

Voting Rights Essay

Instructions:

Our course theme this year is voting rights and the health of democracy. You are reading two books, *Who's Counting?* and *Give Us the Ballot*, to learn about the history of voting rights and evaluate current topics such as voter registration, voter fraud, and Voter ID. Central to this process is an understanding of the history of voter discrimination and the role of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in guaranteeing equal access and treatment. Your task is to recount the history of voting rights discrimination, expansion, and protection; demonstrate an understanding of the content, implementation, and interpretation of the VRA; and take positions on current voting rights controversies.

The positions that you take should be supported by arguments and evidence. No position is necessarily wrong, but you must explain your reasoning rather than just state what you want to see happen in terms of reform and/or legislation. *Who's Counting* and *Give Us the Ballot* provide well-articulated and contrary perspectives on current issues. Part of taking a position on current voting rights controversies is agreeing or disagreeing with these texts. In doing so, you should engage both texts and cite them often.

Your essay must have direct textual evidence from BOTH books. Textual evidence from the books should appear in all three major sections of the essay. In Section 3, you must put the books in dialogue with each other by summarizing and evaluating both sides of the argument. The Essay should be written using MLA format with a Works Cited page.

Sections of the Essay:

Introduction (1 paragraph)

1. History of voting rights (1-2 pages)

-Topics: Constitutional Convention, U.S. Constitution, history of the franchise, constitutional amendments relevant to voting rights, legislation relevant to voting rights, court cases relevant to voting rights, the role of specific political parties, interest groups, and individuals in advancing or restricting voting rights (you do NOT need to discuss all of these topics, pick what you want to discuss in Section 1 to adequately cover voting rights history).

2. Voting Rights Act of 1965 (1-2 pages)

Summary: Provide outline of different sections of the law, explain what the different sections aim to accomplish, summarize the impact of court cases on the interpretation and implementation of the law, and discuss the significance of *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013).

3. Current Issues (2-4 pages)

-Topics: Voter registration, voter fraud, voter turnout, voter ID, early voting, absentee voting. You may choose to discuss whatever topics you want. What do you think are the most important voting rights issues that need to be reformed and/or fixed? Take positions on at least TWO issues and make arguments in support of policy proposals. Directly compare and evaluate opposing positions as presented in the texts.

Conclusion (1 paragraph)

Works Cited

Due: Monday, April 29th