



*Spring Semester 2009 topic:*

**IS IT TIME TO CHANGE THE  
DRINKING AGE?**

**MORE THAN 125 COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS THINK IT MIGHT BE! WHAT DO YOU  
THINK?**

**WHAT IS THE PROBLEM? IS CHANGING THE DRINKING AGE THE BEST SOLUTION?**

**SHOULD THERE BE A NATIONAL DRINKING AGE? SHOULD IT BE LEFT TO EACH STATE TO  
DECIDE?**

**WHEN, HOW, AND WHY DID IT BECOME 21?**

**SHOULD THERE BE SPECIAL RULES FOR COLLEGE CAMPUSES?**

**EXPLORE THESE AND RELATED QUESTIONS, PROPOSE A SOLUTION, AND EARN THREE CREDIT  
HOURS in POL 301! (Wednesdays 1:25-4:10)**

**Co-Coordinator: Dr. Jane Rainey, Dr. Joseph Gershtenson, and Dr. Glenn Rainey**



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## Frequently Asked Questions

### *What is CACTUS?*

CACTUS stands for Citizens' Assembly for Critical Thinking about the United States.

### *What is a Citizens' Assembly?*

Citizens' Assemblies are groups of randomly chosen citizens from all walks of life who are invited to meet, study a topic, consult with the public, debate, and make a recommendation for approval by the voters. Citizens' Assemblies on Electoral Reform have been created by governments in Canada and the Netherlands.

### *How will CACTUS resemble these?*

CACTUS will meet weekly during Spring Semester, 2009, to learn, consult, debate, and seek consensus about whether to change the drinking age. It will be modeled on the format developed in those countries. While CACTUS will not have authority from the government to put a recommendation on the ballot in a public election, you will get to place your recommendation before the ECU community and try to win support for it.

### *How will CACTUS differ from these?*

CACTUS has a course number (POL 301) and you will get a grade and three credit hours for participating. CACTUS also may be used for BLOCK VII General Education Credit, for a political science elective, or a general elective.

### *Will CACTUS have exams and assignments?*

CACTUS will be unlike any class you have taken. Yes, there will be some exams and assignments. However, much of your time will be spent working together to think about options, whether there is a need for change, and what direction it should take.

### *Must I know a lot about politics to participate?*

No. Citizens' Assemblies are based on the belief that ordinary citizens, given adequate education and information, can debate and reason together and make informed political decisions.

### *Will there be a lot of required group work outside class time?*

No. CACTUS will consist of large group and small group sessions during the weekly meeting time (1:25-4:10 Wednesdays). There will be some individual work and discussion board opportunities between CACTUS meetings. In mid-semester, you may choose to host or participate in a public hearing on campus at a time other than class time. There will also be some opportunities for committee work.

### *Will I be required to speak in front of a large group?*

No. While we hope that as you become informed, you will feel increasingly comfortable speaking in front of others, you will be interacting in small groups and discussion boards as well as the plenary (full) sessions. Also you will get to voice your opinion through your vote on the Assembly's final decision.

### *Who should sign up for CACTUS?*

#### **YOU should...if**

You are tired of "politics as usual"...

You are tired of "classes as usual"...

You want to serve your country by becoming a more engaged citizen...

You want to gain ability and confidence in speaking in front of others,

working in small and large groups,

thinking critically,

debating and reasoning together...

You want to develop your reading, writing, and constructive listening skills...

You want to learn whether there is a better way to do democracy than partisan

bickering, trite clichés and media sound-bites...

[www.cactus.ecu.edu](http://www.cactus.ecu.edu)

