Civic engagement encompasses a wide range of activities in which individuals work to strengthen their communities, to realize common goods, to enhance the capacities and dispositions necessary for democratic self-rule, and, in general, to deliberately shape their common life. Wesleyan University prides itself on enrolling and nurturing students with a strong social consciousness. Students participate in a wide variety of formal and informal “civic” activities in Middletown and around the world. These activities include volunteer work, practica, and service-learning courses. This certificate is designed for students interested in reflecting upon these activities and integrating their civic and academic efforts.

Requirements. During their sophomore through senior years, Civic Engagement Certificate (CEC) students will complete a series of structured academic and cocurricular activities, including courses, volunteering, practica, and opportunities for reflection that will enable them to develop a broad understanding of the varied components of civic engagement.

We can think of civic engagement as applied democratic theory. As “theory,” mastery requires the development of a theoretical understanding of both the principles of democracy and the institutional and social requisites of a democratic society (see Requirements 1 and 5 below). As “applied,” mastery of civic engagement requires the practical understanding of social processes that results from actual engagement in the community (Requirements 3 and 4). Thus, the certificate requires students to take a set of courses to acquire an understanding of how democratic processes (including the practices and institutions of civil society) work; to acquire the firsthand experience of civic engagement and civic life by participating in approved civic activities; and, finally, through both coursework and other means, to reflect on the connections among these and to integrate them effectively (Requirements 1, 2, and 5).

• Requirement 1: Six courses dealing with civic engagement are required. Courses are grouped into the following categories (listed on WesMaps (http://www.wesleyan.edu/wesmaps))
  • The Individual in Society
  • The Practice of Democracy
  • Ethical Reasoning
  • Volunteerism and Activism
  • Education and Public Scholarship
  • Civic Engagement in Cross-Cultural Perspective
  • The six courses must come from at least three of these categories and one must be from The Practice of Democracy category.

• Requirement 2: Three reflection papers are required, one per year of the certificate. These papers, along with one document from each relevant course, will be archived during the process of completing the certificate.

• Requirement 3: A minimum of 40 hours of service work coordinated through the Office of Community Service and Volunteerism (OCS)

• Requirement 4: A practicum

• Requirement 5: The senior seminar, a .25 credit capstone course (CSPL302)

Note: CEC requirements fulfilled before a student is admitted may be counted toward the certificate at the discretion of the CEC Advisory Panel.

Admission. Students will be admitted to the CEC by self-declaration. They will be considered part of the certificate group after they have formally applied to participate and discussed their plans with the faculty coordinator. The application will consist, in part, of a reflection paper explaining the place of civic engagement in the applicant’s own life and plans to fulfill the CEC requirements.

Additional Information. Contact the faculty coordinator, Barbara Juhasz, at bjuhasz@wesleyan.edu.