



### ***Getting High School Students Involved in Voting***

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This curriculum unit is recommended for:  
Civics and Economics or United States History, High School Level, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades

**Keywords:** Politics, Political Parties, Voting, Elections, President, Executive Branch, Legislative Branch, Judicial Branch, Republican, Democrat, North Carolina, Charlotte

**Teaching Standards:** See [Appendix 1](#) for teaching standards addressed in this unit.

**Synopsis:** The purpose of this unit is to get young adults interested in politics. As a teacher in North Carolina, I will present my students with a historical background of Charlotte, North Carolina and the surrounding region. Students will be engaged in the history and how politics influenced the development of our state. Many of my students are ages 15-17. The purpose is to get them involved in the political process and get them ready to vote when they turn 18. This is an engaging unit that allows students to be involved in the political process of the United States. It allows students to open their mind to the world of politics and voting. It will allow students to engage in the voting process, debates, propaganda, voting, public speaking, and writing. It is a fun and interactive way for the students to learn the objectives needed for Civics. Students will engage in a collaborative learning group with the goal of creating a political party of their own. They will go through the process of campaigning, voting, and electing a class President. Students will engage in their ideals on politics and incorporate it into their surrounding region in hopes of making improvements and getting involved in future elections at all levels.

*I plan to teach this unit during the coming year to 35 students in my Civics and Economics classes. The majority of the students are 10<sup>th</sup> graders ages 15-17.*

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## Getting High School Students Involved in Voting

*Sean Bradley Baker*

“I don’t care about politics. Politics has nothing to do with my life now. Politicians are just a bunch of old, corrupt men who want to be rich. I’m just one vote, what difference would I make anyway? I don’t understand any of this and it is too boring to read about.” These are just a few questions and statements I usually get when discussing politics and voting with my high school students. They know how to operate the latest and most up-to-date technology in the “Apple” world and know every technological app possible, but if you asked them to name the Speaker of the House or who was running as the their district House of Representative member they wouldn’t be able to answer you if their life depended on it (in most cases). They don't know who is left-wing or right and probably couldn’t list five major figures in either the Republican or Democratic parties, other than maybe the President. Being a Civics and Economics teacher, at the high school level, I have taken the challenge to try and create a spark in high school students to get them involved in politics and realize they can use the power of democracy to make a difference. I try to make them realize that in the not too distant future they will care about taxes, healthcare, foreign policy and gun control, to name a few. Many of my students have never been through a voting process, watched a political speech or have parents that are very involved in politics. This makes them ignorant to the madness that is politics. My goal is to create an unbiased picture of politics for a usually biased, manipulated teenager who may have an extremely uninformed perception of how American politics operates. My goal is to enrich my students with political history, structured debates, simulated campaigns and rigorous activities in order to push them to examine their political ideals and roles in the political world.

With this focus in mind, I try to get students to answer the question: What can be done to get young adults more involved in politics? If we have a greater understanding of what we want out of our government, know our political needs, and have an educated opinion on major political, social, and economic issues, can’t we make strong educated decision and vote for representatives that have our ideals in mind? Bob Hall from “Democracy North Carolina” stated that voter turnout for adults ages 18-29 was the lowest of registered voters in the 2012 Presidential election. He goes on to state that, “North Carolina has a history of low voter participation that goes back to the Jim Crow era, when the poll tax, literacy test, and other tactics told people that politics is for the privileged, the boss man, not for you. We’ve made considerable progress and are finally climbing out of the bottom tier of states, but we still have a long way to go to reach the participation levels of many northern states.”<sup>1</sup> I think in order to get the voter turnout increased the students need to be better prepared, educated, and involved in the process. We must also look at data. For example, North Carolina now has more registered voters labeled as “unaffiliated” than it does Republican. I think this movement shows that people are moving away from affiliating with big parties and making rational decisions for themselves with a more nonpartisan attempt at choosing a candidate. By understanding the history of politics students will see how voting has made major accomplishments in the past and what has been done to pave the way for them to make a difference. Young adults will realize the importance of getting involved in politics and educating themselves on who is running our country.

Through this unit I want my students to educate themselves on the purpose and history of political parties. I want them to come up with an educated political idea of what they believe in and take an active part in the future to make a difference. Can a society just vote for the person that they believe is best for the job instead of following the party's commands? Students will focus on the role of a politician, the role of political parties, the campaign process, and the influence of propaganda. They will learn the history of politics that took place in their own "backyard." They will see how politics and voting in elections has changed the landscape of the city they live in. They will realize that being educated on the past and seeing its impact on the future will be important to them becoming educated and involved voters.

Unit questions that will guide discussions and background information and lead to classroom activities are as follows:

- What is a political party? What is the history of the development of modern political parties?
- Have political parties artificially divided the American population?
- What are the major factors that influence our political ideals? How does the campaign process contribute to those factors?
- Do we "belong" to a political party or "identify" with them?
- What is the history of Charlotte and North Carolina politics?
- Are Independent voters becoming the future of politics?
- Should we vote for a political party or a specific individual?

### **Content Objectives**

Unit objectives will follow the North Carolina Standard Course of Study and will meet the requirements of the North Carolina Common Core (See Appendix A).

Over the course of this unit, the students will engage in activities following the standards found in the NCSCOS and the Common Core. The students will engage in various rigorous activities that will result in answering the unit questions and explain the American political process through debates, discussion, and creating a mock atmosphere of the political campaign process and election of individuals.

Rigorous activities will include analyzing the different kinds of primaries throughout the country. They will need to know the differences between an open, closed and blanket primary. We will focus on the closed primary because of North Carolina's use of this specific kind of primary in which only registered members of a particular political party can vote and if its purpose actually strengthens party unity. We will also look at past debates between candidates of the same party and how they try to set themselves apart from other members of their own party. We specifically will look at a portion of a debate between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton in the 2008 Presidential election and the 2012 election between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. We ask the question of why the majority of Democrats saw Barack Obama as the candidate that represented the party the best and would ultimately be the candidate that had the best chance to win the election.

The students would need to be divided into groups of six. Each group then would represent the same party. Members of the group can then “throw their hat in the ring” to run for President. Each group must have at least two members running for president. The students running for President then discuss within their groups why they want to be president. After several discussions and small debates, the group then holds a primary vote. The group or “party” will ultimately choose a candidate who they want to run for president representing their party. Each group will then run their candidate for President in a campaign atmosphere where they will write speeches, create propaganda, and campaign for their candidate.

## **Rationale**

I consider politics to be the last thought on many high school students’ minds, but when it comes to politics, often high school students follow what their parents or friends tell them. Many of their political thoughts are based on what they read in 140 characters on the rapidly growing social network of Twitter. Their thoughts are based on short ramblings of insignificant celebrities or biased Republican or Democrat “sophisticates” who use humor or fear to gain more viewers to influence their own political ideology on a blank canvass that is the high school student. Too often the Rush Limbaughs, Jon Stewarts, Stephen Colberts, and Glenn Becks of the world are influencing students with biased political propaganda and even cynicism. Although, sometimes humorous, several of these programs only show the glittering generalities of politics. My goal is to have students understand facts from both sides of the isle. I want them to gain an unbiased opinion of politics and start making political, social, and economic decisions for themselves. I want them to come up with an educated opinion on which political party they identify with and whether or not the party itself is important to the political process in the United States.

I also want students to realize the importance of politics at a state and local level. State and local government makes up a complete unit in my Civics and Economics class. I want to show students and have them understand how Charlotte has become a powerful and influential city and how politics played an important role in that happening. I want to show how Charlotte and the surrounding area went from a textile mill center to a major metropolis and destination city for many people to live. The students will learn the role politics has played in the development of our city and state.

## **School Background Information**

William A. Hough High School opened on August 25, 2010 to meet the needs of the growing population in northern Mecklenburg County. It is built on land on Bailey Road and it is a prototype for future high schools in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg School system. It consists of 99 classrooms along with a full array of athletic facilities. One of the unique features of our school is the fifteen rain gardens that dot the landscape. They filter run-off water through natural filters and then drain the water back into the creek which runs along the back of the property. Hough High School is named after a former principal of North Mecklenburg High School; Mr. Hough served from September 1955 to July 1974 and was very much loved and respected by the people of this area.

Hough offers students a traditional North Carolina educational program. We offer Standard, Honors and Advanced Placement courses in each of the four core areas: English, Math, Science and Social Studies. In addition, we offer a variety of elective courses to enrich student's lives.

Based on 2011-2012 statistical data, 77% of the student population was white, 8% African American, 8% Asian, 4% Hispanic, and 2% other. The school has over 2,000 students and consists of 90 full-time qualified teachers. William A. Hough High offers a standard course of study curriculum which includes a college/university preparation track, a college technical preparation track, a dual college/university & technical preparation track, and a career track. An occupational course of study leading to an occupational diploma is also available for qualified students in the Exceptional Children's Program. The curriculum is administered on a modified/hybrid 4x4 block schedule (with some A/B classes), allowing for flexible scheduling, re-looping and acceleration.<sup>2</sup>

William A. Hough High uses weekly collaboration through content area meetings. We encourage student centered classrooms that focuses on rigor. We encourage higher level thinking and encourage students to develop answers to problems on their own. This philosophy will play and intricate part in my unit. Students will be organized into groups to understand the political campaign process, which will be important to the development of their political ideology. Students will take a "Conservative vs. Liberal" pre-quiz to help determine stereotypical political ideologies of the Republican and Democratic parties. One of the keys that sometimes come from this quiz is that it reveals that you may want to become recognized as an independent. Students who fall in the middle of both conservative policies and liberal policies could ultimately label themselves as independent voters and not affiliate with a major party. This will get them thinking about which side of the isle they identify with, if they identify at all.

As a teacher at William A. Hough High School, I use input, advice, and collaboration from other teachers. Our alignment discussions among Civics teachers are key to focusing on the NCSCOS and the new Common Core that has been implemented in the past few years. We use high level reading resources and implement objective writing assignments to meet the requirements of the Common Core. These writing assignments will play an important part in my unit. Students will actively engage in writing a political party platform and interpret specific propaganda to identify major forms of propaganda and its influence.

According to their website, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) is located in the Charlotte, North Carolina region and provides academic instruction, rigor and support each school day to more than 141,100 students in kindergarten through 12th grade in 162 schools throughout the cities and towns of Mecklenburg County. CMS believes setting high standards for all students creates a greater opportunity for future success – in our communities, within the region and across our diverse and global society. Each day, CMS students are prepared to be leaders in a technologically savvy and globally competitive world.<sup>3</sup>

CMS is proud of its diverse mix of students who represent 160 different countries and various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. CMS offers an extensive range of magnet programs in 40 of its schools to nurture the talents of students who have interest and ability in specific areas.

CMS also educates supports and meets the needs of students with learning and physical disabilities.

CMS is one of the largest employers in Mecklenburg County with approximately 18,800 teachers, support staff and administrators. CMS is fortunate to have tremendous support from Charlotte's corporate, faith and business communities and more than 43,000 mentors and volunteers that support learning and instruction in CMS classrooms.

The public school system in Charlotte-Mecklenburg has a rich and intricate history. Built upon the efforts of many individuals who firmly believed in the importance of education to this community, public schools in this area have had a tremendous impact on the growth and economy of the region – as well as the thousands of individuals it has served.

## **Teaching Strategies**

### Political Party History

Prior knowledge about political parties is important to students understanding the purpose of the unit. Students will be exposed to the history of the formation of political parties and the idea of the political (liberal-conservative) spectrum. We will complete this using a format labeled, "Political Parties in the United States" (See Resources). We will do a timeline type approach to the rise of political parties. We cover everything from the Federalists and Democratic-Republicans to the Republicans and Democrats of today. We focus on the role of third parties and independent parties and how they can impact a national election despite never winning a presidential election. We discuss the history of third parties, especially the role of the Populist Party in the South and their "fights" against the Democratic Party. Students will learn the basics about political parties, including the history of political parties and how they were formed and how they were morphed into today's political parties. We will discuss the basic stereotypes or common characteristics of parties before and after World War II and how the "switch" took place under President Franklin Roosevelt and became a modern "conservative v. liberal" world with the impact of North Carolina's Senator Jesse Helms. We will discuss how this switch did not impact the southern wing of the Democratic Party until the 1960s. We will compare the parties today and discuss whether or not they are upholding their duties to represent the people.

### New South History/Seminar

A component of learning I want to accomplish in this unit is to have students understand the history of politics in Charlotte and the surrounding areas. I want to see how the area in which they lived has changed over time and what major historical events took place in their area. I want them to see how political changes and decisions have transformed Charlotte, North Carolina as a whole, and our region. We will look at the rise of the "New South" and how the conservative Democrats took control of the area in the 1890s by pulling the race card. We will trace how major historical events and ways of life shaped the landscape of the state we live in. We will trace how the "New South" ends and a "New South" begins around the 1980s with the modernization of banks in the city of Charlotte.

First the students will be shown how the rise of the cotton textile mills brought new industry to the Charlotte area. They will understand how entrepreneurs such as D.A. Tompkins and Stuart Cramer revolutionized the technical aspects of the cotton industry and helped create the “Mill Towns” around the Charlotte area. Students will read and analyze a short biography of D.A. Tompkins found in the “Documenting the American South” (See Resources) and will be shown pictures of D.A. Tompkins and textile mills in the South provided by the Levine Museum of the New South. They will see the rise of the mill towns around the area and how important he was to developing Charlotte from a “podunk” town to a major industrial city. Students will be shown pictures of cotton textile mills provided by the Levine Museum of the New South and the social aspects of what life was like in the textile mills and surrounding towns (Resources). Students will be given a notes outline to help them understand the information being taught. Students will read excerpts from Dr. Thomas Hanchett. Students will see how “after the Civil War, the Southern attitude toward industry changed radically. The end of slavery crippled plantation agriculture, and the region's investors began to work toward a ‘New South’ based instead on industrial development. Under the slogan ‘Bring the Mills to the Cotton!’ North Carolina emerged as the South's leading textile producer by the 1920s.”<sup>4</sup>

Students will also learn the social impacts politics can have. Students will review what life was like in the Jim Crow South. In 1868, with Amendment XIV, the Constitution had finally given black men full citizenship and promised them equal protection under the law. Blacks voted, won elected office, and served on juries. However, nine years later, federal troops withdrew from the South, returning it to local white rule. And now, the Republican Party, champion of Reconstruction and freedmen’s rights, had fallen from national power. Would black people’s rights survive? Students will see how their rights and freedoms were denied by racist but legal statutes known as the Jim Crow laws. We will outline how the specific laws towards blacks led to the influence of white supremacy, the tension of whites losing jobs to blacks, and how major U.S. Supreme Court cases, such as Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), helped enforce these racist laws. We will compare the change over time of these laws and how Supreme Court decisions and legal Congressional legislation slowly led to more modern times and the acceptance of different races and cultures in the area.

Students will also learn the political impacts of the New South. They will continue to see how Jim Crow laws created disfranchisement through poll taxes, literacy tests, and death threats. We will discuss the role of the “Solid South.” The Democratic dominance of the South originated in many white southerners' animosity towards the Republican Party's stance in favor of political rights for blacks during Reconstruction and Republican economic policies such as the high tariff and the support for continuing the gold standard, both of which were seen as benefiting northern industrial interests at the expense of the agrarian South in the 19th century. It was maintained by the Democratic Party's willingness to back Jim Crow laws and racial segregation. We will also see the political, economic, and social effects of the Ku Klux Klan. We will show how politically the KKK wanted to get the Republicans out of power, how economically they wanted to keep blacks out of white jobs, and how socially they wanted to restore white supremacy.

Students will compare three major Supreme Court cases: Plessy v. Ferguson (1896), Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, KS (1954), and Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg

Board of Education (1971). Students will be given background information on each case and students will analyze documents and photographs provided by the Levine Museum of the New South. Students will fill in a chart comparing the three and see the change over time. Students will see how Plessy v. Ferguson sanctioned legal segregation of “separate but equal” for over 60 years and how it was overturned by the historic decision of Brown v. Board of Education. Students will see how the Brown decision changed life in the South and helped change it into a more modern society over time. We will also analyze the impacts of Swann v. CMS and how many southern states, including in this case North Carolina, were not enforcing the decision of Brown and integrating schools. The Swann v. CMS decision brought busing to Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools and helped create more diverse schools and enforce integration. (See chart in resources)

We will also discuss key politicians that have had an impact on North Carolina and the Charlotte area. U.S. Senator Jesse Helms played a major role in renewing the Republican Party and turning North Carolina into a two-party state. When he was U.S. Senator, many conservative white Democrats in North Carolina began to vote Republican, at least in national elections. In part, this was due to dissatisfaction with the national Democratic Party's stance on issues of civil rights and racial integration. Eventually conservatives rallied to the G.O.P over social issues such as prayer in school, gun rights, abortion rights, and gay rights.

#### George Washington’s Farewell Address

As I introduce the unit covering the roles of political parties and elections, the students will read an excerpt from George Washington’s Farewell Address. At this point in the unit, we had already discussed the magnitude and importance of the speech as Washington earnestly tried to divert Americans away from permanent alliances and political parties. The students will be able to read and analyze the speech and create a scenario of what politics would be like if only we had heeded to the advice of our first President. I suggest using excerpts from Washington’s address that focus on the role of political parties specifically to standard level students and possible give a copy of the entire speech to honors level students. Both levels of students will read, analyze, and interpret the primary source document for understanding and fulfillment as to satisfy the new common core in reading. An example of an excerpt to show President Washington’s views on political alliances:

So likewise, a passionate attachment of one nation for another produces a variety of evils. Sympathy for the favorite nation, facilitating the illusion of an imaginary common interest in cases where no real common interest exists, and infusing into one the enmities of the other, betrays the former into a participation in the quarrels and wars of the latter without adequate inducement or justification. It leads also to concessions to the favorite nation of privileges denied to others which is apt doubly to injure the nation making the concessions; by unnecessarily parting with what ought to have been retained, and by exciting jealousy, ill-will, and a disposition to retaliate, in the parties from whom equal privileges are withheld. And it gives to ambitious, corrupted, or deluded citizens (who devote themselves to the favorite nation), facility to betray or sacrifice the interests of their own country, without odium, sometimes even with popularity; gilding, with

the appearances of a virtuous sense of obligation, a commendable deference for public opinion, or a laudable zeal for public good, the base or foolish compliances of ambition, corruption, or infatuation.<sup>5</sup>

## Campaigning

Students will have prior knowledge of how the Electoral College functions and the choice of delegates in the Electoral College. Students will have been assessed on specific vocabulary including such words as caucus, primary elections, conventions, PAC, platform, planks, etc. The students will have a prior understanding of the basic functions of a political party nominating a candidate for a major office such as President. Review of material prior to activities may be necessary to some. My suggestion in terms of activities is to put these specific terms and prior knowledge to life. Students will act as a nominating caucus to nominate a student for President. The students will act as a specific political party to get a fellow student elected. At this point students can take views of Republicans, Democrats, or categorize themselves as a Third Party. They will write a platform consisting of separate planks. They will write a campaign speech for their candidate to give orally to class. This will give the outlining idea of whether or not the students are preparing the parties ideas or the specific candidates at this point.

## Propaganda

Throughout this unit seven different forms of propaganda techniques will be defined and examples of each will be shown. A great resource to show would be a video found on CNN.com. It is a four minute video that helps students determine the difference between a positive and negative political advertisement. It shows how political parties use types of propaganda to influence your opinion. Students will develop their own propaganda posters to demonstrate knowledge of the techniques. They will use propaganda in their political parties to form a positive or negative connotation towards their party or another political party.

The seven forms of propaganda are glittering generalities, bandwagon, name-calling, celebrity endorsement, card-stacking, “just plain folks,” and symbolism. Throughout the discussion of the forms of propaganda we will discuss why political parties use these to persuade voters to vote a specific way. We will discuss how uneducated voters will make a decision on no merit based on propaganda techniques. We will discuss the impact propaganda has not only on a candidate, but also the political party. For example, with celebrity testimonial, in the 2008 election was it coincidence that Barack Obama saw a spike in women supporters after Oprah Winfrey gave him her endorsement? Did this spike cause Barack Obama to win the Presidency? We will also see how propaganda commercials have changed over time and how they have impacted the South. We will see advertisements from 1950-present. We will see how some in the past are now considered politically incorrect and how they targeted southern regions to get votes. We look at many of these advertisements through the website [thelivingroomcandidate.com](http://thelivingroomcandidate.com).

## Platforms

Students will be given a formal outline to list the planks of their party’s platform. This will be used as the basis of their campaign candidate’s speech. They will be given examples of platforms

used from previous elections and candidates from all parties. A platform is a list of the actions which a political party, individual candidate, or other organization supports to appeal to the general public for the purpose of having said peoples' candidates voted into political office or the professed opinion(s) proposed as part of law(s) or otherwise made into social policies. This will be instrumental in determining the difference between a political party's agenda and an individual candidate's agenda. Is there a difference? Students will determine if they are actually creating a platform of an individual or if it is geared more towards a political party. Students will use the history of political party's discussion from class to help influence their writing of their political party's platform.

Students will watch video of campaign platforms outlined in candidate's speeches. Students will compare and contrast Mitt Romney's acceptance speech at the Republican National Convention and President Barack Obama's acceptance speech at the Democratic National Convention. They will look for use of propaganda. They will label parts of the speech that outlines their planks. Students will watch clips of Presidential speeches, debates (for example, John F. Kennedy vs. Richard Nixon), addresses, etc. so to better understand how specific issues are demonstrated and examples of strategies they can use in their campaigns. They will also look at public opinion polls of both candidates before and after the National Conventions to see how they impacted public opinion.

## **Classroom Activities**

### Opening Activity

Opening activities is a strategy used to review previous content covered in a previous lesson or is used to see how much prior knowledge a student has on a topic. My opening activities vary, but I like to use them to get the students engaged in class from the beginning of the lesson. My activities range from a list of five to ten review questions based on previous material, mapping activities, reading activities, or free written response questions. Students know to look to complete this in the first 10-15 minutes of class. After completion, the opening activity is discussed in class, questions and answers are reviewed, or free response questions are shared. Students group these assignments in their notebooks and are turned in for a grade every two weeks.

### Collaborative Groups

Cooperative or collaborative learning is a team process where members support and rely on each other to achieve an agreed-upon goal. The classroom is an excellent place to develop team-building skills you will need later in life. Diverse skill levels, backgrounds, and experience allow each individual brings strengths to a group. Each member of the group is responsible to not only contribute his/her strengths, but also to help others understand the source of their strengths. Any member who is at a disadvantage or not comfortable with the majority should be encouraged and proactively empowered to contribute. Learning is positively influenced with a diversity of perspective and experience increasing options for problem solving, and expanding the range of details to consider. In this lesson, students will work together as a whole to act as a political party and act as a group to get their nominee elected. Students will be grouped together based on

diverse skills levels and background. Groups will be picked and organized by the teacher. These groups will pick their nominee, write their platform and campaign speeches, and create their propaganda as a group. They must work together to finish with the best product and grade possible.

### Debate

The intent of the strategy is to engage learners in a combination of activities that cause them to interact with the curriculum. Debate forces the participants to consider not only the facts of a situation but the implications as well. Participants think critically and strategically about both their own and their opponent's position. The competitive aspects encourage engagement and a commitment to a position. Debates require students to engage in research, encourage the development of listening and oratory skills, create an environment where students must think critically, and provide a method for teachers to assess the quality of learning of the students. Debates also provide an opportunity for peer involvement in evaluation. Students will debate with one another to determine which policies are needed to be discussed in the party platforms. Students will also debate with one another to determine who would be the better candidate to represent their party and why they should be considered the President.

### Free Response Writing

The free-response essay assesses your ability to think critically and analyze the topics studied in U.S. Government and Politics. Free response writing allows students to demonstrate an understanding of the linkages among the various elements of government. Students will use free response writing in preparing their planks for their platform. Students will be asked to share their views on specific topics and freely write about them to contribute to the group in order to write their overall platform for their party. They will also use their free response writing skills to help write their candidate's campaign speech that will be given in class by each candidate.

### Guided Notes

One strategy I use (especially for standard level students) are guided notes. Students are given an outline of notes (prepared by me) with blanks filled in throughout the notes. As we discuss new topics in class, the note outline is projected on my Promethean Board and as I discuss the material I fill in the blanks and they do the same on their outline. The students will participate in discussion as we fill in the notes and will use the notes to study later on when the assessment is assigned. This allows the students to have a detailed, specific, and organized outline for the content in which I want them to know for their assessment, but also to use to incorporate into this lesson. Students will keep the new content material in their notebooks to study later for their test.

Students will fill out and go over several sets of guided notes, including the History of Political Parties, a Venn diagram of modern political parties, comparison chart of Supreme Court cases, propaganda techniques, and elections.

Republicans vs. Democrats vs. Independents (Compare and contrast activity)

Throughout this unit students will be expected to develop stereotypical characteristics of the major political parties, including the independents. A great way for students to understand the qualities of the parties can be expressed with a Venn Diagram. Students then have a graphic organizer they can use and study to determine differences and similarities between the three major political participants. This can also be used to compare two to three specific candidates running in an election. Students are then asked to express their findings either orally or written (4-6 sentences) describing their results. This expresses a multitude of critical thinking skills in one activity.

### Political Debates

Students will watch the political debate between 2008 Presidential primary candidates Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton for the Democratic Party. Students will fill out a worksheet I have created to analyze the debate. Again, the main purpose of watching this is to expose them to political debates and how they are structured and their overall purpose. Many students at 15 and 16 have not taken the time to sit down and watch a political debate. Students will be asked to pick out what they believe was the strongest and weakest argument from both candidates. They will also be able to write about the format of the debate and whether or not it was an effective measure outlining the ideals of the two candidates. The students will also need to come up with a concrete question they would have asked each candidate after watching the debate. Students will also watch excerpts of political satire to see a different viewpoint of politics. Those excerpts range from The Colbert Report, The Daily Show, and Saturday Night Live political skits.

### Writing Platforms

Students will be given a formal outline to write their parties platform. This will be completed after the candidate for each party has been nominated and after the primary vote. Students will be required write a minimum of four planks that will comprise their platform. Students will pick four major issues that their party will want to focus on. The planks will be detailed and elaborated upon. Each plank will be around a paragraph long (four to six sentences) outlining the specifics of the issue, where they stand on the issue, and what they will do about the issue.

### Propaganda Creations

Students will be given examples of the seven forms of propaganda and will be required to create four propaganda posters using four different forms of propaganda. Students may use any means possible to create the poster. They can draw it or print pictures off the Internet to display their form of propaganda. The propaganda must show their candidate in a positive manner or can be negative towards another candidate. They can also use the propaganda to emphasize a political issue that is outlined in their platform. Students will be given 8 x 11 computer paper to create their propaganda, but will given the opportunity to bring in larger poster paper to create their propaganda.

### Prior Knowledge Quiz

Students will be asked to take an informal quiz about their political party affiliation and their place in the United States political spectrum. Students will be asked various questions based on specific issues happening in the United States. The student's responses are based on whether or not they agree with the statement or disagree with the statement. Based on each statement and whether they agreed or disagreed will determine if they have a conservative or liberal approach towards political issues. Students then add up the number of conservative statements and liberal statements and try to determine if they are more conservative (Republican), liberal (Democrat), or in the middle (Independent/Moderate). Students will use this as a small resource to determine which political party they want to be affiliated with or choose to become an independent voter.

### Day One

Students will be given a 15 minute opening activity to allow them to write a free response answer to the question, "What are your personal political views and how did you determine what those views are?" Students will write the question in their notebooks and respond to it. Students will be given the opportunity to share their written responses to the class. Students will then be given a guided notes outline to discuss. This outline will contain notes covering the basic concepts and roles of political parties, voting, and forms of propaganda. Students will fill in the notes as we discuss them in class and share their opinions. As we discuss primary elections, we will watch a 20 minute excerpt from a debate between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama from the 2008 election. We will also watch a 15 minute excerpt from the Republican Primary debate of 2012 from South Carolina. Students will fill in the "Watching the Debate" worksheet as they watch the two debates. Students will be assigned the content vocabulary from the textbook that covers political parties and elections. They will write the key term definitions in their notebooks and assessed on those words on a later date.

### Day Two

Class will begin with an opening activity by discussing reactions to the debates watched from the previous class. We will then go into the History of Politics. This will cover the main notes to discuss the development of political parties and their impact on the South. We will discuss key politicians that had a significant impact on North Carolina such as Jesse Helms. Students will then be grouped into 4 to 6 depending on class size. Desks will be arranged in a manner in which the students can collaborate effectively. Each group will represent a party of their choosing. Students will be given the 30 question "Prior Knowledge Political Quiz." Students will be given 15 minutes to complete the quiz independently. Students are told the purpose of the quiz and are to write down whether they think they are more conservative or liberal before they take the quiz. When the quiz is complete, the quiz can help determine whether their thoughts about being conservative or liberal are accurate. After this time period, I will go over the answers in class. Students are to mark down, depending on their answer, whether each answer was a conservative response or liberal. At the end, the students will add up the number of conservative statements and liberal statements. Students will then share their responses with their group and see where they stand. The group will discuss whether they agree to be a Republican, Democrat, or Independent Party based on discussion and results of the quiz.

Students will then determine who will be their candidates for the primary. Each group must nominate two candidates. Within the group, at least two people will give their reasons for representing their party. The group will then have a primary vote. Whoever wins the primary vote then moves on to compete against the other groups/parties candidates for President. Once the candidate is chosen for their party, the students will begin brainstorming on political ideals they would like to include in their party platform and write a rough draft of those ideas.

### Day Three

Students will be assessed on the key terms they were to have completed on day one. A discussion about local politics will take place. We will look at the rise of Charlotte through politics. We will discuss topics such as D.A. Tompkins, textile mills to modern banks, and the roll of politicians such as Jesse Helms and their impact on our state. Students will then finalize their party platform. Students will be given the political party platform which is broken down into planks. A designated writer for the group will write the final version of the platform. The platform must contain four specific planks that outline specific issues facing our political nation. The candidate for the party will begin writing their rough draft for their campaign speech that will be given to the class in hopes to convince them to vote for them. Other members of the group will start formulating ideas for propaganda posters. Students will be given 8 x 11 size paper to begin rough drafts of their propaganda. Students will make reference to their notes outline completed on day one for the forms of propaganda. Students are required to complete four different forms of propaganda for their campaign.

### Day Four

Students will finalize their platform and have a final copy ready to be turned in. Candidates and other group members will help finalize a campaign speech to be used by the candidate for their group. The candidate must use the platform to help write the campaign speech. Candidates can also come up with creative ways in which they would like to present their speech (some students dress up, rap, play background music, or even create videos). Students will also be finalizing their four propaganda posters. Students will make sure they have identified the form of propaganda used and will check to make sure it is used correctly and identified on the poster. Student can start hanging up the propaganda around the room and campaigning for their candidate.

### Day Five

Candidates for each group will prepare their speeches to be given to the class. The purpose of the speech is to convince the class to vote for them as they discuss their party's platform. Each group will spend about 15 minutes campaigning for their candidate. At this time, they can discuss issues with other students, show propaganda posters, portray their candidate in a "positive light," or even take time to create a negative image of another candidate. Students in the past have created skits or "ads" to portray another candidate negatively. Students are to be actively moving about the room and communicating with one another. After the "campaign process" is over, each candidate will be given five minutes to deliver their campaign speech to the class. After each speech is given there will be a question and answer session in which the voters (students) can ask

the candidate specific questions about their campaign, platform, or individual opinions on different issues.

## Day Six

Candidates will be given two additional minutes for last remarks and to review their platform. Students will then be given a ballot. The one asterisk that should be pointed out at this point is that I do not allow the students to vote for the candidate from their group. If I did there would be a tie for each group. This is why I stress the campaign. Each person is an individual voter and must decide which candidate/party from the class best suites their ideals. Students then vote and the votes are tallied in class. The winner is then announced and given title of President of the Class.

Reflection writing. Students are to write a reflection on the campaign process and what they learned from the activities. Students are also to reflect on why they voted the way they did at the end. Students are to reflect on whether the candidate played more of an impact on their vote or if it was the party they were voting for more because of the specific ideals it represented.

## Resources

### Political Parties in the United States Notes Outline

**Political Parties in the United States**

**1. Two-Party System – began with the ratification of the Constitution**

**FEDERALISTS vs. ANTI-FEDERALIST**  
 "the rich well-born" vs. "common man"  
 Stronger federal gov't vs. limited role of gov't

Disappeared in 1816

**DEMOCRATIC-REPUBLICANS**  
Jefferson/Madison 1800

**DEMOCRATIC PARTY**  
1828 Andrew Jackson  
(southern and northern)  
(DONKEY)

**WHIG PARTY**  
(Nat'l Republicans)

↓

**REPUBLICAN PARTY**  
1854 Abe Lincoln  
(ELEPHANT)  
G.O.P

**2. Functions of Political Parties**

- Nominate Candidates
- Inform Voters
- Ensure candidates are qualified
- Help govern in Congress and State Legislatures
- Act as watchdogs especially of officials of other parties

**3. Party Organization**

- National Conventions – nominate candidates
- Party Platform – ideas, beliefs, programs of the party (voted on at the Nat'l Convention)
- National Committee – runs the party's affairs between elections, Headed by the National Chairperson
- Congressional campaign committee – works to elect and re-elect party members to Congress

**4. Third Parties**

- **Ideological parties:** set of beliefs on social, economic, political issues (Socialist, Communist)
- **Single –Issue parties:** one public-policy matter; usually short-lived. "Free-Soil Party", "Right to Life" Party, "Prohibition Party"
- **Economic protest parties** – economic discontent  
Populists, "Green Back" Party
- **Splinter Parties:** split from a major party  
"Bull Moose" Progressive  
Dixie-crut Party  
Green Party  
Reform Party

D.A. Tompkins Biography

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/tompkins/bio.html>

## Political Campaign Instructions

### Elections Campaigning Group Assignment

Civics and Economics

**Caucus/Convention:** Once you are assigned to a caucus/convention, your caucus/convention is responsible for the following materials:

Nominating a candidate to run for “Class President”  
Creating a political party name and mascot  
Creating a party platform (see requirements below)  
Writing a campaign speech (see requirements below)  
Nominee delivering the campaign speech to the delegates  
Creating 4 forms of propaganda (see requirements below)  
Being able to answer “media” questions (me)  
Voting  
Turn in all work

### **Creating a Party Platform**

A **party platform** is a series of statements expressing the party’s principles, beliefs, and positions on elections issues (each part is called a **plank**).

**Write** a detailed party platform describing your party’s principles, beliefs and positions on **at least 4 issues, policies, or activities concerning the United States**. Make sure each plank is detailed and describes your party’s stance on the issue and how you will solve, remedy, keep, or change the policy or issue.

**Label each plank by name and describe in detail. Each plank should be around a paragraph or two in length.**

### **Writing a Campaign Speech**

As a group you will **write a formal and detailed campaign speech** that addresses the delegates at the convention (the class), but also the school as a whole (the voters).

The speech will be **at least a page in length** and will discuss your party’s viewpoints (platform) as well as discussing why you are the better candidate than the others. You can make up anything you want about your candidate in the speech as long as you write about the specific issues you brought discussed in your platform.

**Your speech should be written and delivered in hopes of convincing the voters to vote for you.**

**\*\*You candidate will use this speech to give at least a 3 minute speech to the voters on his/her campaign issues\*\***

### **Propaganda Posters**

Using the seven propaganda techniques discussed in class, (see notes and pg. 336 in textbook) you will create **4 propaganda posters** discussing your candidate, the issues from your platform, and/or the opposing candidates. These posters can be hung up in the class during the “campaign” to help influence voters on the issues, but more importantly in hopes that they vote for you.

Poster paper will be provided for you or you can create your own.

### **Media**

I will be the media!

Be prepared to answer any questions (in front of the class) concerning your campaign, especially during the speech portion of the campaign.

Use the media! – Through me, your party can call a press conference or run an advertisement (skit) at anytime to help influence the voters to vote for your candidate.

### **VOTE** (with a catch...)

You will be asked to vote for which you think is the best candidate to be named “Classroom President”. **The catch** is you **cannot** vote for the candidate in your group. You must vote for another candidate in the class (otherwise it will all end in a tie for the most part).

**Party Platform Formal Outline (5 planks would be ideal)**

**Party Platform**

**Party Name:**

**Group Members Names:**

**Plank**

**#1:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Plank**

**#2:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Plank**

**#3:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Plank**

**#4:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SYSTEM Notes Outline

Democrats –

- 2<sup>nd</sup> oldest political party in the World
- One of the two major political parties in the US
- Started out conservative in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, but moved left throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
- 

Modern Democrats:

- Socially Liberal (Government should extend its hand to help citizens)
- Economically Conservative (Limits should be placed on a Free Market)
- Symbols: Donkey, Blue
- Left Wing/ Liberal: Government should meet the needs of citizens.

Republicans – One of the two major political parties in the US

- Started out progressive and moved to conservative.

Modern Republicans:

- Socially Conservative (Government should play a limited role in a citizen’s life)
- Economically Liberal (Completely Free Market, no limitations and regulations such as minimum wage. Depend on the market to set standards. **Laissez Faire** – Govt. keeps their hands off the economy.)
- Symbols: Elephant, Red, “Grand Old Party” (GOP)
- Right Wing/ Conservative

COMPARATIVE ISSUE	DEMOCRATS	REPUBLICANS
More Power to National Government vs. More Power to State Governments		
Modern day viewpoints relate to Federalists Ideals vs. Anti-Federalists Ideals		
Socially Liberal vs. Socially Conservative		
Loose Interpretation of the US Constitution vs. Strict Interpretation of the US Constitution		
Lean to the Left vs. Lean to the Right		

**Supreme Court Cases Comparison**

CASE	What Happened?	Decision	Extra Info
<b>Plessy v. Ferguson</b>	Plessy (1/8 of African decent) sat in white only train car, would not move when asked		
<b>Brown v. Board of Education</b>		Schools were desegregated. Separate is _____	
<b>Swann v. CMS</b>	Mr. Swann said CMS was not integrated even though _____ said that segregation is not okay	Court ordered _____ to integrate schools	

Political Notes

American Political Culture

I. Introduction

- A. The American model of government both here and abroad
- B. Tocqueville on American democracy
  - 1. Abundant and fertile soil for democracy to grow
  - 2. No feudal aristocracy; minimal taxes; few legal restraints
  - 3. Westward movement; vast territory provided opportunities
  - 4. Nation of small, independent farmers
  - 5. "Moral and intellectual characteristics," today called political culture

II. Political Culture

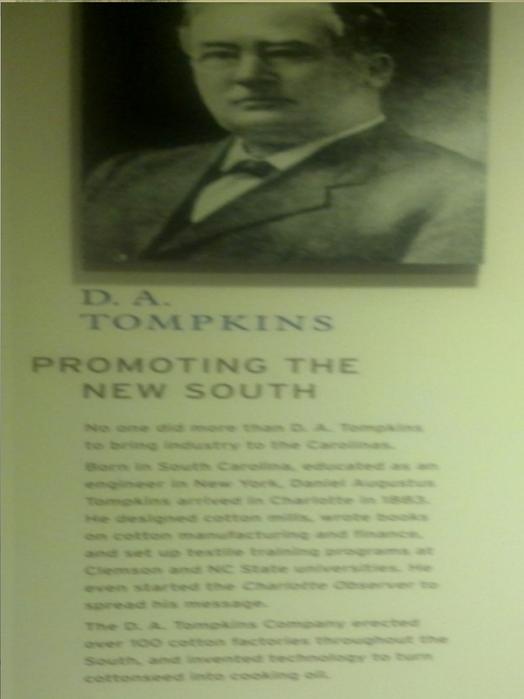
- A. Defined as a distinctive and patterned way of thinking about how political and economic life ought to be carried out (e.g. stronger American belief in political than in economic equality)
- B. Elements of the American political system
  - 1. Liberty
  - 2. Democracy
  - 3. Equality
  - 4. Civic duty
- C. Some questions about the U.S. political culture
  - 1. How do we know people share these beliefs?  
Before polls, beliefs inferred from books, speeches, and so on
  - 2. How do we explain behavior inconsistent with beliefs?  
Beliefs still important, source of change
  - 3. Why so much political conflict in U.S. history?  
Conflict occurs even with beliefs in common
  - 4. Most consistent evidence of political culture  
Use of terms Americanism, un-American
- D. The economic system
  - 1. Americans support free enterprise but see limits on marketplace freedom
  - 2. Americans prefer equality of opportunity to equality of result;  
individualist view

3. Americans have a shared commitment to economic individualism/self-reliance (see 1924 and 1977 polls)
  - E. Economic system
    1. Swedes (contrasted with Americans): Verba and Orren
      - a. Equal pay and top limit on incomes
      - b. Less income inequality
    2. Cultural differences make a difference in politics: private ownership in United States versus public ownership in European countries
  - F. The Civic Role of Religion
    1. Americans are highly religious compared with Europeans
    2. Recent trends in religiosity
    3. Putnam's "bowling alone" thesis
  - G. Religion and Politics
    1. Religious movements transformed American politics and fueled the break with England.
    2. Both liberals and conservatives use the pulpit to promote political change.
    3. Bush, Gore and public support for faith based approaches to social ills
- III. The sources of political culture
- A. Historical roots
    1. Revolution essentially over liberty; preoccupied with asserting rights
    2. Adversarial culture the result of distrust of authority and a belief that human nature is depraved
    3. Federalist-Jeffersonian transition in 1800 legitimated the role of the opposition party; liberty and political change can coexist
      1. Obey secular law
      2. Do good
      3. Embrace "Protestant ethic"
    - b. Miniature political systems produced by churches' congregational organization
    4. Family instills the ways we think about world and politics
      - a. Great freedom of children
      - b. Equality among family members
      - c. Rights accorded each person
      - d. Varied interests considered
    5. Class consciousness absent
      - a. Most people consider themselves middle class
      - b. Message of Horatio Alger stories is still popular
      - c.

**Photos from “Cotton Fields to Skyscrapers” permanent exhibit, Levine Museum of the New South, Charlotte NC**



Dorothy Counts integrates Harding High School (now Erwin Elementary) in 1957.  
MINISTURKEY PHOTO FOR CHARLOTTE OBSERVER, COURTESY OF NORTH CAROLINA COLLECTION, UNC CHAPEL HILL.



## **Appendix A: Implementing Common Core Standards**

Competency Goal 4 The learner will explore active roles as a citizen at the local, state, and national levels of government.

### Objectives

4.01 Examine the structure and organization of political parties.

Students will examine the beginning of political parties and how the parties have morphed into the major Two Party System that we have today

4.02 Describe the election process and the qualifications and procedures for voting.

Students will write platforms, give campaign speeches, and campaign to have other students vote for their running candidate

4.03 Analyze information on political issues and candidates seeking political office.

Each student running for office will give a campaign speech on the issues they wrote in their platform. Students will be seeking political office by convincing the other students that their plan for the school is better than the other candidates.

4.04 Demonstrate active methods of promoting and inhibiting change through political action.

Students will be promoting their party with campaign posters, propaganda, and voting.

4.05 Analyze consequences of compliance or noncompliance with laws governing society.

Students will react to negative and positive propaganda and influences of the media onto their specific campaign party.

4.06 Describe the benefits of civic participation.

Students will be engaging in the voting and election process.

4.07 Analyze costs and benefits of jury service, voting, seeking office, and civic action at the local, state, and national levels.

Each group will nominate a candidate seeking office and try to convince the other class members that he/she will be the best candidate to run their current school and be named "President" of the school

Students will work primarily on Objective 4. Objective four outlines civic participation in voting and understanding the role of political parties and voting in the United States. Students will put these objectives into life by participating in the project.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Hall, Bob. Democracy North Carolina.

<http://democracync.org/downloads/NCVoterTurnout2012PR.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> “Background, Facts and History.” Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. [www.cms.k12.nc.us](http://www.cms.k12.nc.us)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Hanchett, Thomas W. “Charlotte’s Textile Heritage.” Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission. <http://cmhpf.org/educationhanchetttextile.htm> (accessed October 31, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Avalon Project - Washington's Farewell Address 1796." Avalon Project - Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy. [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/washing.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/washing.asp) (accessed October 12, 2013).

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