



Reasoning with Ethics

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Ethics in action creates character.

Use this blog to:

1. Lead class discussions in social studies, civics, ethics or advisory classes.
2. Teach students skills to analyze cases with core ethical values.
3. Recognize skills in support of SEE's Tri-Factor Model of ethical functioning.

[Visit the online Ethics Blog.](#)



A Citizen's Obligation?

USA Today reports there are 240 million people registered to vote in the 2020 election out of a voting-age population of 257 million. Of those registered, it is estimated 62% might vote. Thus, 107 million possible voters (90 million of them registered) will choose not to vote in our democratic-republic's national election.



Is there an ethical responsibility to vote? In

the links provided, authors debate the topic with some suggesting that citizens must take the responsibility to register, be informed about the issues and candidates, and vote. Others suggest that without becoming informed, it is more ethical not to vote. This begs the question of the responsibility to educate oneself about local and national issues, possible referendums, and candidate positions. The rationale used by some not to vote include their disapproval of all candidates, the accusation that the system is too corrupt, and the belief their individual vote doesn't matter.

When one considers the question of voting responsibility, there should be a pause to consider the historical alternatives. Were our ancestors, and some in the modern-day, better off under monarchies, totalitarian rule, or some form of oligarchy? There is a reason that people prompt others to vote with the saying, "Thousands have given their lives for your privilege to vote."

Our democracy continues to be held in contempt by countries that implement totalitarian governing models. China's leaders mock the concept of self-governance and assert only its central planning and authoritarian rule can effectively govern a large diverse nation. Those who don't inform themselves and vote give evidence to the Chinese governing philosophy.

This large topic deserves time for reading and reflection by students. The links on the blog website will provide additional background. Students are encouraged to discuss and seek a consensus on the statement; citizens of the US have an ethical obligation to become informed voters. What core values would support any consensus agreement on voter obligation?

Supplemental Links

It's your moral duty to vote (11/2/16) The Washington Post-- <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/11/02/its-your-moral-duty-to-vote-here-are-3-reasons/>

Ethics, Citizenship, and Public Responsibility [to vote] (4:12) Christine Todd Whitman, at the Maxwell School, Syracuse University-- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9R0JayfZoc>

Ethical reasons to vote (9/29/20) The Conversation-- <https://theconversation.com/why-there-is-no-ethical-reason-not-to-vote-unless-you-come-down-with-covid-19-on-election-day-143870>

Potential US Voters, USA Today (10/22/20) -

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2020/10/22/voter-turnout-2020-ranking-us-presidential-elections/6006793002/>

Voting as an ethical issue, Jason Brennan, (2012) Princeton Press, --

<http://assets.press.princeton.edu/chapters/i9464.pdf>

The Ethics of Voting, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy -- <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/voting/>