Conceptual and Normative Problems of Voting

Political Science 219
Tuesdays 6:00-8:50
University of California, San Diego
Prof. Gerry Mackie
Fall 2006

PURPOSE
Because it is so unlikely that a single vote would change the outcome of a mass election, standard rational choice theory predicts that almost no one would vote in such an election. However, most citizens do vote. Even some social animals exhibit voting behavior. The discrepancy between prediction and reality is dubbed the paradox of nonvoting, or the paradox of participation, or even the paradox that ate rational choice theory.

A bewildering number of proposals have been offered to resolve the discrepancy. We shall canvas them, as well as empirical and experimental findings about the decision to vote. Along the way we shall strive to distinguish conceptually among motivations to vote, consider that an individual might possess heterogeneous motives, examine what extant data suggest about the various motivations to vote, and inquire about what further empirical tests might contribute to the resolution of these controversies.

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ASSESSMENT
• Class presentation on a reading, 5-10 minutes (one page summary or chart emailed to instructor and whole class by noon of the day of the session). What’s right about the reading, what’s wrong about it, how could we test it its truth or rightness further? Or, any other critically inquiring format. Do Y times in the quarter (guaranteed A or A- for first session). NOTE, ALWAYS INCLUDE IN EMAIL SUBJECT LINE: PS 219
• Integrated summary of a week’s session, 3 pages (500-1000 words), emailed to instructor and class no later than Friday midnight AFTER a session. Don’t cover all bits and pieces, synthesize Write as if it were a well-written report to a fellow graduate student. What did we learn, what don’t we know, how could we find out? Or, any other critically inquiring format. Do Z times in the quarter (guaranteed A for first session). NOTE, ALWAYS INCLUDE IN EMAIL SUBJECT LINE: PS 219
• Five-minute oral presentation of same summary at 10th-week meeting.
• A 4 page P/NP paper on the following: Report from a week of your own life, or that of a typical or imagined person, Pivotal, Contributory, and Expressive actions. Due by week 9, November 21, by email.
Takehome final, due no later than December 5, answer both A and B:  
A. Why do people vote (or not)? Or why should people vote (or not)? Don’t review, take a position and defend it. 5 pages. 
B. How measure competing motivations to vote? Originality rewarded. 5 pages. 
OR instead of A and B by 9th week propose your own topic to instructor, due by December 5, 10 pages.

BOOKS

- Andre Blais, 2000, *To Vote or Not to Vote*, U. Pittsburgh Press

These are available for purchase at the bookstore. All should be on reserve in library.

READINGS

Many of the readings will be intelligible to all students. Some readings are better understood with a background in game theory, probability, statistics, experimental design, or logic. The most difficult readings are marked below with a boldfaced addendum, and I want more advanced and specialized students to sign up for those readings, and to explicate them in simple terms for the rest of us.

I. Sep. 26, Introduction

- Prins, Decision Making Among African Buffalo
- Steven Levitt, Freakonomics, New York Times, Why Vote?
- Elster, Rational Choice
- Dowding Survey, Is it Rational to Vote?
- Feddersen Survey, Rational Choice Theory and the Paradox of Not Voting
- Geys Model Survey, “Rational” Theories of Voter Turnout
- Green and Shapiro, Paradox of Voter Turnout, Ch. 4, Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory
- Conradt and Roper, Consensus Decision Making in Animals
- Background Only: Dhillon Survey (a bit more formal), Economic Theories of Turnout
- Background Only: Riker and Ordeshook, A Theory of the Calculus of Voting (where it all started)
- Background Only: Funk (Patricia, not Carolyn) paper cited by Levitt

II. Oct. 3, Some Normative Theory of Voting

- Arneson, Democracy Not Intrinsically Just
- List and Goodin, Epistemic Democracy
- Frey, Participation Value
- Estlund, Beyond Fairness and Deliberation
- Waldron, 89-93, 101-118, 235-252, DIVIDE BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE
- Thompson, *Just Elections*, 1-38
III. Oct. 10, Prosocial Behavior

- Meehl, Selfish Voter, *ethics, logic*
- Background Only: Gerry Mackie, Democracy Defended, LIBRARY
- Background Only: Eriksen and Weigard, Habermas’s Democratic Theory
- Background Only: Mueller, Democracy and Ralph’s Grocery
- Background Only: Frey, Introducing Procedural Utility
- Background Only: Guth, Value of Voting Rights

- Sober, Did Evolution Make Us Psychological Egoists?, PHOTOCOPY
- Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Moral Psychology, Section 5 ONLY, on Egoism vs. Altruism
- Fehr and Fischbacher 2002, Why Social Preferences Matter
- Singer and Fehr Neuroeconomics; Fehr Fischbacher Kosfeld Neuroeconomics; Fehr Fischbacher Norms; Fowler, Altruistic Punishment
- Elster, Altruistic Behavior and Altruistic Motivations
- Frey and Meier, Prosocial Behavior In a Natural Setting
- Pellikaan and Van der Veen, ch. 1
- Ibid., Ch. 3
- Ratner and Miller, The Norm of Self Interest
- Background Only: Zahn-Waxler, Toddler Altruism; Shaw, Empathy Avoidance
- Background Only: Darke and Chaiken, The Pursuit of Self-Interest
- Background Only: Ernst Gellner, The Gaffe-Avoiding Animal, in his Relativism and the Social Sciences, INSTRUCTOR OR LIBRARY
- Background Only: Stephen Holmes, The Secret History of Self Interest, in his Passions and Constraints, LIBRARY
- Background Only: Richerson and Boyd, Culture and Genes Coevolve (some of the most sophisticated *speculation* about the origins of human sociality; accessible)

IV. Oct. 17, Prosocial Behavior in Politics

- Brennan and Hamlin, Beyond Homo Economicus
- Camerer and Fehr, Scope of Homo Economicus
- Kinder and Kiewiet, Sociotropic Politics; Funk and Monet, Sociotropic Voting
- Sears and Funk, The Limited Effect of Economic Self-Interest
- Funk, Self Interest and the Public Interest; Chong, When Self Interest Matters
- Shabman, Critique of the Self-Interested Voter Model; Brodsky, Referendum Voting
- Schlozman, Participation’s Not a Paradox
- Finkel, Collective Political Action
- Holt Participation Games, 20-28 ONLY; Palfrey experiments, 16-19 ONLY
- Goodin, Ethical Voter
- Background Only: Leif Lewin, Self Interest and Public Interest in Western Politics, LIBRARY
- Background Only: Participation Syllabus
- Background Only: Verba, Rational Participation
- Background Only: Whitely, Rational Participation

V. Oct. 24, Voter Turnout

- Geys Turnout Review
- Blais, To Vote Or Not To Vote, Chs. 1-5, BOOK, DIVIDE AMONG FIVE
- Mueller, Public Choice III
- Norris, 3 chs., 35-100, Democratic Phoenix
- Franklin, Voter Turnout, Chs. 1, 8
- Franklin, Voter Turnout, Ch. 5

VI. Oct. 31, Contributory Causation Account (Plus High P, High B Accounts)

- Thompson, Problem of Many Hands
- Parfit, Five Mistakes in Moral Mathematics, pp. 70-83, ethics
- Goldman, Causal Responsibility Approach
- Tort Causation, Wright: read 1737-1741, skim 1774-1788, read 1788-1804, skim 1804-1813, logic, tort law
- Braham and Holler, Causal Responsibility, logic, game theory
- Opp, Cognitive Illusion
- Gelman, Group Welfare

- Recommended but not Required: Judea Pearl Slide Show (for more, see his webpage), simple logic, simple probability, visual thinking
- Background Only: Chockler and Halpern on responsibility and blame
- Background Only: Honore, Necessary and Sufficient Conditions in Tort Law (mostly redundant), ASK INSTRUCTOR
- Background Only: Kreps, Notes on the Theory of Choice (formal details of contemporary decision theory, including expected utility), LIBRARY

VII. Nov. 7, The Expressive Account

- Brennan and Lomasky, Chs 1, 2, 3, pp. 70-73 and pp. 117-123, Ch 6, Ch 10, BOOK, DIVIDE AMONG SIX PEOPLE
- deQuervain, Neural Basis of Altruistic Punishment
- Tyran, Experimental Test of Expressive Voting; Copeland, Expressiveness and Voting
- Treanor, Electing to Vote

- Background Only: Schuessler, Expressive Voting
- Background Only: Sunstein, Expressive Function of Law
- Background Only: Anderson and Pildes, Expressive Theories of Law
- Background Only: Nozick, Nature of Rationality (causal, evidential, symbolic utilities), LIBRARY
VIII. Nov. 14, Various Altruism Accounts

- Baron, Voting vs. Voluntarism
- Jankowski Lottery
- Jankowski Altruism
- Fowler Altruism
- Fedderson and Sandroni, Group Rule-Utilitarian, game theory
- Coate 2004, Testing Rule Utilitarian vs. Expressive, game theory, statistics
- Coate, Testing Expressive vs. Pivotal, game theory, statistics

IX. Nov 21, Various Learning Accounts, Various Contagion Accounts

- Green and Shachar, Voting as Habit
- Kanazawa 1998, Kanazawa 2000
- Fowler, Habitual Voting
- Grafstein, Decision Theory, decision theory, probability; Quattrone and Tversky, Voter’s Illusion, 237, 240-248
- Leighley, Mobilization
- Uhlaner, Role of Groups in Turnout
- Kirchgaessner, Closeness or Mobilization
- Shachar, Follow the Leader, decision theory, statistics
- Fowler, Turnout In a Small World

- Background Only: Krebs Turnout Network
- Background Only: Gerber, Voting May Be Habit Forming
- Background Only: Plutzer, Habitual Voter

X. Nov. 28, Summary and Measurement Challenges

- Briefly summarize our findings
- Creative discussion of how to distinguish conceptually among motivations for voting, and to empirically disentangle and measure such motives. Some UCSD professors may participate.

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