

Politics, Performance, and the Public

Winter 2008

Political Engagement Project

The political engagement project involves attending and, where appropriate, engaging in a political event. For our purposes, we are considering political events very broadly. They might include everyday (as well as extraordinary) governmental processes (e.g. city council meetings) and the wide variety of ways that civil society organizations work to change society (such as strategy sessions and protest in performance activities).

Options for activities include:

City or county council meeting
"Town meetings" of politicians
Washington State Supreme Court hearing
Public hearings on an issue
State legislature
Campaign rally
Labor meeting
Protest march or other demonstration

Political theatre event staged inside — *or outside*
— a theatre
Pro-life or pro-choice event
Military support rally
Meeting of a community, civic, union,
professional association, activist group or
political party.
Conference or film festival on political themes

Students will be involved in a small group that focuses on some aspect of political activity. The schedule below lists the various stages that the group should follow regardless of what group you join and what type of event you attend.

1. Initial group formation and discussion about group goals, basic roles and responsibilities (in class meetings during Weeks 1 & 2)
2. Attendance at the event(s) of your choosing (prior to March 1)
3. Debriefing with entire group outside of class (prior to March 4)
4. Individual/Group reports are due on Tuesday, March 4. Your report will consist of one typed cover page written by the entire group and one typed page provided by each member.
5. Political Engagement Forum –March 6

It is the task of the group to determine how the activities of the group are linked conceptually. While there may be cases where group members attend the same event, it is important that you view the event from different perspectives (for example, examining a pro-life event from both sides of the political spectrum).

The following aspects should be considered for the Political Engagement Forum (both group and individual):

What are you trying to learn? (Please include initial expectations before attending event)
Description of event — What actually took place?
Audience — who were they and what are their *roles*?
"Stage" — A description (and/or other depiction) of the physical place or places where this took place
Your *role* — during and after — expected versus likely
Number of people involved (planning and attendance)
Communications and information surrounding the event
What preceded the event (what planning was done — and by whom)?
What do the organizers hope and/or expect will come next?
What conclusions (including tentative) can you draw?

The media cycle may help you think about these events in a more systematic and systemic way.