

Global Challenges and Civil Society Solutions

MW 12:30AM, F 1:10AM, Willis 211

Professor Huan Gao

Office: Willis 413

Office hour: MW 2:30-5PM or by appointment

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Course Overview

This course explores the role of civil society in our contemporary world across distinct cultural and political settings. Can civil society, a concept first originating from American churches, English coffeehouses, and French revolutionaries, be applied meaningfully to societal actors and political changes in entirely different cultural and historical settings? And how do civil society actors, from international NGOs to local neighborhood groups, help address the myriad challenges we face today, from building democracy to repairing our environment? Students will read extensively about the development and impact of civil society and learn about cases from across the world. At the same time, students will also be asked to engage with local NGOs and contribute to our community in Northfield through both intellectual inquiry and volunteerism.

Class Requirement and Expectations

This course is about reading, analyzing, and criticizing the classic theories and cutting-edge research in political science, as well as leveraging things learned to pursue new inquiries. Therefore, it is crucial that students keep up with their readings assignments and always arrive in class having read the assigned materials and ready to discuss. This course does not require any book purchase; all readings will be made available electronically. You are encouraged to mark up questions, reflections, and points of interest as you read, and you should bring these responses to the class discussion.

There will also be a service and participant-observation component to this course. Students will be asked to volunteer with one of the two community partners (Food Recovery Network and Community Action Center) and analyze the experience accordingly.

Classroom Policy

Active participation in class discussion is a crucial part of this course. It will also form a part of your grade. Participation means actively analyzing, questioning, and otherwise engaging with readings as well as comments from your classmates in discussions. You are expected to participate often and demonstrate that you consistently complete reading assignments. Participation also means contributing to a positive classroom environment. It means being punctual for class, showing courtesy and

supporting your peers in discussions, and taking responsibility in group projects and peer support activities.

Office Hours

Office hours are Monday and Wednesday afternoon, from 2:30 to 5PM. You should also feel welcome to come to office hour with any question or concern. Please use the sign-up sheet on my office door to plan for a timeslot and avoid line-ups. You can also email me for appointment time outside of usual office hour should you be busy during regular office hour.

Student Evaluations

Student evaluations will be based on five components:

- 1) Class participation 20%
- 2) Social problem report and project proposal 10%
- 3) Literature review assignment 15%
- 4) Community engagement assignment 15%
- 5) Debate (group) 10%
- 6) Final paper 25% and preliminary assignments 5%

Summary of Assignments

Participation (20%)

Your participation grade is determined by both your participation in class discussions and your contribution towards a constructive learning environment. Participation means actively analyzing, questioning, and otherwise engaging with readings as well as comments from your classmates in discussions. You are expected to participate often and demonstrate that you consistently complete reading assignments. Participation also means contributing to a positive classroom environment. It means being punctual for class, showing courtesy and supporting your peers in discussions, and taking responsibility in group projects and peer support activities.

You will also serve as **student discussion leader twice** throughout the term. As a student discussion leader, you will present some of your thoughts and reactions to the reading at the beginning of the class. You will also raise questions and moderate conversations. You are welcome to be creative: create opinion polls, start mini-debates, or invite your peers to share relevant personal experience. Make sure to sign up for discussion leader slots well in advance. No more than two students should sign up for any one class. Serving as discussion leader will account for a quarter (5% of course total) of the total participation grade.

Community Engagement Assignment (15%)

In this course not only do we want to investigate grand challenges facing our world today, but we also want to become better citizens who help solve problems in our immediate surrounding and in our local communities. Over the course of the term, you need to participate in **three separate volunteer shifts** (4-5 hours in total depending on which group you work with) with either the **Carleton Food Recovery Network** or the **Community Action Center**. You will write an analysis of the program you volunteered for based on personal experience, observations, and necessary additional research.

Debate (group) (10%)

For this assignment, the class will be randomly split into six groups and assigned positions on three debate statements. An entire class will be dedicated to debate preparation, and the actual debate will take place in the following two classes. This will take place in the final week of class and serve as a conclusion to all topics discussed in the course.

Social Problem Report (10%)

In this assignment you will research one social problem that you would like to address through a civil society solution. This problem should narrowly defined and locally contextualized. For example, if you are interested in homelessness and affordable housing, you should focus on one particular city and discuss the city's specific economic and housing conditions, administrative and welfare system, current solutions, locally based NGOs, etc. You can investigate problems that are not localized. For example, if you are interested in the advocacy for a global cap-and-trade program to reduce carbon emission, you do not have to find a local setting for this problem. However, you should still research relevant institutions and organizations: what current international agreements exist? What kind of international and/or regional organizations can produce effective, binding agreements? What forums and programs currently exist for countries to negotiate these agreements? What forums are open to outside influence? Even when you are presenting a problem global in nature, your report should contain the specific contextual information that facilitate the creation of a viable solution. This social problem report should also feature your proposed approach to address the problem, be it service delivery, advocacy, or public education, etc. There will be class time to discuss this first report together and form final project groups if so desired.

Literature Review (15%)

For this assignment, you will produce a literature review of existing research on how civil society impacts a particular problem that interests you. You can investigate the impact of NGOs on conflict resolution or poverty reduction in developing countries; you can investigate how social movements lead to democratization or democratic backsliding; you can also investigate whether NGOs can effectively contribute to welfare provision and whether reduces input from the public sector. Your literature review should describe the general question, why it is important, and also discuss the context of that problem. You need to outline the major debates in the field and discuss evidence on both sides. Ideally, this literature review should feed directly into your final project, however, you should not feel obligated to pursue the same problem for the literature review and the final project.

Final Project (25%+5%)

The central coursework for POSC 279 is a proposal to create a civil society solution to a challenge facing human society. You will complete the final project **individually or in groups of 2 or 3** (groups of 3 need to seek approval from the professor first). You can address any challenge, be it as sweeping as climate challenge, or as localized as finding clean water for a single village. Your proposal should describe the problem and the context, review relevant literature as well prominent existing solutions, and lay out a detailed proposal of your solution. Your solution can and should be creative: building an NGO to deliver services to underserved population or to advocate legislative changes is perfectly commendable, but also consider less conventional ideas such as empowering communities through art, leveraging investment through profitable ventures, etc. Your proposal should also address the practical aspects of

creating such an organization or program, such as local laws and regulations, fundraising, human resources, and customer relations.

In **week 3** you will submit an **individual** social problem report, which features a preliminary proposal for the final project.

In **week 8** you will present a final project **outline** in class and receive feedback from your peers. This outline will be 3% and graded based on completion.

In **week 9** you will submit your comments and feedback for an assigned partner. This will be 2% and graded based on completion.

The final project is due on the last day of the exam period.

Schedule of Readings and Assignments

March 28	Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction • Going over the syllabus • Discussing service component
<i>Module 1: Democracy and Dictatorship</i>		
March 30	Defining Civil Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gellner, Ernst. "The Importance of Being Modular." In <i>Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison</i>, edited by John A. Hall, 32-56. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995.
April 1	Public Sphere	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habermas, Jurgen. <i>The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society</i>. Translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991. Chapter I-II (1-55)
April 4	The Role of Religion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Casanova, José. "Civil society and religion: Retrospective reflections on Catholicism and prospective reflections on Islam." <i>Social Research</i> (2001): 1041-1080.
April 6	Alternative Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pye, Lucian W. "Civility, social capital, and civil society: Three powerful concepts for explaining Asia." <i>Journal of Interdisciplinary History</i> 29, no. 4 (1999): 763-782.
April 8	<i>Case Study – Muslim Brotherhood</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rahman, Maha Abdel. "The politics of 'uncivil' society in Egypt." <i>Review of African Political Economy</i> 29, no. 91 (2002): 21-35.
April 11	Social Capital and Making Democracy Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Levi, Margaret. "Social and unsocial capital: A review essay of Robert Putnam's Making Democracy Work." <i>Politics & Society</i> 24, no. 1 (1996): 45-55.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Putnam, Robert D. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." <i>Journal of Democracy</i> 6, no. 1 (1995): 65-78.
April 13	Democratization and Democratic Backsliding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mercer, Claire. "NGOs, civil society and democratization: a critical review of the literature." <i>Progress in development studies</i> 2, no. 1 (2002): 5-22. Berman, Sheri. "Civil society and the collapse of the Weimar Republic." <i>World politics</i> 49, no. 3 (1997): 401-429.
April 15	Final Project Proposal Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social problem report due
April 18	National Form – United States	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Skocpol, Theda. <i>Diminished democracy: From membership to management in American civic life</i>. Vol. 8. University of Oklahoma press, 2003. Chapter 1-2.
April 20	National Form – Japan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pharr, Susan J. "Conclusion: Targeting by an activist state: Japan as a civil society model." <i>The state of civil society in Japan</i> (2003): 316-336.
April 22	National Form – China	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zhang, Xin, and Richard Baum. "Civil society and the anatomy of a rural NGO." <i>The China Journal</i> 52 (2004): 97-107. Gallagher, Mary. "China: The Limits of Civil Society in a Late Leninist State." In Muthiah Alagappa ed. <i>Civil Society and Political Change in Asia: Expanding and Contracting Democratic Space</i>. Stanford University Press, 2004: 419-452.
April 25	Economic Development and Empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fukuyama, Francis. "Social capital, civil society and development." <i>Third world quarterly</i> 22, no. 1 (2001): 7-20. Banks, Nicola, and David Hulme. "The role of NGOs and civil society in development and poverty reduction." <i>Brooks World Poverty Institute Working Paper</i> 171 (2012).
April 27	<i>Case Study – Women's Microfinance in India</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holvoet, Nathalie. "The impact of microfinance on decision-making agency: evidence from South India." <i>Development and change</i> 36, no. 1 (2005): 75-102. Thomas, Rebecca, and Jill Witmer Sinha. "A Critical Look at Microfinance and NGOs in Regard to Poverty Reduction for Women." <i>Social Development Issues (Follmer Group)</i> 31, no. 2 (2009).
April 29	Debate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
May 4	Debate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Literature Review Assignment Due

May 6	<i>Case Study – Hurricane Katrina Recovery</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leong, Karen J., Christopher A. Airriess, Wei Li, Angela Chia-Chen Chen, and Verna M. Keith. "Resilient history and the rebuilding of a community: The Vietnamese American community in New Orleans East." <i>The Journal of American History</i> 94, no. 3 (2007): 770-779. Airriess, Christopher A., Wei Li, Karen J. Leong, Angela Chia-Chen Chen, and Verna M. Keith. "Church-based social capital, networks and geographical scale: Katrina evacuation, relocation, and recovery in a New Orleans Vietnamese American community." <i>Geoforum</i> 39, no. 3 (2008): 1333-1346.
May 9	Transnational Movement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Price, Richard. "Transnational civil society and advocacy in world politics." <i>World politics</i> 55, no. 4 (2003): 579-606.
May 11	International NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fisher, William F. "Doing good? The politics and antipolitics of NGO practices." Annual review of anthropology 26, no. 1 (1997): 439-464.
May 13	<i>Case Study – Aid in the Balkans</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sampson, Steven. "Weak states, uncivil societies and thousands of NGOs: Benevolent colonialism in the Balkans." <i>The Balkans in focus: Cultural boundaries in Europe</i> (2002): 27-44.
May 16	<i>Case Study – Transnational Environmentalism in China</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reese, Stephen D. "Globalization of mediated spaces: The case of transnational environmentalism in China." <i>International Journal of Communication</i> 9 (2015): 19.
May 18	Final Project Outline Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final project outline due
May 20	Final Project Outline Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">
May 23	Welfare State and Society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project outline peer review due Evers, Adalbert. "Mixed welfare systems and hybrid organizations: Changes in the governance and provision of social services." <i>Intl Journal of Public Administration</i> 28, no. 9-10 (2005): 737-748. Batley, Richard. "Engaged or divorced? Cross-service findings on government relations with non-state service-providers." <i>Public Administration and Development: The International Journal of Management Research and Practice</i> 26, no. 3 (2006): 241-251.
May 25	<i>Case Study – American Poverty</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tanner, Michael. <i>The end of welfare: Fighting poverty in the civil society</i>. Cato Institute, 1996.
May 27	Conflict and Peace	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Varshney, Ashutosh. "Ethnic conflict and civil society: India and beyond." <i>World politics</i> 53, no. 3 (2001): 362-398.

May 30	Civil Society in the Information Age	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tucker, Joshua A., Yannis Theocharis, Margaret E. Roberts, and Pablo Barberá. "From liberation to turmoil: Social media and democracy." <i>Journal of democracy</i> 28, no. 4 (2017): 46-59. Kittilson, Miki Caul, and Russell J. Dalton. "Virtual civil society: The new frontier of social capital?." <i>Political Behavior</i> 33, no. 4 (2011): 625-644.
June 1	Community Engagement Discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community engagement assignment due
June 6	Final project deadline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Resources for Students

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Carleton College is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The Office of Accessibility Resources (Henry House, 107 Union Street) is the campus office that collaborates with students who have disabilities to provide and/or arrange reasonable accommodations. If you have, or think you may have, a disability (e.g., mental health, attentional, learning, autism spectrum disorders, chronic health, traumatic brain injury and concussions, vision, hearing, mobility, or speech impairments), please contact OAR@carleton.edu or call Sam Thayer ('10), Director of the Office of Accessibility Resources (x4464), to arrange a confidential discussion regarding equitable access and reasonable accommodations.

Assistive Technologies: Technological Resources for Students

The Assistive Technologies program brings together academic and technological resources to complement student classroom and computing needs, particularly in support of students with physical or learning disabilities. Accessibility features include text-to-speech (Kurzweil), speech-to-text (Dragon) software, and audio recording Smartpens. If you would like to know more, contact aztechs@carleton.edu or visit go.carleton.edu/aztech.

Library

Library staff can help you find and evaluate articles, books, websites, statistics, data, government documents, and more. [You can make an appointment with a librarian](#), get help via chat 24/7 from any page on the library's website, [email, or call](#). The Library building has lots of great study spaces, and we'd love for you to visit! For more information and our hours, visit the Gould Library website at carleton.edu/library.

Writing

The Writing Center

The Writing Center a space with peer writing consultants who can work with you during any stage of the writing process (brainstorming to final proofreading). Hours and more information can be found on the [writing center website](#). You can reserve specific times for conferences by using their [online appointment system](#).

The Term-Long Program for Multilingual Writers

If English is not your first language and you believe you might benefit from working regularly with a writing consultant this term, email Melanie Cashin, [Multilingual Writing Coordinator](#), at mcashin@carleton.edu. She can arrange once- or twice-a-week meetings between you and a specific writing consultant throughout the term.