# Constitution Day at Mt. SAC!

# 00:00:00 **Kelly**

# Will the issues of the economy and abortion drive voters in ways historic trends can't predict? It's really hard to say. Much of what will happen in these elections is literally shaped by how we draw our political maps.

# 

# 00:00:16 **Christina**

# Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

# 

# 00:00:17 **Sun**

# And I'm Sun Ezzell, and you're listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast.

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# 00:00:21 **Christina**

# Our mission is to find ways to keep your ear to the ground, so to speak - by bringing to you the activities and events you may not have time to attend, the resources on campus you might want to know more about, the interesting things your colleagues are creating, and the many ways we can continue to better help and guide our students.

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# 00:00:38 **Sun**

# We bring to you the voices of Mt. SAC, from the classroom to completion.

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# 00:00:42 **Speaker 1**

# And I know I'm going to achieve my goals and I know people here are going to help me to do it.

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# 00:00:46 **Speaker 2**

# She is a sociology major and she's transferring to Cal Poly, Pomona! Psychology major, English major ...

# 

# 00:00:53 **Sun**

# From transforming part-time into full-time.

# 

# 00:00:56 **Speaker 1**

# I really liked the time that we spend with Julie about how to write a CV and a cover letter.

# 

# 00:01:02 **Christina**

# Or just finding time to soak in the campus.

# 

# 00:01:05 **Speaker 1**

# To think of the natural environment around us as a library.

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# 00:01:08 **Christina**

# We want to keep you informed and connected to all things Mt. SAC, but most importantly, we want to keep you connected with each other. I'm Christina Barsi, Mt. SAC alumni and producer of this podcast.

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# 00:01:19 **Sun**

# And I'm Sun Ezzell, Learning Assistance Faculty and Professional Learning Academy Coordinator.

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# 00:01:24 **Christina**

# And this is the Magic Mountie Podcast.

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# 00:01:26 **Christina**

# How well do you know our voting system? With midterm elections just around the corner of when this airs, and just for those of us who want a refresher, we're sharing a slightly abridged version of Mt. SAC's Constitution Day event that will help clarify exactly how it all works.

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# 00:01:45 **Christina**

# You'll hear from presenters Dafna Golden, Professor of Geography; Raul Madrid, Sierra Powell, and Kelly Rivera - all professors of political science who share on different topics from voter trends to GIS mapping. Enjoy!

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# 00:02:02 **Giovanni**

# We will begin this meeting with the land acknowledgment. For those of you who have never heard an indigenous land or territorial acknowledgment before, it is a statement that recognizes the indigenous people who have been dispossessed from their homelands and territories upon which an institution was built and currently occupies.

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# 00:02:20 **Giovanni**

# For some, an indigenous land or territorial acknowledgment might be an unfamiliar practice, but it is a common protocol within indigenous communities in the United States, and it is a standard practice in both Australia and Canada.

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# 00:02:34 **Giovanni**

# Mt. SAC is geographically situated in the traditional lands of the Tongva and Kizh Nation. I ask that you join me in acknowledgment in their communities, their elders, both past and present, as well as future generations. May we strive to honor the land and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations. Thank you.

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# 00:02:56 **Giovanni**

# And here to continue on the program, the yanse of this AS Constitution Program, Professor Kelly Rivera.

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# 00:03:11 **Kelly**

# Hi everyone. Once again, welcome to our event. Thank you to Giovanni Rodriguez and all the wonderful folks in student life, associated students, and the geography and political science department for their efforts putting this event together each year.

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# 00:03:24 **Dafna**

# As Gio mentioned, my name is Kelly Rivera and I am a professor here at Mt. SAC in the Department of Political Science and Geography. Today, I'll be kicking off our conversation about the constitution and its impact on our lives by introducing you to the midterm elections and issue shaping voter trends today.

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# 00:03:42 **Dafna**

# I'll be followed by Professor of geography, Dafna Golden, and professors of political science, Sierra Powell, and Raul Madrid, who will cover the topics of federal and local redistricting with a special look at the power of GIS mapping and voter empowerment.

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# 00:03:56 **Dafna**

# Associated students, Vice President Edward Zhang will also join us to discuss ways in which we can influence our campus and communities.

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# 00:04:05 **Kelly**

# So, what is Constitution Day? At Mt. SAC, the Geography and Political Science Department in collaboration with associated students has designated this annual lecture series and voter awareness drive to bring modern political topics to students, connecting them to the constitution and American politics today.

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# 00:04:23 **Dafna**

# This event commemorates the delegates to the constitutional convention when they signed the U . S. constitution on September 17th, 1787. So, let's get started with the topic of the 2022 midterm elections to provide you with a foundation for the rest of the talks you'll hear today.

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# 00:04:42 **Dafna**

# I'll begin with the basics. The midterm elections happen halfway through a president's four-year term. They're held to elect representatives to Congress. And depending on your state, a handful of other offices may also be on your ballot.

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# 00:04:57 **Dafna**

# You may vote for positions like governor, Attorney General, Mayor, or local officials like school board members. Which side note, may be particularly important in an era of renewed book bannings across this country. And in many states like California, you may have ballot initiatives on issues ranging from topics like reproductive rights, Prop 1 in our ballot here in California and gambling; Props 26 and 27 on our ballot - all of which voters can weigh in on.

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# 00:05:27 **Dafna**

# Congress is of course, composed of two chambers; the House of Representatives and the Senate. All 435 members of the house are up for election every two years. Senators serve six-year terms with one-third of the Senate up for election every two years on a rotating cycle.

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# 00:05:43 **Dafna**

# This year, 34, technically 35 Senate elections will take place. The reason it's 35 rather than 34 is due to a special election in California where we will actually vote twice for this same seat. Kamala Harris, the current Vice President, vacated the seat when she became vice president. We have an appointed senator in Alex Padilla. So, we will vote for that seat twice to fulfill the rest of Kamala Harris's term, and then we'll vote for that seat for the next term that that will serve. So, that's why it's 35.

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# 00:06:13 **Dafna**

# Historically, midterm elections can serve as a kind of referendum for the party in control of the White House. In general terms, the public can use the midterm elections as a time to change the balance of power if they believe the country is not headed in the right direction.

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# 00:06:28 **Dafna**

# As John Woolley's data from UC Santa Barbara's American presidency project shows, in the last 22 midterm elections through 2018, the president's party has averaged a loss of 28 seats in the house and four Senate seats per election.

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# 00:06:45 **Dafna**

# Swing seats or seats in competitive races in midterm elections are most highly correlated with the president's approval rating; meaning the higher the president's approval rating, the higher likelihood of an electoral success for their fellow party members in a competitive congressional race.

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# 00:07:02 **Dafna**

# President Biden's approval ratings have been in the low 40% range for most of the year. Gallup's August data shows that President Biden's at his highest rate this year of 44% following the landmark passage of the Inflation Reduction Act.

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# 00:07:18 **Dafna**

# Six presidents with similar approval ratings in this range of 40 to 45% had wide variation in seat loss or gain. In the house. presidents with similar approval ratings saw their party loss anywhere from 63 seats to 13 seats with an average loss of 36 seats.

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# 00:07:39 **Dafna**

# As John Woolley reports, there have been no instances of seat gains for presidents with approval ratings in Biden's range. The gains or losses of seats that result from the 2022 midterms add up to whether or not Republicans or Democrats will have a majority of votes in one or both houses of Congress for the next two years.

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# 00:08:01 **Dafna**

# Historical trends are compelling, but they don't tell the whole story. In 2018, record turnout bucked the trend, and once again, we have issues at play this election that have already spurred outcomes that don't necessarily follow predicted trends.

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# 00:08:22 **Kelly**

# Inflation, a Department of Justice investigation into our former president's handling of classified documents, and the topic most clearly driving increased voter registration; abortion. In the weeks following the Supreme Court decision in Dobbs v. Jackson, which overturned congressional protections to abortion under Roe v. Wade, women are registering to vote in astronomical numbers.

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# 00:08:49 **Dafna**

# In a landslide, voters in Kansas defeated a constitutional amendment that would've removed abortion protections in the state. As recently reported in the New York Times, in the six months before the Dobbs ruling, women outnumbered men by a three percentage point margin among newly registered voters.

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# 00:09:09 **Dafna**

# After Dobbs, the gender gap rose to 40 points (40 points). Women engage politically in a way that lacked any known precedent. When speaking to what happened at the ballot box in Kansas, political science, Professor Alexandra Middlewood at Wichita State University said for a lot of older women here, when they look at the abortion issue, they remember what it was like before Roe was decided.

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# 00:09:38 **Kelly**

# And for independent and moderate Republican women, this wasn't a partisan issue, it was an issue that affected them and still affects women today. And it's not just women.

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# 00:09:50 **Dafna**

# A recent poll from Fox News shows that a significant shift in dads moving political parties, post-Dobbs ruling, is also happening. This pattern can be found in states where abortion is on the ballot. States with the biggest surges in women registering post-Dobbs are solidly conservative states like Kansas and Idaho, with Louisiana emerging among the top five states.

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# 00:10:12 **Dafna**

# Key battleground states also show increases, including Michigan, Wisconsin, and Ohio, which all have statewide races where the fate of abortion access can be decided in November. In Pennsylvania, more than 60% of newly registered voters are women. There have been no comparable increases in the last four years according to state data, which means we also don't have historical trends to compare this issue to.

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# 00:10:40 **Kelly**

# You are living in the midst of history. Don't sit it out this November. As you can see, midterm elections are significant. These elections will lead to which party has the new majority in the House and Senate, which determines the issues that Congress will consider and whether they will work with the president on a legislative agenda.

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# 00:10:59 **Dafna**

# Ultimately, though, the results of the elections may show the direction the country is headed politically. Will the issues of the economy and abortion drive voters in ways historic trends can't predict? It's really hard to say. Much of what will happen in these elections is literally shaped by how we draw our political maps, which is the topic for our next several speakers. Thank you.

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# 00:11:22 **Dafna**

# Next, I would like to welcome to the stage our fantastic Political Science Professor, Raul Madrid, who's here to speak to us about local redistricting. Thank you.

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# 00:11:38 **Raul**

# Thank you Professor Rivera, and thank you Giovanni for putting this event on. As Professor Rivera just said, this event today, will focus on redistricting and how it affects the midterms. And so, what is redistricting?

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# 00:11:52 **Raul**

# So, redistricting happens once every 10 years, at least, and it's a part of our constitution. Our constitution calls for this apportionment process because of course, we have the House of Representatives, so we have to figure out how to distribute the population to districts equally. And so, this is done in such a way that we have to take the census. This is why the census is so important.

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# 00:12:20 **Raul**

# One person, one vote. And so, when we go through this process of conducting the census, we're counting people. Sometimes, like in 2020, states will gain or lose districts, congressional districts. So, for example, in 2020, Texas because it's had a boom in their population, has increased the number of congressional districts that they have.

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# 00:12:46 **Raul**

# So, Texas now has gained two additional seats. Meanwhile, like here in California, we've lost a seat. We're not alone though. California, Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, which by the way can't afford to lose Congressional districts - lost a congressional district.

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# 00:13:05 **Raul**

# The way that states conduct the redistricting process is different depending on the state. So, in 33 states, the state legislature is fully in control of how they conduct their business. This can lead to what is called partisan gerrymandering. And I'll explain that in just a second.

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# 00:13:26 **Raul**

# When a state is in control of how they conduct their redistricting, they are going to bring in a political process. Naturally, the political party that is in charge of that state is going to try to kind of make things more favorable toward them.

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# 00:13:46 **Raul**

# Some states, like here in California, they have an independent redistricting commission. This independent redistricting commission is thought to remove politics from the situation by putting it in the place of independent citizens.

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# 00:14:04 **Raul**

# Still though, in California, we have a group comprised of 14 different members, five of which are Democrats, five of which are Republicans, and four of which have no preference. In New Jersey, they have an independent redistricting commission, but they ultimately, give it to politicians.

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# 00:14:22 **Raul**

# In five states, including Iowa, Maine, New Mexico, Rhode Island, and Utah, they have independent agencies that that conduct the process of creating maps that we'll talk about in just a second. And they then give the process over once they complete the map to the state legislature.

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# 00:14:40 **Raul**

# So, ultimately, politics are able to come back into the fold. And then there are six states that don't have to worry about any of this because few people live there. I think this is true, but I heard it a long time ago, I'll just share it with you anyway. I believe it's the case that there are more cattle in Wyoming than there are people.

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# 00:15:02 **Raul**

# As I mentioned, this can lead to some issues. Depending on how the state decides to conduct their business, it could lead them to partisan gerrymandering, of which the Supreme Court has said is perfectly okay. The Supreme Court in 2019 ruled that they have no business taking part of gerrymandering cases, and that it should instead be left alone to the state's Supreme Courts.

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# 00:15:29 **Raul**

# What is gerrymandering? For some of you, it may be the first time you're hearing this. So, gerrymandering is the process of unintentionally manipulating political boundaries to benefit one party over the other. Parties have a natural desire to stay in power. The ultimate goal of members of Congress is not necessarily to serve us, but instead, to stay in power. And so, how do you do that?

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# 00:15:58 **Raul**

# Well, you can create maps like the one shown here. This is in Chicago. This is the map that is ultimately designed to give more power to the Democratic party and keep out of power Republicans. And you may be thinking to yourselves, "Those dirty Democrats," but this is something that Republicans do as well.

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# 00:16:16 **Raul**

# When parties have power, they try to keep it. California, as I mentioned, has aimed to solve this issue. They have come up with an independent commission. As I said, there are five Democrats, five Republicans, and four that have stated they have no preference.

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# 00:16:34 **Raul**

# Eight members are women, six were men. And actually, in 2010, it was the exact opposite with eight men and six women. Their goal is to ultimately, enforce the Voting Rights Act of 1965. And California does this by emphasizing, making sure that the districts are compact and contiguous among other things. So, in other words, trying to keep neighborhoods of similar conditions together.

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# 00:17:08 **Raul**

# So, this district, for example, the congressional district, the California 39th, has undergone some significant changes. We've actually lost some population. And so, because of that, because of the loss of the congressional district, California has had to reshuffle its maps. And in doing so, in losing one of those congressional districts, the 39th district now comprises a much larger section.

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# 00:17:34 **Raul**

# And in fact, if you look back to 2010, the map was actually gerrymandered before California came up with this Independent Redistricting Commission. So, is California's system the best? It's unclear. California aims to take power from the politicians and put it in the hands of the people. And other states, as I've mentioned, don't do this.

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# 00:18:00 **Raul**

# One of the more equal ways in your mind as you think about how to draw these maps might be just to place districts into equal population squares. But that's going to leave out communities of interest. It's going to leave out some of the racial and demographic features of a particular district.

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# 00:18:19 **Raul**

# Some states and some map makers out there, aim to do what's called cracking. And this is aimed to dilute the vote of one power and give that power to a majority party in the state. It's aiming to spread the population out in an effort to potentially dilute voters. Some have called for packing.

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# 00:18:42 **Raul**

# So, there's a great article out there that I would encourage you to read, and you will read if you take my POLI 1 class. And it actually argues in favor of packing congressional districts with like-minded voters. Now, this is a very controversial take. This is actually arguing that gerrymandering is A, okay. And thus, it increases folks political efficacy and their trust in government. But in doing so, it keeps out of power minority parties.

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# 00:19:10 **Raul**

# There's also sweetheart gerrymandering. This is an important term. If you want to keep your political party in power and you want to keep incumbents in power, you're going to redraw districts to try to keep them in power.

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# 00:19:22 **Raul**

# And lastly, this is very nefarious. It's called prison packing. It's when you count the prison population who can't vote as part of a district knowing full well that they can't vote to try to keep a political party in power. It's a very nefarious thing. But as with politics, sometimes politics is dirty.

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# 00:19:46 **Raul**

# So, that's kind of an overview of redistricting and of gerrymandering, and I'm hoping that that makes a lot more sense for you as we go through our Constitution Day today. Thank you so much.

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# 00:19:58 **Raul**

# I want to introduce us now to my wonderful colleague and creator of our GIS Program here on campus, Dafna Golden.

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# 00:20:14 **Dafna**

# So, we've learned already that gerrymandering is when you take a few people from one place and a few people from another place and draw a line around the map with some specific demographic goal. The joke is that instead of voters picking their politicians, politicians are picking their voters.

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# 00:20:32 **Dafna**

# And this is a problem because when you have too many seats that are gerrymandered to be safe for one party or another, then the political process starts to break down and voters become a little cynical and feel like their vote doesn't really matter.

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# 00:20:48 **Dafna**

# So, redrawing district lines as we saw, is inherently a geographic problem. And geographers have been involved in redistricting since the advent of GIS in the 1990s. And when census data first started coming out, geographers were put to task to start to collect the data and find a fair way to draw the boundaries.

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# 00:21:18 **Dafna**

# But the technology also raised a host of difficult questions about the nature of representation, how we want to be represented, and identity and community. So, as we saw, having input from the local community does end up becoming a very complex process and balancing act because there are so many multiple variables.

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# 00:21:41 **Dafna**

# So, I'm going to come at this from the other extreme perspective. Professor Madrid brought up one of the perspectives of yes, we should gerrymander as much as possible and have the community fully determine where these boundaries are.

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# 00:21:59 **Dafna**

# The other perspective is we should have completely neutral boundaries that don't take into account the community of interest at all. So, that's the opposite side. And so, one way to approach this is a computer-generated model that looks at compactness, and so addresses more the one person, one vote issue because there's these two different criteria that the redistricting is tasked with; one person, one vote, but also, communities of interest.

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# 00:22:36 **Dafna**

# And I'll talk a little bit more about how we define those communities of interest. So, this would be sort of, kind of a middle ground looking at compactness of the congressional districts and minimizing the distance that a person has to the center of that district.

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# 00:22:55 **Dafna**

# And so, this is a slightly more neutral way of drawing the boundaries. But an extreme method would use regular shapes, which completely neutralizes the scene. This is really more theoretical and would never actually be applied, but it gives us sort of a starting point to see what a completely neutral map would look like without the inputs of demographics and using a GIS.

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# 00:23:30 **Dafna**

# So, a GIS is a mapping software. The term GIS is an acronym that stands for Geographic Information System. And as we saw in that great demonstration, it helps us visualize data - data that is based on tabular data, like census data about all kinds of information.

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# 00:23:51 **Dafna**

# So, it helps us visualize it, but it also helps us analyze that data, and can even be used for predictions and developing models that help predict future outcomes of things. So, it's a very powerful tool. I'm so happy that we're talking about it in the realm of political science. It influences a lot of decision-making processes throughout our lives here that we're not necessarily even aware of.

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# 00:24:18 **Dafna**

# So, one of the other tools that we can use with the GIS is to analyze the fairness or in this case, the compactness of these districts. So, this method, this analysis was applied to the current congressional districts to see how close are they to compactness.

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# 00:24:39 **Dafna**

# So, compactness is considered the fairness. And when we apply, and we can see here, this will keep appearing when we measure against the three models, the current districts, the geo districts, which take into account the demographic information and the hexagons that are purely neutral; we can compare the compactness of them.

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# 00:25:06 **Dafna**

# So, obviously, the hexagons are going to have the highest level of compactness, and we can see that these congressional districts as they exist, are the least compact. And the geo-developed boundaries are somewhere in the middle. So, they improve the compactness to some degree.

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# 00:25:25 **Dafna**

# But obviously, as we heard with some of the discussion, compactness and one person, one vote aren't the only considerations. We also have these communities of interest that we have to take into account that we want to take into account. This is really how people get heard and represented, is by having specific demographic groups represented.

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# 00:25:47 **Dafna**

# So, how do we go about doing that in the GIS? We can analyze the fairness of these districts in terms of representing these different demographic groups. And these series of maps show because the communities of interest isn't narrowly defined, it's kind of open-ended. And these are some of the variables that we use to define, help us define what a community of interest is.

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# 00:26:15 **Dafna**

# So, race and ethnicity is one of them. Voting preference, party preference is another one. And social vulnerability and economic factors are another one. So, taking these variables into account, we can look at the level of fairness in representing these groups at a national scale.

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# 00:26:38 **Dafna**

# And this is again, comparing these three different geographic objects when we look at the geo-generated districts, then there's still unfairness, but it's decreased a little bit. There is this change in the district boundaries. The most fair would be the hexagon shapes.

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# 00:27:01 **Dafna**

# So, this just shows how useful these maps can be in informing our decisions. And so, we can go to one extreme and completely rely on computers to make decisions for us. Those decisions are only as good as the data that goes into them. And then as we start to define greater variables and have larger inputs into how we create those districts, it becomes more complicated.

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# 00:27:32 **Dafna**

# And having access to interactive GIS tools for the community to have input is an amazing new tool. So, I just wanted to highlight some of the ways that GIS helps informs our decisions here, not only in political science, but also in sociology and psychology. So, GIS is just a tool that helps inform decision-making and analysis and can be applied to many different fields. And I'm so happy to see it applied to political science. Thanks a lot.

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# 00:28:14 **Kelly**

# So, before Professor Golden leaves us, I wanted to really plug our program that we have on Mt. SAC for GIS, which she has really architected for our campus, and it's an amazing program and opportunity for our students. I wanted her to speak more about it, and really share the opportunities, like how can students get involved and like when should they start enrolling? Maybe winter, like tell us about it.

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# 00:28:39 **Dafna**

# Thanks so much for the opportunity to share a little bit more about the GIS Program. There is a GIS certificate and AS degree program, it's achievable in one year here at Mt. SAC. All the courses are online and the GIS, like as I said, can be applied to many different disciplines.

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# 00:28:56 **Dafna**

# So, it's meant to supplement your path that you're on in any other field, but it will help you become more employable because you'll have that technological knowledge that will be able to advance your employment in many different fields.

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# 00:29:17 **Kelly**

# Okay, So, we now are going to welcome to the stage Professor of Political Science, Sierra Powell, who is here to share with us all the ways that you can get involved as a voter and why you should.

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# 00:29:33 **Sierra**

# Hello everyone. As they said, I am Sierra Powell and I am so excited to be here to share with you a little bit bit more about voting. I also first would like to thank Kelly and Gio for organizing this great event. It's really important, I think, that we take some moments every year on Mt. SAC's campus to reflect on the constitution and the things that we can do to participate.

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# 00:29:56 **Sierra**

# So, today, I'll be talking about why we vote at all, some reasons as to why your vote matters. We'll look at some examples going back in the past and also, think about some things going forward. So, at the end of the day, why do we vote?

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# 00:30:13 **Sierra**

# Well, one option for selecting our leaders is direct democracy, which would be to have us vote on everything all the time. We came from a system where we did not have a voice, we did not have a say. So, we knew that we wanted to have a say. However, it's very difficult for everyone to have a say on everything all the time.

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# 00:30:33 **Sierra**

# I don't know about you, but I have to work for a living and I don't have time to vote on every single issue all the time and get educated on everything. So, instead, we have a different system in the United States called representative democracy, whereby, in general, we vote for people and then those people vote on our behalf.

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# 00:30:52 **Sierra**

# So, at the end of the day, voting matters because it is a right, it fulfills your civic duty, it holds representatives accountable, and it affects policy and also, inspires empowerment. So, I'll go through each of these kind of one by one.

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# 00:31:07 **Sierra**

# In brief, people have fought really hard for the right to vote, and all kinds of communities have done this over time. So, at the very beginning of our nation, we were creating a nation and fought for the right to have a different system of government, period.

# 

# 00:31:20 **Sierra**

# But even at that time, it was still white property men that were able to vote. And over time, it came to be people that were born or naturalized in the United States. Then people that were former slaves could vote and women gained the right to vote. Native Americans were explicitly given the right to vote.

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# 00:31:39 **Sierra**

# We changed the way that this can be enforced with the Voting Rights Act, and we also changed it from the age of 21 down to the age of 18, and increased accessibility for people with disabilities. And so, certainly, my perspective is that it's really humbling to think about all of the people in the past that have fought for this right.

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# 00:32:00 **Sierra**

# And in some ways, voting matters because we're carrying on that legacy and we choose to be a part of our system. So, also the big picture is that we're all governed by laws every day. We are governed by laws in our city, our county, if you're in Pennsylvania or something, your township, and also, the United States and international law. And so, you can use that right, to have a say in those laws. So, that is one reason that voting matters.

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# 00:32:27 **Sierra**

# Another reason that voting matters is this concept of civic duty. And Professor Ruiz in his interview mentioned that he felt like it was his civic duty to get involved in the redistricting process and involved in participating in his government. One way to participate in your government is through voting. Many people believe that they have a civic duty to participate in the process.

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# 00:32:52 **Sierra**

# So, there's a lot of people and there's a lot of ways to participate and conduct your civic duty. One way is getting involved with a redistricting commission. Another way is serving in the military. We may have some veterans in our audience here.

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# 00:33:05 **Sierra**

# But another way that most of us can easily participate in is by voting. So, we should vote and your vote matters because we have a commitment to civic duty.

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# 00:33:15 **Sierra**

# Another reason that your vote matters is that we want to hold our representatives accountable. So, however the lines are drawn, you are going to have representatives. And one reason that we vote is we put these people into office, but then we get to analyze them and assess them and watch them. And we have mass media to help us do that. But if we don't like what they're doing, and if we don't feel that their policies and their choices are representing us, we can throw them out.

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# 00:33:44 **Sierra**

# And so, voting is also a process of holding not just Congress, but also, all of our different representatives accountable for the things that they're doing. Theoretically speaking, this makes our representatives want to find out what we care about, want to represent the people as if we were literally there.

# 

# 00:34:02 **Sierra**

# Voting also matters because it affects policy choices. If you think about voting, think of it like your voice. Strategically speaking, politicians are going to respond to people who vote. This is their incentive. If people vote and they participate the way that they want and they enact policy changes that they want, then those people will vote to keep them in office.

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# 00:34:27 **Sierra**

# However, the people who are sitting out of an election, the politicians are not going to respond to. So, people that have a larger voice are more likely to be responded to.

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# 00:34:38 **Sierra**

# So, relatedly, this is a famous quote; that the flaw in the pluralist heaven is that the heavenly chorus sings with a strong upper-class accent. If you think about the United States and all of American citizens as our big sample size, for conducting U . S. policy in American government - if the people that participate the most and have the loudest voice are people from an upper-class part of society, then it may be that our policies reflect that.

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# 00:35:06 **Sierra**

# And maybe you or I don't have as much money to donate or as much time to participate on social media, but what we all do have is this concept of one person, one vote. So, we can all participate. So, if our sample size is just rich people or if it's just everyone, then we have a greater chance of moving our policy choices closer toward what maybe an average ordinary American might prefer.

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# 00:35:32 **Sierra**

# A fifth reason that voting is important is that it inspires civic engagement. So, when one votes, they feel typically empowered; I did a thing, I went out and I made a decision and I participated, and I had my voice heard. And generally, in election years, we see people participating by voting, but also, then thinking about other things.

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# 00:35:55 **Sierra**

# Maybe donating money, maybe having a bumper sticker on their car, maybe participating in social media. So, civic engagement and civic duty is not necessarily just about voting, but also, all of these other factors that connect us with our communities.

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# 00:36:10 **Sierra**

# And when people do feel empowered and participated, they have a stronger sense of efficacy, which is to say that your voice matters, that you feel responded to in society. And again, a lot of our conversation has been maybe about congressional districts today, but this can happen at all levels.

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# 00:36:30 **Sierra**

# You can choose to engage your civic duty by being a member of your neighborhood watch. So. There's a lot of different ways to participate in this and you can be the change that you want to see in the world. So, let's look back at a few examples.

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# 00:36:45 **Sierra**

# A first thought is that local election matters a lot. So, sometimes, it may feel that our vote doesn't matter because you are like one person out of the whole United States, and it's easy to feel really small that way. But also, on the ballot are a lot of other local elections that are really important.

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# 00:37:02 **Sierra**

# And I just wanted to share with you, Julian Nava was elected the first Mexican American to serve on the LA Unified School Board of Education, right during the heart of the Chicano and Latino Civil Rights Movement. And when populations, particularly populations that are underrepresented, make gains in local elections, they can have larger changes down the road.

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# 00:37:26 **Sierra**

# And this is one of those people that was able to do that early on and also, locally. In fact, even someone that used to attend community college in Los Angeles.

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# 00:37:36 **Sierra**

# I also wanted to share with you this guy from Pennsylvania, his name is Brendan Boyle. Sometimes, I think when we talk about redistricting and this idea of politicians choosing their voters, we think about reelecting the same person over and over and over. We've had some of those people here in California that we elect over and over and over.

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# 00:37:56 **Sierra**

# But that isn't to say that there aren't moments where things change. One thing I hear a lot of the time is that republicans in the state of California feel as if their vote doesn't matter because we're such a strong blue state here in California. But recall that California has had Republican governors.

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# 00:38:15 **Sierra**

# Policies change, people change, people move around. So, this guy, Brendan Boyle, was the first Democrat elected ever to this Pennsylvania state legislative district in 2008. And he is someone that had immigrant parents. His parents were a janitor and a school crossing guard. He was a first-generation college student and he was elected at age 31 to the state legislature in Pennsylvania.

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# 00:38:42 **Sierra**

# And over time, this man is now, today, a member of the U . S. Congress, and he serves on the all powerful Ways and Means Committee. So, it is true that your vote matters and that patterns that may have existed in communities in the past can change. And Brendan Boyle is one of those examples.

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# 00:39:00 **Sierra**

# Also, other local elections matter. Some of you may recall that in 2018, our region passed Measure GO for Mt. SAC. And this is something that was on the ballot.

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# 00:39:12 **Sierra**

# Mt. SAC received 750 million education bond. And all of this construction that we are seeing that you maybe had to walk by to try and get to this talk is a result of this money that was voted on by the people that live in this region.

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# 00:39:29 **Sierra**

# So, I personally am really excited that Mt. SAC received this money and feel grateful for the opportunity that people could say yes to giving us a new student center, and allowing us to have these new funds for our education here.

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# 00:39:43 **Sierra**

# As we look forward, we can think about November 2022. There's a lot on the ballot, and it may differ depending on where you live, but one thing we do know definitely in political science is that there's a positive relationship between one's educational attainment and then their propensity to vote.

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# 00:40:01 **Sierra**

# That is to say that people that are more highly-educated are more likely to vote. I hope that certainly those of you that are students in the room work to continue that trend. Here you are at Mt. SAC working to get educated, and your education is becoming higher the longer that you sit here.

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# 00:40:17 **Sierra**

# And hopefully, then you can take advantage of the opportunity that is here physically to register to vote if you aren't already. You can register to vote online. It's super easy and you can be one of those people that is of higher education and also, chooses to participate in politics.

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# 00:40:39 **Christina**

# Thank you for listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast, and don't forget to share your favorite episodes.

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