

Discussion Questions for 17.951, Political Behavior

Voter Turnout

- What is the relevance of individual, elite, and institutional factors in voter turnout?
- What is the role of education in turnout? What are the causal mechanisms?
- What are institutional factors and barriers to turnout? What is the effect of voter registration on turnout, and how does this vary across demographic groups? What does the effect of the Motor Voter bill tell us about the impact of registration and about the likely effects of different kinds of reforms?
- What is the role of mobilization by parties, interest groups and social movements in voter turnout? How can we explain changes in turnout over time?
- How can we explain differences in turnout between the U.S. and other democratic nations?
- Contrast Plutzer's developmental model of voting over a lifetime with the more institutional-based perspectives of the other authors
- What are the advantages and limitations of rational choice perspectives on turnout?
- Which types of reforms aimed at increasing turnout are likely to be successful or unsuccessful according to these different views of turnout?