Political Science 501, Baumgartner
Short paper topics/discussion points
Week 10: Examples from the voting turnout literature

Readings: Rosenstone and Wolfinger, Abramson and Aldrich, Powell, Squire et al., Cox and
        Munger

NOTE: Each of these articles asks essentially the same question, but approaches the issue from a
different research design. Write a paper and come to class prepared to discuss one of the articles in
great detail, paying attention to the following types of issues, and comparing the merits of one
approach to those of the other articles.

What is the N? What is the effective unit of analysis? Is it the voter, the country, the election, or
what? Pay careful attention. Is it the same unit of analysis at all points in a given paper?

What variables that were variables in other studies are in fact constants in this study? How does
that affect the findings?

Are the most important conceptual variables in fact those that vary much in this dataset?

Is one of these approaches "better" than the others? What important variables are "designed out" of
the research design that you think should be included? Did the author have a means of avoiding
that?

Would a literature be richer if a greater number of similar studies were done, each improving on
such things as the measures and the statistical techniques, or would time be better spent on devising
alternative designs and research strategies? There is a big trade-off here to discuss.

In the survey based studies, what is the degree of over-reporting of voting and how do the authors
deal with it?

In the survey studies, what is the amount of missing data and how do the N's decline through the
analysis?

Which of the five studies answers the question of why people don't turn out to vote best?