“Taking the Mystery Out of Voting”
A How-To Guide

Turn Up Turnout at the University of Michigan
TUTUofM@gmail.com
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Introduction

Age is a strong predictor of voting turnout, especially in midterm elections, with younger people less likely to vote than older groups. Perhaps the major reason for this age disparity is that young people move so frequently and forget to update their registration at their new addresses. Another reason is that first-time voters do not always appreciate WHY it is important to vote in local and state elections and HOW to cast a ballot. Without help, the first voting experience can be mysterious and daunting. The goal of this workshop is to explain why voting matters, especially at the state and local level, and to demystify the voting process.

During the summer of 2017 the workshop was presented to five groups of students entering the University of Michigan, with good results. This document describes the workshop in sufficient detail to permit adapting it for other colleges, other states, and even for seniors in high school. Enclosed are screenshots of the workshop presentation along with explanations of each slide.

This workshop was designed and originally presented by Tara Jayaram, Elizabeth Pratt, and Elaina Rahrig under the supervision of Professor Edie Goldenberg, with general support from Democracy Works and financial assistance from the Students Learn Students Vote Coalition. The following pages describe a 45 minute presentation given to 10-40 students at each session. Workshop sections can be expanded or shortened, depending on the time available. If you have questions about our presentation or suggestions for improvement, please contact us at tutuofm@gmail.com.

We hope you find this helpful in your civic engagement endeavors.

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Checklist: Things to Do Before the Workshop

- Change the state image on the Introduction and Acknowledgements Slide (see page 6)
- Find sample ballot for your area (optional)
- Print both handouts
  - Deliberative Discussion Information Handout (see pages 10-12)
  - Sample Ballot/Exit Survey (see pages 26-27)
- Delete the Big Ten Voting Challenge slide or replace the University of Michigan logo (see page 23)
- Ask participants to bring devices- phone, tablet, or laptop
- Make sure AV equipment works
Materials Used in This Workshop

★ “Taking the Mystery out of Voting” Google Slides presentation
★ Room with
  ○ Chairs
  ○ Overhead projector and AV equipment
  ○ Whiteboard and markers (optional)
  ○ Internet access
★ Laptop (for facilitators)
★ Handout A (two-sided), which includes:
  ○ Deliberative discussion instructions
  ○ Exit survey
★ Handout B (two-sided), which includes:
  ○ Sample ballot
  ○ Useful website links
★ Pens
★ Extra tablets or laptops for participants who cannot bring their own (optional)
Workshop Outline

For a 45 minute workshop,* you may plan for the topics and exercises to be timed this way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Allotted Time</th>
<th>Slides</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introductions, Acknowledgements and Agenda</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why It Is Important to Vote/Suffrage History</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>3-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberative Discussion of Controversial Topic</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>5-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review Importance of Voting</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>8-9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Vote/Common Misconceptions</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td>10-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Next Steps and Thank Yous</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
<td>17-20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*To modify for a shorter session, select the portions that best fit your workshop’s needs.
Display Slide #1 on the overhead projector as participants enter the room.

Introduce presenters by names, years in college, majors, hometowns, and states. Ask participants to share their name and where they are from. This allows facilitators to use more participant-relevant examples by using examples from their home states.

***This slide uses a picture of the state of Michigan. Each presenter should change the image to match the state where the presentation is being given.
Give participants an overview of the workshop.
Ask participants to share why they think it is important to vote.

Participants are sometimes hesitant to share. Be patient and assure them that there are many reasons to vote. When participants come up with the answers themselves, they are more meaningful.
Slide #4 shows that not all U.S. citizens have always had the right to vote in this country\textsuperscript{2}.

Explain how the United States voting population has expanded over time using the dates on the slide.

Acknowledge that even today not every U.S. citizen has the right to vote. For example,

\begin{itemize}
  \item Some states permit those convicted of a felony to vote and others do not. Some states allow citizens to vote when they are in prison/jail, some after they get out of prison/jail or finish probation, and in some states only a governor or court may restore suffrage.\textsuperscript{3}
  \item Citizens of Washington, D.C. can vote for President but cannot vote for U.S. Congress.
  \item Even though laws change, many barriers remain to exercising the right to vote. That was especially true for African Americans after they officially gained the right to vote.
\end{itemize}


Announce a shift to a deliberative discussion\(^4\) of an important policy affected by vote outcomes.

A crucial part of civic engagement is political discourse. This allows participants to express their own thoughts and ideas about political topics while also allowing them to listen to and interact with those who hold different points of view.

***The topic for this deliberative discussion is the death penalty. If you decide to use a different controversial topic, change the image, the following two slides, and the informational handout accordingly.

***While the length of your deliberative discussion is flexible, allocate at least fifteen minutes for this portion. We do not recommend including a deliberative debate if the total workshop time is less than 40 minutes.

Slide #6 shows 31 states with the death penalty and 19 without.\(^5\) Explain how:

- ★ The states in blue do not have the death penalty.
- ★ The states in red have the death penalty.
- ★ The states in purple have the death penalty, but their governors placed a moratorium on its use for the time being.

State policy concerning the death penalty is an example that makes clear the importance of voting for state offices. Whether or not a state has the death penalty is decided by the people elected to the state legislature and the governor. In many states, judges are elected; in others, they are appointed by the governor. Voting in state and local elections could make the difference between having or not having the death penalty and between imposing and not imposing the death penalty in states that allow it.

Ask participants to raise their hands if (1) their state does have [red] (2) does not have [blue] or (3) has a moratorium on [purple] the death penalty.

\(^5\) Death Penalty Information Center. "States With and Without the Death Penalty."
Slide #7 begins the deliberative discussion. The deliberative discussion is based on a format used by the Kettering Foundation, which provides three options with summarized arguments under each to fuel discussions. Participants may also come up with their own arguments.

Before turning to small-group discussion, briefly describe the three options.

★ Option #1- Abolish the death penalty in every state. This means no state would be able to punish a crime with death.
★ Option #2- Institute the death penalty in every state. This means every state would be able to punish a capital crime with death.
★ Option #3- Leave it up to the states to decide. This means keeping the law as it is now. Some states have the death penalty and some do not.

Emphasize that the death penalty is a controversial topic, and different people hold different beliefs about it. Disagreements exist and discussion among people with different points of view can help each person understand the positions others take. It provides an opportunity to listen to others’ thoughts and to feel comfortable questioning them and respectfully pushing back on what other participants say.

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Pass around handouts with arguments for the different policy choices that participants can use to inform their discussions. All statistics come from the Death Penalty Information Center. After explanation, ask participants to discuss the topic with one or two people next to them. Each participant should choose one option for which to argue. If the group is small (fewer than ten participants), skip small-group discussion and move immediately to the large-group discussion.

Follow the small-group discussion with a large-group discussion. Use this as a format for the large group discussion:

- ★ List the three options and ask participants to raise their hands for the one they chose.
- ★ Ask someone from one of the groups to share the rationale for their choice. (e.g., “Could we hear someone who chose to institute the death penalty in every state explain why they chose that option?”)
- ★ Invite others to add to or push back on what was said.
- ★ Facilitate.

The interactive discussion is the most flexible part of the workshop. It can last as long or short as you would like.

End the group discussion by reiterating the importance of voting for local and state court judges, state legislators, and governors. For example, you could say that if a state has the death penalty, judges are usually the ones who decide whether to impose this punishment and how often.

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Slide #8 is a return to the discussion of why it is important to vote. Highlight more reasons to vote, adding to those that were mentioned earlier. The photos will “fly” in in this order:

1. Voting lets you choose who represents YOU- who makes the laws and rules (Finger pointing)
2. Politicians chase votes and if young people don’t vote, politicians won’t chase their votes (Senior citizen voting) [Because officials think voters look like this, they pay much more attention to issues such as social security as opposed to issues such as the cost of higher education.]
3. It feels good to vote -- you’re fulfilling your civic duty (“I Voted” sticker)
4. If you vote, you encourage others to vote (Dominoes)
5. Voting levels the playing field so that elections are not controlled solely by the wealthy -- one person, one vote (Money-filled briefcase)
Announce that you are now going to explain how to vote.
In order to vote, you must first register to vote. This can be done either by registering at your Secretary of State’s Office or (in some states) online.

Once you are registered to vote, you are able to vote in every U.S. election as long as you keep your registration current by updating your address if you move. For students, you can register to vote either at your home address or at your university address.
Announce you are going to use the example of an out-of-state student.

This is Tara. Tara is from South Carolina but she goes to school at the University of Michigan. Because Tara has two addresses (a home address and a school address), she is able to choose whether she would like her vote to count in Michigan or in South Carolina.

First, you explain in-person voting. Let’s say Tara happens to be in South Carolina during the election and decides to vote in person at home. This is how she would do it. Note: This also applies to those who live where they want their vote to count. This includes in-state students and out-of-state students who register to vote in Michigan.
When Tara votes in person, she drives or walks to her polling place on election day. She checks in at a table, produces ID (if required) and receives a ballot. She walks to a ballot box (as seen in image) and fills out her choices. Then she gives the ballot to another person at the polling place.

Tip: Tara may print out a sample ballot beforehand and fill it out to use as a “cheat sheet” while she is at the polling place. She can also bring information on candidates and issues into the ballot box.
Out-of-state students who prefer to vote in their home state and in-state students who cannot make it to their local polling station on voting day must vote by absentee ballot. Let’s say Tara decides she does not want to go home to South Carolina to vote on election day, but she still wants her vote to count in South Carolina. This means she has to get an absentee ballot.
To obtain an absentee ballot, Tara has to request one by application. She can get an application from her Secretary of State’s Office, fill it out, and return it to the Secretary of State’s Office. Some states permit requesting absentee ballots by mail; others, such as Michigan, require first-time voters to present their ids in person in order to qualify to receive an absentee ballot or vote in person for their first election.

Note that there is a section where the voter writes his or her home address (for Tara, this would be in South Carolina) and where to send the ballot (for Tara, this would be in Michigan). This ensures Tara’s vote will count in South Carolina although her ballot will be sent to her school address in Michigan.
Explain how to cast a vote when you have registered for an absentee ballot. Tara receives a ballot in the mail. She fills out the ballot and then mails it back in the envelope provided after attaching a stamp (or multiple stamps).

Note the deadline referenced on the envelope in the image. That ballot must be received by 7PM election day. It is important to register for an absentee ballot as early as possible and to fill it out and mail it back in plenty of time before the deadline. The longer you wait, the more likely you are to not have your vote counted because your ballot was not returned in time.
Slide #16 introduces a discussion of some common misconceptions about voting. The images are designed to visually represent each misconception. Each flies in upon clicking:

1. **Financial aid:** Students who go to school out of state can register to vote at home or at their college. The choice will not affect a student’s financial aid.

2. **Filling out a ballot:** Many people believe they must fill out every option on the ballot. This is not true. Voters can leave categories blank if they wish.

3. **Timing:** Many people believe it takes a long time- hours- to register to vote. This is not true. On average, it takes 2-5 minutes to register.

Ask participants if they have any other concerns about voting.
Slide #17 announces the Big Ten Voting Challenge.

Starting Fall 2017, all Big Ten schools will be competing for two trophies. Winners will be announced after the 2018 election.

★ One trophy will go to the school with the highest percentage of students who are eligible to vote and who vote in the 2018 midterm elections.

★ The second will go to the school with the best improvement in voter turnout in the 2018 midterm elections, compared to voter turnout in the 2014 midterm elections.

★ All students’ votes will count, wherever they vote in the United States.

***This slide is only relevant for workshops at Big 10 universities.
Slide #18 provides live links (the second and third links in the Google Form) for participants to take the next step toward registering to vote. These links must be created and added to the tiny.cc Google Form BEFORE facilitating a workshop.

Direct participants to the appropriate links.

★ Those 18 years or older access the first option, which links participants to a voter resource site where they can begin the process of registering to vote and receive reminders to vote.
★ Those not yet 18 access the second link to provide information -- email address and birth month and year -- that will generate a reminder to register to vote when they turn 18.

The University of Michigan has partnered with TurboVote to receive a custom URL for participants to use TurboVote. TurboVote allows University of Michigan students to:
★ Register to vote in any of the fifty states.
★ Sign up for text or email reminders of upcoming elections anywhere in the U.S.
★ Receive reminders to update addresses if needed.
★ Learn the rules for obtaining absentee ballots in your state.
★ The URL also has a feature that permits tracking of the number who sign up.

Other options for online voter resources include, but are not limited to:
★ Rock the Vote
★ UVote
The third URL on the Google form links to a Google form where participants who are under 18 can enter their information. This information is used to send participants reminder emails to register to vote the month after they turn 18. This document is also made in Google Forms and looks like this:
Slide #19 shows what a sample ballot looks like. Hand out the sample ballot that participants can take with them.

Explain how to fill in the ballot and that ballots can be filled out in various ways (i.e., bubbles vs. arrows vs. machine voting) and might look different (i.e., butterfly ballots vs. machine voting).

Explain components of a ballot:
★ Straight-ticket voting.
★ Partisan portion of ballot.
★ Non-partisan positions (e.g., elections for judges) and ballot measures. Voting in those cases requires individual decisions for each position or item, even if you previously voted straight ticket.

Tell participants to take the sample ballot with them.
Slide #20 shows a brief workshop evaluation. Hand out the evaluation form.

Ask participants to take a minute to fill out this exit survey to help improve the workshop for future use.
Slide #21: Final Information and Thank You
4 minutes (rest of time)

This is the final slide to thank participants for coming.

- Any questions? Email tutuofm@gmail.com or come and talk to us at the end of the workshop!
- Want to join TUT? Come and talk to us about it at the end of the workshop!

Thank you!
Works Cited