17.20 Introduction to the American Political Process

Recitation: Sources of American Discontent; Representation and Responsiveness
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1. Announcements

2. Representation and Responsiveness
Announcements
What You can Expect

- A simplified and intuitive overview of the readings
- Tips for the writing assignments
- Supplementary readings (*Optional* but *useful* for completing the assignment)
Representation and Responsiveness
Definition

- Pitkin
  - Formalistic representation
  - Symbolic and descriptive representation
  - Substantive representation
  - Nowadays, political scientists mainly care about descriptive and substantive representation

- Mansbridge
  - Descriptive representation v. Substantive representation?
  - Descriptive representation can improve Substantive representation:
    - Overcome distrust (641-643)
    - Define group interest when group interests are not crystallized
  - Beyond enhancing substantive representation
    - Construct the social meaning: reparation and redress historical grievances
    - Legitimacy and image
• Descriptive representation without substantive representation?
• Substantive representation without descriptive representation?
How Political Scientists Study Representation

- Descriptive representation
Substantive representation is roughly equivalent to policy responsiveness.

Caughey, Devin, and Christopher Warshaw. "Policy Preferences and Policy Change: Dynamic Responsiveness in the American States, 1936–2014." American Political Science Review 112, no. 2 (2017): 249–66. © Cambridge University Press on behalf of the American Political Science Association. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/.
How Political Scientists Study Representation

- Substantive representation is roughly equivalent to policy responsiveness
Citizen Competence

- Marty Gilens offered comprehensive literature review on whether average American citizens were capable of formulating meaningful policy preferences
- The public knows so little about policy issues
- Ordinary citizens do not hold stable and consistent policy preferences
- But there are still hopes: 1. Take cues from others 2. Maybe some people really care about one issue 3. Aggregate all survey responses
Below are the readings he cited:

More on Gilens 2012

- Mechanics behind the miracle of aggregation:
  - Condorcet Jury Theorem
  - Aggregation reduces the random measurement errors and the variance of survey responses
● Unequal Voice leads to Unequal Responsiveness:
  ● How to measure political voice?
• But why we still see some responsiveness like this?

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Sometimes the poor and disadvantaged happened to agree with the wealthy and potent

- Economic growth
- Job creation

• Solution to political inequality
• Why do people don’t participate?
  ● They can’t: No resources
  ● They don’t want to: Lack of interest
  ● Nobody asked them to: Mobilization