



Kris Wright - Debate Central LD workshop - 2013 September/October NFL topic

2013 Sept/Oct NFL Topic

Resolved: In a democracy, voting ought to be compulsory.

**When you analyze a resolution, you need to have . . .
the attitude:**

We want to treat the resolution as a text, whose meaning is unearthed, or determined, through the practice of doing a “close reading.” Much like you do in a rigorous English or Social Studies course, we want to flesh out the different ways that the resolution could be interpreted

the strategy:

Distinguish the evaluative phrase(s) from other words in the resolution. Every resolution asserts an evaluation of something, which means that every resolution contains some words that tell us what is being evaluated and other words tell us what kind of evaluation being made in the assertion. The words that tell us the kind of evaluation being made are referred to as the evaluative term(s) or evaluative phrase(s). If asked to identify the evaluative phrase(s) in our resolution, I’d argue there are two possible options:

1- “ought”

a. On this option, what semantic role does “in a democracy” play?

b. Interpretations of “ought”:

c. strategic significance of each interpretation of “ought”

2- "ought" + "in a democracy"

a. On this option, what semantic role does "in a democracy" play?

b. Interpretations of "ought" + "in a democracy":

c. strategic significance of each interpretation of "ought" + "in a democracy":

d. What are some helpful ways we can distinguish between conceptions of democracy? The aim here is to figure out what kinds of reasons would be sufficient for determining what a democracy ought do.

i. Direct and Indirect

ii. Procedural and Substantive

iii. Liberal and Illiberal

iv. Aggregative and Deliberative

v. Radical and Traditional



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Next, we should analyze uses of “compulsory voting” to proffer interpretations of what the resolution is expresses a judgement of. Here are some suggested questions to guide you in your interpretive endeavor:

What does it mean to make voting compulsory?

What ambiguities in meaning remain?

What is a “right”?

How does treating voting as compulsory compare to treating voting as a right?

Remember: How you interpret the evaluative phrase(s) and the thing being evaluated has strategic implications for the round, so choose your interpretation of the resolution thoughtfully & reflectively!

What are some helpful articles and books to read?

[specific to democracy]

- **Cohen, Joshua. “Procedure and Substance in Deliberative Democracy”**
Cohen defends a view of deliberative democracy that maintains substantive features that constrain what the procedure can be used to democratically justify. He argues that these substantive features follow from the fact of reasonable pluralism.

- **Dahl, Robert. *On Democracy*.**
Dahl defends democracy against a number of common criticisms. He builds up a conception of the democratic process, and the requirements for that process to properly function, grounded on the notion that people are intrinsically equal. By intrinsic equality, Dahl means that the interests of all people should be given equal consideration when making collective decisions.

- **Mouffe, Chantal. *Democratic Paradox***
Mouffe argues that liberal democracy is characterized by an internal conflict--a paradox--created by the combination of classical liberalism and the tradition of democratic theory. Mouffe criticizes theorists of democracy for attempting to permanently remove this internal tension by aiming to develop a consensus view on the principles that should define our community. Mouffe instead proposes a solution to the tension that aims at balancing the values of liberalism and democracy through the agonistic practice of valuing and sustaining dissent. Dissent in the democratic process is, for Mouffe, a more important goal for democracy than consensus. Under an agonistic relationship, opponents will treat each other as friendly, respectful adversaries arguing and working for their own position to be victorious, instead of treating each other as enemies to be destroyed.

- **Peter, Fabienne. “The Political Egalitarian’s Dilemma**
Peter argues that even a deliberative democracy faces the political egalitarian’s dilemma. This article is a response to Cohen and other advocates of deliberative democracy.

- **Saffon, Maria Paula and Nadia Urbinati. “Procedural Democracy, the Bulwark of Equal Liberty”**
Saffon and Urbinati argue that democracy is constituted by its procedures and that these procedures, and the conditions required for the procedures to function, are what defend equal liberty within a democracy.

[specific to compulsory voting]



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- **Chong, Alberto. “Does compulsory voting help equalize incomes?” & “On compulsory voting and income inequality in a cross-section of countries”**

These articles empirically defend the conclusion that compulsory voting, when enforced, improves the distribution of income to the benefit of the poor.

- **Hill, Lisa. “Compulsory voting, political shyness and welfare outcomes”**

Under a system of voluntary voting, political shyness negatively affects the welfare of vulnerable members of our community. On the other hand, the importance of compulsion is linked to notions of reciprocal obligation and the centrality of inclusive citizenship.

- **Jakee, Keith. “Is compulsory voting more democratic?”**

This article argues that, counter-intuitively, compulsory voting increases the chances that the less popular candidate is elected.

- **Lacroix, Justine. “A Liberal Defense of Compulsory Voting”**

Lacroix argues from a liberal point of view, which is not the kind of liberalism that is meant. Instead, liberalism in the political theory sense refers to a philosophy that regards the political significance of liberty and equality to be foundational to deciding how our government should govern, what are justified constraints on how governments may legitimately treat individuals (and even how individuals may justly treat each other as political agents). Lacroix argues that from the point of view of a liberal, compulsory voting can be defended on several grounds. In other words, she argues that compulsory voting is justified by the principles of liberty and equality.

- **Lardy, Heather. “Is there a right not to vote?”**

This article argues that there is no right to vote and that the defense of one rests on a misunderstanding of what kind of freedom a right to vote consists of.