

**APSA Teaching and Learning Symposium on Teaching American Politics in Times  
of Uncertainty**  
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**Section of American Government** – Voting, Elections, Civil Rights

**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. Teacher selected articles on turnout and participation from the Pew Research Foundation or other sources.

**Pre-Activity Student Work** – Review constitutional amendments that expanded voting rights, discussion of other forms of participation. Review which groups were more likely to utilize which forms of participation.

**Activity Description** – Place students in groups of 3-5 (depending on the size of the class) and have them list various forms of participation that do not include actual voting. Then have them identify which groups (racial, age, gender, religious) are more likely to engage in that type of participation. After a short amount of time the class will come together and have an open discussion of how and why they assigned each identity to that form of participation. Each group will need to make a coherent argument about why they made their choices. An alternate version would be to assign each group a specific identity and have them decided which forms of engagement that identity is most likely to engage. Then when the class comes together, they can compare which groups engage in similar participation and which do not.

**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:** Teamwork, Communication, Critical Thinking, Equity, and Inclusion