

Democracy Lab

A Web Resource for Teaching and Learning about Democracy

A vibrant democracy requires engaged citizens. The Center for Civic Life at Lock Haven University of Pennsylvania presents **Democracy Lab**, an exciting new resource that promotes civic engagement, develops student civic leadership and helps transform campus climate. We are pleased to announce our [online public issue forums](#) for spring 2004 classes. Easily integrated into courses in a wide range of disciplines and at all undergraduate levels, **Democracy Lab** forums may be adopted by instructors for student purchase at the reasonable price of \$25. Using a 10-week agenda based on our successful fall 2002 pilot, [Students and the World](#), **Democracy Lab** brings a powerful civic education experience into your existing courses.

From dialogue to inquiry to action. In **Democracy Lab** forums, small deliberation groups bring together 15-20 students from across the country, providing a much greater diversity of voices than in any classroom. Moderator announcements guide students through a dialogue agenda – making personal introductions, deliberating the pros and cons of different approaches, posing questions for research, sharing and discussing the results of inquiry, identifying common ground for action and considering action possibilities. Dialogue occurs on discussions boards available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Three Online Forums are available for spring 2004:

[By the People: Americans' Role in the World](#) (A National Issues Forum book)

Terrorism, the war in Iraq, free trade and global warming are just a few of the issues considered as students deliberate the pros and cons of four perspectives, each with its own set of priorities: 1. Maintaining military strength and using it unilaterally if necessary, 2. Spreading democracy, 3. Expanding global free trade, 4. Attacking global environmental and health problems multilaterally.

[Racial and Ethnic Tensions: What Should We Do?](#) (A National Issues Forum book)

The merits of immigration restrictions, affirmative action and English-language instruction are considered as students weigh the pros and cons of three approaches: 1. Our society should be color blind and focus on what unites us rather than on differences. 2. First we must build racial and cultural identity and pride within the many groups that comprise American society. 3. We must complete the job of integration which is the only way to end prejudice.

[Three American Futures: What Direction Should We Take?](#)

Considering competing conceptions of three traditional American values, freedom, equality and democracy, students weigh the relative merits of three paths toward an American democracy for the 21st century: 1. Reducing the power of government to increase individual freedom, 2. Using the power of government to equalize the life chances of all individuals, 3. Reinvigorating democracy by increasing the power of average people in their communities and workplaces.

Democracy Lab is a [convenient and flexible](#) way to engage students in public affairs and to help them acquire active citizenship skills while enhancing their capacity to meet rigorous academic standards. To maximize campus impact, consider involving courses in two or three disciplines and holding a campus or community forum on the issue. **Democracy Lab** also provides training and mentoring for [Student Civic Leadership Teams](#) which can plan a key role in conducting such events.

Democracy Lab is an [ideal curricular tool](#) for universities participating in the AASCU American Democracy Project and for all colleges and universities seeking to integrate civic education into their curriculum. Space is limited; reservations are required. Preference will be given to courses that add disciplinary variety and to schools that increase demographic diversity. For additional information visit the Center for Civic Life website at www.teachingdemocracy.org and click on **Democracy Lab**. [Reserve now online](#). Direct inquiries to Dr. James Knauer at The Center for Civic Life: civiclif@lhup.edu or 570-893-2491.