

Politicized Yawning

Introduction

Americans are losing interest in politics. Voter turnout has been declining for decades, and public trust in government is at an all-time low. Why is this happening?

One reason is that the media has become increasingly focused on the game of politics, rather than on its substance. Stories about horse-race polling, campaign strategy, and political gaffes dominate the news, while issues that actually affect people's lives are often ignored. This focus on the game of politics has created a "spiral of cynicism" among the public. When people feel like they're not getting any real information about the issues, they become less interested in politics and less likely to vote.

Another reason for the decline in political participation is the rise of social media. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have become echo chambers, where people are only exposed to information that confirms their existing beliefs. This makes it difficult for people to learn about different perspectives and to have informed conversations about politics.

The decline in political participation is a serious problem for our democracy. When people don't vote, they're giving up their voice in government. This makes it easier for special interests to control the political process and to pass laws that benefit themselves at the expense of the public.

We need to find ways to reverse the decline in political participation. One way is to encourage the media to focus more on the substance of politics and less on the game. We also need to find ways to make social media platforms more conducive to informed discussion about politics.

Finally, we need to educate citizens about the importance of voting and civic engagement. We need to help them understand that their voice matters and that they can make a difference in their community and country.

If we can do these things, we can help to restore trust in government and rebuild our democracy.

Book Description

Americans are losing faith in their democracy. Voter turnout is declining, trust in government is at an all-time low, and public discourse is more polarized than ever before.

Why is this happening?

One reason is that the media has become increasingly focused on the game of politics, rather than on its substance. Stories about horse-race polling, campaign strategy, and political gaffes dominate the news, while issues that actually affect people's lives are often ignored.

This focus on the game of politics has created a "spiral of cynicism" among the public. When people feel like they're not getting any real information about the issues, they become less interested in politics and less likely to vote.

Another reason for the decline in political participation is the rise of social media. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have become echo chambers, where people are only exposed to information that confirms their existing beliefs. This makes it difficult for people to learn about different perspectives and to have informed conversations about politics.

This book argues that the decline in political participation is a serious threat to our democracy. When people don't vote, they're giving up their voice in government. This makes it easier for special interests to control the political process and to pass laws that benefit themselves at the expense of the public.

The book also argues that there are ways to reverse the decline in political participation. One way is to encourage the media to focus more on the substance of politics and less on the game. We also need to find ways to make social media platforms more conducive to informed discussion about politics.

Finally, we need to educate citizens about the importance of voting and civic engagement. We need to help them understand that their voice matters and that they can make a difference in their community and country.

If we can do these things, we can help to restore trust in government and rebuild our democracy.

Chapter 1: The Yawning Public

1. The Decline of Voter Participation

In the United States, voter turnout has been declining for decades. In the 1960 presidential election, 62.8% of eligible voters cast a ballot. By the 2020 presidential election, that number had fallen to 61.7%. This decline is particularly pronounced among young people and people of color.

There are a number of factors that have contributed to the decline in voter turnout. One factor is the increasing polarization of American politics. As the two major parties have become more ideologically opposed, it has become more difficult for voters to find candidates who represent their views. This has led many voters to feel like their vote doesn't matter.

Another factor that has contributed to the decline in voter turnout is the rise of social media. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have become echo

chambers, where people are only exposed to information that confirms their existing beliefs. This makes it difficult for people to learn about different perspectives and to have informed conversations about politics.

Finally, the decline in voter turnout has also been attributed to changes in election laws. In recent years, many states have made it more difficult to vote, by imposing stricter voter ID requirements and cutting back on early voting opportunities. These changes have made it particularly difficult for people who are already marginalized to vote.

The decline in voter turnout is a serious problem for our democracy. When people don't vote, they're giving up their voice in government. This makes it easier for special interests to control the political process and to pass laws that benefit themselves at the expense of the public.

We need to find ways to reverse the decline in voter turnout. One way is to encourage the media to focus more on the substance of politics and less on the game. We also need to find ways to make social media platforms more conducive to informed discussion about politics.

Finally, we need to make it easier for people to vote. We need to eliminate voter ID requirements and expand early voting opportunities. We also need to make Election Day a national holiday.

If we can do these things, we can help to restore trust in government and rebuild our democracy.

Chapter 1: The Yawning Public

2. Why People Don't Vote

Americans are losing interest in politics. Voter turnout has been declining for decades, and public trust in government is at an all-time low. Why is this happening?

There are many reasons why people don't vote. Some people feel like their vote doesn't matter. They may believe that the government is corrupt or that it doesn't represent their interests. Others may feel like they don't have the time or energy to vote. They may be working long hours or taking care of children or elderly parents.

Lack of Information

One reason why people don't vote is that they feel like they don't have enough information about the candidates or the issues. They may not know where the candidates stand on the issues or what their

qualifications are. They may also not be aware of the importance of voting or how it can make a difference.

Negative Campaigns

Another reason why people don't vote is because they are turned off by negative campaigns. They may be tired of hearing candidates attack each other instead of talking about the issues. They may also be disgusted by the amount of money that is spent on campaigns.

Feeling of Powerlessness

Finally, some people don't vote because they feel like they don't have any power. They may believe that the government is controlled by special interests and that their vote won't make a difference. They may also feel like they don't have a voice in the political process.

These are just some of the reasons why people don't vote. If we want to increase voter turnout, we need to address these concerns and make it easier for people to participate in the political process.

Chapter 1: The Yawning Public

3. The Impact of Media Coverage

The media plays a powerful role in shaping public opinion. The way that the media covers politics can have a significant impact on how people view the political process and their role in it.

When the media focuses on the game of politics, rather than on the substance of the issues, it can create a sense of cynicism among the public. People may come to believe that politics is a dirty business and that their vote doesn't matter. This can lead to a decline in voter turnout and a decrease in public trust in government.

For example, a study by the Pew Research Center found that people who watch a lot of cable news are more likely to be cynical about politics and less likely to trust the government. The study also found that people who watch a lot of cable news are more likely to believe that

the government is corrupt and that politicians are only interested in helping themselves.

In contrast, when the media focuses on the substance of the issues, it can help to inform the public and encourage them to participate in the political process. People may be more likely to vote and to contact their elected officials if they feel like they understand the issues and that their voice matters.

For example, a study by the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University found that people who read a lot of newspapers are more likely to be politically informed and to participate in the political process. The study also found that people who read a lot of newspapers are more likely to trust the government and to believe that politicians are trying to do the right thing.

The media has a responsibility to provide the public with accurate and unbiased information about politics. When the media fails to do this, it can have a negative

impact on the public's trust in government and its participation in the political process.

This extract presents the opening three sections of the first chapter.

Discover the complete 10 chapters and 50 sections by purchasing the book, now available in various formats.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: The Yawning Public 1. The Decline of Voter Participation 2. Why People Don't Vote 3. The Impact of Media Coverage 4. The Spiral of Cynicism 5. Breaking the Cycle

Chapter 2: The Media's Role 1. The Focus on Strategy 2. The Neglect of Substance 3. The Creation of Cynicism 4. The Erosion of Trust 5. The Need for Change

Chapter 3: The Power of Issue-Based Coverage 1. What Is Issue-Based Coverage? 2. The Benefits of Issue-Based Coverage 3. How Issue-Based Coverage Can Increase Voter Participation 4. Examples of Successful Issue-Based Coverage 5. The Challenge of Providing Issue-Based Coverage

Chapter 4: The Challenge of Competitive Coverage 1. What Is Competitive Coverage? 2. The Problems with Competitive Coverage 3. How Competitive Coverage Can Decrease Voter Participation 4. Examples of

Harmful Competitive Coverage 5. The Need for More Competitive Coverage

Chapter 5: The Public's Desire for Substance 1. Research on Public Preferences 2. Examples of Public Demand for Substance 3. The Media's Responsibility to Provide Substance 4. The Benefits of Providing Substance 5. The Challenge of Providing Substance

Chapter 6: Overcoming the Spiral of Cynicism 1. The Role of Education 2. The Role of the Media 3. The Role of Government 4. The Role of Citizens 5. The Path to a More Engaged Public

Chapter 7: Creating a More Informed Electorate 1. The Importance of an Informed Electorate 2. The Barriers to an Informed Electorate 3. How to Create a More Informed Electorate 4. The Role of the Media in Creating an Informed Electorate 5. The Role of Government in Creating an Informed Electorate

Chapter 8: Restoring Trust in Government 1. The Decline of Trust in Government 2. The Causes of the Decline of Trust in Government 3. The Consequences of the Decline of Trust in Government 4. How to Restore Trust in Government 5. The Role of the Media in Restoring Trust in Government

Chapter 9: The Future of Democracy 1. The Challenges Facing Democracy 2. The Threats to Democracy 3. The Opportunities for Democracy 4. The Role of Citizens in the Future of Democracy 5. The Role of the Media in the Future of Democracy

Chapter 10: A Call to Action 1. The Importance of Taking Action 2. What Citizens Can Do 3. What the Media Can Do 4. What Government Can Do 5. The Path to a More Perfect Democracy

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