

UNIT II (C) LECTURE POLITICAL BELIEFS AND BEHAVIORS

I. What is Meant by the Phrase “Political Participation?”

Though it generally means more than just voting, for this chapter/lecture it mostly means “voting.”

II. When it Comes to Voting, What’s the History of Voting in General

- It first was controlled by the states; then later by the federal government
- 1842 law; House members elected by districts
- Direct popular election to U.S. Senator
- Suffrage to blacks
- Suffrage to women
- Suffrage to 18 year olds

III. When it comes to Voting, What’s the History of Black Voting Rights?

- 15th Amendment passed with intent to give blacks the right to vote (guaranteed the right to vote regardless of race, color, or previous condition of slavery)
- 15th Amendment gutted by the Supreme Court, which declared that it did not confer a right to vote
- Southern states then used many evasive strategies to keep blacks from voting
 - literacy test (a state law requiring potential voters to demonstrate reading skills. The laws were frequently implemented in a discriminatory fashion to prevent otherwise qualified blacks from voting. These tests were suspended by the Voting Rights Act of '65)
 - poll tax (A state tax paid prior to voting. The tax was designed to prevent blacks from voting since poor whites were usually exempted through a grandfather clause. Poll taxes were made illegal in the 1960's.
 - white primaries (The exclusion of blacks from voting in the primary elections of political parties. Such primaries were employed largely in the South where the Democratic primary meant winning the election. The Supreme Court voided the use of white primaries in the '60's
 - grandfather clauses
 - intimidation
- Major change came with the 1965 Voting Rights Act, increasing the black vote over the next ten years.
 - Suspended literacy tests
 - Appointed federal examiners who could order the registration of blacks
 - Created criminal penalties for interfering with the right to vote

IV. When it Comes to Voting, What’s the History of Women Voting Rights?

- Several western states permitted women to vote by 1915
- 19th Amendment was ratified in 1920 (Amendment allowed women the right to vote)
- No dramatic changes in electoral outcomes or in public policy resulted from the amendment

V. When it Comes to Voting, What’s the History of Youth Voting Rights?

- Voting Rights Act of 1970

- 26th Amendment was ratified in 1971 (Lowered the voting age in both state and federal elections to eighteen. Congress had attempted to achieve this goal through legislation, but the Supreme Court ruled that the federal government had no authority to do so with respect to state elections.
- Youth voters had lower turnout, but higher levels of civic participation, no particular party affiliation, until Barack Obama

VI. When it Comes to Voting, What's the History of DC Voting Rights

- 23rd Amendment ratified in 1961 giving DC residents the right to vote in presidential elections

VII. When it Comes to Voting, Who Votes?

- Those w/ schooling or political information are more likely to vote than those without schooling. Yet an ever increasing number of college grads and white collar workers are also not voting.
- Church goers vote more than non church goers
- Men and women vote at the same rate
- Blacks vote less than whites

VIII. When it Comes to Voting, Why Don't More Americans Vote (low voter turnout)

- Most common answer given – apathy.
- But the real problem is low registration rates
- Therefore the most common solution – get-out-the-vote-drives – doesn't do it alone
- What's needed is easier registration
- Motor Voter Act ('93) increased registration throughout the country. (Act allowed people to register to vote when applying for a driver's license and to provide registration through the mail and at some state offices that serve the disabled and provide public assistance.)
 - Election day turnout less depressed in states that implemented this law or had election day registrations
 - The two party balance of registrants has not been affected, although independent registrants have increased in number.

IX. When it Comes to Participation as a Whole, To What Extent do Americans Participate Compared to Europe

- When turnout of registered voters is compared, the U.S does very well
- When participation by other measures is compared, Americans participate in politics more than Europeans.
- Americans elect more officials and have more elections

X. When it Comes to the Word Participation, The Public, According to the Text, Can Be Broken Down into Six Levels (aka Kinds) of Participants. What Are They?

- Inactives: People who rarely vote, do not get involved in organizations, and do not even talk much about politics. 22% of populations
- Parochial Participants – People who do not vote and stay out of election campaigns and civic associations but who are willing to contact local officials about specific, often personal problems.
- Communalists: People who tend to reserve their energies for community activities. They prefer to avoid the partisanship and conflicts that characterize campaigns. Their education and income are similar to those of campaigners.
- Voting Specialists: People who vote but participate in little else politically. They tend not to have much schooling or income and to be substantially older than the average person.

- Campaigners: People who not only vote but like to get involved in campaign activities as well. They are better educated than the average voter, but what distinguishes them most is their interest in the conflict of politics, their clear party identification, and their willingness to take strong positions.
- Complete Activists: People who are highly educated, have high incomes, and tend to be middle-aged rather than young or old. These people participate in all forms of politics and count for about 11% of the population.