

ATOMIC CIVICS

Instructor: Miles Townes
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Class hours: tbd
Class website: <http://ac.oppidi.net>

The goal of this class to equip you, the student, with the skills and knowledge necessary to interpret, change, and make rules that structure your life. We will read and think critically about social structure, but also practice ways to shape that structure. Some of this will be new. Some of it will be different ways of looking at things you have already learned.

Assigned reading (📖), viewing/listening(🎧), and research/writing (:) should be completed *prior* to the class under which it is listed. Some readings are indicated by 📖, meaning we will read them in class together. You will get more from those classes if you look at the reading ahead of time. In any case, it is not expected you will memorize reading or viewing material, but that you will form your own ideas and be prepared to discuss.

Details of the grading process will soon be made definite.

A non-required reading, but one that may help you understand the instructor's approach to the subject matter, is the most recent draft of *Politics (how people rule)*, available at ac.oppidi.net/phpr.pdf.

Please write on the notecard the following information:

Your name
Your student ID number
Your email address

On the same card, please answer the following questions:

Where are you from?
Describe your political views (max. 2 words, please):
What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?

Week 1: This Class Rules

- a. Game on.
(no prior assignment)
- b. Mind your manners.
📖 Arcynta Ali Childs, "[Q and A with Miss Manners](#)" *Smithsonian* Aug. 2011
📖 two [Miss Manners columns](#) closest to your last birthday
- c. School as polity.
📖 Marina Krakovsky, "[Teaching Apathy](#)" *Stanford* Sept./Oct. 2004
📖 "[Constitution of HB Woodlawn](#)"
🔔 Paolo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Ch. 2
- d. Class exercise

Week 2: Micropolitics

- a. The political animal.
🔔 Aristotle, *Politics*, Book 1, Part I & II
- b. Violence. (CW: the readings talk about specific and abstract acts of violence. The class discussion will touch on some of these. If this poses a difficulty for you, please advise the instructor.)
📖 Graeme Wood, "[Why we fight \(book review of Collins's Violence\)](#)" *NY Sun* Feb 13, 2008
📖 Simon Sessolo, "[Simon Sessolo on 'Aspects of Violence'](#)" *E3W Review of Books* Spring 2012
- c. Conflict, Compromise, & Civilization. (CW: the readings talk about specific and abstract acts of violence. The class discussion will touch on some of these. If this poses a difficulty for you, please advise the instructor.)
Either 🗣️ Stephen Pinker, "[The Surprising Decline in Violence](#)" TED Talk
or 📖 Stephen Pinker, "[A History of Violence](#)" *New Republic* March 19, 2007
- d. Government
🔔 Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Gutenberg Project Edition, [Ch. XIII](#) & [Ch. XVII](#)

Week 3. *Face To Face*

- a. Why talk?
🔔 John Stuart Mill, "[On the Liberty of Thought and Discussion](#)" in *On Liberty*
- b. How to talk.
🎧 "[Ice Cream Debate](#)" *Thank You For Smoking* (2005, Fox Searchlight)
🔔 Rosenberg, Shawn. "[Types of Democratic Deliberation...](#)"
- c. Talk.
📖 (Instructor) [Persuasive Speaking](#)
(for the following, you only need to watch about 8 minutes or so of each)
🎧 [Kennedy-Nixon Debate](#) September 26, 1960
🎧 Martin Luther King, Jr, "[I have a dream...](#)" Washington, DC, August 27, 1963
🎧 Barack Obama, "[A More Perfect Union](#)" Philadelphia, PA, March 18, 2008
- d. (catch up day)

Week 4: *Changing Minds*

- a. Normally.
📖 Saul McLeod, "[Social Roles](#)" *SimplyPsychology.org*, March 2008
- b. Make it make you.
📖 "[Structuration- Anthony Giddens](#)" *Social Theory Re-wired*, Routledge 2016
📖 Daniel Little, "[Giddens on Agents and Structures](#)" *Understanding Society* May 12, 2012
- c. Change agents.
📖 Clive Thompson, "[Is the Tipping Point Toast?](#)" *Fast Company* Feb 1, 2008
🔔 Everett Rogers, *The Diffusion of Innovation, 3rd Ed.* (1983: Free Press) p. 313-321
- d. How to make change.
📖 Atul Gawande, "[Slow Ideas](#)" *Then New Yorker* July 23, 2013
EITHER 📖 Benoit Denizet-Lewis, "[How Do You Change Voters' Minds? Have a Conversation](#)" *NYT Magazine* April 7, 2016
OR 🎧 "[For Your Reconsideration](#)" *This American Life* Apr 8, 2016

Week 5: Identities and Institutions

- a. Who are you?
📖 Naomi Ellemers, "[Social Identity Theory](#)" *Brittanica.com*

- b. Better together.
📖 Robert Putnam, "[Tuning In, Tuning Out: On the strange disappearance of social capital in America](#)" *PS: Political Science & Politics* Dec. 1995.

- c. Designing institutions.
📖 James Madison, "[Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787](#)", Tuesday, June 26
📖 "[What Happens When Congress Fails To Do Its Job](#)" *Newsweek*, March 27, 2010

- d. Institutional alternatives.
📖 "[Agreement Among The States To Elect The President By National Popular Vote](#)", NationalPopularVote.com
📖 "Michael Wines, "[How a Wisconsin Case Before Justices Could Shape Redistricting](#)" *New York Times* Oct. 1, 2017
📖 "[Takoma Park, Md., Gives 16-Year-Olds the Right to Vote](#)", *Governance* Oct. 2013

Week 6: Pens vs. Swords









- a. Watch your language.
📖 Colin Dwyer, "[The Oxford Comma: Great For Listing, Pontificating, And Winning Court Cases](#)" *The Two-Way* (NPR) March 16, 2017
📖 Steven Pinker, "[False Fronts in the Language Wars](#)" *Slate* May 31, 2012
📖 Geoffrey K. Pullum, "[Room for Debate on Strunk and White](#)" *Language Log* April 25, 2009

- b. Letters and Op-Eds.
📖. Robert Longley, "[Tips for Writing Effective Letters to Congress](#)" *ThoughtCo.* Sept 13, 2017
📖 FAIR. "[How to Communicate with Journalists.](#)" (read through "How to Write Op-Eds as well").









- c. Class exercise.

- d. [Catch-up day]

Week 7: Rights & Justice

- a. You got that right.
 -  "[Peace of Westphalia](#)" ss. XXIII - XXXIII
 -  Lindsay Kohl, "[Defining the Natural Rights of Man: An Analysis of Burke, Paine, and Wollstonecraft](#)" *Explorations* Vol VII 2012.
 -  "[Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)" United Nations (Paris, France), Dec. 10, 1948
- b. Justice.
 -  "[Justice](#)" *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* thru section 1.4
- c. Demonstration and Disobedience.
 -  Martin Luther King, Jr, "[Letter from a Birmingham Jail](#)" Birmingham, AL, Apr. 16, 1963
- d. Art and Imagination.
 -  Theresa BrownGold, "[An Artist's Call to Action: Art as Social Inquiry](#)" Oct. 31, 2011
 -  /  "[1000 Songs Everyone Must Hear, Part 5: Politics and Protest](#)" *The Guardian* March 18, 2009 (listen to a few of the songs and be prepared to talk about them)

Week 8. Rules the World

- a. Risk.
 -  /  Anthony Giddens, "[Risk](#)", Reith Lectures, Week 2
- b. Tradition.
 -  /  Anthony Giddens, "[Tradition](#)", Reith Lectures, Week 3
- c. Family.
 -  /  Anthony Giddens, "[Family](#)", Reith Lectures, Week 4
- d. Democracy.
 -  /  Anthony Giddens, "[Democracy](#)", Reith Lectures, Week 5

Week 9. You make the rules

(Topics as determined by the class)