

1 Minute Reviews

Before we begin our discussion, I want to take a moment to very briefly discuss each of the readings. It is useful to prime ourselves in this way so that we can be better able to discuss the readings. As such, I will name each of the readings and I will ask a volunteer to give a one minute or less summary of what the main points of the readings were.

Downs – An Economic Theory of Democracy

Rosenstone and Hansen – Mobilization, Participation and Democracy

Schumpeter – Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy

Schattschneider – Semi-Sovereign People Pluralist Heaven quote

Fiorina – The Decline of Collective Responsibility in American Politics

Duverger – Political Parties

This American Life – 440 Game Changer

Before we get to the discussion questions, does anybody have any questions about any of the readings?

Next we will be breaking up into smaller groups. This is in an effort to avoid groupthink and discussions can be more engaging with more manageable group sizes. We will do this entire process three times. First, each small group will take 5 minutes to look at the following discussion questions. Then I will come around to each group for another 5 minutes each (10 minutes total). Then the groups will continue to discuss the questions for a further 5 minutes. Finally, we will come together and discuss them as an entire section for a further 5-10 minutes (though we may go longer if need be).

Voting

- 1) Do you need to be irrational to vote? Consider Downs as well as Rosenstone and Hansen.
- 2) Can the public will be measured? What does Schumpeter have to say? Is he correct?
- 3) Explain why voting is and isn't a valid expression of the public will. Which side of the debate is stronger?
- 4) Schattschneider suggests that turnout is in-part a function of politicians determining the scope of the debate.
What are the implications here for democracy? What is Schattschneider's solution to this problem?
- 5) Even if we can measure public will, given what we learned about gas mining in Mt. Pleasant, PA, do we trust it?
- 6) Given the answers to these questions, do you think voting is democratic?

Voting Exercises:

We will be participating in three voting exercises. These exercises will have real world consequences. Using three different voting schemes, we will determine what type of cookies the class will receive for the next three weeks. In each instance you are nominally limited to a \$5 budget for each week, but this budget can be extended if a full consensus is reached and everyone agrees to contribute to the cookie budget.

First, we will use a plurality system to directly vote for what cookie type will be purchased. For this first vote, you have several options which you can vote on, or you can write in your own cookie type. Please refer to Ballot 1 and make your selection. Votes will be tallied at the end of this exercise. You may not speak to each other.

Next, we will use a representative election. Who thinks that they would do a good job of selecting cookies for the class? (If more than two, I will select two students and say that these decisions are often modified by nature. If only one, I will make myself the other candidate. If two exactly, proceed as normal). Your two candidates are (name the two candidates and assign them Candidate 1 and Candidate 2). If elected, one of these candidates will receive \$5 and will make cookie choices for you. Each candidate may now spend 2 minutes convincing you why they are the best cookie chooser. (Give them two minutes each) Please refer to Ballot 2 and make your selection. Votes will be tallied at the end of this exercise.

You will now participate in a deliberative democracy. You have ten minutes to discuss amongst yourselves which cookie you would like for section next week. Once that time is up, you will write in what type of cookie you want. (Allow ten minutes for them to deliberate). Please refer to ballot 3 and write in your selection. Votes will be tallied once you are finished.

Let's discuss the different type of voting schemes. Which did you like better? Which was more democratic? Which do you think had the best outcome? What did you dislike about each?

We are now going to answer some discussion questions about political parties. We will use the same structure as when we discussed voting.

Parties

- 1) Fiorina claims that it is too easy to dodge responsibility by various political actors? What is Fiorina's solution? How would this work?
Do you think it's easy to dodge responsibility? Give evidence one way or another.
- 2) What are the pros and cons of strong partisanship?
- 3) What problem does Schattschneider say that parties can solve? Do you buy this argument?
- 4) Do parties distort or clarify public opinion?
- 5) Parties mobilize (Rosenstone), shape opinion (Duverger), and are better suited to making political decisions for us (Schumpeter).
If parties are responsible for who shows up, what we think and for making our decisions, how can they be democratic?

We are now going to answer some discussion questions about electoral systems. We will use the same structure as when we discussed parties.

Electoral Systems

- 1) Do you prefer a plurality or a proportional electoral system? What are the pros and cons of each?
- 2) Which system is better able to elicit the public will? Consider Duverger's mention of local versus national attention to issues.
- 3) Do you prefer a bipartisan government or a multi-party government (or one party)? Why? How many parties are ideal? Why?
- 4) Duverger talks about two distortions in representation. Which is a greater concern and why?
- 5) Are bipartisan or multi-party systems undemocratic? Which is more democratic? Why?