

## Week 5 – How Democratic is the US? Lesson Plan

### Housekeeping

- Will be emailing you to have our second advising meeting. Look out for that, and please sign up.

### Introduction

- Nancy provided us with a good framing for this week's topics in yesterday's lecture: *How much democracy do we want, and where do we want it?*
- In asking "how democratic is the US", we need to come up with some sort of general criteria to evaluate this question. We have two suggestions put forth in the literature, a public participation story, and an institutional one. So – when do we want the public to participate? When don't we want participation? What kinds of public participation do we want? What are the outcomes we're looking for? How do institutions structure the outcomes that we get? These are the kinds of questions that readings – and hopefully we - will tackle today.
- Another way of thinking about this is thinking back to the Dworkin distinction between equality of impact v. equality of influence. What we're really doing this week is diving further into the influence side of things – whether it's in the ways people participate (via their time and money) or the institutions that structure their influence.
- We'll start class with Ariana's article presentation, and then move into talking about Lessig, SVB, both of which take a participatory take on the question "how democratic is the US." Then, we'll move on to the institutional perspective that was presented to us this week by Levinson. How do the rules and structures influence the democratic outcome?
- We'll turn to Scokpol and Williamson after the break, and look at the Tea Party as a case study.
- You'll get your papers back at the end of class.

### Lessig and Ariana's Article

Article: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2013/11/05/the-influence-of-money-in-u-s-politics/>

What is Lessig's definition of a democratic congress? [narrow: controlled by the people alone]

How does a focus on funding the next campaign affect political decision making and representativeness, according to Lessig?

Should we publically finance campaigns?

### SVB

The quote from Schattschneider on which the book is based: "The heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent." What does this mean, and why does it sum up the SVB findings?

What do SVB see as the most important thing for democracy? [representation and political voice]

What are the different expressions of political voice? Who lobbies/testified/field amicus briefs?

Which of the above is the most palatable form of influence in Washington? Why? What are the outcomes we're looking for?

[transitioning to Levinson]

To what extent do we want representation in a democracy? What would Levinson say – think about some of the institutional features he brings up. [electoral college, lame duck presidency between the election and inauguration, extensive executive powers]. What is Levinson's main argument? [constitution is outdated, how to revise to improve democratic outcomes?]

[Arizona's push for anti-gay laws – does the people's voice always result in policies that reflect democratic values?]

Why might we want representation in the political sphere and not in the economic? Do we want it in the judicial sphere?

[Break]

Scokpol and Williamson give us a useful case study in the tea party.

Who are the Tea Partiers?

If money is what matters in determining whom government is responsive to (according to Lessig and SVB), why was the Tea Party so successful (given that the activists are not particularly wealthy, well-connected Washington insiders)? Combination of popular pressure, media and big-time money.

Lessig says that the need to raise money makes American politics more polarized in general. And a key polarizing force has been the Tea Party. But was the drive for money causing the rise of this movement? What was the source of the extremism in this case - the politicians or the public?

Draw a distinction between the tea party and what they think of as the sustaining social movements – civil rights, feminist, anti-war. Why is this different? Should we deny it the label of the movement?

Is this civic activism that benefits our democracy? S and W pose this well - If people actively engage in the political process but on mistaken premises, is that good or bad for democracy? – can structure this as a debate if we have time.

## Grades

A few comments:

- One thing that was consistently inconsistently done was citing sources. Why is it important to cite sources?
  - o Gives your paper credence – to show that you've done proper research
  - o Being responsible and giving credit to other scholars
  - o Making it easy for the reader to figure out where ideas came from
  - o Avoiding plagiarism

- Plagiarism is anything that takes another work and claims it as your own. This could be paraphrasing an argument in your own words and not citing the source of the argument, “self-plagiarizing”, and not crediting previous work even if its your own, citing quotes.
- So when in doubt, cite!
- One other tip, just for good form: even if you have full citations in the footnotes, you should have a bibliography at the end. (Same goes for parenthetical citations.)

Across the 16 students in my two sections, 4 papers in the A range, 8 papers in the B range, and 4 papers in the C range. Median was a B, mode was a B.

Overall, the papers showed a lot of potential. You have two more papers to build on from here, so I encourage you all to come and talk to me or Amanda before you submit your next paper. (Comments and grade are stapled to the back of your paper.)