

Exam 3

Michael Cardiff

August 6, 2020

Question 1

Q What explains voter turnout in the U.S. (overall and across groups and regions), and why do many observers consider it a cause for concern?

A Many things affect voter turnout in the US, but a lot of them depend on specific groups of people, but there are a few that span overall. When it comes down to it, you cannot show up to the polls if you are prevented from either registering or actually voting when the day comes. In the same vein, if you are not required to show up, many people simply will not show up. In terms of specific groups, a more specific problem lies in discrimination against certain minority groups and people of certain socioeconomic status.

Many people in the US simply do not see the incentive to vote. Voting participation is not mandated in the least, so it slips their mind when it comes to election day. Places where voter turnout is high such as Turkey and Belgium place fines on people who do not vote (Krutz et al., 254). The incentive in this case for voting is that you will not have to pay this fine, hence people vote more often. This can however be seen as a cause for concern, as the voters might seem more threatened to vote rather than voting out of their own free will.

Some people are prevented from showing up to the polls at all. Convicted felons are completely barred from voting, but this does not explain low voter turnout as these felons would not be part of the VEP. The type of prevention here have to do more with the process of voter registration. Requiring a photo ID can be a major restriction as it unfairly targets certain groups (Krutz et al., 255). Most of the time you have to get a photo ID from the DMV, and the first thing everyone

thinks of when you mention DMV is long lines. This means people who do not have a lot of money and need to work two or more jobs will not have time to go get an ID. Even then, if people have time to get an ID, in some places they cost money, though it is often not a lot, it is still money that could be put to better use.

Question 2

Q What is the institutional argument and the cultural argument for why third parties do not perform well in the U.S.?

A Third parties in general do not gather much support in the US political system. Neville-Shepard mentions that other political scientists often attribute this to Duverger's law (Neville-Shepard, 275). This law is a statement about the nature of the plurality voting system. Neville-Shepard counters this point by saying it is more of a problem with how the general public views these third party candidates. These candidates are less viewed as alternatives and more as invaders in the election of two parties.

Duverger's Law is the more institutional view of third parties. It specifically states in a plurality rule system with single-member districts (like the US), there tends to be a two-party system. This argument relies on the "mechanical" effect that voting for a third party has on the "system" (Neville-Shepard, 275). By mechanical effect, this is a sort of implication that a third party would ruin how the system is currently working, and would result in a system that would get nothing done. This in turn, discourages the voters from voting third party.

The argument which Neville-Shepard presents is that third party candidates are presented as "invaders" to the election (Neville-Shepard, 280). Many people during the course of the 2016 election mentioned that a vote for a third party is as good as staying out of the election (Neville-Shepard, 281). Even today, people who are vehemently against one candidate or the other in the

current election will say that a vote for a third party is a vote for insert unfavorable candidate here. So the language surrounding third parties is less regarding a serious alternative to the current system, but instead a thrown away vote that contributes to the person you do not want to win instead of the person you voted for.

Question 3

Q Which electoral reforms have been proposed to resolve the U.S. political dysfunction, and which changes seem to be at least possible?

A There have been many reforms suggested to change how the current electoral system functions. One of the more common suggestions is to abolish the electoral college of the president. An alternative to this is suggested in the article by Foley, mentioning that we could return to the Jeffersonian method of giving out electoral college votes. In terms of general non-presidential elections, there are alternative voting systems which could be used to combat the current deadlock. One suggestion is a ranked voting system, in which the voters specifically rank their choices for the person they are voting for.

In terms of other general voting systems, ranked choice voting seems like the most sensible alternative, but it is not likely to be implemented. A ranked choice system would put less stigma on third party candidates and would solve the previous problem of a throw away vote when it comes to third parties. But the real problem occurs when no majority is obtained by any candidate. This does give any other candidate a chance to win, but the instant runoff in the form of counting the ranked choice will give many votes to candidates who did not have many in the first place. This system seems very confusing and I could see people going into even more outrage because the candidate they voted for did not win (even if that happens now).

In terms of presidential elections, the current system we have allows for presidents to be elected without being the majority choice of the people. In fact, Presidents Trump, Bush, and Clinton all did not win the popular vote (Foley, par. 23). Foley suggests that we should instead return to the original Jeffersonian style of assigning delegates. This process would ensure the person is described as a commitment to majority rule throughout the article (Foley, par. 4). This differs from a direct popular vote as it still relies on the districts to individually vote, but it also relies on the overall majority being in one person. A direct popular vote would simply place too much power in the hands of the people, which is against what the Framers of the constitution wanted. This system seems to have the biggest chance of being actually implemented.

Question 4

Q What research methods have been used in the articles assigned for Sessions 8, 9, and 10, and what are some of their strengths and weaknesses?

A The three articles used for Sessions 8, 9, and 10 use very different methods to study similar phenomena. Session 8's reading by Pied mostly uses survey and polling to gather data. The Zingher reading uses statistical analysis of already gathered data. The Neville-Shepard paper uses a specific case study as its method of research. All of these papers talk in some way about the 2016 Presidential Election, so it is interesting to compare the effectiveness of these methods.

Pied uses existing polls along with an ethnographic research method in order to demonstrate his argument. The elements of ethnography are very strong, as it allows for the interviewing of specific people involved in the events which the author is concerning himself with (Pied, 774). The main issue with this type of research is the presence of the actual researcher. Often in ethnographic studies the researcher tries to make themselves relatively unknown, but when it comes to interviews, this is not always the case. The presence of the interviewer can influence what people say. What makes up for this on the part of the author is the polls, which are something more concrete that are

less subject to this bias.

Zingher's analysis of the various party demographics is strictly mathematical in nature. He uses a statistical regression test on the likeliness that someone would vote democrat in various election years (Zingher, 2). Later on in the article he goes on and uses a group contribution percentages to see what percent of the democratic/republican vote a particular group made up. This method is very effective as it provides a rule of analysis which is very generalizable, so many of the groups which are found in the US can be properly represented. A weakness of this method however is that it is hard to tell anything about a single election year from a data set, it is more reliant on comparing to previous data as seen in the table on Page 4.

Neville-Shepard uses employs an interesting analysis of published media in the time near the 2016 election. The analysis seems almost linguistic in the way that he describes the way that the media talks about the third parties (Neville-Shepard, 281-282). This method, unlike Zingher's, is much more effective in its use of the general pattern it finds. Instead of letting the research find the pattern, the pattern is established early in the paper, even in the abstract, and then expanded upon using evidence from not only the most recent election year, but also previous controversial years such as the 2000 election. However, media in general has a very large party bias, almost all news stations or papers have a corresponding party alliance which most people know about.

Question 5

Q How have domestic policy-making and foreign policy-making differed in the U.S., and how have they been connected?

A Even though domestic and foreign policy share some similarities, they differ for key reasons that make the US very unique. One way that they are different is simply in the content which they deal with. Domestic policy more often deals with the wants and needs of the people where foreign

policy is dealing with the wants and needs of other nations. One connection between them is the people who carry out these actions, and this is what makes the connection unique to the US.

The differences are quite stark when it comes to domestic and foreign policy. Foreign policy often will involve a larger amount of political figureheads over a longer amount of time (Krutz et al., 628). Domestic policy on the other hand will involve strictly the head of state governments and their interactions with the federal government over shorter periods of time (Lynch, Gramer, par. 1). Domestic policies may have to do with how individual states are handling the COVID-19 pandemic. This involves whether or not the federal government is requiring people to wear masks, as well as the corresponding state-level orders as well.

The similarities come when it comes down to who is affected. The president, as both head of state and head of the nation has a large role in both domestic and foreign policy (Lecture 7/28). In any article you will see regarding US politics, there is bound to be at least one mention of either the US president, congress, or the supreme court. All of these different branches of the government will intertwine with one another and will effect one another, as they are serving not only the domestic needs, but also its international needs.