

## **Political Representation**

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Political representation is often viewed as the central act of democratic governance, linking citizens with those in government who are authorized to make decisions on their behalf. It is generally understood as the activity of making citizens' voices, opinions, and perspectives "present" in policy-making processes. Yet a wide range of contributions in political science and other disciplines have lent greater nuance to these understandings, revealing that "political representation" as a concept is both elusive and multidimensional.

Political representation occurs in both democratic and non-democratic contexts, for example, at the same time that a host of elected and non-elected actors make claims to speak on behalf of different groups. Moreover, there are a variety of possible metrics for evaluating "good representation," which may or may not be related closely to one another: the presence of representatives who look like the represented (descriptive representation), for instance, may or may not generate a faithful reflection of citizens' priorities and interests in the policy-making process (substantive representation).

Both theoretical and empirical in focus, this course will introduce different definitions and approaches to studying political representation. Materials will be drawn from political systems both inside and beyond the United States, and examples will focus on the political representation of various sectors of the population, based on ideology, class, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and age.