

I *The founder of Penn State's Laboratory for Public Scholarship and Democracy and chair of Penn State's Public Scholarship Associates establishes public scholarship's connections with democracy by distinguishing public scholarship from service, outlining a curriculum of consequence, and suggesting the constitutional roots of public scholarship.*

A Laboratory for Public Scholarship and Democracy

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Some ideas and practices, clear and rationally bound together in the moments in which we stop to reflect, nonetheless prove elusive in the daily commerce of academic and artistic discovery, teaching, and institutional governance. As imagined in the U.S. Enlightenment-influenced Constitution, education and democracy are tiles of a single mosaic. Yet they have become distanced and isolated on many contemporary campuses. Can twenty-first-century universities reimagine the public value of scholarship and bring it to the forefront of student and faculty discovery and contribution?

Communities engaged in public scholarship believe the answer is yes. They believe that scholarship, rather than goodwill alone, is the keystone of a university's service; they also believe that among the most valuable academic contributions are those that sustain popular democratic governance. In *Scholarship for Social Change* (2005), a Stanford University report of the nationally respected Haas Center for Public Service, Brubaker-Cole identifies as deeply rooted principles the presence of "a continuum of scholars, ranging from undergraduates to faculty, joining together in the search for new knowledge, and a common commitment to directing this search toward doing good in the world" (p. 6). Public scholarship has grown from the scholarship and service model to include democracy as the third leg of the educational stool: public scholarship posits that democracy, rather than volunteerism, is the critical end to be achieved. The goal, rather than providing a *volunteer* experience, is to initiate democratic experiences based on university values of scholarship, academic discovery, and artistic pursuit.



In this configuration, students and faculty are asked to explicitly confront the relationship among democracy, scholarship, and service. Here, student and faculty service, based on their scholarship, is expressed not as a set of inward acts but as a public resource.

Public scholarship does not dismiss or challenge the value of volunteerism or philanthropic service. Student clubs, fraternal and social organizations, and individual opportunities for service provide tangible benefits to others as well as valuable means for personal fulfillment and growth. These are undeniably positive attributes associated with the chance to assist others, to contribute to worthy causes, and to help community and civic organizations to succeed. But volunteerism in and of itself should not be confused with the primary goals of public scholarship, which are: (1) imparting in students a deep understanding of the obligations and duties of democratic community—understanding best learned through a combination of academic and experiential learning; and (2) providing the opportunity to employ the university's intellectual and creative resources in the service of those obligations. Volunteerism is inherently the result of individual choice—actions an individual may choose to take. Volunteerism is fundamentally about the individual. In contrast, public scholarship posits that service to the democratic community is not an individual or volunteer choice, but a fundamental duty of those who accept membership in the democratic community. There is an explicit assumption that rights generate duties, that the rights of academic freedom carry responsibilities to something larger than the academic discipline, and that among the duties of the university is the charge to pass on this understanding to new scholars. In a democratic society in which the public serves as both citizen and sovereign, individuals and their public institutions have affirmative obligations. Universities meet those obligations when they engage in public scholarship.

The democracy and education relationship, the value of that relationship to the nation at large, and the obligation of universities and colleges to view democracy and education through a lens of public purpose are tenets and practices that fuel the chapters in this volume. Educating students to understand democracy and to participate in it using the tools of scholarship—and legitimizing and rewarding faculty work that employs scholarship as the lynchpin of democratic engagement—serve as a basis for visualizing universities that engage explicitly in public scholarship as *laboratories* in which discovery ignites and sustains the constitutional ideal of *WE the People* as an enlightened public sovereign.

What Is Public Scholarship?

Public scholarship commits academic and creative work—including teaching, discovery, and artistic performance—to the practice of effective student and faculty engagement in public sovereignty and the democratic process.

It aligns academic and civic goals to sustain the discovery and practice of democratic principles. It is emerging as a framework for common discussion and collegial practice among diverse faculty whose discipline-bound research and teaching in fields such as communication, engineering, geography, and psychology have otherwise provided rare occasions for mutual reflection, let alone collaborative efforts.

Public scholarship may be thought of as an overarching philosophy, with political overtones, that expresses a rationale for the implementation of a set of educational practices, including foundational academic coursework, faculty-supervised applied fieldwork, and research. Public scholarship is political in its recognition that active citizen engagement is a core element of the democratic compact generated by the U.S. Constitution. The obligation of faculty to teach students how to participate effectively in the democratic community, as well as to impart instruction in democratic theory and normative rule-of-law practices, has long been championed, dating back to scholars such as Meiklejohn ([1948] 1960) and Dewey (1916). It is a political act, an element of a civil compact, to teach students the principles and practices of public sovereignty and a pragmatic recognition of that compact to integrate scholarship and public work. Unlike stand-alone civics classes and day-of-service community outreach programs, public scholarship posits both scholarly expertise and democratic capacity as explicit learning outcomes for students and as the *raison d'être* of faculty work.

The connotations of both democracy and public scholarship are broad. Education as a public resource, scholarship in the public interest, educational preparation of students for effective citizenship, and knowledge as a foundation for popular governance are implicit in public scholarship. Plotted on a concept map, the public scholarship metaphor is an interdisciplinary crossroads at which commitment to the integration of education and democracy provide an academic commons.

Will the commons provide space for new partnerships among scholars or between universities and communities? Will a university envisioned as a laboratory for public scholarship and democracy foster new educational practices? Two dozen public scholarship veterans from higher education, research institutes, foundations, and public broadcasting accepted an invitation from Penn State in November 2004 to look for answers at “A National Public Scholarship Conversation.” Cornell educational historian Scott Peters offered a sobering caution: “Look at the top six books on the academic profession,” he said. “You will not find public scholarship in the index of any.”

Peters is correct. Yet something called public scholarship or public service scholarship has entered the lexicon at Cornell, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Penn State, and Stanford and has generated a research focus at the Kettering Foundation and elsewhere. Cohen provides a general definition in *Youth Activism: An International Encyclopedia*: “Public scholarship is the conduct of scholarly and creative work, including teaching, research,

artistic performance, and service, in ways that contribute to informed engagement in the democratic process” (2005, pp. 506–507). In this construction, *public* scholarship emphasizes the public nature of academic work, an accent that springs from the democratic citizenship obligations of schools and the ideal of knowledge as a public good.

A Public Scholarship Curriculum

The recognition of scholarship as a public good, however, is not innate, nor are enlightened democratic practices self-perpetuating. Few students arrive at the university with a nuanced understanding of democracy. Most are content to view democracy as an election in which the candidate or the referendum with the most votes wins. The complexities of the *rule of law* and the protection of the rights of those who are not in the majority are constructs that must be skillfully introduced, and in a public scholarship community, grounded in both theory *and* practice. Nor do many new students have experience viewing academic expertise as a cornerstone of public governance. Enlightened civic engagement, like the liberal arts of the sciences and the humanities, requires purposeful, systematic study and praxis. The arts of liberty are learned approaches to democratic community. They must be taught.

In their public scholarship teaching practices, faculty focus an academic lens on issues and problems encountered in nonacademic communities. This provides an opportunity for students to experience courses not as required hoops to jump through, but as the ore of a precious public resource with value in the commerce of neighborhood and nation. The goal is not community *service*, or at least not service alone. Public scholarship lenses exploit a filter that enables students to see the connections among the expertise they bring as emerging scholars and the implications of that academic expertise applied in environments beyond the classroom and library. It is not uncommon for students to ask about the relevance of their classroom scholarship. Public scholarship models respond to such questions by addressing the democratic obligation to make the most of academic discovery precisely in order to sustain the practices of democracy.

Just as advanced courses require prerequisites, however, democratic learning and community contribution require a continuum of deepening knowledge and layered skills. Substantive engagement with the Constitution, knowledge of the structure and culture of communities beyond the academy, disciplinary expertise, the implications of epistemology, and the ability to evaluate dispassionately the harm as well as the benefit of our efforts are as necessary as the will to do good. Public scholarship, then, requires an educational community in which students and faculty view their courses, studios, and laboratories as scholarship, and their scholarship as viable contributions to real concerns of health, poverty, social justice, violence,

human dignity, and other matters that fall within a democracy's concern for the common welfare.

It is one thing to describe lofty goals, such as the ability to focus student learning on democratic engagement or the desire to perform public service through faculty and student scholarship. It is another, however, to translate goodwill and generalized aspirations into a set of purposeful actions. At universities, processes to achieve particular academic outcomes fall within the sphere of the curriculum.

Is there a public scholarship curriculum? Penn State's intercollegiate minor in civic and community engagement is one example. It requires a foundational course that provides a survey of several issues, including the construct of democracy, the notion of public scholarship, an introduction to community social and cultural structures, and outreach education. Students participate in fieldwork that stresses their scholarship rather than the volunteer or service nature of the work. Psychology students have worked with middle school groups on issues of self-esteem to address and perhaps prevent bullying and other negative middle school behaviors. The university students are learning to be better psychologists while addressing a pressing community concern. Architectural engineering students have worked in under-resourced neighborhoods to develop affordable housing with environmentally friendly resources. Geography students in urban settings have identified links between transportation practices and poverty.

Many schools are experienced at finding connections between classroom and community, and community-enhanced scholarship does provide an important student and faculty experience. Even so, service-based scholarship alone does not fully address what might be thought of as the eight-hundred-pound gorilla in the room: scholarship and curriculum. What bodies of knowledge and which learning experiences do students need in order to understand and successfully engage in public sovereignty that integrates their work as emerging scholars? An ad hoc approach, even one that includes deep experiential engagement in community service, is insufficient to create substantive mastery of the democracy and education objectives voiced in public scholarship.

Like service learning, public scholarship employs pedagogies of experiential learning and community practice that hold the potential for students to move beyond their sophomore perceptions of learning as stagnant, received knowledge. Experiential learning may foster a focus on the relativity of knowledge and highlight the consequences of operating from within a given epistemological domain. But the distinction between public service and public scholarship is more than semantic. Public scholarship is a reaction to the transient nature of volunteerism and philanthropic service and a statement of belief in the power of education and expertise to contribute to the democratic compact. Yet the public scholarship curriculum remains a theory, an idea that supports a view of the university as a laboratory in

which faculty and student work may identify a curriculum that engages and sustains the arts of liberty.

Several elements have moved faculty and student work at Penn State and elsewhere along a continuum from the initial desire to do good through public service, past the recognition of positive learning outcomes generated through the experiential components of service, to the academic embrace of public scholarship as a democratic laboratory. The efficacy of public scholarship, the value of public scholarship as faculty work, and the conduct and implications of university scholarship to public sovereignty are addressed in many of the following chapters. First, however, it is useful to explore the pragmatic claim that public scholarship may be construed as a constitutionally based obligation of higher education.

The Constitutional Roots of Public Scholarship

Historian Henry Steele Commager placed the accomplishments of the American revolutionaries into a remarkable context: “For such a nation to win independence, create a national government, invent the constitutional convention and write state and national constitutions which still endure, perfect a federal system, solve the ancient problem of colonialism, fix effective limits on government, separate church and state, establish genuine freedom of religion and of the press, impose order on a disorderly economy, deal with threats from Indians, the Spanish, and the British on every frontier, and develop the first working democracy, all in one generation, was without precedent in history and, we might add, without sequel too” (1975, pp. xii–xiii). For Commager, the ability to reinvent the relation of individuals to the state was a product of the Enlightenment, a movement that generated the reliance on systematic observation and scientific method that is the basis of contemporary education and discovery. “They had almost limitless confidence in Reason,” Commager wrote, “in the ability of man to penetrate to the laws of Nature, to grasp their operation, and to apply them to the affairs of mankind” (pp. xiii–xiv).

The American Revolution enabled unprecedented political transformation. Radical notions of the relation of individuals to the state that emerged in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writings of the European *philosophes* formed the basis of an enlightened American Constitution and Bill of Rights in which sovereignty belonged to the people, and government would be *citizen-centered* rather than serve the welfare of monarch or ruler. Drawing from the declaration, “*WE the People . . .*,” the Constitution created a new compact balancing state authority, popular rule, and the rights of individuals, and giving greatest weight to the values of individual dignity and liberty. Authoritarian rule was replaced by rule of law, and citizen participation became the basis of the law’s implementation. Explicit was the protection of the individual against the tyranny of the majority. The

new American government embraced public sovereignty and rule of law to create its democracy.

The foundation of the American contribution to democratic governance is anchored in the First Amendment and is fashioned upon several dependent principles and practices. “The critical dimension” of liberty, declared historian Eric Foner in *The Story of American Freedom*, “is the right to participate in public affairs” (1998, p. xvii). And what does it take to participate in public affairs?

Justice Louis Brandeis provided an answer in a First Amendment opinion linking democracy and enlightened engagement: “Freedom to think as you will and to speak as you think are means indispensable to the discovery and spread of political truth” (*Whitney v. California*, 1927). The Brandeis First Amendment conception viewed unfettered communication as more than a right. Brandeis believed that “the greatest menace to freedom is an inert people,” and he wrote that “public discussion is a political duty,” an obligation that should, he said, “be a fundamental principle of American government” (p. 375).

Alexander Meiklejohn, philosopher and president of Amherst College, echoed the Brandeis view in his analysis of political freedom and the Constitution. He wrote that the “principle of the freedom of speech springs from the necessities of . . . self-governance” ([1948] 1960, p. 9). Four years later, the American Enlightenment-based faith in public sovereignty voiced by Jefferson, Brandeis, and Meiklejohn provided the foundation for Justice William Brennan’s landmark libel decision in *New York Times v. Sullivan* (1964), a case ignited in the heat of the civil rights movement. Brennan cited Brandeis: “Public discussion is a political duty,” he reaffirmed. And First Amendment scholar Harry Kalven, Jr., reported that Meiklejohn was thrilled by Brennan’s validation of the principle of self-governance and its reliance on an informed public; Meiklejohn viewed Brennan’s reaffirmation as an occasion for dancing in the streets (Kalven, 1964).

The principles of democracy embedded in this instrumental view of the First Amendment contain four elements. Together, they create an obligation of education for diffusion of knowledge and discovery. First, the purpose of the state is to enable individual freedom, rather than state sovereignty for its own sake. Second, to achieve individual freedom, citizens must enjoy a right to participate in civic affairs. Third, productive participation in civic affairs is grounded in free trade in discovery and ideas, which serves as the intellectual road map of political, social, and personal well-being. And fourth, liberty requires the coupled political duties of active participation and acquisition of the knowledge necessary to generate enlightened engagement.

The roots of the Enlightenment inspiration lie deep in America’s historical soil. Thomas Jefferson (1905) described the value of intellectual and civic literacy in the First Amendment equation when he wrote, “Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers,

or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that every man should receive those papers, and be capable of reading them.” Jefferson recognized that individual liberty requires an unfettered press *and* a community capable of reading it. Brandeis built on that recognition. He warned that without enlightenment, “men feared witches and burnt women” (*Whitney v. California*, 1927). Brandeis espoused an unfettered exchange of ideas to “free men from the bondage of irrational fears.” Ideas generated by enlightenment. Enlightenment generated by educated citizens capable of reading Jefferson’s papers.

Sustaining a twenty-first-century democratic community capable of reading Jefferson’s papers—now virtual as well as in ink, and visual as well as in prose—requires the adoption of a contemporary recognition that education is no less an element of public sovereignty than is a free press. Like the press, education conveys social, political, and cultural expectations and provides the underpinnings of reasoned democratic contribution. As with public museums, music, and theater, it is a function of the public’s education to prepare citizens to read Jefferson’s papers critically and to use the knowledge gained to participate effectively in the public’s democratic community.

Whether and how university communities can sustain a curriculum of consequence in which the conduct of teaching, discovery, and performance provide a means through which students and faculty may view their work not as segregated from society but as contributions that integrate scholar-citizens with a larger community remains a pivotal question. Meiklejohn made the democracy and education connection explicit in 1948. “The primary task of American education,” he wrote, “is to arouse and to cultivate, in all the members of the body politic, a desire to understand what our plan of national government is” ([1948] 1960, p. 3).

As laboratories for public scholarship and democracy, universities can explore the entwined, symbiotic constituents of education and democracy and help all the members of the body politic gain a better understanding of democratic practice. Preliminary work in the Penn State laboratory suggests that volunteerism and community service alone are insufficient to teach the warp and weft of education and democracy, and they must be buttressed by the kinds of educational depth envisioned in the founders’ faith in Reason and Enlightenment. Successful public scholarship requires an educational apprenticeship steeped in the disciplinary acquisition of knowledge *and* the incremental development of democratic judgment and skill, and like any new and complex capacity, democracy does not come naturally. It is learned.

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