

Voting Issues Social Media Campaign Culminating Activity Narrative

Task – Students will be able to create a social media campaign discussing the benefits and drawback to various voting policies enacted around the United States.

Lesson Overview: In this inquiry-based lesson, students will examine one of the most pressing and debated civic issues of the 21st century: voting policy. Voting is a foundational element of democratic governance, yet policies that shape when, where, and how Americans vote vary widely by state due to the principles of federalism. Students will explore these variations by researching key voting policies across the United States, developing a social media campaign to educate fellow citizens, participating in a gallery walk and mini-debate, and finally writing a “letter” to their state representative advocating for their position on this issue.

Persistent Issue – What should society do to promote fairness and equality within its borders?

Central Question – Should voting protocol remain a power of the states, or should it be a power of the federal government?

- What is the proper balance of power between the state and federal government?
- Should we look to the past for solutions to our current problems? (times when the federal government stepped in to regulate voting vs. balancing state rights)

Value Conflict – State’s rights vs. Federal protection of individuals

LESSON PURPOSES:

- 1) Describe various state voting policies around the country and possible barriers citizens may face.
- 2) Explain the role of Federalism and the Constitution when it comes to elections and voting.
- 3) Analyze the benefits and drawbacks of certain voting policies.
- 4) Determine the proper role of government in outlining voting policies and rights through research, evidence collection, and discussion.
- 5) Articulate and defend an informed position on what role the federal government should play in voting rights/policies.
- 6) Write a persuasive letter to a public official using appropriate civic reasoning and evidence.

LESSON MATERIALS:

- SMARTBoard/Projector
- Voter Simulation Ballots
- Mini-Lecture Notes
- Expert Groups Reading Materials
- Digital posters/posterboard/butcher paper for Social Media Campaigns
- Whiteboard
- Student devices/pencil paper for student Letter to Representative Essay

LESSON PROCEDURE:

Step 1: Grabber Activity- Voting Simulation (15-20 minutes)

In order to demonstrate the various barriers to voting and how the process differs by state students will participate in a small-scale simulation to understand the impact of voting barriers on voter participation and the democratic process. (Insert the CLEAR Voter Ballots Template Final)

- Divide students into groups, each representing a different voting scenario:
 - **Group A:** Mail-in voting
 - **Group B:** In-person voting with a 5-minute time limit and long lines
 - **Group C:** ID requirement voting
 - **Group D:** Ballots in a different language
 - **Group E:** Ballots with images only
- **Voting Simulation**
 - **Group A:** Provide mail-in ballots to be filled out and submitted at their seats
 - **Group B:** Set up a single voting booth, create a line, and give them 5 minutes to vote.
 - **Group C:** Require students to show their student ID before receiving a ballot.
 - **Group D:** Distribute ballots printed in a language different from the primary language of instruction.
 - **Group E:** Hand out ballots with images instead of text to indicate choices.
- **Discussion** Discuss the results and ask the following questions:
 - **What challenges did you face during the simulation?**
 - **Did some groups have it easier than others?**
 - **Why would certain barriers to voting ensure fairness? (ex. Having multiple polling boxes v. one in the main office or time limits ensuring votes are counted quickly)**
 - **How do you feel this impacted your ability to vote and vote accurately?**
 - **How did you feel about the “fairness” of the process?**
 - **Should voting be “easy”?**

Explain to students that over the course of the next few class sessions they will be engaging in research on voting requirements across states and whether these procedures are justified. Do they promote fairness and justice? Should the federal government step in and regulate the voting procedure in the US?

Step 2: Mini-Lecture on Voting Rights (20-30 minutes)

PowerPoint: The instructor will then engage students in a refresher where the student’s previous knowledge is recalled and sets up the issues students will be working on. (Insert CLEAR Voting Mini-Lecture Final)

Ask students to recall the concept of “consent of the governed” and after some discussion, ask students, what are ways in which US Citizens show consent? How do we voice our opinions and influence our government? Students should conclude that voting is traditionally seen as the main way we use our voice. The instructor will then show students Art. I Sec. IV of the US Constitution. Ask students to breakdown what this means in a modern context. The teacher will then walk through the “Voting Eras” slides and times when congress has stepped in to regulate voting protections. The teacher should then show students some graphics on voter turnout for the

most recent election. Make sure to include your state. Have students call out what they are noticing. Where is voter participation high? Where is it low? Why might this be? Students should recall instances from the grabber. Finally remind students of the Central Question to frame the Social Media Campaign Activity.

Step 3- Voting Issues Expert Groups and Media Campaign Creation (60-90 minutes)

Begin class by asking students to reflect on some of the voting procedures of different states that they looked at yesterday. Next, ask students to do a think-pair-share on the following question: Where do you typically see discourse on politics or go for political information? After a moment of discussion ask student groups to share: Many students will probably say they go to online forums to see political discourse (TikTok, Instagram, X, reddit) rather than in person. Ask students to think about the advantages and disadvantages of using social media for this purpose.

After some discussion, instruct students that today they will begin doing in-depth research on one of the previously discussed issues as they have been hired by an Election Education group to create a social media campaign on modern day voting issues. They will need to become the experts on their issues and within their groups determine who will be creating the feed for “pros” and “cons”. Pass out or display the Social Media Campaign PDF. (Insert FINAL Social Media Campaign PDF HERE).

The instructor will hand out/show students where to access the research materials for their assigned position. (Insert Group Assignments Folder- student materials)

Instructor will provide each student with a research scaffold for their assigned topic and the Gallery Walk. (Insert All Students- State Policies Scaffold- student materials)

Students will work together to complete their portion of the State Policies Scaffold thinking about the benefits and drawbacks to their assigned aspect of voting regulations and whether it is justified. Once students have completed the assigned portion of the graphic organizer, they can begin creating their social media campaign. The instructor should review the sample social media feed and review all necessary components before groups begin working. (Insert Sample ProConSocial Media PDF- student materials)

Step 4- Gallery Walk (20 minutes)

Give students 5-10 minutes to put any finishing touches on their posters. Instruct students to get their Voting Issues Graphic Organizer out (the All Students- State Policies Scaffold back page). Inform students that today they will be completing the organizer by participating in a Gallery Walk, where they will be getting information on the rest of the issues we have highlighted. Remind students that for each issue, they should be thinking about whether they believe this aspect of the voting process is justified, or to what extent it is necessary.

Allow students time to go through each issue and ask soft scaffolding questions as necessary.

- What is the voting process described here?
- What does this issue look like in our state?
- What are some reasons you believe this is good/bad?

- How does this promote fairness? Or does it?

After students are finished, have them go back to their focus groups.

Group Deliberation

After students complete their Graphic Organizer, they will come back together to answer some discussion questions included in the organizer.

Step 5- Mini-Debate

After students complete their gallery walk and examine the pros and cons of various voting policies—including in-person voting requirements, voter ID laws, same-day registration, and mail-in voting—they will participate in a mini-debate to answer the central question:

Should voting policies remain up to the states, or be regulated by the federal government?

To prepare for the debate, students will reflect on what they learned during the gallery walk and use that evidence to support one side of the argument. Depending on the size and dynamics of the class, the teacher may organize the debate in one of two ways.

In **Option 1**, the class is divided in half. One side will argue in favor of **state control** over voting policy, while the other side argues in favor of **federal regulation**. Each side will work together to develop opening statements, main arguments, and closing remarks. Students can draft these on a word/google doc, or on a piece of scratch paper.

In **Option 2**, the class is broken into smaller groups of 4–6 students, with equal representation from each viewpoint in every group. This structure allows for more individual participation and encourages all students to speak. Each group will have time to prepare and then hold their own debate, rotating through roles such as opener, responder, and closer. Again, opening statements, arguments, and closing remarks can be drafted digitally or on paper.

For either option, the instructor can provide support by requiring each side or group to have a minimum number of arguments, scaffold with sentence starters like “One consequence of state/federal control is...” or “an advantage of federal/state oversight is...” to help struggling students, have minimum/maximum speaking requirements to encourage discussion and debate, include a scribe role for reluctant speakers, or establish your classroom ground rules as needed. While there is no one correct way to hold this debate, clear expectations for students will provide the best outcome! Scaffold to your learners based on what is successful in your classroom.

The debate begins with brief opening statements from each side, followed by a period of open exchange where students respond to each other’s arguments and questions. This is the heart of the debate, where students are encouraged to engage respectfully, use evidence from their research, and consider both legal and practical implications. The debate will end with short closing statements that summarize each side’s position.

Throughout the discussion, the teacher may guide the conversation using prompts such as:

- *Why did the Constitution give states the power to control elections?*

- *How do different voting laws impact voter turnout and access?*
- *Would federal regulation ensure greater fairness or threaten state sovereignty?*
- *Who is better positioned to protect voting rights and election integrity—states or the federal government?*

After the debate, debrief with the class by asking students to reflect on what they believe are the strongest and weakest arguments from both sides. Finally allow students to drop their assigned positions and introduce the Letter Assessment.

Step 6- Final Assessment Letter

For the conclusion of this lesson, pass out or show students where to access the Federalism and Voter Policies- Letter to A Representative Assessment. Instruct students to write an analytical essay in the form of a letter advocating for their personal position on the central question. (Insert Federalism and Voting- Final Assessment Doc HERE- student materials) Instruct students to follow all instructions on formatting and writing requirements. Use the rubric attached to the document to score essays. You may alter categories or point requirements as needed for your classroom.