Session 4
Apathy: Not Being Political?
Why Bother Talking about Apathy?

Popular (Mis)Conceptions of Apathy

Wikipedia

Random House Dictionary

Encyclopaedia Britannica

Political Apathy: Causes, Consequences, Solutions (?)

1. individual responsibility for nonparticipation in the political process
2. a condition created by institutional practices and social and cultural structures that limit participation and political awareness

Solution? Real political equality.
“the effective operation of a democratic political system usually requires some measure of apathy and noninvolvement on the part of some individuals and groups....In itself, this marginality on the part of some groups is inherently undemocratic, but it has also been one of the factors which has enabled democracy to function effectively.”


George Will: the Nazis were brought to power in 1933 in an election in which turnout hit nearly 89 percent...implying acute instability. Low rates, therefore, may be explained by the health and maturity of a political order.


Charles Krauthammer: “a leading indicator of contentment” + “more room for the things that really count: science, art, religion, family and play.”

“The history of American democracy and political thought is, in part, a history of the fear of democracy” (Deluca, 1995, p. 2)

“In the United States activists come disproportionately from the better educated and more affluent”

“Apathy and lack of political skill are a consequence, not a cause, of the party structure and political culture….The political system determines whether participation is predicated on class-related resources and attitudes.”

Also, see our entry for Apathy on the course Concepts page: http://politicalanthro.wordpress.com/apathy/