

## **Discussion Questions for 17.317, U.S. Social Policy**

### **Part II: Preferences, Participation, and Representation**

- This section of the course focuses on the mass public – what does the public want, who participates in politics, and whose preferences get expressed in public policy. We begin by looking at political participation, which is a key way in which citizens voice their preferences.

### **Who Gets Represented? The Case of Social Security**

- Senior citizens have low levels of formal education and income – how can they be so participatory?
- Old people didn't used to be so participatory – used to be age group least likely to participate – so what changed?
- How has Social Security affected the participation rates of senior citizens over time? What are the mechanisms? What have been the program's effects on resources, political engagement, mobilization opportunities?
- How have these program effects varied across senior subgroups?
- Seniors participate in politics at higher rates than younger people – does it matter? How would we know?
- At the same time, there has not been backlash against senior citizens – why not?