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## **COURSE SYLLABUS - Democracy in Action**

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*Guilford College*

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## COURSE SYLLABUS

# Democracy in Action (First-Year Seminar)

Fall 2024, 12-week Semester (4 credits)

Professor Sonalini Sapra

“I change myself, I change the world.”

- Gloria Anzaldúa

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

- Martin Luther King Jr.

“There is no thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single issue lives.”

- Audre Lorde

“The open space of democracy provides justice for all living things – plants, animals, rocks, and rivers – as well as human beings.”

- Terry Tempest Williams (Back Bay Books, 1998), p. 471

## KEY TERMS

civic engagement, place-based learning, participatory democracy, community-engaged learning

## HOW CAN YOU REACH ME?

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## STUDENT/OFFICE HOURS

Sonalini’s student hours are on Mondays (1:00–3:00 pm) and Thursdays (1:00–2:00 pm). I am delighted to meet you at other times—just email me to make an appointment! Student hours are time set aside **just for you**. Drop by to chat about anything you want at any time.

## What is this first-year seminar all about?

The aim of this seminar is to explore the idea of civic engagement and citizenship in a world increasingly characterized by global flows of commodities, people, money, information and media. Some of the questions we will consider are:

- What are civic and political engagement and how do they relate to democracy?
- What does it mean to belong to a particular place?
- How does one develop skills to engage in constructive dialogue with others who have different views on social and political issues?
- What are the unique and collective responsibilities that people have in contemporary times within their local, national, and global communities?

Students will be expected to carry out a civic engagement project **focused on forced migration and refugee resettlement or food justice** during the course of the semester and engage in a series of experiential active learning activities organized by the instructor. Class sessions will include reading discussions, reading response papers, written reflections, self-assessment, visits to community sites, and conversations with community members actively engaged in one or more civic engagement arenas.

## Why study this topic?

Understanding civic engagement and citizenship is imperative today as it empowers you to actively participate in democracy, navigate the complexities of a globally connected world, build inclusive communities through constructive dialogue, and recognize your responsibilities to society at local, national, and global levels. This course goes beyond theory, requiring you to undertake real-world civic engagement projects, fostering experiential learning and tangible impact. The skills developed—critical thinking, communication, and community engagement—are highly transferable, enhancing personal and professional development.

## What are our learning goals this semester?

- Understand key terminology, concepts, and contexts related to civic participation, including democracy, activism, citizenship, ethics, leadership, freedom, etc.
- Apply critical thinking skills to analyze contemporary sociopolitical issues like forced migration and resettlement in Greensboro and beyond.
- Examine how your own social location and personal background shapes your civic perspectives and engagement.
- Develop self-awareness around what issues compel you to take an active role as a citizen.
- Cultivate motivation and efficacy to contribute to community betterment through various civic engagement approaches.
- Strengthen abilities to probe contemporary societal issues, gather information, and ask meaning-making questions as active citizens.

## What course materials will you need to be successful in this course?

All the readings/videos/podcasts for this class will be available on our Classroom Canvas site. Look under “Modules,” and you’ll find things organized by week.

## What are the course requirements/assignments you will be expected to complete?

### ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION (20%)

Your participation grade is based on two components: attendance and participation in class. I will pass around a sign-in sheet for you to sign at the beginning of every class. Please note that missing more than 2 classes (not inclusive of days you fall sick) during the semester will adversely impact your final participation grade.

I expect you to read the material before class and come prepared to discuss the material. The best way to prepare for this class is to read actively. In other words, you should try to generate questions, comments, or observations about the readings while you are reading them and write these down in the margins of your text or in a journal. When you are reading, among other questions, always ask yourself: What is the author's main point? What sources does he/she use to make this point? Is it convincing? Why or why not? What does this reading teach you? How? When and why did the author write this? You won't be able to find conclusive answers to all of these questions, but attempting to answer them will help you develop a better understanding of the work.

### FLIP DISCUSSION BOARDS (25%)

**No Generative AI use is permitted.** Beginning from Week 3, you will be responsible for creating and posting an audio/video clip on Flipgrid based on a topic prompt. Sharing your ideas through video/audio and responding to your classmates will hopefully inspire collaboration, community, and creativity. **Your task is to complete one Flipgrid post per week.** Each post must address one of eleven topics so that by the end of the semester, you would have posted 10 times. This means you do not have to do a post for one topic on the list. You can choose which topic you would like to skip.

#### AUDIO/VIDEO

Audio/Video posts will vary in length according to the topic, but I would like most of your recordings to be at least 4-5 minutes in length. Please note that you don't need to video record yourself if you are uncomfortable doing so. You can always turn the camera away to look at nature, your pet (if you have one!), or anything else you'd like.

#### RESPONDING TO CLASSMATES

You must craft 2-minute responses/replies every week to at least two of your classmates.

The prompts I give will generally be fairly open so that students can critically examine particular texts/videos and explore different issues.

\*\*\*Please note that these will be graded as complete/incomplete. As long as you meet the criteria posted on Canvas you should get a "check" for completing this assignment.

### FOOD JUSTICE ASSIGNMENT (15%)

Students will work at the Guilford College Farm for 8-10 hours over the course of several weeks, engaging in various farm tasks and learning about sustainable agriculture practices. They will keep a reflective journal throughout the experience. At the end of the project, each student will write a final paper analyzing the farm's role in the food justice movement and connecting their experience to course readings.

# Collaborative Group Project Assignment

## GROUP ORAL INTERVIEWS (15%)

Students will practice oral interviews, first with each other and later with community members from the refugee community in the Greensboro area. You will receive some training for this. In addition, students will create clean transcripts for the interviews.

## STORYMAP FINAL PROJECT (15%)

The first step, as a practice, is that students will interview each other and construct a StoryMap based on the interviews.

The final StoryMap project is on the interview with local members of the Refugee community. Please see Assignment #1 for more guidelines.

## COMMUNITY PRESENTATION (10%)

Toward the end of the 14-week semester, students are expected to orally present their research in small groups to the class and community members.

## Grading: Submission of assignments by their deadlines is expected.

Late penalties will be forgiven for most assignments if they are related to circumstances beyond your reasonable control (ex: you are sick, you are caring for sick people, etc.). Otherwise, use Canvas to upload assignments by their due dates. Please back up your work.

For assignments counted as late, here are the penalties:

How late is it?	What's the penalty?
10 minutes to 24 hours late	5% of maximum assignment grade
24 to 48 hours late	10% of maximum assignment grade
More than 48 hours late	No work will be accepted more than 48 hours late

## CREDITS

This course is a 4-credit course. It will require about 90-100 hours of work from you over the course of the Fall 2024 14-week semester. Please see below a rough breakdown of activities and time associated with each of these activities:

- Watch 5 hours of video-5 hours
- Read class material/listen to podcasts-20 hours
- Work on Flipgrid Discussion Boards-20-25 hours
- Work on your Political Memory Story Map Project-8-10 hours
- Work on your group project-20-25 hours

## GRADING

Extensions on assignments: I am giving **TWO** 24–36 hour no penalty “life happens” extensions on assignments that you can avail of during this class. Please notify me ahead of time if you’d like to avail of these extensions and use them judiciously because people in your class discussion group and group project are relying on you to complete your work so that they can complete theirs.

Points and percentages are translated into letter grades according to the following scale:

<b>A</b>	100-93.0	<b>B</b>	86.99-83.00	<b>C</b>	76.99-73.00	<b>D</b>	66.99-64.00
<b>A-</b>	92.99-90.00	<b>B-</b>	82.99-80.00	<b>C-</b>	72.99-70.00	<b>D-</b>	63.99-67.00
<b>B+</b>	89.99-87.00	<b>C+</b>	79.99-77.00	<b>D+</b>	69.99-67.00	<b>F</b>	59.99-0

## Academic Honesty and Integrity

Academic honesty and integrity represent central elements of the liberal arts education at Guilford College. As scholars pursuing knowledge and truth, informed by the Quaker testimony on integrity, we seek a community where each member acts responsibly and honorably in all activities and at all times. Acts of dishonesty represent a serious offense at Guilford College. The academic honor code is violated when anyone claims credit, implicitly or explicitly, for work and ideas that are not [their] own. Violations of the academic honor code include, but are not limited to, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, unauthorized use of materials, and falsification of information.

For detailed information, see [The Academic Honor Code < Guilford College](#).

### What constitutes plagiarism?

As members of a learning community, we all want to submit work that reflects our own ideas and efforts. Even if it is unintentional, plagiarism can have serious consequences. Before you submit each assignment, ask yourself these questions:

- Did I reference ideas, quotes, phrases, or facts I read about in a book, article, or website, without citing the author and year of the source where I read about them?
- Did I paraphrase by changing only a word or two or moving the words around?

**Did you answer “yes” to any of the above questions?** If so, you are committing plagiarism and need to give credit to appropriate sources before you submit your assignment.

## Health, Safety, and Our Classroom Community

Our intersecting identities—including race, class, gender, sexuality, ability, body size, national origin, and immigration status—shape how we are perceived, represented, and treated in society. They also influence what knowledge is considered worthwhile. I have selected course materials reflecting diverse perspectives and experiences. However, there may be gaps. Your feedback on making this course more inclusive is welcomed.

At semester's start, we will collaboratively develop guidelines for respectful class discussions. As we navigate ongoing political, social, and economic uncertainties, kindness, patience, directness, and mutual respect will be essential.

As your instructor, I will uphold campus health/safety protocols consistent with institutional values and course objectives. I hope you will too.

Learning requires more than intellectual engagement. To truly absorb new ideas, you must have basic security and stability in your life. The pandemic has introduced many challenges; prioritizing mental and emotional health is vital. If you are struggling, please use campus resources, including counseling services, or reach out to me. Support is available so you can feel secure. The counseling center can be contacted at [counselingcenter@guilford.edu](mailto:counselingcenter@guilford.edu).

## Learning & Writing Center

For students needing tutoring and/or assistance with writing and other learning skills, as well as time management, please make an appointment with the Guilford College Learning & Writing Center: [The Learning & Writing Center at Guilford College - Home \(weebly.com\)](http://www.guilford.edu/learning-writing-center).

## Accessibility

I try to design our classes to be accessible to everyone, but there may be things we haven't thought of. Please let me know if there's something else that would help you succeed in class. Guilford College facilitates and supports the implementation of reasonable accommodations, including resources and services for students with documented disabilities, chronic medical conditions, temporary disability, or pregnancy complications resulting in difficulties with accessing learning opportunities. Students requesting academic accommodations must first self-identify and register with the Accessibility Resource Center (ARC) located in Hege Library, Office 217. The Directors will meet with the student to create an individual accommodation plan (IAP). ARC will provide the accommodation letters to instructors at the student's request when providing any classroom and/or testing accommodations. Please notify ARC in the first week of classes to discuss your accommodations needs. More information and relevant policy documents about the types of accommodations and services offered, disability determination, and the student registration process can be found on the [Guilford College ARC site](http://www.guilford.edu/arc).

## **Generative AI Policy**

As an instructor, I am still evaluating my personal and political stance on using generative AI in my courses. I welcome an open dialogue to understand multiple perspectives.

While AI may become increasingly integrated in various applications, I believe writing requires an engaged process of finding one's voice. Due to the community-focused nature of this program, AI generation will not fulfill assignment expectations, with one exception— you may utilize AI to help formulate questions for your interviews with members of the refugee/immigrant community. Guidance will be provided on the mindful application for this purpose. By discussing complex issues related to AI writing tools, I hope this course will equip you to make conscientious decisions about if, when and how to use them. I look forward to an enriching semester of learning together.



## Class Schedule and Reading Assignments

The calendar below details the readings for each week of the course. The readings listed below should be completed before arriving in class. Please bring notes from reading to class as well as technology to access the Internet. The calendar below is subject to change; please reference this schedule regularly to make sure you have the most up-to-date assignments.

<b>WEEK 1: Welcome and Introduction. Creating a Learning Community.</b>	
<p><b>Questions to consider:</b> <i>What is civic engagement? What constitutes a need for civic or political engagement? What do you see as a problem or challenge that could be improved by civic or political action? Are civic engagement and political engagement compatible or at odds with each other? How can they work effectively together to advance democracy and a just global society?</i></p>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Readings</b>
	Please read the syllabus.
	<p>Nussbaum, Martha. 2002. "Education for Citizenship in an Era of Global Connection." <i>Studies in Philosophy and Education</i> 21, no. 4-5 (July-September): 289-303.</p> <p>Watch: Eric Liu's TED Talk. 2014. <a href="#">Why Ordinary People Need to Understand Power.</a></p>
<b>WEEK 2: Intersectionality</b>	
<p><b>Questions to consider:</b> <i>What hierarches and power dynamics exist between different social groups? How do we recognize these, without oversimplifying/distorting the reality of complex relationships? How can we as individuals locate ourselves within these structures of power? What is privilege? How can I determine and acknowledge my own privilege? How can this discussion of power and privilege be applied to direct service or other civic acts? Why is it relevant?</i></p>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Readings</b>
	<p>Watch: Kimberly Crenshaw's TED Talk. 2016. <a href="#">The Urgency of Intersectionality.</a></p> <p>Sensoy, Özlem and Robin DiAngelo. 2017. <i>Is Everyone Really Equal? An Introduction to Key Concepts in Social Justice.</i> New York: Teachers' College Press.</p> <p>Yosso, T. 2005. "Whose Culture has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth." <i>Race, Ethnicity, and Education</i> 8 (1): 69-91.</p>
	<p>Taylor, Keeanga-Yamahtta. 2017. <i>How We Get Free: Black Feminism and the Combahee River Collective.</i> Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books. Pp. 1-69.</p> <p>DiAngelo, Robin. 2011. "White Fragility." <i>International Journal of Critical Pedagogy</i> 3 (3): 54-70.</p>

## WEEK 3: Case Study: American Dreams and Ethnic/Immigrant Realities

**Questions to consider:** *What is the “American Dream” and how does it apply to today’s immigration debate? For what reasons do people emigrate to America? What are working conditions like in meat processing plants in North Carolina? What rights and protections should immigrants (both documented and undocumented) have and why?*

Date	Readings
	<p>Gill, Hannah. 2010. “The Latino Migration Experience in North Carolina: New Roots in the Old North State” (chapter 5). In <i>Defying the Odds: Latino Youth, the Agents of Change</i>. Chapel Hill: UNC Press.</p> <p>View “<a href="#">I am UndocQueer</a>” an art project by Julio Salgado.</p>
	<p>Our class will meet at the starting point of the Underground Railroad Trail on Guilford’s Campus.</p> <p>Grabell, Michael. 2017. <a href="#">Exploitation and Abuse at the Chicken Plant</a>. <i>The New Yorker</i>.</p>

## WEEK 4: Refugee Issues

**Questions to consider:** *Who is a refugee? What are some of the legal, political and theoretical definitions and frameworks that define refugee status? Do refugees have a stronger claim to protection and assistance than other groups, such as internally displaced persons (IDPs) and economic migrants?*

Date	Readings
	<p>Arendt, Hannah. 1994. “We Refugees.” In <i>Altogether Elsewhere: Writers on Exile</i>, 110–19. London: Faber and Faber.</p> <p>Jacobsen, Karen. 2019. “<a href="#">Refugees and Global Migration</a>.” <i>Great Decisions</i>, 13–24. Student will need access to JSTOR to read this article.</p>
	<p>United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. 2022. “<a href="#">Global Trends: Forced Displacement in 2022</a>.” UNHCR.</p> <p>Greenhill, Kelly M. 2016. “Open Arms Behind Barred Doors: Fear, Hypocrisy and Policy Schizophrenia in the European Migration Crisis.” <i>European Law Journal</i> 22, no. 3: 317–32.</p>

<b>WEEK 5: Refugee Studies (contd)</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Readings</b>
	Antonio Guterres’s TED Talk. <a href="#">Refugees Have the Right to Be Protected</a> . (19 minutes.)  Pipher, Mary. 2003. <i>The Middle of Everywhere: The World’s Refugees Come to Our Town</i> . Boston: Mariner Books. Pp. 1–63.
	Documentary screening: Human Flow (2017).

**WEEK 6: Case Study: Food Justice**

**Questions to consider:** *Why do we need to learn about food systems?*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Readings</b>
	Guthman, Julie. 2012. “If They Only Knew.” In <i>The Unbearable Whiteness of Alternative Food</i> .  Whyte, K. P. 2017. “Food Sovereignty, Justice and Indigenous Peoples: An Essay on Settler Colonialism and Collective Continuance.” In <i>The Oxford Handbook on Food Ethics</i> , eds. A. Barnhill, T. Doggett, and A. Egan. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
	MacMillan, Tracie. “ <a href="#">The New Face of Hunger</a> .” National Geographic.  Kennedy, Brian. 2016. “ <a href="#">Hunger in North Carolina</a> .”  Morales, Alfonso. 2011. “Growing Food and Justice: Dismantling Racism through Sustainable Food Systems.” In <i>Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class and Sustainability</i> , eds. Alison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman. Pp. 149–76.

**WEEK 7: Food Justice (contd.)**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Readings</b>
	<i>The New York Times</i> . August 25, 2020. <a href="#">Heat, Smoke, and Covid are battering the workers who feed America</a> .  Watch: <a href="#">Food Waste Is the World’s Dumbest Problem</a> (12 minutes).
	<b>Field visit and tour of Guilford College’s farm.</b>

## WEEK 8: Environmental Justice

**Questions to consider:** *What is environmental justice and how does it relate to some of the other topics we've discussed above?*

Date	Readings
	Taylor, D. E. 2011. "The Evolution of Environmental Justice Activism, Research, and Scholarship." <i>Environmental Practice</i> 13, no. 4: 280-301.  Ali, Mustafa. 2017. MSNBC. <a href="#"><i>On Environmental Justice in the Trump Era</i></a> .
	Thompson, Leah. 2020. <a href="#"><u>"Why Every Environmentalist Should Be Anti-Racist"</u></a> Vogue  Dhillon, Jaskiran. 2017. <a href="#"><u>"What Standing Rock Teaches Us about Environmental Justice"</u></a> . Items---Insights from the Social Sciences.  <a href="#"><u>Bird Like Me</u></a> . Short Clip from the Jon Stewart featuring Wyatt Cenac. (6 minutes.)

## WEEK 9: Environmental Justice (contd.)

Date	Readings
	<a href="#"><u>PBS documentary on Environmental Justice</u></a> . 2018. (27 minutes.)  <a href="#"><u>Flint's Deadly Water</u></a> . 2020. (PBS Documentary, 53 mins.)
	Newkirk, Vann. 2016. "Fighting Environmental Racism in North Carolina." <i>The New Yorker</i> .

## WEEK 10: Energy Equity

**Questions to consider:** *How can we ensure that all communities, regardless of their socioeconomic status, race, or geographic location, have access to clean, affordable, and reliable energy services while also addressing the disproportionate impacts of energy production on marginalized populations?*

Date	Readings
	Brown, Patricia Leigh. 2018. <a href="#"><u>"Green Upgrade: How California is Pioneering Renewable Energy Justice"</u></a> . Yale360.  Gallucci, Maria. 2019. <a href="#"><u>Energy Equity: Bringing Solar Power to Low-Income Communities</u></a> . Yale360.
	Watch: <i>Happening: A Clean Energy Revolution</i> (2017).

WEEK 11: Final Class Presentations	
Date	Readings
	Class Presentations (first group)
	Class Presentations (second group)
WEEK 12: Course Wrap Up	
<p><b>Guiding Questions:</b> <i>How has your understanding of democratic participation and activism evolved throughout this course? What key insights or perspectives have you gained, and how might they influence your future engagement in civic and political life? In what ways do you think the concepts, theories, and case studies explored in this course can be applied to contemporary social and political challenges? How might the lessons learned from historical and global examples of activism inform current struggles for social justice and democratic reform?</i></p>	