This is a course designed to introduce undergraduate students to the remarkable resurgence of attention to the associational and voluntary sector which Alexis de Tocqueville identified a century and a half ago as the distinctive characteristic of American society. For the past twenty years or so, increasing interest in this sector has been displayed by politicians and scholars, and the sector has come to be praised on all sides. Alas, it has not been understood as much as it has been admired. Furthermore, the end of the Cold War and the collapse of most socialist states have led to international enthusiasm for the building of civil society by means of voluntary non-profit activity, in the belief that strong civil societies would promote democracy. The real question is which comes first, civil society or democracy?

We will begin by closely examining the concepts of civil society and social capital – civil society as it has been redefined since the end of the Cold War, and social capital as it have been developed by Robert Putnam and other social scientists. We will then focus on the network of institutions called the Third (or not-for-profit) Sector, in order to see how Americans organize themselves in the space between the state and the market. Then we will contrast American behavior with that in other societies. The problematic of the course will be to see whether there is such a thing as social capital (or social trust), and, if so, whether social capital builds civil society and democracy. We will ask what the role of religion is in civil society, and inquire whether communitarianism provides an alternative to civil society. Finally, we will look into what some are calling the beginning of global civil society.

The course will meet once a week in a seminar format. There will be a reading assignment for each week, often a single monograph. I do not expect students to read the entirety of any of these works (and I will identify essential chapters), but I do want them to begin to learn how to deal with a book – reading parts in full, skimming others. The basic course requirement is to write a research paper on a topic to be determined in discussion with me. The alternative of an examination will be available for those whose theses and JPs make another writing assignment too difficult. Having said that, I am open to discussion about criteria for evaluation at the beginning of the term.
Books are available for purchase at the Labyrinth Bookstore on Nassau St. An extensive reserve collection of books will also be available on reserve in the Woodrow Wilson School’s Stokes Library in Wallace Hall.

Book-length readings (Specific chapters will be recommended in each book.)

Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (Rutgers U., 1978)

Reading Assignments:

12 September: Civil Society and Democracy: Tocqueville on Associationalism

19 September: Civil Society: History

26 September: Civil Society and Community in the U.S.
   Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (Rutgers U., 1978)

3 October: Civil Society in the U.S., I
10 October: Civil Society in the U.S., II
Visitor: Ian Rowe (2-3 p.m.)
Robert J. Sampson, Great American City: Chicago and the Enduring Neighborhood Effect (Chicago, 2012), pp. 3-24,31-49

17 October: Civil Society in the U.S., III
Visitor: David Frum (2-3 p.m.)
Sean Safford, Why the Garden Club Couldn’t Save Youngstown: the Transformation of the Rust Belt (Harvard University Press, 2009)

24 October: Civil Society in the U.S., IV

31 October: Fall Break

7 November: Religion and Civil Society
Visitor: Ai-jen Poo (2-3 p.m.)

14 November: Civil Society and Volunteerism

21 November: Thanksgiving Break

28 November: Civil Society Outside the United States

5 December: Global Civil Society?

12 December: Concluding class discussion

15 January: Dean’s Date (Term papers due)

Books on reserve in Stokes Library, WWS:


Bob Edwards, Michael W. Foley and Mario Diani, eds. Beyond Tocqueville: Civil Society and Social Capital in Comparative Perspective, (Tufts U., 2001)

Francis Fukuyama, Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity (Free Press, 1996)


Albert Hunter and Carl Milofsky, Pragmatic Liberalism: Constructing a Civil Society (Palgrave, 2007)


Robert D. Putnam, Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy (Princeton, NJ, 1993)


____________, (ed.), *Democracy and Trust* (Cambridge University Press, 1999)
