

Civic education conducive to a more democratic America

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Successful democracies depend on an informed, thoughtful, and engaged electorate. However, social scientific research shows the American electorate to be poorly informed and often disengaged. In an article in the 2008 *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education*, Eamonn Callan contends that civic education in America nonetheless has an important role to play in mitigating these civic vices.

There exists a "democratic elitist" theory that says we should not worry about the ignorance and disengagement of ordinary citizens. However, the problem with that theory is that it assumes rashly that unaccountable elites will rule in the interests of the rest of society.

Callan worries both about the unwarranted trust in the capacity of elites to protect democracy and the abandonment of hope in the capacity of citizens. Instead, he argues for "rational social hope" in which teachers can educate in ways that promote civic virtue.

Teachers, journalists, political activists, and the like must commit to helping to create a citizenry whose self-government is adequately grounded in relevant information, understanding, and civic virtue.

Source: Wiley

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