Course syllabus

“Does Culture Matter in Civil Society?”

Course description

This course aims to expose students to several theories of civic engagement, to conceptualise the contemporary social experience of civic engagement in different cultural contexts, to analyse how civic engagement can develop cultural democracy, and to explore what role culture could play in the construction of communities.

This course also aims to foster collaborative student learning through group presentations and research assignments.

The purpose is to investigate theoretical and practical aspects of the interdependence between culture and civic engagement in contemporary society, ways of creating integration of citizens, national models of the active citizenship, and to analyse this practice in Russia in particular.

Why is it urgent?

In the context of analysis of contemporary issues of Identity construction: regional, national, and individual, it is necessary to make the next step: to analyse the process of civic engagement in order to help to create new forms of communication and communal identities.

This course is based on philosophical, sociological, and cultural texts. One of the philosophical luminaries of the twentieth century Hannah Arendt wrote in this respect: “The general crisis that has overtaken the modern world everywhere and almost every sphere of life manifests itself differently in each country” (H. Arendt). The crisis comes from the development of mass technological culture and reveals itself in human loneliness, which is neither isolation nor solitude; in excitability and lack of standards; in capacity of consumption, accompanied by inability to judge, and above all, in “egocentricity and that fateful alienation from the world which since Rousseau is mistaken for self-alienation” (H. Arendt).

In fact, nowadays many individuals and not only individuals but also the social groups find themselves in the condition of the “Lost.” It happens not only in Russia. This Identity Crisis consists of the loss of historical continuity, temporal collage, different forms of narcissism and hedonism, existential anxiety, and social alienation. People in the different countries do not trust each other, social institutions, or the state.

The last decade has seen the wave of real world democratisation, which has coincided with the decline of active citizenship and the decay of democratic institutions. The globalisation
process and the development of the Information Society are charged with civic disengagement and the withering of social capital.

During the course the students will be able to read, analyse and criticize the main theoretical approaches to Civil Society and to answer the following questions:

“What is the essence (the soul) of Civil Society?”
“What is the role of Social Capital?”
“Why is it necessary to improve education in order to perfect civic engagement?”
“Are there any perspectives for civic engagement in the Electronic Network Society?”
“What are the perspectives of civic engagement all over the world as well as in Russia?”

The basic concepts: key theoretical debates about social associations; cultural, social, personal resources of social solidarity; public sphere vs private sphere; the public values and moral habits in civil society; education for Civil Society; analysis of relationship between Civil Society and cultural and intellectual rights; education tasks in creation of “communication competence.”

Course prerequisites: Students must have taken the courses “History of Philosophy,” “History of Culture,” “Political Theory,” “Social Philosophy,” and “Ethics.”

English is required.

Specific Learning Outcomes
By the end of the course the students should be able to:

1. Engage in discussions and collaborative problem solving,
2. Develop critical thinking and learning,
3. Develop writing activities,

Requirements and responsibilities
Preparation, attendance, active engagement.
Completion of readings and assigned written works.
Active engagement in discussions and in the final collective presentation is essential in this course in order to develop the capabilities of active participation in public discourse that is considered as a virtue.

How the Final Grade Will be Determined
1. All students are expected to attend classes (lectures, seminars) (15%).
2. Written works will be given at assigned times (25%).
3. The final work must be written (30%).
4. The final collective presentation must be given, based on the written work (30%).

Three times students will summarize and react critically to the readings. The papers should be 3-4 pages. The grades of the written work will be based on:
1) clarity of organization of thought,
2) understanding of the works,
3) analytical thinking beyond mere description and summarization,
4) ability to argue one's own position.

Presentation: The presentation should be a group presentation of 3-4 persons, at least 20 min. long. It must be based on the final written work.

**Course schedule:**
Lecture: once a week (2 hours)
Seminar: once a week (2 hours)
Total: 4 hours per week, 34 hours per course.

1. Introduction lecture. The main issues of the contemporary Civil Society (4 hours).

   This lecture will touch on the following themes: The growth of economic and political power, the devolution of state authority and local governments. What are the reasons and demonstrations of the declining confidence in government, devolution of authority of state, local institutions, the growth of non-governmental organizations? What are the basic institutional developments? Do political devolution and supranatural evolution create new claims to group representation and cultural rights? What are the main challenges to individual memberships in traditional structures? Does democracy work within a framework of multiple, divided memberships and cultural identities? What are the main identity crisis manifestations in this case? What are the boundaries of individualism?

**Reading List:**
Бауман З. Глобализация. Последствия для человека и общества. М., 2004 (главы 1-4).
Кастельс М. Информационная эпоха. Экономика, общество, культура. М., 2000 (главы 1-3).
Бенхабиб С. Притязания культуры. М., 2003 (вступительная статья, введение).
2. Discussing the essence of Civil Society. Culture and Civil Society (4 hours).


   Reading List:


   Арендт Х. *Vita Activa*, или о деятельной жизни. СПб, 2000 (введение).


   Бауман З. Индивидуализированное общество. М., 2002 (введение, главы 1-2).


   Reading list:


   Коэн Д. Арато Э. Гражданское общество и политическая теория. М., 2003 (введение, глава 4-5).


   Патнэм Р. Процветающая коммьюнити, социальный капитал и общественная жизнь. // МЭиМО. 1995. №4.
4. The Soul of Civil Society. Why should people commit in the social Life? (4 hours).


Reading List:

5. Is Civil Society a Good Society? (2 hours).


Reading List:
Федотова В.Г. Хорошее общество. М., 2005.
Федотова В.Г. Анархия и порядок. М, 2000.

6. Education and Culture. Why is it necessary to teach people how to live together? (4 hours).

The interdependence of educational levels and trust and participation levels. Arguments of John Dewey for educative growth. Discussion between J. Dewey and W. Lippmann: Democracy “as the idea of community life itself.” Dewey’s rejection of understanding human being only as political beings. The art of human emancipation. The basic practice of cultivation of spaces of giving reasons and inviting responses. Cultivation of democratic space.

Introduction of Ethics into the school and University curricula, Ethics and Good Society analysis. Courses on Ethics and Public Policy. Education for Justice. Ethical space for Russia. Postcommunism: collectivism or communitarism, perfectionism or welfare state.
Reading list:
Дьюи Дж. Демократия и образование. М., 2000.
Федотова В.Г. Хорошее общество. М., 2005.

7. Civil Society and Policy Making in Culture (2 hours)


Reading List:
Хабермас Ю. Моральное сознание и политическое действие. СПб, 2000.

8. The Contemporary Issues of Cultural Political Discourse (2 hours).

The Creation of “Communication Competence” (competencies of judging, reasoning, appreciating, performing, responding). Civil Society as Artful Practice. Encouraging professional virtues. Commitment to analytical integrity. Ways of developing the virtues of productive, genuine, civil public discourse.

Reading list:
9. Community Networks in the Electronic Culture (2 hours).

Putnam on the role of the electronic revolution in decreasing social capital and the decline of civic engagement. Putnam’s critique of TV. Methodologies to examine the social networks in contemporary cultures. The role of cultural values, the importance of cultural pluralism, the diversity of traditional forms of culture, the role of cultural elite, “knowledge” as a virtue, the significance of culture as a part of society and politics.

Role of Internet in expanding and reinforcing social networks. The dependence of social electronic networks and the national cultural context. Online communication, group discussion forums: facilitating of the flow of resources, like friendship, expanding membership. Aid in the form of information. Protection of social and cultural rights.

The main targets of community network designers. The examples of interdependence of cultural context and electronic communities development.

Reading list:


10. The main problems of civic engagement in Russia (2 hours).

The main factors of the weakness of Civil Society in Russia. U. Lotman about the role of cultural and artistic associations in building of Russian culture. The role of cultural communities in Soviet history in promoting of Civil Society. The reasons for the devolution of the public
sphere in Post-Soviet Russia. The arguments for the development of civic engagement to preserve Russian culture.

**Reading list:**

Лотман Ю.М. Поэтика бытового поведения в русской культуре 18 в. // История и типология русской культуры. СПб.,2002. С. 233-255.
Федотова В.Г. Анархия и порядок. М., 2000.

11. Collective Presentation (4 hours)

The themes for presentations should be chosen from the list of themes discussed during the course.

**Please note that this syllabus is the subject to change depending on class interests and needs.**

**The reading list for the course**

**Theoretical Issues**


18. Бауман З. Индивидуализированное общество. М., 2002.


**Civil Society, Culture and Policy Making**


Education, Culture and Society
7. Культура имеет значение. Каким образом ценности способствуют общественному прогрессу. М., 2002.

Building of Civic Engagement in the Different Cultural Contexts.


**Building Civic Engagement in the Electronic Network Society**


**Extended literature:**


