

## Response to Readings: Saturday, February 25, 2006

### Defining “We the People”: Suffrage in American Political History

Core theme: U.S. Political History

Political History typically focuses on candidates and elected leaders, not the people who put them in office, the voters. Professor David Steigerwald of OSU Marion will lead us in considering the history of voting in the United States. The core reading will be Alexander Keyssar’s important book, *The Right to Vote*, the first general history of suffrage in America.

Throughout much of American history the specific identity of political citizenship, the people who actually matter politically, has been the subject of discussion and political wrangling. Far from the story of “onward and upward” to greater and greater participation that we usually think, the history of suffrage is one of ups and downs. Further, there have been multiple paths to suffrage (and the loss of suffrage) based on differences between states and regions.

As you read think about the following question and answer in one to two typed pages:

**Focusing on the period that you teach, what was the key change (or changes) in suffrage that occurred? What were the most important causes of the change?**

#### Readings:

Alexander Keyssar. *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States*. New York: Basic Books, 2000.

Read Introduction and Conclusion

Middle School Teachers read chapters 1-5

High school Teachers read chapters 5-8

from Donald W. Rogers, ed., *Voting and the Spirit of American Democracy: Essays on the History of Voting Rights in America*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992.

Sean Wilentz, “Property and Power: Suffrage Reform in the United States, 1787-1860,” pp. 31-41.

from Marjorie Sprull Wheeler, ed. *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Women Suffrage Movement* (Troutdale, Oregon: New Sage Press, 1995).

Beverly Beeton, “How the West Was Won for Women Suffrage,” pp. 99-116.

Linda G. Ford, “Alice Paul and the Triumph of Militancy,” pp. 277-294.

Robert Weisbrot, “Freedom Summer,” from *Freedom Bound: A History of America’s Civil Rights Movement* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990), 92-114.