We the Educators

Civic Skills
Civic Belonging
Democratic Fluency

In a Strange Country: The Challenge of American Inclusion

Tuesday February 23, 7-8:30pm ET

Lucas Morel

This seminar will discuss Ralph Ellison's (very) short story, "In a Strange Country" (1944). A precursor to the author's instant classic, Invisible Man (1952), the short story depicts a black serviceman on shore leave in Wales during World War II. After he gets mugged by white servicemen, a Welshman comes to his aid and invites him to a private singing club. The story traces the inward musings of the "black Yank" (as he is called by the Welshman), who comes to appreciate the Welsh. His experiences that evening and back home move him to reflect upon his ambiguous status as a black American fighting for a country that has yet to accept him as an equal citizen. The story provokes important and timely questions about how to close the gap between American principles and practices and thereby promote greater inclusion of all members of the American citizenry.

Sermon Slam: A Rabbi, A Reverend and Sikh Leader on Civic Responsibility

Sunday February 28, 5-6:30pm ET

Rabbi Dov Lerner
Reverend Zina Jacque
Simran Jeet Singh

How does your faith tradition inform and inspire your sense of connection and obligation as a citizen? In this sermon slam, you'll hear three faith leaders from different religious backgrounds give short (7 minute) and dynamic sermons on the theme of civic responsibility. You'll also have a chance to reflect and hear from peers about the intersection between religion, identity and civic responsibility in your educational setting. The concept for this session was inspired by SermonSlam, created by David Zvi Kalman.

Alexis de Tocqueville: Democracy in America, Today

Sunday February 28, 5-6:30pm ET

Susan McWilliams Barndt

Almost 200 years ago, a young Frenchman named Alexis de Tocqueville came to the United States on a trip and ended up writing a book -- Democracy in America -- that is still regarded as one of the smartest books (if not THE smartest book) ever written about American politics and culture. What can we learn from Tocqueville about American democracy today? How can he help us understand not just the strengths but the weaknesses of our democratic system? And how can he help us understand how to be the best democratic citizens we can be?

Parties and American Democracy

Tuesday, March 2 7-8:30pm ET.

Russell Muirhead

Every observer of American politics today decries polarization and partisanship, which have all but eliminated pragmatism and compromise. In this session we inquire more deeply into the roots of disagreement in democracy. The Founders did not put the word "party" in the U.S. Constitution, and many think they anticipated that American national politics would be non-partisan. Yet as soon as national politics began in 1790, parties appeared. Are parties natural to democracy? Are there permanent sources of disagreement? Should we expect people to get along better than they do? Can we understand each side of the party divide as reasonable? This session aims to thoughtful and effective citizens who know how to navigate an age of intense partisan passions.

Teaching How to Think: Using Art to Encourage Intentional Thought in the Civics Classroom

Tuesday March 2, 7-8:30pm ET

Jessica Ross

In this interactive session, participants will explore art, objects, and primary source materials connected to civic education through the practices of the Artful and Visible Thinking Frameworks developed at Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Specifically, participants will have an opportunity to engage as learners as they try out several thinking routines with a variety of civics curricular materials; reflect on art as an entry point for meaningful thought processes; consider classroom implications in whole-group discussion; and hear an introduction to the research background of the frameworks to learn more about the concept of thinking dispositions, or thinking habits, connected to civics education.

Does the Constitution Mandate a Wall of Separation Between Church and State?

Thursday March 4, 7-8:30pm ET

Vincent Phillip Muñoz

In this seminar, we will explore why the Supreme Court has ruled that the First Amendment requires the "separation of church and state." We also will discuss criticisms of separationist jurisprudence by leading Supreme Court justices. In an attempt to understand the degree to which the Supreme Court has accurately interpreted the Constitution's protection of religious freedom, we will also carefully examine James Madison's philosophical and constitutional thinking about religious freedom and how it might be best protected.

Frederick Douglass's 1852 Speech: What Does It Mean to be an American?

Thursday March 4, 7-8:30pm ET

Roosevelt Montas

Frederick Douglass's 1852 speech on the Meaning of the Fourth of July to the Negro offers a sweeping analysis of the contradictions at the heart of the American national project. The animating question for Douglass is, What Does it Mean to be an African American? His approach to that question sheds light on the even more fundamental question: What Does it Mean to be an American? The speech is profoundly relevant today as we stand at another defining moment in our nation's history.

Is it Worth it? Meditations on National Sacrifice and National Longing

Sunday March 7, 5-6:30pm ET

Tamara Tweel

Pericles Funeral Oration in the Thucydides' History of the Peloponnesian War describes what is virtuous and worthy of love in Athenian democracy. Together, we will read this text alongside Thucydides' eviscerating description of the Plague and examine the purpose and fragility of democratic life. We will ask ourselves what about our country is worthy of admiration and sacrifice? What values must we preserve under any and all conditions? Finally, we will turn to Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address, listening for the echoes of Pericles, and challenge ourselves to describe the value of a government by the people and for the people.

Why Difficult Conversations are Difficult and How to Make Them Better

Sunday March 7, 5-6:30pm ET

Phoebe Sinclair

This interactive workshop will lead you through a difficult conversation in your own life to explore the impact on your neurobiology, emotions, perceptions, and agency. You will also reflect on ways to disrupt escalating cycles towards a more constructive cycle of conversation. Finally, you will dive deeper into one element - deep listening - that helps shift from stuck conversations to more open and understanding ones.

From School to Country: Belonging as the Foundation of Civic Education

Tuesday March 9, 7-8:30pm ET

Audi Hecht
Rana Aboomar
Petrus Fortune

At the center of civic engagement is the experience of belonging to a classroom and, in turn, to a community. Belonging is fundamental to democratic education in two respects: first, it gives students the feeling of self-worth that teaches them that they matter; second, it extends the experience of worthiness to a collective, letting the student know that just as they matter to their community the community must matter to them. In this session, we'll hear from three Civic Spirit educators on how they have cultivated belonging in their classrooms and schools, and support students in developing their own connections to community and country. We'll also learn from each other about our experiences and challenges in this area of civic education.

Fighting Fake: Key skills to become reliably informed

Tuesday March 9, 7-8:30pm ET

Miriam Romais
John Silva

Information is the most fundamental element of democracy. It is the basis for citizens' understanding of the world around them; how we analyze social issues, assess challenges, determine political priorities, form opinions and evaluate our options. We must move beyond the unhelpful term "fake news" and teach students to more precisely identify the many types of misleading, inaccurate and false information that they encounter. Explore motivations behind different types of propagators of misinformation and learn fact-checking skills and tools to help encourage student learning. By gaining a deeper understanding of misinformation, you can help students become less susceptible to it and more likely to prioritize reliable, standards-based sources of news and information.

I Might be Wrong: How to Foster Intellectual Humility in the Classroom and Why it Matters

Tuesday March 9, 7-8:30pm ET

Tenelle Porter

In today's era of punditry and polarization, intellectual humility – the ability to acknowledge what you do not know and how you might be wrong – is in short supply. This is a problem that we as educators can address. In this workshop, you will learn findings from recent research about intellectual humility in adolescence, discussing what it is, what its benefits are, and how it can be fostered in the classroom.

Teaching in Uncertain Times: Structures for Deeper, Nuanced, and More Personal Conversations

Thursday March 11, 7-8:30pm ET

Phoebe Sinclair

At the heart of this workshop is an experience of Reflective Structured Dialogue - an approach to difficult conversations that has been used around the world in classrooms and communities for 30 years. This dialogue will lead you through questions about your own experiences of teaching in a pandemic and give you an opportunity to connect with others. After the dialogue you will discuss the impact of certain conversational structures and how you might use them in your classroom to make difficult conversations more meaningful, nuanced, and constructive.

Presenters

Rana Aboomar

Rana Aboomar is the Muslim Youth NYC Program Coordinator at the Muslim Community Network. She brings a wide range of skills in youth leadership development. Originally from Ohio, Rana earned her undergraduate degree in international relations with a minor in history and Arabic from Ohio State University. She recently graduated from a Master's of Education in the higher education program from Temple University. She has a background in post-secondary education policy, non-profit management, and education research. Rana likes to spend her free time volunteering at different NYC based non-profits with a focus on education in disadvantaged communities.

Susan McWilliams Barndt

Susan McWilliams Barndt is chair and professor of politics at Pomona College, where she has won the Wig Award for Excellence in Teaching three times. McWilliams is the editor (with Jeremy Bailey) of the peer-reviewed journal American Political Thought. She is the author of The American Road Trip and American Political Thought (Lexington, 2018) and Traveling Back: Toward a Global Political Theory (Oxford, 2014). McWilliams is also the editor of A Political Companion to James Baldwin (Kentucky, 2017) and a co-editor of several books, most recently The Best Kind of College: An Insiders' Guide to America's Small Liberal Arts Colleges (co-edited with John Seery, SUNY, 2015). Her writing has been published widely, including in Boston Review, Bust, Front Porch Republic, The Nation, Perspectives on Political Science, Political Science Quarterly, The Review of Politics, and The Star-Ledger. For her work, McWilliams has received awards including the Graves Award in the Humanities, a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, and the Quarry Farm Fellowship from the Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies.

Petrus Fortune

Petrus Fortune is the Chairperson of the Social Studies Department and Co-Director of Head Start and Summer School at Bishop Loughlin Memorial High School in Brooklyn, New York. He holds a B.A in International Relations from Syracuse University, an M.A. in Administration Policy and Leadership from Fordham University and an M.A. in History from City College of New York. Mr. Fortune teaches African-American Studies, Global History I and II, Government, and Economics, and Law. He is also the moderator for the Weight Training club and Co-Moderator of the Civic Spirit Club.

Audi Hecht

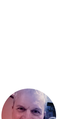
Audi Hecht is an educator in the fields of history and political science and serves as Chairperson of the History department at Yeshiva University High School for Girls (Central) in NYC where she teaches United States History, United States Government and Politics, and We The People of The Book, a course integrating American Jewish History, Identity, and Civics. Audi is presently a doctoral candidate at the Azrieli School of Education at Yeshiva University where she is exploring the sphere of school leadership and institutional health. A politics enthusiast, she enjoys sharing her passion for the inner workings of the American political landscape with her students and community.

Reverend Dr. Zina Jacque

Reverend Dr. Zina Jacque is the pastor of The Community Church of Barrington. In addition to her Doctorate in Practical Theology (Boston University), she holds a Masters of Divinity (Summa Cum Laude, Boston University) , a Masters of Education (Columbia University) and a Bachelor of Arts (Northwestern University). She has served on the staffs of multicultural, urban and suburban churches, both large and small. Rev. Zina currently serves as an active member of the Barrington Area Ministerial Association. She also serves as a member of the Boards of Directors for JourneyCare Hospice, the Samaritan Counseling Center of the Northwest Suburbs, and the American Baptist Churches of Metro Chicago. Rev. Zina has been involved with many civic and philanthropic endeavors, and she is in high demand as a speaker for many local and national organizations.

Rabbi Dov Lerner

Rabbi Dov Lerner is a resident scholar as the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought at Yeshiva University—the responsibilities of which include teaching courses in the college, mentoring students, conducting research, and publishing material reflective of the center's emphases. He received a BA in English literature from Yeshiva University and his rabbinic ordination from RIETS, and went on to receive an MA in religion from the University of Chicago, where he served as the Hillel's Orthodox Advisor on campus. He is currently a doctoral candidate at the University of Chicago writing on Maïmon's Exegetical Pedagogy, and serves as the Rabbi of the Young Israel of Jamaica Estates.

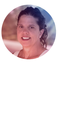


Roosevelt Montás

Roosevelt Montás is Senior Lecturer in American Studies and English at Columbia University. He holds an A.B. (1995), an M.A. (1996), and a Ph.D. (2004) in English and Comparative Literature from Columbia University. He was Director of the Center for the Core Curriculum at Columbia College from 2008 to 2018. Roosevelt specializes in Antebellum American literature and culture, with a particular interest in American citizenship. His dissertation, Rethinking America: Abolitionism and the Antebellum Transformation of the Discourse of National Identity, won Columbia University's 2004 Bancroft Award. In 2000, he received the Presidential Award for Outstanding Teaching by a Graduate Student. Roosevelt teaches "Introduction to Contemporary Civilization in the West," a year-long course on primary texts in moral and political thought, as well as seminars in American Studies including "Freedom and Citizenship in the United States." He is also a Rene Plessner Lecturer in Freedom and Citizenship. He speaks and writes on the history, meaning, and future of liberal education and is writing a book for Princeton University Press about his experiences as a student and teacher.

Lucas Morel

Lucas Morel is the John K. Boardman, Jr. Professor of Politics and Head of the Politics Department at Washington and Lee University. He holds a Ph.D. in political science from Claremont Graduate University. Prof. Morel also teaches in the Master's Program in American History and Government at Ashland University in Ohio; high school teacher workshops sponsored by the Gilder-Lehrman Institute, the John M. Ashbrook Center, the Jack Miller Center, and the Liberty Fund; and summer programs for the Claremont Institute for the Study of Statesmanship and Political Philosophy. Prof. Morel is the author or editor of the following books: Ralph Ellison and the Raft of Hope: A Political Companion to "Invisible Man", The New Territory: Ralph Ellison and the Twenty-First Century, Lincoln and Liberty: Wisdom for the Ages, and Lincoln's Sacred Effort: Defining Religion's Role in American Self-Government. In June 2020, he published Lincoln and the American Founding for the Concise Lincoln Library Series of Southern Illinois University Press. He is a trustee of the Supreme Court Historical Society, former president of the Abraham Lincoln Institute, a consultant on the Library of Congress exhibits on Lincoln and the Civil War, was a member of the scholarly board of advisors for the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission, and a member of the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission, which will plan activities to commemorate the founding of the United States of America.



Vincent Phillip Muñoz

Vincent Phillip Muñoz is the Tocqueville Associate Professor of Political Science and Concurrent Associate Professor of Law at the University of Notre Dame. He is the Founding Director of ND's undergraduate minor in Constitutional Studies and also directs Notre Dame's Tocqueville Program for Inquiry into Religion and Public Life. Dr. Muñoz writes and teaches across the fields of constitutional law, American politics, and political philosophy with a focus on religious liberty and the American Founding. His first book, God and the Founders: Madison, Washington, and Jefferson, won the Hubert Morken Award from the American Political Science Association for the best publication on religion and politics. His First Amendment church-state case reader, Religious Liberty and the American Supreme Court: The Essential Cases and Documents, is being used at Notre Dame and other leading universities. In 2019, he joined the editorial team of American Constitutional Law, the leading constitutional law casebooks designed for undergraduate instruction. Dr. Muñoz has been awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities fellowship to support his current project, a scholarly monograph on the natural right of religious liberty and the original meaning of the First Amendment's Religion Clauses. An award-winning teacher and a popular lecturer, Dr. Muñoz has spoken at over 70 colleges and universities in the past several years. He received his B.A. at Claremont McKenna College, his M.A. at Boston College, and his Ph.D. at Claremont Graduate School.

Russell Muirhead

Russell Muirhead is the Robert Clements Professor of Democracy and Politics at Dartmouth College. He teaches courses on American political thought and philosophic foundations of constitutional democracy. He is also the Chair of the Department of Government, Co-Director of the Political Economy Project, and Chair of the Committee on Priorities. Russell is a newly appointed member of the New Hampshire House of Representatives, representing Grafton 12 district. Muirhead is the author of The Promise of Party in a Polarized Age and Just Work.

Tenelle Porter

Tenelle Porter is a post-doctoral researcher at the University of Pennsylvania and a scientist in residence at Character Lab where she studies intellectual humility, motivation, and learning. Her work has been featured by the BBC, Vox, NY Magazine's The Science of Us segment, and won an Open Mind Award from the Heterodox Academy. She has a PhD from Stanford's Graduate School of Education, a Master's degree from the University of Oxford, and a Bachelor's degree from the University of Kansas.

Miriam Romais

Miriam Romais is NLP's senior manager for education and training. She is the lead producer of NewsLitCamp events across the U.S. and works on all professional development opportunities. She joined NLP in 2018, with 20+ years of experience as a photo editor, documentary photographer, trainer and nonprofit leader.

Jessica Ross

Jessica Ross is an experienced educator, researcher, facilitator and hiker (in her spare time). She currently works as a part-time faculty member at University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, Roger Williams University and with Project Zero (PZ) at the Harvard Graduate School of Education where she supports online courses and the Democratic Knowledge Project team. Previously she served as a project manager and researcher for the Agency by Design research initiative, examining the promises, practices and pedagogies of maker-centered learning. Before joining PZ, Jessica taught Grade 5-8 humanities for 10 years where she integrated frameworks including Artful Thinking and Teaching for Understanding into her classroom practice. She has a background in education, history, and writing. Jessica has collaborated with schools, school districts,and museums to integrate PZ frameworks, along with interdisciplinary-focused curriculum design, into their programs.

John Silva

John Silva is the News Literacy Project's senior director of education and training and a national board-certified teacher. He joined NLP in March 2017 with 13 years of experience as a middle and high social studies teacher with Chicago Public Schools. He first became involved with news literacy in 2014 when his students engaged in NLP's original classroom program and currently leads NLP's professional development for educator's efforts.

Phoebe Sinclair

Phoebe Sinclair has been an Associate with Essential Partners since 2019, and a student of EP's approach since 2011. She has facilitated, designed, and supported dialogue with civic groups, faith communities, private institutions, local government, educators, students, and parents. Her primary areas of focus include deep listening, reflective practices, arts and movement based approaches, consensus-building, and meeting design. Ms. Sinclair holds a BFA in Writing, Literature, and Publishing from Emerson College and, since 2005, has served as the first point of contact for community-based inquiry and action at a Cambridge nonprofit.

Simran Jeet Singh

is the Senior Diversity and Inclusion Adviser for YSC Consulting and a Visiting Professor at Union Seminary. He is a Soros Equality Fellow with the Open Society Foundations, a Racial Equity Media Fellow with Interfaith Youth Core, and a Senior Fellow for the Sikh Coalition. Simran holds a PhD, MPhil, and MA from Columbia University, an MTS from Harvard University, and a BA from Trinity University. He is a columnist for Religion News Service, a spiritual/religious life advisor at NYU and Columbia University, and an advisor on numerous councils, including President-Elect Joe Biden's AAPI Faith Advisory Committee, Governor Andrew Cuomo's Interfaith Advisory Committee, and The Justice Film Festival's Advisory Council. Simran also hosts two shows: a video web series titled Anti-Racism as a Spiritual Practice and Spirited, an interview-based podcast that explores diverse perspectives on faith and justice.

Tamara Mann Tweel

Tamara Mann Tweel is a Program Director at The Teagle Foundation specializing in civic initiatives. She joined the Foundation in 2019. In this role, she is focused on efforts to strengthen the civic dimension of undergraduate education. Previously, she served as the Founder and Director of Civic Spirit and the Associate Director of the Freedom and Citizenship Program at Columbia University. She currently teaches in the American Studies Program at Columbia University and at the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America. She has testified before Congress on the importance of bringing the humanities and civic education to young people. In 2009, she received the K. Patricia Cross Future Leaders Award from the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Her work has been published in numerous academic and popular journals, magazines, and newspapers, including The Washington Post, The Harvard Divinity Bulletin, The Journal of World History and Inside Higher Ed. She holds a Ph.D. in history from Columbia University, an M.A. in theology from the Harvard Divinity School, and a B.A. in political philosophy and art history from Duke University.