

Rios, A., McCartney, M., Bennion, E. A., & Simpson, D. W. (Eds.) (2013). *Teaching civic engagement: From student to active citizen*. Washington, DC: American Political Science Association. 536 pp.

Review by Brandon W. Kliewer

The relationship between the discipline of political science and the field of civic engagement education has historically been contentious. As scholars consider the position and relevance of political science in the 21st century, civic engagement education seems to be expanding into this discipline. The effort to create a space for civic engagement education in political science can be seen in the American Political Science Association's recent release of *Teaching Civic Engagement: From Student to Active Citizen*. Editors Rios, McCartney, Bennion, and Simpson position the research and examples of innovative teaching practice included in the volume as a call to create "a more prominent place for civic engagement education in higher education and demonstrate why political scientists should be more active in fostering students' abilities to be civically engaged" (p. 3). The editorial team is made up of political science faculty members from a representative cross-section of higher education institutions. The work of civic engagement education is presented as a possibility for political scientists teaching across higher education.

Citing the National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement's *A Crucible Moment: College Learning and Democracy's Future* (2012), the editors suggest that educational standards and societal expectations for higher education have changed. Higher education, and in the context of this volume, political science, is now expected to be more involved in helping to create the conditions for democracy and increase the capacity of society to make progress on tough challenges. The volume begins from the assumption that political scientists should not only be more involved in creating spaces for civic engagement education in the discipline, but also take greater responsibility for creating the space to support the types of civic learning that prepare and motivate students to be active citizens. The editors are careful to position civic engagement education in ways that do not displace traditional research tracks in political science. Instead, the argument to advance civic engagement education within the discipline is a call to elevate civic engagement education to the same level of importance as other subfields. Overall, the editors successfully articulate a normative argument and outline an intellectual space

for the scholarship of teaching to flourish in the discipline of political science and around civic engagement education.

The editors have designed the volume to cover a wide range of activity associated with civic engagement education. The first section provides contextual features, important concepts, and the state of civic engagement education in political science. The longest of the four sections, Section 2, surfaces strategies associated with implementing civic engagement education programs, providing a series of examples and models of how civic engagement education is currently being practiced in political science. The third section explores curricular and cocurricular programming that advances civic engagement education. The final section shares assessment and evaluation techniques. Collectively, the sections and chapters that make up *Teaching Civic Engagement* provide a thorough account of essential skills and knowledge necessary for political scientists to redefine their teaching scholarship to align with the objectives of civic engagement education.

The volume is a powerful one-stop shop for political scientists interested in conceiving, implementing, and assessing new civic engagement education programs. It is well written and likely to be easily understood by political scientists just beginning to consider forms of community-engaged scholarship and civic engagement education practices. Readers can expect to gain tangible and practical understandings of how civic engagement education can intersect with their own work. The strength of the volume rests in its general applicability. Political scientists interested in civic engagement education and forms of community-engaged scholarship will gain a clear sense of how the field is realized across different institutional types and subfields within political science. The content of the volume also holds relevancy for community-engaged scholars who work in areas of advocacy, indigent legal defense, electoral politics, human rights, and a range of other public participation and policy issues.

Although the chapters in the volume shed light on important dimensions of civic engagement education, there is limited attention to how community-engaged scholarship and civic engagement education affect community. Some of the chapters highlight elements associated with community-campus partnerships but for the most part, discussions of partnership are limited in scope. Readers wishing to better understand the complexity of supporting successful community-campus partnerships might be interested in Michelle Lorenzini's chapter, "From Active Service to Civic and Political Engagement: Fighting the Problem of Poverty" (p.

119–135). However, most readers will likely be left with additional questions related to how civic engagement education intersects with topics related to community–campus partnerships. Readers wishing to explore this area would benefit from the book *Unheard Voices: Community Organizations and Service Learning* (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

The chapters in the volume also fail to articulate a conception of community–campus partnership that moves beyond providing technical or expert service to the community. The majority of examples included in this volume uphold students as service providers or as having a unique ability to provide technical assistance that extends from relevant course learning outcomes. The volume fails to highlight partnerships in which faculty, students, administrators, and community partners cocreate types of learning that are multidirectional and lead to civic action that is mutually beneficial to larger stakeholder groups. Examples offered in the volume are inherently student-centered and fail to reflect the potential impact of civic engagement education in the community. Some of the assumptions that inform the civic engagement education examples could be explained by the emphasis on the study of social and political institutions in the discipline of political science. Regardless, the general field of academic service-learning, community engagement, and civic studies provides partnership examples manifesting values and processes that more explicitly support democratization, political association, and interventions at the systems and organizational level.

Political scientists new to civic engagement education might be left with questions related to the ethical implications associated with community–campus partnership building, practices associated with cocreated learning spaces, and ways that community–campus partnerships shape content, course design, and elements associated with classroom management. Even so, this volume represents a significant step toward creating a legitimate space for civic engagement education in the discipline of political science. As higher education shifts in the 21st century, it is important to recognize ways that the discipline of political science can reimagine itself to include a coherent civic engagement education subfield within the larger disciplinary structure.

References

- National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement. (2012). *A crucible moment: College learning and democracy's future*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities.

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About the Reviewer

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