

**Lesson plan, Government 97 (Spring 2014)**  
**Shelby Grossman**

[Credit to Chiara Superti for many of the ideas here]

Papers

- Meet with me, email me whatever
- Have a thesis, underline it, italicize it, say “I will argue that...”
- The whole paper should support the thesis
- The point of the paper is to give you an opportunity to process course information. Think critically. I give points for creativity.
- Show me you understand what authors are saying, but don’t summarize. You can show me you understand what authors are saying by critiquing what they are saying, synthesizing it with what other authors are saying.
- I’m going to be looking to see whether you are citing the relevant people, and the relevant passages
- See Amanda, go to the writing center.

Three main actors/elements for this week

Voters

Electoral systems

Parties

Tradeoffs in the outcomes we would like to achieve in an ideal democracy.

What are some democratic ideals about voters?

- Free of living life without worrying about politics (Constant), but also paying attention
- We want people to be rational when they vote, but they have to be irrational to vote (Downs)

What are some of the democratic ideals about electoral systems?

- Representation, but governability
- Stability, but voice for minorities

In an ideal world, what do we want parties to do?

- Be responsive, but also make long-term decisions

More generally, Dahl is highlighting some tradeoffs in our democratic system. What are they?

Voters

Have you voted before? If so, for who and why? How did you come to this decision? How does this relate to any of the readings for this week?

Let's list out the costs and benefits of voting

What happens when voting is costless. Who votes, who doesn't vote?

- What changes when voting is costly?

Review median voter theorem.

- What are the assumptions that this model makes? Put differently, why wouldn't this work?
- Most of literature on this model actually takes the form of, why isn't this model working?
- South Africa, after democratization, is extremely pro-business. Deception, racial deception. They make that one issue more salient.

But who cares if poorer or less educated people are voting? Don't we only want Harvard graduates to vote?

The Causes and Effects of Rational Abstention

- What are the causes?
- What are the effects?

How many ppl do you need to vote for the US to say we have a commitment to democracy?

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[Here is a description of an exercise I did that worked very well. This is the email I sent to other TFs about it.]

Hi all,

My section had been really excited last week about the mandatory voting topic, so I decided to take Chiara's suggestion and look at the case of **Australia** in section.

I printed out the following articles and gave one to each student. Students read their article, and then we went around the room and everyone summarized their article or op-ed, and discussed which readings (or concepts from the readings) the points related to. We then had a more general debate about mandatory voting that went extremely well. It ties into a lot of the themes for this week.

Just an idea if you haven't had section yet. The only downside was it took a little too long (25 minutes), but because the students were so excited about the topic and they were tying it into the readings very effectively I thought that was ok.

Shelby

Articles:

<http://www.economist.com/blogs/economist-explains/2013/09/economist-explains-10>

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/aug/21/compulsory-voting-good>

<http://www.dailynews.com/opinion/20130906/compulsory-voting-is-a-solution-to-low-voter-turnout-commentary>

<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/11/07/should-voting-in-the-us-be-mandatory-14/what-weve-seen-in-australia-with-mandatory-voting> (this links goes to 6 separate op eds)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-23810381>

### Electoral systems

Duverger is talking about what explains the nature of parties. He says electoral systems matter. Why?

Why would SMD lead to two parties?

PR leads to multiple parties?

Pros and cons of SMD v. PR

Chile under Pinochet: Binomial system.

- Two positions per district
- Tallies first done by list. Only if first list gets twice votes of second list does first list get both positions. If not, each of the two top winning parties gets one positions.

What are pros and cons of this?

- Pros: stability, compromise
- Cons: bad for representation, deadlock

How would compulsory voting interact with different electoral systems?

### Parties

Fiorina, political scientist at Stanford writing in the 1980s.

He asserts that responsibility can only exist in a democracy through political parties. Why would this be?

Under what conditions will parties lead to collective responsibility?

To what extent are parties or are not parties serving these roles in America today?

What about in other countries?

He sees a decline in parties, but one critique is that people are embarrassed to say they are affiliated with a party, but then they actually vote in primaries.

What does he say about single issue groups?

The only way collective responsibility has ever and can exist is through political parties. What does this mean? Do you agree with it?

What further evidence would you like to see to believe his argument?

What would elections look like without parties?

Get back into your groups: Do you want to reevaluate your decision to have parties?

New decision, should parties be democratic?

What would be the interaction with compulsory voting and parties?

This week is called "Are elections undemocratic?" Why is it called that?

I gave out this handout.

**Sophomore Tutorial: Democracy - Government 97 (Spring 2014)**

**Handout for Tuesday, February 11, 2014**

Paper: Come meet with me! Or at least email me!

- Feel free to show me an outline or just a thesis statement, or just come wanting to brainstorm.

Tensions within and between ideal outcomes for voting, electoral systems and parties

Voting/voters

Electoral systems

Parties