

# How to read like a political scientist examples

[Politics](#), [Democracy](#)



I have written up my own "how to read like a POLS" (hereafter referred to as HTRPS) summaries for Mueller and Loeb. I won't do this for all of the response papers, but I wanted you to have an opportunity to compare your own summaries to the ones I drew up. Please note that you will not always find exactly the same things in your own HTRPS summary and in someone else's, and this isn't necessarily a bad thing. But, you'll want to get to the point where you've practiced enough and the main points (argument, logic, evidence, policy recommendation) jump out at you, so comparing summaries can help in that regard. Here are mine: Mueller, "Democracy's Romantic Myths" (HTRPS summary) Argument: Scholars and others who are interested in democracy and its quality have worried too much about apathy of the public, political inequality, and low levels of participation. Democracies still are more representative than other types of regimes even in the presence of these less-than-ideal conditions. In fact, the more mature a democracy gets, the less engaged citizens tend to be. Logic: Inequality is part of democracy, as is a messy contest between special interests. It doesn't make sense to treat everyone as equal when comparing someone who affects many people and has a particular expertise (e. g. a major employer) to someone with little influence and expertise (an average citizen). You also can't get rid of special interests, because they are a natural outgrowth of democracy. As long as the outcomes are generally representative of the needs of the whole, then democracy is functioning just fine. Evidence: Political inequality: research on factors that determine political effectiveness Participation: statistics on national vote totals, mayor of Rochester, vote for Clinton Enlightened voters: evidence that most

Americans don't know basic facts about composition of Congress, the Constitution, etc. Policy Prescription: Stop freaking out about participation. Rogat Loeb, "The Active Citizen" Argument: Lack of participation and social involvement by Americans is a problem for the health of our democracy and our ability to try to solve serious social problems (e. g. poverty, environment, etc). Logic: We behave in ways that psychologists would call "learned helplessness." We assume that the problems are too big for us to solve, so we shouldn't even try. We also have been conditioned by political rhetoric (such as on TV) that leads us to reply cynically to these challenges. Evidence: -the story about his friend Pete Knutson, allying with other fishermen and civil society groups to save salmon spawning grounds against much larger (and richer) opponents (industry) -stats provided by Putnam that indicate civic engagement has decreased in the past 30 years Policy prescription: need to rebuild local communities to increase civic engagement; individuals need to take action a la Susan B. Anthony, etc.