

Citizen Diplomacy

Jane Sargus, Instructor
Berkeley, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
June 8th – 29th 2022

Course Description: Over eight hours (four two-hour sessions) this course will explore the nature of “citizen diplomacy” and ask what it achieves? How does the engagement of individual citizens within “sub-national” level international exchanges differ from, and compliment, traditional diplomatic relationships between national governments? These and other questions will be addressed and debated with the leader of an organization dedicated to people-to-people engagement globally and a variety of discussants and participants from this and other programs.

Active participation in the course discussion is encouraged, but because this is an online course, for logistical reasons, the instructor asks that questions and points are made during the intervals in which she and the other speakers invite them. There will be a ten-minute break between the two fifty-minute sessions. Links to a reading list of resources for further study and sources cited in discussion will be posted.

About the Instructor: Jane Sargus of Washington, D.C. is the Executive Director of the Congressional Office for International Leadership (COIL). Before assuming her duties as Executive Director, Ms. Sargus brings 40 years of federal experience to COIL. Having served as COIL’s Program Administrator and Budget Officer from 2008 to 2012, Ms. Sargus crafted the congressional budget justification for the Appropriations Committee in the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate. With her financial management experience and a deep understanding of international programs in the Legislative Branch, Ms. Sargus performed in-depth analyses and research on multiple and complex issues related to budget formulation for a program with both national and international impact. From 2012 to 2017, Ms. Sargus served as COIL’s Deputy Executive Director to manage day-to-day operations for all aspects of the agency and to coordinate its logistical contract of \$2-3 million annually.

Prior to COIL, Ms. Sargus served as a Budget Analyst in the Office of the Chief Financial Officer of the Library of Congress. Her work supported the Library’s annual \$400 million plus budget requests to congressional appropriations and oversight committees. While with the Library’s Congressional Research Service (CRS), Ms. Sargus provided critical fiscal support for the Frost Special Task Force on the Development of Parliamentary Institutions in Eastern and Central Europe while also serving on the Financial Management Team overseeing CRS’s annual appropriation. Ms. Sargus also spent five years in the Library’s John W. Kluge Center managing all aspects of financial operations for more than 20 funds totaling over \$71 million.

Jane Sargus has a B.A. from the Miami University in Oxford, OH and completed graduate work in Business Administration from The George Washington University.

June 8nd Session – Introductions to Instructor Jane Sargus, COIL, and the Open World program

Part One: Opening

Defining “Citizen Diplomacy” - what does it attempt and who are “Citizen Diplomats?” When thousands around the world book AirBnB rooms in a Ukraine under attack to get assistance to the war zone – is this citizen diplomacy? How broad a phenomenon is it? What are the big questions in Citizen Diplomacy and how does it differ from “diplomacy?”

The Instructor describes herself, the agency she leads, the Open World program it implements, and how citizen diplomacy became important to her. She outlines what is coming over the next seven parts (three sessions).

Part Two: COIL’s History and the “Billington Approach”

COIL is an example of an institution promoting citizen diplomacy from within the government, but removed from day-to-day foreign policy. The Instructor describes the founding of COIL and how it has evolved over time – starting with the former Librarian of Congress James H. Billington’s visionary approach to facilitating people-to-people exchange. How and why this unique effort to promote international exchange and cooperation got started and what it suggests about the character of Citizen Diplomacy as a concept and the role of government in facilitating it.

Dr. Jason Bruder is a former career U.S diplomat, academic, and U.S. Senate staffer now serving as Senior Advisor for Strategic Planning at COIL.

June 15th Session – A Closer Look at Citizen Diplomacy Through COIL’s Example

Part Three: Participants in International Exchange

The Instructor and the participants will discuss the experience of international exchange by non-diplomatic citizens. How and why the participant became involved and what the experience was like. What the participant learned or has seen others learn from this kind of international visit and dialogue. To what extent do participants form friendships, sister city relations (or similar, and/or engage in after program cooperation? Can the experience of dialogue and new relationships change lives or communities?

Lewis Madanick is a Senior Program Manager with COIL. He has 30 years’ experience fostering citizen diplomacy efforts and exchanges, and has lived in Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine.

Part Four: Hosts and Facilitators

A discussion with Open World program hosts and facilitators of the dialogue, who provide the structure for citizen diplomacy. They will describe their experiences. They will also discuss: What can be accomplished and how?

Is citizen diplomacy idealistic, or practical? Have technological changes impacted the role of citizen diplomacy?

June 22th Session – Perspectives from Different Programs.

Part Five: Citizen “Ambassador” organizations

This is not solely a course about the Instructor’s agency, but on citizen diplomacy as a phenomenon. In parts five and six, representatives of different organizations will discuss their own institutional missions and practices. The discussion about the character of Citizen Diplomacy and its effects will continue.

The guest speakers and the instructor lead a discussion about the large network of local organizations that support Citizen Diplomacy – their organizations’ story and how they organize themselves. What are their organizational principles and goals? How do they define “Citizen Diplomacy?” What can citizen diplomats accomplish that diplomats can’t or don’t? What kind of impact do such organizations have on communities and individuals over long periods of time? How do they cooperate with other people to people exchanges and organizations?

Part Six: Rotary International and Rotary Clubs

The guest speaker and the instructor discuss a different institutional approach to Citizen Diplomacy and international dialogue. What’s their story and how do they organize themselves? What are their organizational principles and goals? How does Rotary define the concept of “Citizen Diplomacy?” What can citizen diplomats accomplish that diplomats can’t or don’t? What kind of impact can Rotary have over long periods of time? How does Rotary International (and their Rotary clubs) cooperate with other people-to-people organizations?

June 29rd Session – Diplomacy and Citizen Diplomacy: The Big Picture

Part Seven: A View from a Professional Diplomat

The Instructor and the guest speaker discuss how professional diplomats fit “Citizen Diplomacy” into the context of the regular diplomacy that occurs between nations. Do networks of individual citizens play an important role in foreign policy? How would a professional define “Citizen Diplomacy” and how would he/she assess its value to the United States? When is citizen diplomacy effective and when is it not? Does citizen involvement in people-to-people diplomacy look different in other countries?

Part Eight: Summation: Come back to the points raised and the questions asked in part one.

The Instructor and class members will review the definition of “Citizen Diplomacy” and its character discussed over the past seven sessions. Does citizen diplomacy complement or complicate “Diplomacy” between nations? Why? What if citizen diplomacy runs against the citizen’s own government? What have we heard about technology and citizen diplomacy? (Talk about the virtual program venue and how that impacted our work during the pandemic). The instructor wraps up the discussion with some of the insights she has about her career in the service of facilitating international dialogue.