

"Bowling Together: A New Generation Confronts the Challenge of Declining Social Capital"

Julianna Arnim, Leslie Barrera, Anthony Calleo, Michelle Dang, Elizabeth Ann Early, Sean Gallagher, Shelley Grahmann, David Illingworth, Stephen Jones, John Kelley, Joon Kim, Lauren Langner, Mai Le, Brian LeCompte, Joseph Lohan, Lauren Martin, Lesley Neel, Que Ngo, Charlotte Parrott, Ana Sanchez, Vera Schoepe, Jessica Sepulveda, Mark Valdez, Vi Vu Vuong, Michael Whitebread and Kathleen Zemanek, , Janice Gordon-Kelter, Honors

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Janice Gordon-Kelter

Robert Putnam in his work, "Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community," has identified a growing concern in the United States. The level of social capital, social connectedness, civic engagement and community involvement continues to decline, posing a threat to individual and societal health. One factor contributing to the perceived decline is the belief of young people now coming of age that they are powerless to have an effect on the larger society. As representatives of a new generation, the participants in the Honors course, "Contemporary Problems and Solutions," have chosen to consider the problem of declining social capital from a variety of perspectives. The topics considered include: the revitalization of religious organizations, the business community, the electronic community and the medical community in order to enhance human and societal health and well-being; the increase in individual connectedness provided by programs promoting social and emotional literacy and service learning; the reduction of urban/suburban divisions as a source of educational inequity; the discovery of shared values and our connection to others and our communities through art, music, literature, film and myth; the creation of alternatives to the various forms of escapism and to the distancing effects of binary constructions; and the foundation of a youth-run organization as a model for altruistic involvement and active change. The ultimate goal of the group is to go beyond the identification of obstacles to participation by the creation of specific solutions, solutions that will enable their contemporaries to substitute action for apathy and to create new forms of social capital.