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9-25-2013

### Civic Sociology: Connecting Classroom to Community

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Porter, Terry, "Civic Sociology: Connecting Classroom to Community" (2013). *Scholarship Forum 2013*. 16. <https://fuse.franklin.edu/forum-2013/16>

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# Civic Sociology: Connecting Classroom to Community

## Terry Porter

### Franklin University



#### The National Dialogue

- In 2011, The United State Department of Education led a national dialogue about strengthening students' civic learning and democratic engagement as a core component of college study.
- This resulted in the formation of the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, who released their findings and recommendations in a study titled *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future*.
- Many in the field of higher education are joining this call for higher education to become more engaged in its public purpose and renew its dedication to educating students to "embrace the duties of active citizenship and civic participation."
- The primary focus of the task force is the traditional student. However, 73 % of undergraduate students are considered non-traditional (nces.ed.gov 2002).
- This presents an opportunity for Franklin University to empower our students to become engaged citizens through civic education.

#### Civic Sociology

Civic Sociology is an applied sociology course that will engage students in what it means to be a citizen and a member of a community, while learning foundational sociological concepts.

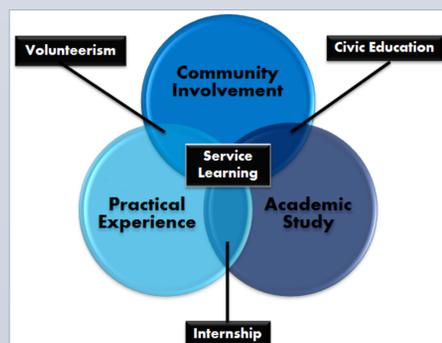
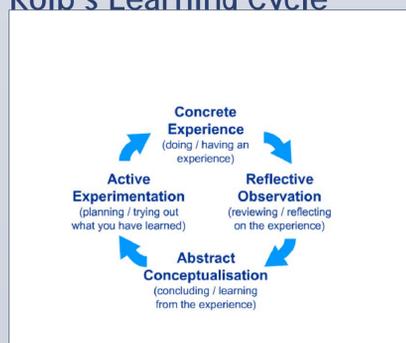
My qualitative research leads me to three conclusions.

- Students feel that "something" is missing in their neighborhoods, communities, workplaces, and society-at-large.
- Students want to find what is missing and become catalysts for social and civic change, but they do not know how to do this.
- Students are eager to learn how to be social change agents and apply their learning in the service of their communities.

Experiential learning is a cornerstone of adult education (Kolb's Learning Cycle). Civic and community education engage in experiential learning via service learning. Civic and community education is also quintessentially sociological. The following sociological concepts can be applied in civic and community education:

- The sociological imagination
- Culture & socialization
- Social institutions
- Structural inequality & power
- Issues of social class, race, and gender

#### Kolb's Learning Cycle



#### Course Description and Purpose

##### Course Description and Purpose

All individuals have roles and responsibilities in a democratic society. Students will reflect on the tensions among their individual beliefs and personal interests, political realities, and the common good in local and global communities. This course will not only focus on the individual role in a democracy, but it will also ask students to examine the root causes of social issues and how these issues can be resolved through individual citizenship, participatory citizenship and justice-oriented citizenship. Students will use foundational sociological theories to explore civic and community engagement. This course will combine theory, reflection, discussion and service learning to prepare students to be engaged citizens in their local and global communities.



#### Learning Objectives

critically examine one's personal assumptions and beliefs and they affect one's social views and actions

gain an understanding of the differences and the interaction between individual citizenship, participatory citizenship, and justice-oriented citizenship.

3. To understand and describe the relationship and inequities linked to power systems, privilege, social oppression and discrimination, social justice and community action
4. To see the connection between local, national and global issues and how community action at the local level can affect national and global social issues.
5. To determine how we as individuals and groups become empowered and create equitable social action within our communities, and society.
6. To participate as active citizens through service learning with community partners.
7. To develop a personal philosophy of engaged citizenship through the course readings, community involvement, and reflection.

#### Conclusion

Benjamin Franklin wrote, "an *Inclination* join'd with an *Ability* to serve Mankind, one's Country, Friends and Family; which *Ability* is to be acquir'd or greatly increas'd by *true Learning*; and should indeed be the great *Aim* and *End* of all Learning" (Franklin, 1749).

The creation of Civic Sociology is an homage to the namesake Franklin University. By creating and offering this course, we are empowering our students to join the "dialogue" of change that higher education has started.

#### References

- Franklin, B. (1749). *Proposals relating to the education of youth in pensilvania*. Retrieved from <http://www.archives.upenn.edu>
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