

Course: GV251

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Week 11: Interest Representation

PART I) Essay question: “Low voter turnout in European elections has nothing to do with Europe’. Discuss.”

- (i) Let us start by **defining “low voter turnout”**. One of the possible ways to do this would be by comparison to the turnout level observed in national elections. With such an understanding of “low turnout”, our basic task in the essay would become to explain why turnout in European elections is *systematically lower* than turnout in national elections. The advantage of this approach is that it allows us to exclude from the essay the many factors from the wider literature on voting behaviour that can explain turnout variations in both national and European elections, and to focus instead on the smaller set factors that apply in European elections but not in national parliamentary or presidential elections, as a result of the differences between the two types of processes.
- (ii) **Brainstorm:** Which are some factors that could explain why turnout in European elections tends to be systematically lower than turnout in European elections?

- (iii) **Turn back to the question:** Which of these factors could be thought of as having “something to do with Europe”? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to define what “Europe” can be taken to mean in the context of this question.
- (iv) **Formulate your argument:** Which of the factors listed under point (ii) do you consider as being the most plausible explanations of the phenomenon of systematically low voter turnout in European elections? Can these factors be considered as having “something to do with Europe”? Based on your answers to these questions, formulate a one- or two-sentence thesis statement that concisely summarises the main argument that you will develop in the essay.
- (v) **Plan the main body of your essay:** One of the possible ways to do this would be to analyse the explanations that you find least convincing at the beginning of your main body, to demonstrate their limitations, and then to move on to the factors that you consider most convincing, always remembering to point out whether each set of factors “has to do with Europe” or not. Consider what types of evidence you can bring up in support or against each of the explanations that you will analyse in your essay.
- (vi) **Think about what to write in the introduction and the conclusion:** Try to think of an interesting fact, a commonly held belief, an important or provocative quote, or a paradox that you can use in the first sentence of your introduction in order to motivate your essay. Remember that it is important to use your conclusion in order to summarise your essay’s main argument, and that you shouldn’t use it to bring up any new arguments. However, if you wish, you may use the last sentence of your conclusion to reflect on a broader implication of your main argument (e.g. for the EU’s democratic legitimacy).

PART II) Influence of different types of interest groups on EU policy

a) *Models of interest group politics:*

1. Which types of interest groups are given the chance to influence policy-making the most, in each of the following models of interest groups politics?

i. Pluralist model: _____

ii. Neo-pluralist model: _____

iii. Corporatist model: _____

iv. Consociational model: _____

2. Which model of interest group politics best captures how interest group politics work in the EU?

3. Which model of interest group politics do you think would be *most appropriate* for the EU, from a normative perspective?

b) *Why are some types of interest groups more influential than others?* Please note down all the factors that you consider important. As you consider your answer, you may refer to the prompts at the next page in order to draw inspiration.

Prompts to boost your inspiration with regard to question b:

- i. Which useful purpose can interest groups fulfil from the perspective of the EU institutions? Which types of interest groups are best placed to serve this useful purpose, thereby being most likely to gain a sympathetic ear in Brussels?
- ii. Would the following interest groups be likely to be highly influential in each of the situations listed below?
 - The European Round Table of Industrialists (**ERT**) vs. the European Trade Union Confederation (**ETUC**), stating their demands during the negotiations about the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP)
 - The German Association of the Automotive Industry (**VDA**) vs. the Automotive Industry Association of the Czech Republic (**AIA CR**), arguing the opposite thing in a consultation about a regulatory issue in the car industry
 - The Committee of Agricultural Organizations in the EU/ General Committee for Agricultural Cooperation in Europe (**COPA-COGECA**), demanding **higher subsidies** during a reform of the EU's wine policy
 - The Committee of Agricultural Organizations in the EU/ General Committee for Agricultural Cooperation in Europe (**COPA-COGECA**), taking a pro-GMO stance in a consultation about agricultural product standards
- iii. Useful concepts: demand for vs. supply of access, logic of collective action, issue context, division of competences, diffuse vs. concentrated interests, structural power, policy context (incentives and consultative fora)

c) **Discuss:** Please answer the following questions with respect to the two empirical studies that were assigned as basic readings.

(NB: These are six generic questions that you can always use in order to approach articles that use quantitative techniques in political science.)

	Dür and Mateo (2012)	Klüver (2011)
What is the main question that the author is asking?		
What are the dependent and independent variables of the study?		
What is the author's answer to the main question?		
How does the author measure the dependent and independent variables? Are these measures appropriate? In other words, is the author really measuring the thing she says she is measuring?		
What cases has the author chosen to study? Are these cases representative, or is the sample biased? Would the author find the same results if she had chosen different cases?		
What are the implications of the author's findings? Are the findings relevant? Do they help advance our understanding of a particular issue that is pertinent in political science?		

PART III) Interest groups and the EU's democratic legitimacy

“While political society in Brussels, in terms of supranational party politics, may be underdeveloped relative to national political systems, civil society in the EU, as represented by EU interest-group activities, is more developed than in any national capital in Europe.”
(Hix and Høyland 2011)

Discuss: Does consultation with interest groups increase the democratic legitimacy of the EU institutions?

