

The Amazing Race: American Politics and the Battle to be First

by

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Background

I teach in an affluent public high school in Cornelius, NC. Our free and reduced lunch population is about ten percent and our minority population below twenty. We score among the highest ranked schools in the district on standardized tests and have a very active and well-subsidized parent organization. We do not experience many of the troubles characteristic of inner city schools. There are no gangs, fights, or teen pregnancies. This does not mean, however, that the unit I am about to propose is outside the realm of possible use for any group of kids that does not match this description. The unit is written for an AP Government class though I do not think it is prohibitive to classes that are not on the advanced placement level. As is the case with any educational exercise, it can be amended or manipulated for use with a different audience. I will make suggestions at the conclusion of the unit that will address this possibility.

There is another important feature of this school that I think is worth noting because it seems relevant to the unit I am going to propose; the students at my school are predominately from very conservative families that identify themselves openly and affirmatively with the Republican party. That, in and of itself, is not a problem. For many years I taught at an arts school where the population was the polar opposite. The challenge is trying to teach students, of any affiliation, about the inter-workings of party politics.

The goal of the unit is to see beyond or outside of those inclinations. But let me be clear, the goal is **not to change** students from one ideology to another, which is often the misconception; rather, I would like for students to step back from their own beliefs in an attempt to understand their perceived “enemies” perspective in a way that will allow them to be more well-rounded/ more informed in their approach to politics and political issues. I would dare say that my goal is to create a kind of objectivity, though I understand the peril in attempting to achieve what many believe is an unattainable goal.

Nevertheless, it is obvious to me after three years at this school that the parents of my students have very strong and outspoken beliefs about American politics. Students have quite often espoused opinions about, for instance, the President, but with little evidence to suggest that they themselves have thoroughly examined the issues. The students are not as well informed as their parents and teachers- ostensibly speaking of course. For instance, during this election cycle there was lots of talk about China and none of my students had a clue about issues relative to US/ China relations outside of the general belief that China poses a “threat” to the United States. This is no news flash to teachers

who have taught what I teach. Students do not often have the same “real world” experiences. These kids don’t have a mortgage payment, they don’t worry about tax season, or property values- it is a natural state of being for them. Having said that, I believe it will become a running thread to my unit that I qualify my rationale for the unit, its’ implicit activities and anything else within the framework of working with ultra-conservative kids. It is not because I am attempting to sway them from their belief or that I totally disagree with them but because I have, I believe, a higher academic and intellectual purpose in mind.

Introduction/ rationale

Politics is a messy business. It seems to be such a polarizing element of our culture. It is said that proper etiquette dictates that in casual conversation one should never broach subjects that cross into religion or politics for fear of the conflict that might ensue. If you were to begin a political conversation today with a co-worker or an in-law (this is from personal experience), what would be the outcome? Are you ever scared to share your political views? And why is that? Shouldn’t we engage in as many conversations as possible- I mean power in this nation is with the people right? Our rulers/ leaders are in positions to change the nature of our existence and often make very important decisions that are effective to our everyday lives. So we need to pay attention and be civically involved right? There is even a group of very influential folks who have formed publicagenda.org as a way to get people more engaged in public issues by giving them non-biased information they can use to make their own decisions about important issues. But it is not a resource many know about or use. Is our reluctance to openly talk politics is a lack of political interest? I don’t think so.

Strangely enough, from my experience, Americans are both very outspoken when they believe they are in the company of friends and secretive when in the company of strangers about their political beliefs. A common occurrence in our political world is that though many folks identify themselves openly as moderates or independents most will vote for one of the major parties and in the direction they have for years or, if they are new to the process, the same as their parents and grandparents- these seem to be one and the same. So it seems there is a kind of collective public shyness or disingenuousness about political views and a private staunchness. And when the private becomes public, well then you have Rush Limbaugh and *Cross-Fire* (show on CNN where pundits scream at each other), and debates where candidates make up stuff to win. I wonder whether we allow *those* voices to define American politics. I would argue that we do but don’t like it very much. Just look at this current poll from Pew Research that shows just how much Americans disliked the negative tone of the 2012 elections.¹ So, why are Americans settling for this?

I think it is the same mentality that makes UNC fans hate Duke and vice versa. There is no substantive reason other than it is simply how fans behave. These fans may or may not know one another-that is of no consequence- the color blue you choose is most important. I should know because my mom went to Duke University and I have grown up hating the tarholes! Politics and spectator sports are really no different in this sense;

except in sports we aren't afraid to dawn our colors or cheer loudly for our teams-much like my students who aren't afraid to be ultra-conservative in spite of their lack of knowledge. People aren't afraid because sports are games and the outcomes of those games are no serious determinant to our lives. So where do these two institutions cross paths and how are they different?

I tend to believe that this condition is explained by our primal tribal predilections. We cling desperately to the belief that we must belong to a side. We do it all the time. The popularity of professional sports is a great testament to our tribalism. In a TED series, Social psychologist Jonathan Haidt explains that humans have always been drawn to take sides based on moral differences and even when there aren't morals involved, say in sports, we make them up (i.e., LeBron James is evil for leaving Cleveland!). But in politics we use our moral sensibilities to create a cultural framework for ourselves that makes them purposeful.² For example, he says most conservatives tend to rate respect for authority as most significant to one's moral code and liberals believe that equality is just as significant. However, upon further examination, Haidt says it seems plausible to believe that although conservatives and liberals think this makes them opposites, reality says differently. For example, the fight for civil rights during the mid 20th century was bitterly fought. Most would agree that much of the partisan bickering of the period was borne of sheer ignorance. Liberals demanded equality and conservatives demanded a respect for state authority. Neither side seemed able to see beyond those parameters.

But wouldn't liberals and conservatives today agree that the federal government's intervention to protect the civil rights of black Americans during the 1950s and 60s constitutes both respect for authority and equality? In this case, the government limited the freedom of people to discriminate by using federal power and did so as a means to protect equality. The insistence of the two sides that they are polar opposites becomes convoluted and unsubstantiated in this context. Thus both conservatives and liberals were/are served by the moral principles of the other. They can and do work together to achieve a higher purpose. Imagine if they'd been able to do so in the 1960s- we may have avoided a really dark and violent period in our history.

Haidt challenges us to think about how counterproductive it is to always side with one team. Haidt calls this "stepping outside the moral matrix." What if Duke and UNC fans were asked if they loved college basketball or college sports? Would the answers be the same? And isn't it that answer that serves them both equally and best? I believe we could do this with thousands of examples- examples that make it clear that for every view that claims moral superiority there is a kind of a built-in paradox.

My point in all of this is that I see the American political arena as being constructed in a way that draws people into petty kinds of bickering- that it reduces us down to our tribal nature because we feel like we have to choose between the two sides we are given. It is the reason many of my students become so angry and emotionally negative at the mere mention of President Obama. And keep in mind that though third parties have formed and been a part of the election process, the rules surrounding the Electoral College and barriers to get on the ballot have kept them from ever being a serious threat

to the two-party system. In North Carolina for instance, Ralph Nader has never been on the Presidential ballot because he did not either raise enough money or get enough signatures (State rules) to be included.

In the end, we use our moral compasses as an excuse to choose from one of the major parties. And that divides the electorate thus making us more easily conquerable by the political powers-that-be. By conquerable I mean that we are duped into believing that our political leaders are looking out for our best interests when the reality is that they are feeding upon our tribalism as a way to maintain power. Joe Biden and John McCain have been members of the Washington establishment for 4 decades. Why exactly do we continue to believe that their messages of change and progress are actually going to happen? The congressional public approval rating has been well documented to be in single digits and has been abysmal for years and years- but these guys keep getting elected.

I know that this is not a new way to perceive American politics. And it is not something I propose that we as human beings will ever necessarily overcome (though I don't think it is impossible). That's not the point. I am a teacher and my job is to analyze the subject I have been hired to teach and bring ideas for consideration to the classroom. So I recognize this as a prevalent condition in our society and have chosen to expose it for educational purposes. Therefore, my unit is meant to reveal a political world that is less dependent on choosing sides- especially with elections and parties- so that my students might see beyond their chosen tribe, "stepping outside the moral matrix," and evolving into considerate, discretionary, intellectually studious human beings. And here is how I plan on doing it.

Part One: Seeing is believing- *Paul Ekman and the thin slicing of Bill Clinton*

It has been said that 90% of communication is non-verbal. And if that is the case then what we hear our political leaders say means far less than what we see them do. So, the first part of the unit is an exploration of Malcolm Gladwell's book *Blink*.³ In a latter chapter of the book (which my students will read) he explores the concept of mind reading through the eyes of two well-known and accredited researchers on the subject- Silvan Tomkins and Paul Ekman.

These guys have revolutionized the field of mind reading by way of interpreting the facial expressions of people (and remarkably horses!). The two men have been able to, over time, break down facial expressions into "action units," that when studied carefully, can reveal everything that is happening in the mind. People don't need to speak for these researchers to know what they would say. In one amazing and compelling part of this chapter Ekman recalls seeing Bill Clinton speak during the 1992 primaries and saying to his wife "this is a guy who wants to get his hand stuck in the cookie jar and have us love him for it anyway." Ekman says he saw a combination of facial action units that ended in an eye-roll and at that point knew exactly who Bill Clinton was, characteristically, as a human being.⁴

Why is this significant? Well, after watching the interviews of President Obama and Candidate Romney on 60 Minutes Sunday night (September 23) I realized just how powerful the face (and body) can be, and what a remarkable message it can send. Romney not once moved his glare from the interviewing journalist while Obama searched with his eyes the floor, walls, and ceiling on numerous occasions- facial action units that indicate a maneuvering around the issues. Is that something all people pick up on? Gladwell says absolutely yes, but that we do it in the unconscious. And it is at this point that Gladwell becomes an important contributor to my unit (*there is actually some fairly complex research in the field of communication studies done on this very topic- one of the more pertinent can be found in a 1991 study printed in Communication Studies Journal volume 42 issue 2- this stuff is way too deep for most kids though but if you have a particularly cerebral group you could include this as background reading*).

I want students to think first about what it is that they are seeing in candidates. We are going to do some deep analysis of the expressions, the body movements and the ever-changing contours of the face- some watching instead of listening- speeches with the volume down! Gladwell says only about .005% of the people in the world have been trained on the complexities of facial reading because it is so amazingly difficult to do, but we can do some of what Gladwell describes and have a decent chance of drawing conclusions that are worth a classroom conversation. I would like to explore the possibility that we can learn a lot just by watching politicians-no sound, no noise, just our interpretation.⁵

Here is what I propose. Below is a rubric students will use to judge candidates facial and body expressions. The terms and descriptions are as follows; **facial expressions** include smiling, frowning, smirking or anything of the like that shows anger, sadness, happiness, or fear; **Gestures** includes pointing, waving, counting or other movements of the hands; **Paralinguistics** includes tone of voice, pitch, loudness, and inflection; **body language and posture** is defined as arm crossing or defensive moves, leg crossing, slouching.⁶ The rubric is of my own design and has no scientific utility but what can be derived from general psychology. It does, however, allow my students to normalize what they are saying and move us in the direction of a carefully thought out conversation about what candidates are doing with their faces and bodies and why that might be important to the voting public.

Specifically, I think it will be important for students to look at debates of the past between candidates with whom they are unfamiliar. This will give us the opportunity to do some correlation studies between our face/body assessments and success in a political election. This is not necessarily about predicting winners and losers as much as looking at what appeals to us and why (but we will talk some about who we thought did better in the election). The correlation will be more about getting in touch with our personal preferences based on what we see and hear and less about any party loyalties that might exist. I know this seems less than scientific and that is because it is; nonetheless, plenty can be said for attempting to draw some attention to this important element of campaigning (but definitely not an attempt to determine cause and effect).

Type of Communication	Description	Frequency	Assessment
Facial Expressions			
Gestures			
Paralinguistics			
Body Language/ Posture			
Eye Gaze			
Appearance			

Part II- Playing politics: *Case Studies in Campaigning*

The Advanced Placement Government curriculum includes a section about studying campaigns and elections. And in that section students are to be exposed to a number of important elements to an American political campaign which include, but are not limited to, a few things I would like to explore in this unit: **polling and the use of polling data, an understanding of who politicians are** (a look at the professions, race, gender and income level of those in the political arena-generally speaking), **strategies in campaigning, campaign finance, voting trends, the role of political parties, and the formulation of a platform.** To better understand how all of these things come together, I want my students to do some analysis of candidates and campaigns of the past. I am going to give them several choices of campaigns they might explore and require them to pick at least two. Appendix A is a detailed attachment for this part of the unit-see below.

To be sure, I will need to supplement their research with conversations and lectures about what they found and those will occur during the regular class period but for the purposes of this paper I don't think I need to give that sort of detail. For instance, we will have a conversation about how polls are conducted and how to analyze polling data but I will not spend any time describing my power point but will give some detail later in the unit about what I want my students to do. For the sake of helping teachers who might use this unit think about specific elections that students might study I am going to spend a short time now discussing some that stand out to me as perfect for student investigation.

We might begin by looking at Harry Truman's victory in 1948 and Lyndon Johnson's election to the Senate in the same year. Both elections will give students excellent information to consider about how a winning campaign is constructed. Truman was thought to be in real trouble because he was behind in all the polls. Most predicted him to be the overwhelming loser. His strategy to combat that condition was fairly simple but also genius. He travelled to almost every state in the Union by train stopping in as many spots as possible, even those that may have seemed insignificant because of their size. No President had gone to this length to meet the voters. His speeches were also unorthodox. He did not use prepared script but instead decided to speak very plainly and off the cuff so that he presented himself as a common man. People began to refer to him as "give 'em

hell” Harry because of his plain speaking frankness. And it worked. It was his ticket back to the White House.

Johnson’s road was a great deal different. He ran for the Senate against a political stalwart in Texas politics named Coke Stevenson. Mr. Stevenson was so beloved in his home state that his nickname was “Mr. Texas.” It was said that he represented everything that a good Texas man stood for. He was abandoned by his parents as a youth but did not wilt. He educated himself while he slept under the stars with the horses and carriage he’d worked so hard to purchase. He talked his way into law school and became a sheriff and eventually a congressman. Robert Caro says that Stevenson was the persona around which most Westerns of the early TV era were created.

Johnson’s story was pitiful in comparison. He went to Southwest Texas Teachers College and though he grew up in an impoverished area Johnson spent lots of time with his father, who was a state congressman, travelling to and from Austin. His life wasn’t terribly hard and he certainly never gained a reputation for hard work. But he desperately loved politics and power. He’d spent lots of time in previous years building relationships with powerful people, including potential funders; however, he was not a larger than life character like Coke Stevenson so how could he defeat Mr. Texas? He raised lots of money, made lots of promises, and called in lots of favors. He famously toured Texas in a helicopter. He had radio ads playing all over the State accusing his opponent of some pretty outlandish things including a link to communism. This was all pretty new stuff to the average Texan. Coke Stevenson refused to do any of those sorts of things. He travelled the state by himself in his car chatting with people about what they thought was important. But Johnson moved quicker and shook every hand and kissed every baby in sight. He worked night and day. It is also believed he may have had his campaign team pay Mexicans brought over the border in West Texas for their votes. That conspiracy aside, he won.⁷

The Presidential election of 1960 might also be a nice one to consider. It was one of the closest elections in American history. Former Vice President Richard Nixon was the republican candidate and John F. Kennedy was the democratic candidate. There are a number of points for interest in this one. Kennedy’s campaign was almost single handedly bankrolled by his father Joseph P. Kennedy who himself had wanted to ascend to the office but ruined his reputation around the end of WWII with anti-Semitic comments. Nixon was part of the very popular Eisenhower administration and seemed to be much more knowledgeable about things like foreign policy than his youthful opponent. This election was the first to see presidential candidates appear on television for a debate. Nixon’s refusal to wear make-up led many to say that he looked nervous and sickly and cast him the loser. Strangely enough those who listened on the radio gave the nod to Nixon. Kennedy’s victory was by .2% of the vote and he actually won fewer states than did Nixon. It remains a controversial outcome to this day.⁸

I would also suggest that students look at Ronald Reagan’s election in 1980. Reagan had tried and failed twice to get his party’s nomination for the Presidency and was presiding successfully as the Governor of California when he decided to again make his

move toward our nation's highest office. Reagan was in a tight competition with Jimmy Carter. Carter had suffered through a difficult first term. There was also a third party candidate that drew lots of attention- the Independent John Anderson. The economy was struggling because of an oil embargo that brought on a gas crisis, sky rocketing inflationary rates, and a debt cycle that was hold left because of the Vietnam conflict. But Carter had negotiated peace between Israel and Egypt and became a bit of a folk hero to the middle and lower class Americans because of his staunch refusal to play "Washington style" politics. The Iranian hostage crisis was in full effect as the election approached. In retrospect, it might seem as if Reagan was a shoe in, he did win over 400 electoral votes. But the popular does not reveal that kind of chasm- and Anderson got 6% of the vote while the libertarian candidate Ed Clark got 11%! This election might be nice for students for a couple of other reasons. Reagan powerfully defines what conservatism will be for the next 50 years in what has been since termed the Reagan Revolution. The use of massive amounts of campaign funds suddenly becomes a major element to the campaign cycle. Reagan's abilities in front of the camera are noted as his greatest assets, not so much his knowledge on any particular subject. Reagan the actor beats Carter the intellectual (he was a nuclear submarine engineer).⁹

Just a couple other elections in the modern era I want to suggest. First, Bill Clinton upsets George Bush in 1992 then loses the Congress in 1994. Clinton seemed to have no shot in the spring of 1992 to win the Presidency. There was a great deal of controversy surrounding him including many rumors about extra marital dalliances. George HW Bush has every reason to believe he would be resoundingly reelected. The Cold War had ended during his tenure, our military successfully ousted Iraq from Kuwait, and he had signed major civil rights legislation- the Americans with Disabilities Act. Clinton showed himself to be a smooth talking, saxophone playing, folksy guy who went on MTV to talk about what kind of underwear he preferred. But the key seemed to be his unofficial slogan- "it's the economy stupid." George Bush had promised not to raise taxes in 1988. The famous line was "read my lips, no new taxes." But the economy was faltering and headed into recession- Bush went back on his pledge. That seemed to be all Clinton, and the American voters, needed to vote him out. But there was also a popular third party candidate- Ross Perot. He was able to attract a lot of economic conservative hard-liners and steal just enough votes from Bush to give Clinton an upper hand. It was a surprise. Even more surprising was that two years later he lost congress to Newt Gingrich and the republicans. Gingrich's *Contract with America* promised a return to the conservative values of Ronald Reagan.¹⁰

I hope these examples might help anyone interested in this project think about what students will do with their research. There are lots of other elections that might be interesting to study. Scott Brown's election to the Massachusetts Senate seat formerly occupied by Ted Kennedy was a shocker. Students might look at the election of Jessie Ventura to the Governor's office in Minnesota. They could look at the 2000, '04, or '08 presidential elections which were all full of terribly interesting trends and facts. It might very well be the case that more recent elections would make more sense because of the issues-things that students find more relative to their lives. The rubric will give them a means for assessment no matter what elections they choose. The important thing is to

look sharply at what makes some politicians successful and others fail. It is especially important when we consider phase three of this unit.

Part III- The Amazing Race- An Election Simulation

All of the previous activities will culminate in what I am calling the Amazing Race. I have two AP Government classes. They will each be responsible for crafting a candidate and facing off for an election that will involve the entire staff and student body. This will be a weeklong competition and will involve several important challenges for each team. Each challenge will result in the accumulation of points that will ultimately determine a school champion. I like to give some pretty “big prizes” for activities like this because it creates incentive. So I tell students they will work in partners on the semester exam if they win- that usually results in much higher scores- and for my crowd of kids that is enough to get them excited.

I am now going to describe each element of the race. Some of the action will happen in the classroom while other activities have to take place outside the classroom. I will be careful to describe how each phase may involve one or the other or both. One other caveat- I will ask that the class divide themselves into groups so that the following jobs can be handled concurrently; however, it will also be the case that each group will need to share their work and ideas with the entire class because consensus will need to be achieved since this is a whole class project. Also, though some groups might be responsible for singular activities, the entire class will be responsible for others. All this will be clearer as I explain each of the challenges below.

1. **Collecting Polling data-** The first phase of this contest will require students to collect polling data so that they might determine what kind of a campaign to run. My seminar leader has suggested that we might use writings from the author Nate Silver has a popular book out now and also a blog called Fivethirtyeight.com. I hesitate to do so because I don't want this project to run too long but mention it here in case other teachers might be interested. Students will have to develop questions for both students and teachers. They must be careful to ask questions that will give them the best possible data to use- I will not intervene with questions and here is why. After students have done their polling each class will do a presentation to me. It will include graphics that show me what the data they have collected reveals. They will have to explain what questions they used to gather the data. And they will also then explain to me how the data will inform their choices about what things to focus on for their campaign. I will scrutinize all of this information and declare a “first challenge winner.” The class with the best overall presentation will receive 100 points.
2. **Develop a candidate-** biographical sketch- who are they, where are they from, education, work experience, family, path to politics. This is where we bring together lessons previously mentioned. Students will have looked at various campaigns and candidates from the past. They will have looked at what a presentable candidate looks like and will craft their own mythical person. Each class will have to present the bio sketch and tell the story of their candidate using

the criteria mentioned. I will assemble a team of teachers to help judge the bios. The panel will have five teachers each of whom has the right to award one class 50 points for their biographical presentations. It might seem as if I haven't given enough detail for this piece but in cases like this I like to leave it up to the students' creative sensibilities to decide how the presentation will look and what elements they will include. In other words, they might do a commercial and film it for the class or perform some sort of skit or something more simple. Too much intervention with older kids I think limits the possibilities.

3. **Develop a platform**-this is a big one! The platform will in part be a result of the analysis from the data gathered during the first challenge and also a reflection of the beliefs of the kids in each class. And here is where I think things can get complicated. They will need to spend time doing two things. First students will need to spend time researching various topics (health care, foreign policy, taxation- if those are among the topics they want to emphasize) and will need to split the work because they will only have a couple of days. But then they will need to spend time in whole class discussion to determine what direction they will go once they begin to campaign. I think it goes without saying that everyone will need to feel like their candidate stands for what they believe in or at the very least, what they believe will carry them to victory before they can begin to work on the next phase of the project. And this will be of particular difficulty as the members of the class are likely to have varying degrees of opinion about important subjects they would like to address. Much like delegates work in a party convention (or at least used to) the classes will need to hammer out their differences before they can run a successful campaign. Once the platforms are chosen a group of students from each class will meet with our PTSA board of directors. That presentation will result in an award of 200 points to the class our parents believe have done the most thorough work and understandable presentation.

***The next three parts of the Amazing Race will happen concurrently-thus will be split between groups of students-I will leave it up to the classes themselves to choose how they will divide the work.**

4. **Develop the theme and strategy**-It is very important to any campaign to think about how to "frame" an election. In the AP Government curriculum we study the four T's, which are tone, theme, timing, and target. The tone is normally thought of as being either negative or positive-defend or attack. Theme refers to the brand or message like Obama's hope and change in 2008. Timing has to do with when a candidate chooses to run-not material in this exercise. And the idea of a "target" is about focusing on a particular demographic that might swing the election. This competition requires that the classes appeal to both students and teachers (more about that later). So they need to think about how they get word about their candidate to teachers and students and how they will appeal to them as potential voters. How do they differentiate their message so that they attract both sides of the electorate while not seeming too radical or wishy-washy? They must decide whether or not they will attack the opponent and how best to do so if they make that choice. They will need a symbol that will be used to advertise their person

- and one that is meaningful and memorable. In addition, each class will decorate one of the giant corkboards that are in the main hallway of our school that will include things like the bio information, the theme, and platform issues (if they want). The art teachers will judge the creativity and aesthetic quality of their boards, plus the content included; this will be worth an award of 100 points.
5. **Raising money, winning primaries and debates (sort of)**- This part of the challenge has three parts. First, teachers will be divided into two groups funders or Super PACs and super-delegates. Each teacher will receive an envelope from me indicating which group they represent. On the fourth afternoon of the competition I will ask them to place the envelope in my teacher's box indicating which candidate they will endorse. The candidate with the most money pledged will receive 250 points and likewise for the candidate that get the most super-delegates. My guess is, given all that will be going on during the week, that one group of students will need to be in charge of coordinating a kind of a campaign trail dedicated to reaching out to teachers. On that same day, each candidate will appear in a video to be aired on our school wide television system to deliver a short 3-minute speech. This is where the *Blink* stuff will really be useful. The administrative team will vote on the best speech. The winning candidate will receive 100 points.
 6. The final challenge is to get elected. On the last day I will ask that the entire student body go to homeroom (not a difficulty at my school). Teachers will simply take a show of hands and count the votes. I can do this electronically by sending a ballot to each teacher through email- our system can be used to display the ballot to each homeroom and teachers need only to fill in the numbers. They can then return them to me by email and I will do the counting. Finally, each grade will be given a certain number of electoral votes based on their size. Ninth grade is always biggest but the others are up in the air so it will depend on the year in question. The winner of the electoral vote will receive 300 points. The popular will receive 200 points; however, this contingency opens up the possibility of each team earning something.

Conclusion

I would like to mention just a few other things that teachers may want to consider before attempting this unit. As is the case with any project, once my classes have attempted it I might find that this one doesn't work as well as originally conceived. My overall suggestion to other teachers would be to, as is normal for us, take these ideas and adjust as necessary. Some things that would work at my school with my students might not work with yours. Additionally, some of the background things I do might not be necessary but really my personal preference. Also, kids may want to do all kinds of things to draw attention to their candidate. Posters, tweeting, face book campaigning, making t-shirts or buttons-kids may even want to craft a new political party (a third party) and all this will be open game. But as is the case with teenagers, there likely is the opportunity for cheating. There isn't much I can do about that but to say that if I can confirm that it is true I will relinquish points from that party. Will teachers favor their favorite students and other students favor their friends- well maybe. But I won't think

about that one and hope for a greater sense of integrity on the part of the electorate. I also might suggest doing review quizzes of material and give bonus points to the class with the most correct answers. I like to do those kinds of things anyway but they would be especially useful in the heat of battle. It is always worth it to use incentives to get students to think that learning is fun, you know? Lastly I must say something about how long this unit might take. My best guess, especially if we do all the readings and research plus the amazing race activity, would be about two to three weeks. That would include all the lectures I will need to do about each of the individual subjects covered for this unit. But it is a big unit and may take as long as a month. Remember, this unit covers a lot of material and might be worth the chance. But again adjust as necessary. Happy politicking, now go out there and press some flesh!

Endnotes

¹ <http://www.people-press.org/2012/11/15/low-marks-for-the-2012-election/>

² http://www.ted.com/talks/jonathan_haidt_on_the_moral_mind.html

³ Malcolm Gladwell, *Blink*, 197-200.

⁴ Ibid, 200-205.

⁵ Ibid, 205-221.

⁶ <http://psychology.about.com/od/nonverbalcommunication/a/nonverbaltypes.htm>

⁷ Robert Caro, *The Lyndon Johnson Years: Means of Ascent*, 145-318.

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_1960

⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_1980

¹⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_1992

Appendix A
Campaign Research Data Sheet

Name: _____

Candidate Pre-1970 Name, Year, Office	Candidate Post-1970 Name, Year, Office
Biographical- professional, educational, family, route to politics, and any other significant aspect of the person's life... reference The Choice on PBS Frontline. http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/choice-2012/	
Polls and polling- did they play any significant role in the outcome or in the way the candidate conducted the campaign.	
Strategy- Theme, Tone, Timing and Target. What was the theme/ slogan, negative or positive tone, attack or defense, when did they begin to run and who was their target audience?	
Campaign Finance- How much money did they raise and spend? Was there any controversy over donors or spending?	
Voting trends- Were there any significant shifts in the electorate- think about young people turning out in big numbers for Obama in '08... look for a trend in your elections. Why was it meaningful to the outcome and why did the trend happen- what was the spark for the trend?	
Political Parties- Candidates are always members of parties but in what way does either a) the party shape the candidate and campaign or b) the candidate help redefine the party? How would you assess what happened in the election you chose?	
Platform- THE ISSUES!!! There could be some cross over with the category above on this one- what did the candidate emphasize in the election- what was important? Does it have relevance to what the party was saying in their platform?	

Annotated Bibliography

Caro, Robert A.. *Means of ascent*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990. This is the second in a four part series (with more to come) on the life and times of Lyndon Johnson. It seemed of particular importance to this unit because it explores Johnson's first and second campaigns for the House of Representatives-two of the better known in American political history. These books are huge and not for the casual reader but give great insight to the sleaziness that has become the norm in American politics. In a way, Johnson is the father of modern tactics. Teachers may at least want to read the chapters noted in the endnotes for more information.

Gladwell, Malcolm. *Blink: the power of thinking without thinking*. New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2005. Malcolm Gladwell has written at least four bestsellers and this was my favorite. He writes a great deal in this book about what happens when we "aren't thinking." He describes our instincts, what they are, why they are the way they are and how they take over in the blink of an eye. More importantly he tries to deconstruct it means to the understanding of our conscious behaviors and ourselves. It should be required reading for students because more than anything it asks us to examine our actions and the underlying motives that bring them about.

Silver, Nate. *The signal and the noise: why so many predictions fail-- but some don't*. New York: Penguin Press, 2012. I have not read this book but it is currently a best seller. It might of great use to teachers who want to use this unit because it explores how we use elements of our culture to predict elections. Silver has gained tremendous notoriety for his ability to predict accurately elections across the country. My bet is that there is at least a chapter or two that could be of use to students who want to clearly understand what makes an election go in one direction or the other.

Haidt, Jonathan. "The Moral Roots of Liberals and Conservatives." Lecture, TEDtalks from TED, Stanford, March 23, 2008. This was actually the inspiration behind my unit. Haidt makes a really compelling argument about the nature of human beings to revert to tribal dispositions and what that means to our current moralistic claims. Further, he argues that it is possible to see our grid-locking political system as falling prey to this emotional, tribal inclination. It's not science but certainly worth a discussion. I am gong to use this video as an introduction to the unit I have proposed.

The choice 2012. DVD. Directed by Michael Kirk. Alexandria, Va.: PBS Home Video, 2012. This film is available to watch online at PBS.org. It is a documentary and biographical sketch of the two men who battled for the presidency this year. I think students could learn a lot about why people run for office, how to establish a biography for their own candidates, and how to frame their upcoming election.