Get Out The VOTE!

Overview
In this lesson, students will explore voter turnout in North Carolina and through a short reading, they will learn about the various reasons for depressed voter turnout in the US. Students will then learn about various "Get Out the Vote" (GOTV) efforts to combat low turnout through platforms such as Twitter and various GOTV commercials. As a culminating project, students will create their own GOTV campaigns for the First Vote school-wide election simulation.

Materials
- "What Affects Voter Turnout Rates" handout from Fair Vote, attached
  - Source: http://www.fairvote.org/voter_turnout#what_affects_voter_turnout_rates
- "Get Out the Vote" assignment handout, attached
  - Additional supplies may be needed for implementing student GOTV campaigns, such as art supplies, video equipment, etc.
- "Seven Tips for Getting Out the Vote" from Nonprofit Vote handout, attached
  - http://www.nonprofitvote.org/documents/2012/04/seven-principles-of-getting-out-the-vote.pdf
- Various Get out the Vote commercials
  - Terry Tate: Get Out the Vote: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbBq29qGxaA
  - Rock the Vote Presents: #TURNOUTFORWHAT: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rijpU5yD55I
  - LL Cool J for Rock the Vote (1992): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbOrLFdGSys
  - Rock the Vote Road Trip at University of North Carolina Charlotte: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7Y4kNLppFI
  - 5 Things That Are Harder Than Registering To Vote, featuring President Obama: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5eE7Da_6AMM
  - MTV's Elect This: What will you elect?: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCw1pYKBHtU&feature=youtu.be
  - Chuck Norris' Top 10 Reasons to Vote: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ISprIUmx7o
- TED Talk, "Let's Make Voting Fun Again," by Eric Liu, available at http://www.ted.com/talks/eric_liu_let_s_make_voting_fun_again#t-797060.

Duration
30-45 minutes for Voter Turnout and GOTV discussion and explanation; remaining time will vary depending on how much class time teachers devote to Get Out the Vote projects.

Teacher Preparation
Seek approval from the administration before allowing students to run school-wide Get Out the Vote Campaigns. Be sure to approve student GOTV campaigns before they begin working on them.

Procedure
Voter Turnout
1. As a warmup, ask students to call out some guesses to the questions below. Write their guesses and the actual percentages on the board for reference.
   - How many people are registered to vote in North Carolina?
     - As of September 2016, there are 6,694,335 registered voters in North Carolina. *(Check www.ncsbe.gov for the most up-to-date numbers.)*
   - What percentage of registered voters in North Carolina voted in the 2012 presidential election?
     - 68.3%

- What percentage of register voters ages 18-25 voted in the 2012 presidential election?
  - 55.1%
- What percentage of registered voters over age 65 voted in the 2012 presidential election?
  - 76.6%

Sources: *http://enr.ncsbe.gov/voter_stats/results.aspx?date=09-03-2016; http://www.elon.edu/docs/e-web/org/nccc/NCVoterTurnout2012PR.pdf*

2. Further discuss:
   - Are you surprised by the amount of registered voters who voted in 2012? Did you think that number would be higher or lower and why?
   - Are you surprised that young people don't vote at the same rates as other age groups? Why do you think this is the case?
   - Do you plan on registering to vote and voting as soon as you're eligible? Why or why not?
   - If not, what would it take to convince you to go vote? In general, how can we improve youth voter turnout in your opinion?

3. Place students in small groups or pairs and provide them with a copy of the attached "What Affects Voter Turnout?" handout from Fair Vote. (Fair Vote is a "non-partisan, non-profit organization that seeks to make democracy fair, functional, and more representative.") Instruct students to read the handout in groups/pairs and answer the attached questions.

4. Once students have had sufficient time to read and discuss, review the questions as a class:
   - What surprised you most about this article?
   - Are you familiar with the terms "blue states," "red states," and "swing states?" How might these terms relate to voter turnout?
     - Blue states vote predominantly Democratic in national elections. Red States vote predominantly Republican in national elections. Voters in a red or blue state may be less apt to vote if they feel that their vote doesn't matter.
   - How do the different types of elections affect voter turnout?
   - Why do you think laws designed to increase turnout (early voting, etc.) appear to have depressed turnout?
   - Why do you think voters tend to be wealthier, older, and white?
   - Why is it important to vote?
   - Do you think this article listed all the reasons for low voter turnout? What other ones can you hear of?
   - What do you think are effective strategies for increasing voter turnout?

#GOTV

5. Ask students if they've encountered the acronym or hashtag "GOTV" on social media. If a student has, ask him/her to define it. If students are unfamiliar with GOTV, tell them that it stands for "Get Out the Vote." (If teachers have access to Twitter in the classroom, do a search for #GOTV and share some examples of GOTV tweets. Be sure to prescreen tweets before sharing with the class.) Ask students:
   - What do you think it means to "Get Out the Vote?"
     - According to Wikipedia, Get Out the Vote "describes two types of political campaigns, both aimed at increasing voter turnout in one or more elections. The first are efforts made by electoral authorities or nonpartisan organizations that attempt to motivate potential voters to register and to vote; and the other are efforts made by political parties or politicians targeted at voters who are expected to vote in their favor."
   - Can you think of any nonpartisan "Get Out the Vote" organizations?
     - Some examples include Rock the Vote or the League of Women Voters.
   - Why would a nonpartisan organization be interested in getting out the vote?
   - Why would a political campaign or partisan organization be interested in getting out the vote?
   - Do you think GOTV campaigns serve an important purpose? Why or why not?

- Have you ever seen a GOTV commercial?

6. Teachers should review and choose a few of the following GOTV commercials to share with students. (Links were active as of Aug. 2016. If the links don't work, try typing the video title in the search bar):
    - Terry Tate: Get Out the Vote: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AbBq29qGxaA
    - Rock the Vote Presents: #TURNOUTFORWHAT: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rijpU5yD55I
    - LL Cool J for Rock the Vote (1992): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wbOrLFdGSys
    - Rock the Vote Road Trip at University of North Carolina Charlotte: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v7Y4kNLppFI
    - 5 Things That Are Harder Than Registering To Vote, featuring President Obama: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5eE7Da_6AMM
    - MTV's Elect This: What will you elect?: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jCw1pYKBHtU&feature=youtu.be

7. After the video(s), discuss:
    - What was the point of this video?
    - What information (if any) does the video convey?
    - Do you think this video is an effective way to encourage young people to vote? Why or why not?
    - If you could direct this video, what would you add, remove, change, etc. to make it more effective?
    - Besides Twitter and video(s), what are some other ways to Get Out the Vote or make people aware of an upcoming election?

Get Out the (First) Vote
8. Inform students that in groups, they will design and implement a GOTV campaign for the school's upcoming First Vote election simulation. To help prepare them to encourage voter participation throughout their school, tell students they are going to watch a short (13 min.) TED Talk, "Let's Make Voting Fun Again," by Eric Liu, available at http://www.ted.com/talks/eric_liu_let_s_make_voting_fun_again#t-797060. After viewing, discuss:
    - What specific examples of "joyous" voting throughout history does Eric Liu cite? Why did these people know that voting mattered so much, and why have we lost that? How and why has voting now become a "grim duty?
    - Eric says that "the couch has replaced the commons." What does he mean? Do you agree with this description of American society? Explain.
    - What does he mean when he says that social media is a "quiet kind of citizenship" and a "way of being alone together?" Do you agree with this characterization? Explain.
    - Eric comments that "what we need today is an electoral culture that is about being together, together." What does he mean and do you agree? Explain.
    - How do we get voting to be like joining a club or a party? What specific ideas does he have to make voting fun? In what ways are other countries already doing this?
    - Eric notes that the average American watches five hours of TV a day. What impact do you think this has on our society, and on our electoral and political processes in particular?
    - What actions has the "Joy of Voting" project taken to make voting fun and community based again?
    - Why are some people (such as the artist Eric mentioned) intimidated by voting? If you feel this way, what can you do about it?
    - Eric says: "All citizenship is local. When politics becomes just a presidential election, we yell and we scream at our screens and then we collapse, exhausted. But when politics is about us and our neighbors and other people in our community coming together to create experiences of collective voice and imagination then we begin to remember that this stuff matters. We begin to remember that this is the stuff of self- government." What message is he trying to convey? Do you agree? Why or why not?

- Eric poses the question "why bother voting?" How does he answer this? Are his reasons sound? Why or why not?
- He argues that "voting helps us generate the very power that we all wish we had." How so?

- Eric further comments that "All of our bonds in the end are imagined...and can be reimagined." What examples can you cite that prove the validity of this statement? What examples might disprove this statement?
- He says there is "no such thing as *not* voting"...what does he mean?
- Eric comments, "We live in a time right now divided, often very dark, where across the left and the right there is a lot of talk of revolution, and the need for revolution to disrupt everyday democracy. But here's the thing – everyday democracy already gives us a playbook for revolution." What is the revolution to which he is referring? How do you imagine 100% voter turnout would change our politics and government?
- What would it take to mobilize 100% voter turnout?
- What does Eric Liu want you to do? Has he convinced you to do it? Why or why not? If not, what else will it take to convince you?

9. Tell students you want them to keep these themes, as well as some of the specific ideas from "The Joy of Voting" in mind as they work to Get Out the Vote for their school's First Vote election. Divide students into groups and provide them with the attached instructions and the "Seven Tips for Getting Out the Vote" handout. Review the instructions as a class, answer any questions, and provide a timeline for working on and then implementing the GOTV strategies.

➢ **Teacher Notes:**
- Prior to assigning this project, teachers should consider whether there is a way to assign students particular groups within the school electorate to target with their GOTV strategies, which would allow students to then evaluate whether their strategies were actually effective after the First Vote election. For instance, if there are four sections of *American History: Founding Principles, Civics, and Economic* taught at your school, perhaps each class would be assigned to target a specific grade level in their GOTV campaign (9, 10, 11, 12.) Then, when reviewing the data post-election regarding voter turnout, students could discuss whether they think their GOTV efforts increased turnout for their assigned grade level or not.
- If more than one teacher will be implementing this activity, teachers may want to coordinate with each other in determining which classes will target which demographic groups with their GOTV campaigns.
- In order to get students more engaged in the project, teachers can also consider offering a prize to the group whose assigned grade had the highest voter turnout. To determine the winning group, use the demographic information provided by First Vote at the conclusion of the election simulation.
- For students designing posters and print ads, teachers may want to refer them to the Professional Association for Design's website, which has examples of Get Out the Vote ads and also offers a contest that students could enter their GOTV print work into: http://www.aiga.org/vote.
- On the due date of the GOTV campaigns, teachers can allow each group to present their campaigns to the class before sharing them with the wider school. At the end of each presentation, allow the other groups to provide feedback by sharing what they liked, or by asking constructive questions to help make each campaign better. Using this feedback, groups can fine tune their campaigns before deploying them throughout the school.

Measuring the Results
10. After the election, use the First Vote platform to review demographic information about the voters in your school. Analyze the effectiveness of the students' Get Out the Vote campaign by reviewing the voter turnout percentages by grade (or any other grouping of voters that you had students target.) Discuss:
- Do you think your GOTV campaign was effective? Why or why not?

- What are the various ways we might measure your effectiveness?
- If you had to change anything about your GOTV campaign, what would it be and why?
- Do you think professional GOTV campaigns work? Why or why not?
- Are you more interested in voting and elections after working on this project?
- Would you consider working for a professional GOTV organization, political party, or candidate's campaign to help GOTV? Why or why not?

What Affects Voter Turnout Rates?

Turnout varies greatly by state. In the 2012 Presidential Election, 76% of eligible Minnesotans cast ballots, whereas only 45% of eligible Hawaiians did. Many different factors influence voter turnout levels.

- **Electoral Competitiveness:** One of the most important factors is the competitiveness of the presidential election in each state. Overall, 66% of eligible voters turned out to the polls in the nation's 12 most competitive states in 2012, but only 57% did in the nation's 39 other states (including the District of Columbia).

- **Election Type:** Low turnout is most pronounced in primary elections, off-year elections for state legislators, and local elections. For example, a 2013 study of 340 mayoral elections in 144 U.S. cities from 1996-2012 found that voter turnout in those cities averaged at 25.8%. In many cities, mayors have been elected with single-digit turnout. For example, turnout in Dallas' 1999 mayoral election was a mere 5%.

  Run-off elections for all offices also tend to have lower turnout that first round elections, especially if the first round election takes place on the same day as several other elections. For example, of 171 regularly scheduled primary runoffs for U.S House and U.S. Senate from 1994 to 2012, all but six of them resulted in a turnout decrease between the initial primary and the runoff, meaning that 96.5% of federal runoff elections had fewer people voting in the second round than in the first. The average reduction in turnout was 35.3%. Additionally, the longer the wait between the initial primary and the runoff, the higher the decrease in voter turnout between elections. Primary elections with a gap of more than thirty days had a median decline in voter participation of 48.1%, while those with a gap of twenty days or less had a median decline of 15.4%.

- **Voting Laws:** Voter registration laws, voter identification laws, early voting, and polling place accessibility can also affect voter turnout, though not always in the ways that we might expect. For example, the introduction of early voting, which was intended to make voting easier and increase turnout, appears to have actually decreased turnout.

- **Demographics:** In the aggregate, voters tend to be older, wealthier, more educated and whiter than non-voters.

  o *Age:* Young people are much less likely to vote than older ones. From 1972 to 2012, citizens 18-29 years old turned out at a rate 15 to 20 points lower than citizens 30 year and older.

  o *Race/ethnicity:* Voter turnout also varies by race and ethnicity. In 2012, turnout rates among eligible white and black voters was 64.1% and 66.2%, respectively, while it was only 48.0% and 47.3% among Latino and Asian American voters respectively. The 2012 election was the first presidential election since Reconstruction ended in which black turnout exceeded white turnout.

  o *Gender:* Women's voter turnout has surpassed men's in every presidential election since 1980. In the 2012 election, 7.8 more women than men voted. Interestingly though, older women are actually less like to vote than older men. In 2008, 72.2% of men 75 years and older voted, compared to only 64.9% of women that age.

  o *Socio-economic status:* Wealthy Americans vote at much higher rates than those of lower socio-economic status. During the 2008 presidential election, only 41% of eligible voters making less than $15,000 a year voted, compared to 78% of those making $150,000 a year or more. Studies have shown that this difference in turnout affects public policy: politicians are more likely to respond to the desires of their wealthy constituents than of their poorer constituents, in part because more of their wealthy constituents vote.

Once you have read the "What Affects Voter Turnout Rates?" handout, discuss the following questions and record your answers. Be prepared to share your answers with the class.

1. What surprised you most about this article?

2. Are you familiar with the terms "blue states," "red states," and "swing states?" How might these terms relate to voter turnout?

3. How do the different types of elections affect voter turnout?

4. Why do you think laws designed to increase turnout (early voting, etc.) appear to have depressed turnout?

5. Why do you think voters tend to be wealthier, older, and white?

6. Why is it important to vote?

7. Do you think this article listed all the reasons for low voter turnout? What other ones can you hear of?

8. What do you think are effective strategies for increasing voter turnout?

Name: _____

GET OUT THE
★VOTE★

Directions: Election season is here! Your group will create a "Get Out The Vote" (GOTV) campaign to convince the most amount of students possible to vote in the First Vote election simulation. It is up to you and your group members to research and decide the most effective GOTV strategies and to apply those strategies to your efforts. You're also encouraged to create your own strategies and to apply your own ideas. Above all, you should BE CREATIVE and HAVE FUN with this project!

1. **Review the "Seven Tips for Getting Out the Vote" handout. Discuss the following questions:**
    - Which of these tips do you think is most important? Why?
    - What strategies or tips would you add to this list?
    - Do you think these strategies are effective with people your age in particular? Why or why not?
    - What kinds of advertising are most effective for you personally? Why?
    - Ultimately, how can you make voting FUN and IMPORTANT for your peers to GET OUT THE VOTE???

2. **Choose at least three of the following components to make up your GOTV campaign:**
    - A social media campaign (Twitter, Snapchat, Facebook)
    - A website
    - Radio Campaign to be played/performed during morning announcements (with the school administration's approval)
    - TV Commercial Campaign to be uploaded to YouTube or similar video hosting site
    - Flyers, brochures, pamphlets, postcards
    - Yard signs (with school administration's approval)
    - A set of bumper stickers
    - Election posters, banners, murals, etc.
    - Wall murals
    - Election rally or debate viewing party (with the school administration's approval)
    - PA announcement(s) before school events
    - Set up a GOTV booth in your school
    - After school information session or event (with school administration's approval)
    - Election buttons, t-shirts, bracelets, etc.
    - Performances and artistic events (flash mob, plays/skits or "street theatre," concerts or "Battle of the Bands," etc.)
    - Create your own!

3. **Use the following questions to help guide your planning:**
    - What is the overall goal of your GOTV campaign?
    - Who is your audience? How will you identify and then reach people in your target audience?
    - What do you want them to know about the election and the importance of voting?
    - How can they get more information about the election and how to participate?
    - How does your GOTV campaign address the reasons for low voter turnout from the "What Affects Voter Turnout Rates" handout?

After determining the components and design of your GOTV campaign, share your ideas with your teacher, administrator, or election facilitator to ensure that they comply with school policies. And then, get to work implementing your ideas!

Suggested Links for Research:
- Living Room Candidate: http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/

- Campaigns & Causes: Political Memorabilia in North Carolina: https://exhibits.lib.unc.edu/exhibits/show/campaigns

- Why Millennials Don't Vote for Mayor: Barriers and Motivators for Local Voting: http://features.knightfoundation.org/local-vote/voter-dropoff.pdf

- Lessons from GOTV experiments: http://isps.yale.edu/node/16698#.V9L2CJMrLMU

- Shaming voters to vote: How groups use peer pressure: http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2012/11/02/peer-pressure-and-voting/1675019/

- Legacy Americana Campaign Memorabilia: http://www.legacyamericana.com/

- Rock the Vote: https://www.rockthevote.com/

- Democracy NC – Get Out The Vote: http://nc-democracy.org/category/our-issues/get-out-the-vote/

Project Due Date: _____

Notes & planning: