



# EXPOS

# 2020



## The 2020 Election and American Democracy

### **General/Capstone Inspiration**

Interactive election map - <https://www.270towin.com/>

18-year-old first time voter profiles - <https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2020/01/9312663/first-time-voter-2020-election-youth-vote>

Register to vote - <https://vote.gov/>

Voting amid the pandemic - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-5yje9HnIM>

### **Unit 1**

What Is Democracy? (trailer) - <https://zeitgeistfilms.com/film/whatisdemocracy>

Suppressed: The Fight to Vote (trailer) - <https://www.bravenewfilms.org/suppressed>

The Electoral College - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9H3gvnN468>

Gerrymandering - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bGLRJ12uqmk>

The Voting Rights Act - <https://time.com/3985479/voting-rights-act-1965-results/?playlistVideoId=4403648476001>

Should we lower the voting age to 16? - <https://www.kqed.org/education/531208/should-16-year-olds-be-allowed-to-vote-2>

Should voting be mandatory? - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cu3AZ1Hjw0c>

## **Unit 2**

Polarization -

(a) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UMnQg\\_LRQs&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UMnQg_LRQs&feature=emb_logo)

(b) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqkFD-QDDhI>

Authoritarianism -

(a)

[https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=5YU9djt\\_CQM&index=147&list=PLJ8cMiYb3G5df0hNFQxY\\_CKa8wrUERh-u](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=5YU9djt_CQM&index=147&list=PLJ8cMiYb3G5df0hNFQxY_CKa8wrUERh-u)

Oligarchy -

(a) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inBWp13C7H8&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inBWp13C7H8&feature=emb_logo)

(b) <https://www.vox.com/2014/5/14/5718080/the-most-terrifying-graph-about-democracy-is-a-straight-line>

(c) <http://www.cc.com/video-clips/kj9zai/the-daily-show-with-jon-stewart-martin-gilens---benjamin-page>

Money in politics -

(a) [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ylomy1Aw9Hk&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ylomy1Aw9Hk&feature=emb_logo)

(b) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5kHACjrdEY>

## **Course Narrative**

It's a cliché for pundits and politicians to declare that each election is the most important in our lifetimes, maybe all of American history – at least, that is, until the next one. Even so, it's easier than usual to make the argument that the 2020 Election finds American democracy at a crossroads. President Trump's bid for re-election was bound to be contentious, given the shocking upset that brought him to the White House in 2016 and the divisive character of his policies and rhetoric. Less expected was that the 2020 Election would be held amidst a deadly pandemic that has ground normal life to a halt and raised uncertainty about how to conduct the vote safely and fairly. Or that the preceding summer would see a national reckoning with systemic racism and police brutality. Consider that all of this occurs within a political climate of intense polarization, refracted in a media environment which frequently distorts reality to fit partisan narratives, and it is clear that the 2020 Election will test America's democracy like none before. And yet, for all that makes this election unique, we have arrived at this critical juncture as a result of forces that are deeply rooted in our nation's history, from the bitter residue of the 2016 Election, to the unfinished work of the Civil Rights Movement, to paradoxes of democratic citizenship that date back to the nation's founding.

In this course, we'll draw on works by political scientists, historians, journalists, and activists to better understand the stakes of the 2020 Election and the wider issues it raises about participation, representation, citizenship, and equality. The first unit of the course focuses on voting as a right and as a responsibility. Our readings will address barriers to the ideal of full and equal participation - such as low voter turnout, voter suppression, gerrymandering, and the Electoral College - and assess potential solutions, from the seemingly common-sense to the deeply controversial. The second unit then asks that we zoom out from the polls and take a broader view of the systemic challenges facing American

democracy. As a class, we'll engage with cutting edge research on topics like polarization, authoritarianism, inequality, and the influence of money in politics. These readings will lay the groundwork for students to conduct original research and analysis on American politics in 2020 and beyond. Along the way, we'll be cataloguing our predictions and reactions as the electoral drama unfolds, curating our own archive of news items and campaign materials, and reflecting on our part in the process from the unique vantage of point of the University, where many students will be casting their ballots for the first time. This work will provide the materials for our third unit capstone, where students will contribute to a collaborative project that blends public writing with visual media and compose a personal reflection discussing their experience of this historic moment.