

**APSA Teaching and Learning Symposium on Teaching American Politics in Times
of Uncertainty**
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Summary – Are there multiple tiers in American Democracy? Do people’s rights differ based on their personal characteristics? Or location? Have these rights evolved over time? How? Founding Fathers beliefs about participation. What can we do today to expand rights? Which groups are more likely to engage in diverse types of participation?

Student Learning Outcomes-

Describe the role voting plays in a democracy.

Explain how voting rights have expanded over time.

Evaluate differences in turnout among various populations in the United States.

Resources – US Constitution.

Pre-Activity Student Work – Review constitutional amendments that expanded voting rights.

Activity Description - Who could vote for George Washington vs. who could vote for Donald Trump?

In class, all the students stand up. Then recite various categories of people who could not vote for George Washington (non-whites, women, non-Christians, under 21 years old, non-property owners.) Tell the students to sit down as their category is called. After all categories are called, look around the room at how many students are still standing. (In over 25 years of doing this exercise, I have never had more than 1 or 2 students still standing.) Then, have all the students stand up again. Recite the categories of people who could not vote for Donald Trump (or whomever is the current president) (under eighteen, non-citizens, mentally incapacitated, felony conviction – can also have a class discussion on states that allow people with felony convictions to vote.) Tell students to sit down as their category is called. Usually for this exercise many more students are still standing. Sometimes there are students who are not citizens or who are under eighteen.

Reflection – A reflection paper including some of the following questions.

How did the activity get you to think about yourself as a citizen? How did the activity influence your understanding of the political process? Are you more or less likely to engage politically? How can we increase voter participation? Do we want higher levels of participation or is low participation a sign of a healthy democracy?

NACE COMPETENCIES: Critical Thinking