

Discussion Questions for 17.951, Political Behavior

Participation

- Which political acts are the most and least unequal? Why?
- If you were an interest group official who wanted to influence policy, which acts would you urge your membership to take part in?
- What are the differences between the socioeconomic (SES) model of participation and the Civic Voluntarism (CVM) model?
- How important are various factors in the CVM model for different participatory acts?
- How much do the factors vary across individuals?
- Where do these factors come from?
- What is the relevance of education for participation? What are the differences between absolute and relative levels of education?
- What is the relevance of income for participation? Of free time?
- What is the relevance of skills, and where can they be gained?
- What are the sources of political interest, information, and efficacy?
- Compare churches and unions as mobilizing entities
- How does the CVM model explain the low participation rates of the young? The high participation rates of the old?
- What kinds of reforms aimed at increasing participation does this model suggest?
- Would full participation matter for policy outcomes? How and why?
- What are some of the measurement issues associated with the CVM model?
- What factors aren't discussed in Verba, Scholzman, and Brady? (network effects; context effects; role of public policy in influencing CVM factors; overtime analysis and trends in participation, inequality)