Paper Suggestions - Theories

• **Use Theories**
  – Theories are general explanations

• Try to explain (tell us “why”), not just describe
  – Don’t give us a list of events

  – Why did the 1964 Civil Rights Act pass?
  – Why did the ERA fail?

Paper Suggestions - Sources

• **Read ahead**
  – Articles on Americans with Disabilities Act, etc. may be useful
  – The Domestic Policy chapter (ch 17) may be useful

• **Look at the on-line bibliographies**
  – Civil Rights bibliography & journals
  – Web resources on politics
• Use academic sources
  – Journals, books published by university presses or written by professors
  – You can also use gov’t publications, interest group web sites, newspapers, magazines, etc.
• Non-academic sources are often biased

• Politicians seek election
  – They move left or right to win

• Politicians seek the median of their electoral districts or states
  – They do not move to the nation’s political center
Example: Support for Civil Rights

• Consider Carmines and Stimson’s brief history:
  – Northern Democrats supported civil rights
  – Southern Democrats opposed civil rights
  – Republicans were neutral in the 1950s
  – They moved toward support in the early 1960s when civil rights hit TV & their constituents demanded that something be done

Changing Party Positions on Civil Rights

• By 1968, Democrats were winning black votes for supporting civil rights

• Republicans changed to “go slow” on C.R.
  – Nixon’s “Southern strategy”
  – White southerners began voting Republican

• These moves are consistent with spatial models
Collective goods explanations

• Mass political movements are hard to mobilize because:
  – They impose high costs on activists
  – The public at large shares the benefits

• Potential activists assess their personal costs and benefits
  – What will it cost me?
  – What will I gain if I participate & if I win?

Why did the ERA fail?

http://www.johnsman.com/photos/alicepaul01.html
Why did the Civil Rights Movement Succeed?

Solution: Selective Benefits for Participants

- The benefits of victory may have been greater than the costs to activists
- Activists were honored
  - Just as we honor soldiers & firefighters, they honored civil rights marchers who risked their lives
- Southern, Black churches played a central role
  - A religious duty
  - Tight-knit communities honored their own
- The Women’s movement did not have these advantages
Agenda Setting Theory

• Political agenda: list of items that people think are important & that politicians are debating

• The Media influence the agenda:
  – The media cannot tell you what to think, but they can tell you what to think about.

Civil Rights & the National Agenda

• Civil rights strategy: Convert the struggle from a southern problem to a national issue

  – Marches & boycotts were aimed at national, TV audiences
  – Goal: Tell the nation the truth
  – Then voters will demand change