



The History of Compulsory Voting in Europe: Democracy's Duty? (Routledge Studies in Social and Political Thought)

Anthoula Malkopoulou

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Is voting out of fashion? Does it matter if voters don't show up at the polls? If yes, is legal enforcement of voting compatible with democracy? These are just a few of the questions linked to the thorny problem of electoral abstention. This book addresses the hot question whether there is a duty to vote and if this is enforceable in the form of compulsory voting.

Divided into two parts, Anthoula Malkopoulou begins by expertly presenting the importance of compulsory voting today, situating the debate within the contemporary discussion on liberty, equality and democracy. Then, she questions the historical origins of the idea in Europe. In particular, she examines parliamentary discussions and other primary sources from France and Greece, including a few additional insights from other countries like Switzerland and Belgium. Focusing especially on the years between 1870 and 1930, the reader learns about the historical actors of the debates, their efforts to legitimate punishment of abstention through normative arguments, but also their strategic motivations and political interests. While discussions at the beginning of the century focus on introducing compulsory voting, Malkopoulou criticizes its misuse after the Second World War, exposing the contingency of relevant normative claims today and the conditionality of compulsory voting.

From ancient times until today, you learn about the ideological debates, their political context and how the problems of equal representation and democratic moderation persist through the ages.

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