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### **First Paper Assignment**

Phillip Converse claims that around a fifth of the population has “no issue content” to their political attitudes and that they respond as if their beliefs are the “equivalent of mental coin flips.” Anthony Downs uses a set of assumptions about a “rational man” to guide his economic theory of democracy. How can we reconcile the arguments of these two authors? And, what are the implications of any reconciliation for how we understand democracy and the value of democratic theory? Is Christopher Achen correct that the work of Converse suggests that democratic theory has lost its starting point?

In order to develop your ideas effectively, you will want to be sure to provide both a strong critique and a strong defense of the ideas of each author. And, to create a cohesive narrative, you will want to use each author to engage the work of the other. The main goal I have is that you demonstrate your analytical and synthetic thinking skills with regard to the authors’ set of ideas. You can show your analytical skills by taking apart their structures, arguments, and evidence and constructively criticizing them. You can demonstrate your synthetic thinking skills by bringing disparate ideas in the authors’ work together and integrating your own knowledge of the subject.

The paper should be a maximum of **five pages** long. You should cite heavily to the text so that it is clear where you find support for your ideas and contentions (at least an average of five citations per page). Well-organized, strongly cited, well reasoned, and clearly written papers are very easy to grade. Poorly organized, unsupported, muddily reasoned, and hastily written papers are also very easy to grade. I would love it if your papers are easy to grade in the good way. It is always a good idea to outline your argument in the introduction and to help your reader follow your argument by providing sub-headings.

The **due date** for the paper is the beginning of class, **Wednesday July 8<sup>th</sup>**. If you turn the paper in a day **early** to me at my office (SSB 367) on Tuesday between 3-4 p.m., you will receive a **2% bonus**. If you turn the paper in to me after the beginning of class, there is **5% penalty** for each day it is late. Be aware that the political science department office will not accept papers and that you cannot submit papers electronically.

Please use the seven-steps method in writing this paper. I am confident it will help reduce your stress and improve the quality of your thinking and writing. Best of luck!