation and sharpens your skills at a range of processes, including informal political conversation, public forums, jury deliberation, the interplay of media and elections, and deliberation within and between governments and nonprofit organizations. If the course is successful, you should develop: (a) a clearer understanding how deliberative processes work; (b) a bit more skill at deliberating; (c) the ability to recognize when contemporary practices fall short of the deliberative ideal; and (d) some ideas for how to make our political process and our society more deliberative.

Communication

Be sure to regularly read your Penn State email account, as I will send class updates throughout the semester. If you do not check it regularly, be sure to set it so that all your emails are forwarded to an account you do check.

Readings

The readings for the course come from one book, plus readings posted in Canvas. The main text is *Political Communication and Deliberation*. Chapters from this text are referred to on the Course Schedule by the code PCD, along with a number indicating the required chapter. This text is available in electronic format through the PSU library.

Additional readings referenced by abbreviated titles and will be made available through Canvas. Some will be made available later in the semester, but they'll always have a link in the syllabus once they're there.

Assignments and Grading

Adapted to the online medium, this course is a steady paced jog, not the sprint-and-stop interval training so common in college courses. The grading reflects this difference. There are no high-stakes exams. There is a final project, but it draws on knowledge and practice built up over the semester and counts only for a modest chunk of the final grade. The bulk of one's grade comes from a series of twenty **response papers**. These are reflections based on the readings, with each being in a range of 350-500 words (roughly 1.5-2 pages), and each is worth 3% of the final grade. The **final project** (including a presentation/activity and final paper) is worth 30% of the final grade. The final 10% of the grade comes from **in-class participation**, including the effective performance of assigned roles (facilitator, reporter, discussant).

Each assignment is graded on a numerical scale, then weighted to contribute to an overall course performance percentage. Those are translated into final grades using the following scales, which gives the rough meaning of each letter grade in terms of qualitative performance. On the PSU grading system, see http://www.registrar.psu.edu/grades/grading_system.cfm (Links to an external site.).

If you are unable to meet assignment deadlines due to medical illness or family emergency, notify me via email as soon as it is possible to do so. Assignments turned in late result in a loss of one assignment-grade level per day.




Final Project Details







The final project will consist of two elements--an in-class activity/presentation and a final paper. The in-class element will be using an allotted period of time effectively to convey the main insights from the final paper, and this can range from a conventional talk or slide-show presentation to a class exercise that shows students a new concept or process you developed. The paper will be 2500-5000 words in length and incorporate at least ten scholarly sources (i.e., books published by university presses and/or articles published in peer-reviewed journals, counting no more than two that appear on the course syllabus).






Most final projects will be a literature review, qualitative case study, or design innovation. A literature review should review the scholarly literature on a subject and draw out original insights on the topic. A qualitative case study will look at a deliberative event or critique an event using deliberative democratic theories, and this event can be something that is naturally occurring (e.g., a previously scheduled public event) or something you create (e.g., a deliberative forum of your design). A design innovation proposed a new tool or process for improving some kind of deliberation; it may include a trial-run and evaluation of this innovation, or it can be a theoretical argument that uses previous research to develop and assess the innovation. If you have an idea for a final project that doesn't fit one of these categories, share your idea with the instructor to get feedback on its efficacy.






The 30% of one's grade that comes from the final project is divided as follows: 2% for progress paper 1 (summary of project idea), 4% for progress paper 2 (annotated bibliography), 4% for in-class activity/presentation, and 20% for the final paper.







Course Schedule









Wk	Day	Date	Topic/Task	Reading due	Assignment (due before midnight before the next class)
1	Tue	25-Aug	Introduction to the course <u>Slides (not much here)</u> 	None	<u>RP1</u> Restate your personal learning goals in relation to two or more ideas in the assigned readings.
	Th	27-Aug	Conceptualizing democracy and deliberation <u>Slides from group discussions and end of class</u> 	PCD Preface (just pp. xi-xiv) and Chapter 1	<u>RP2</u> Try writing two guidelines for hosting a discussion on a controversial topic. Explain how they promote deliberation and connect them to the assigned reading.
2	Tue	1-Sep	Collaborative discussion principles <u>Slides from class</u> 	PCD 2	<u>RP3</u> Take an interactive values test online, such as https://personalvalu.es/personal-values-test (Links to an external site.), then identify your five most important values and say how you would prioritize them in a specific case where two or more are in tension.


	Th	3-Sep	<p>Weighing conflicting values</p> <p><u>Slides from class</u> </p>	None	<p><u>RP4</u> (see details below)</p> <p>Complete two pre-deliberation questionnaires.</p> <p>1. Demographics Survey: https://sewg.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3PIbUNu1cCArBhb (Links to an external site.)</p> <p>2. Psychological Characteristics Survey: https://sewg.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_4MFExWprXMN7w1v (Links to an external site.)</p> <p>After reading the <u>discussion guide</u>  for the CGA, write a reflection on how your values connect to the health policies you support. This reflection is <u>Response Paper 4</u>.</p>
3	Tue	8-Sep	<p>Common Ground for Action (CGA) session on health care policy</p>	<p><u>Discussion guide on the future of health care</u> </p>	<p>Sign into the session by the start of class by going to the CGA forum URL: http://findcommonground.org/game/join?joinId=011716929 (Links to an external site.)</p> <p>(Join ID: 011-716-929)</p> <p>At the conclusion of the forum, you'll be directed to complete a post-deliberation questionnaire.</p> <p><u>RP5</u>: Write a paragraph (100-150 words) on what you'd like to see your Member of Congress do to address health care problems. After posting it in Canvas (for me), please ALSO post your paragraph <u>here</u> (Links to an external site.), and it'll be sent to your representative.</p>
	Th	10-Sep	<p>Deliberation online</p> <p><u>Slides from class</u> </p>	<p><u>"Digital democracy"</u>  (read first)</p> <p><u>"Linking theories"</u>  (read second)</p>	<p><u>RP6</u>: Offer an original suggestion for developing a component of a Democracy Machine that builds on an idea or insight in the readings.</p>

4	Tue	15-Sep	Jury deliberation and critical thinking	Mock jury reading 	RP7 : Focusing on the material presented in Chapter 6 (and the assigned news article (First Zoom trial in the US (Links to an external site.))), how could moving juries online improve or impede their deliberation?
	Th	17-Sep	(cont.) Slides from class 	PCD 6 First Zoom trial in the US (Links to an external site.)	RP8 : When in your life have you faced a true moral dilemma? Describe the dilemma and how you arrived at your decision. Did you seek advice or make the decision on your own?
5	Tue	22-Sep	Weighing moral dilemmas Slides from class 	" Moral machine experiment "  (read for general understanding; don't sweat the statistical details) Optional further reading (Links to an external site.)	RP9 : Keep a news diary for 24 hours, recording every source of news and how you found it (up to a max of 10). Note that this includes both a copy-and-paste into Canvas and adding your data to a shared spreadsheet (Links to an external site.) .
	Th	24-Sep	Mediated deliberation Slides from class 	PCD 3 And check out the AllSides news platform (Links to an external site.)	

6	Tue	29-Sep	Electoral deliberation (and candidate debates) Slides from class 	PCD 4	<p>RP10: Do the assigned reading (two articles), then try using one of the following voting aids (or one you find on your own)</p> <p>https://justfacts.votesmart.org/ (Links to an external site.) https://www.vote411.org/ (Links to an external site.) http://www.opensecrets.org/ (Links to an external site.)</p> <p>Reflect on its utility as you prepare for the upcoming election.</p> <p>FRIENDLY REMINDER TO REGISTER TO VOTE: (Links to an external site.) Quick link to register to vote in PA (Links to an external site.). If you intend to vote outside PA but aren't registered (or not sure about your registration), go here: https://www.nass.org/can-I-vote (Links to an external site.)</p>
	Th	1-Oct	The Oregon Citizens' Initiative Review (and voting guides generally) Slides from class 	<p>"Tracing the Boundaries" </p> <p>"Emanating Effects" </p>	<p>There's nothing to turn in before Tuesday, but after you watch Adichie's video, you might find it fun to use pen and paper to make an "identity pie" for yourself. Here's an example (Links to an external site.)</p>
7	Tue	6-Oct	Identity and cultural complexity	Watch Chimamanda Adichie, "The Danger of a Single Story" (Links to an external site.)	
	Th	8-Oct	Identity and political representation Link to ORCA (Links to an external site.) (for future reference) VP Debate by the numbers (Links to an external site.)	"Six Questions" 	<p>RP11: How does random selection address the problem of cultural representation in a pluralistic society? Does it work? What are its limitations?</p>

8	Tue	13-Oct	<p>Citizens and officials deliberating together</p> <p>Slides from class </p>	<p>PCD 7</p> <p>Optional viewing: Citizens' Assembly (Links to an external site.) (Links to an external site.) Participatory Budgeting (Links to an external site.) Citizens' Jury (Links to an external site.)</p>	<p>RP12: If you were writing a new constitution for PSU student government and had to choose a sortition legislature or an elected one, which would you choose? Why? What are the tradeoffs between electing or using sortition in the context of higher-ed student governance?</p>
	Th	15-Oct	<p>Replacing elections with sortition</p> <p>Slides from class </p>	<p>“Legislature by Lot” </p> <p>“Sortition, Rotation, and Mandate” </p>	<p>Final project progress paper #1: proposed project</p> <p>AND please enter your project into the Final project inventory worksheet (Links to an external site.)</p>
9	Tue	20-Oct	<p>Deliberative poll on election reform with visit by Dr. Alice Siu (Links to an external site.)</p>	<p>Discussion guide on election reform </p>	<p>10:35AM: Go to your assigned Deliberative Poll room</p> <p>First names A-J go to Discussion A (Links to an external site.)</p> <p>First names K-R go to Discussion B (Links to an external site.)</p> <p>First names S-Z go to Discussion C (Links to an external site.)</p> <p>At 11:35, we'll debrief in our standard Zoom room (Links to an external site.)</p> <p>If any issues arise, email Alice at asiu@stanford.edu.</p>
	Th	22-Oct	<p>Seeing the wider deliberative system</p> <p>Slides from class </p>	<p>PCD 8</p>	<p>RP13: Identify at least three different communities in which you belong, only some of which may be geographic. Describe them and their significance for your identity.</p>

10	Tue	27-Oct	Identifying your communities	Next time you're a facilitator, be sure to read this three-page Facilitation Guide 	RP14: Watch 2-3 online ads for Biden and 2-3 online ads for Trump. How are they similar or different? Do they contribute to (or detract from) deliberative elections? Tie your analysis back to the conception of deliberative elections in PCD Chapter 4. Also, try formulating a question about the Illuminating Project (Links to an external site.) after perusing its contents.
	Th	29-Oct	Campaigning Online: Visit by Dr. Jennifer Stromer-Galley (Links to an external site.)	Your reading assignment is to cruise around in the Illuminating Project website (Links to an external site.)	
11	Tue	3-Nov	Finding your civic passion	THERE IS NO LIVE CLASS MEETING TODAY	RP15: Answer a series of questions that will help you identify where you feel the most "civic passion". This paper is longer than usual because you will be reflecting on it and writing it in lieu of a regular class session. See the assignment description for details.
	Th	5-Nov	Government deliberation Slides from class 	PCD 5	
12	Tue	10-Nov	The boundaries of deliberation vs other kinds of speech Slides from class 	"Non-deliberative communication"  "(Un)civil resistance" 	RP16: Drawing on the reading for this week, develop or refine an idea for the "Democracy Machine" first introduced in Week 3. Make special note of how your thinking has changed on this subject over the course of the semester.
	Th	12-Nov	Innovations in online infrastructure for deliberation Slides from class 	"Decide Madrid"  "Democracy Machine" 	Final project progress paper #2: Annotated bibliography

13	Tue	17-Nov	Seeing the big picture Slides from class 	PCD 10	<u>RP17</u> : After doing the reading (and Tuesday's class discussion), answer this query: In what ways has this class made you more and/or less hopeful for the future of democracy?
	Th	19-Nov	Discuss ideas for final project presentation/ class activity		
14	Tue	1-Dec	Student-led discussions by Nicole, Jack, Meghan, Jacob & David, Andrew, Trenton, and Jeremy	TBD (I'll choose two from the bibliographies for this day's presentations)	<u>RP18</u> : Write a reflection essay on one or more of the day's presentations/activities (but not your own).
	Th	3-Dec	Student-led discussions by Vince, Ben, Megan, Sophia-Samantha-Nikki, Will, Zach, and Blair	TBD (I'll choose two from the bibliographies for this day's presentations)	<u>RP19</u> : Write a reflection essay on one or more of the day's presentations/activities (but not your own).
15	Tue	8-Dec	Student-led discussions by Kate, Kylie, Tyler, Ruby, Eric, Zoe & Elone, and Colin	TBD (I'll choose two from the bibliographies for this day's presentations)	<u>RP20</u> : Write a reflection essay on one or more of the day's presentations/activities (but not your own).
	Th	10-Dec	Certificate in Collaborative Dialogue presented by Lori Britt (Links to an external site.) of James Madison University	You're invited to learn more about the Interactivity Foundation (Links to an external site.),	<u>Final project papers</u> are due by Friday Dec 11 at 11AM.

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COURSE POLICY NOTES

Electronic Devices

In a Zoom class, we are all on some electronic device--a phone, laptop, tablet, or desktop computer. During class times, these devices should be used exclusively for participation in Zoom, note-taking, and other purposes directly related to the course content under discussion. To put it simply, it's impossible to be focused on the course while distracted by other activities and outside-class messages. If you have a family emergency that you must address during class, excuse yourself (e.g., turn off audio/video) to take care of it.

Academic Integrity

Though it should go without saying, I expect you to do your own work. Note that material copied from the Internet must be referenced with footnotes or some other form of citation, just as is true for material that you get from books, articles, and other media. Any plagiarizing on your assignments, or submitting others' work as your own will result in a score of zero for the exam or assignment, and disciplinary action will be taken, typically resulting in a permanent notation on your transcript. See <http://tlt.its.psu.edu/plagiarism/tutorial> (Links to an external site.). Yeah, it's a very bad thing.

Disability Services

If you would like to request academic accommodations due to a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services at <http://equity.psu.edu/ods> (Links to an external site.). If you have a letter from that office indicating that you have a disability requiring academic accommodations, please present the letter to me so that we can discuss the accommodations you will need for class. The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified persons with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities. If a student enrolled in this course anticipates needing any type of accommodation or has questions about physical access, please notify me as soon as possible. A disability is defined as "a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities." This includes a variety of invisible disabilities including chronic physical and/or mental illness.

Diversity and Nondiscrimination Statement

The Pennsylvania State University is committed to equal access to programs, facilities, admission and employment for all persons. It is the policy of the University to maintain an environment free of harassment and free of discrimination against any person because of age, race, color, ancestry, national origin, religion, creed, service in the uniformed services (as defined in state and federal law), veteran status, sex, sexual orientation, marital or family status, pregnancy, pregnancy-related conditions, physical or mental disability, gender, perceived gender, gender identity, genetic information or political ideas. Discriminatory conduct and harassment, as well as sexual misconduct and relationship violence, violates the dignity of individuals, impedes the realization of the University's educational mission, and will not be tolerated.

We consider this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. Penn State is "committed to creating an educational environment which is free from intolerance directed toward individuals or groups

and strives to create and maintain an environment that fosters respect for others” as stated in [Policy AD29 Statement on Intolerance \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

Safe Zone Statement

Matt is a member of the Penn State Safe Zone Ally Network, and we are both available to listen and support you in a safe and confidential manner. WeI can help you connect with resources on campus to address problems you may face that interfere with your academic and social success on campus as it relates to issues surrounding sexual orientation and gender identity. Our goal is to help you be successful and to maintain a safe and equitable campus. For more information visit the Penn State LGBTQA Student Resource Center in 101 Boucke Building or at: studentaffairs.psu.edu/lgbtqa

Mandated Reporting Statement

Penn State’s policies require us to share information about incidents of sex-based discrimination and harassment (discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and retaliation) with Penn State’s Title IX coordinator or deputy coordinators, regardless of whether the incidents are stated to me in person or shared by students as part of their coursework. For more information regarding the University's policies and procedures for responding to reports of sexual or gender-based harassment or misconduct, please visit <http://titleix.psu.edu> (Links to an external site.). Additionally, we are required to make a report on any reasonable suspicion of child abuse in accordance with the [Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law \(Links to an external site.\)](#).