



**CLASSROOM LAW PROJECT
PRESENTS**

ELECTION 2020: WHY VOTING MATTERS

**A collection of lessons, strategies, and materials on the race for
President, Oregon's Initiative Process, Voter Rights,
and other electoral issues.**



September 15, 2020

A Note from Classroom Law Project:

We are all aware that the 2020 election will be unpredictable and possibly very challenging to teach. We at Classroom Law Project are pleased to offer you a series of lessons **targeted to middle and high school level grades** to help you and your students sort through this year's election issues.

Our theme of this set of materials is **WHY VOTING MATTERS**. This election season coincides with the 100th Anniversary of the year that the 19th Amendment was ratified, an amazing reason to consider why voting *still* matters. In this first edition of these materials, we will introduce issues around choosing a president and how social media is impacting the election. In addition, these materials include other crucial electoral issues including:

- Civil discourse in controversial times
- The characteristics of a good leader
- Voting Rights
- Voter Access & Gerrymandering
- Voter Turnout
- A culminating classroom townhall simulation about why voting matters

We begin by providing you some information on how to foster civil discourse in your classroom and how to plan for encountering controversial topics with your students. You will find that most of the lessons are titled with an Essential Question. We hope these questions will prompt critical thinking and meaningful conversation in your classroom, and that this year's election will be an event with all students will engage. We've designed these units and lessons to be stand-alone and to work together, so you can pick and choose which will work best for your students. We've also included the new Oregon Social Studies standards as well as CCSS Literacy standards that connect to the lessons. Finally, we are providing these lessons as both traditional printed lesson materials and alternate, digital lesson ideas in the Google Classroom we will make available for teachers to access.

The entire series of lessons culminates in the final unit with a **mock townhall hearing** in which you can involve members of the community and your students. All students "testify" before a simulated committee made up of community members you invite – or other students can serve in these roles. All of the how-to's are included here for you to create this fun and memorable experience for your students.

Thank you for supporting the work of Classroom Law Project and we hope that these materials will introduce creative and thoughtful conversations in your classroom, and give students the opportunity to engage with issues that will very much affect their everyday lives.

Use. Enjoy. Vote!

THE ELECTION 2020 SEASON

CONTENTS

This fully self-contained compilation of units and lessons includes the following:

Intro Packet for Teachers:

- Goals for teachers and students
- Theme and Pre-Unit Survey Question for Students
- Tips for Teaching Elections in Polarized Times
- Oregon Social Studies Standards – Grade 8
- CCSS Literacy Standards for Social Studies – Grade 8
- Oregon Social Studies Standards – High School
- CCSS Literacy Standards for Social Studies – High School
- Quotes about Voting

Unit 1 – Electing a President

Lesson 1.1 - How do Americans hire a president?

Lesson 1.2 - What does it take to be president?

Lesson 1.3 - How do we compare candidates?

Unit 2 – Other Issues on our Ballots

Lesson 2.1 – What other elections are at stake in 2020?

Lesson 2.2 – How does direct democracy work in Oregon?

Lesson 2.3 – Possible Ballot Initiatives on Oregon’s 2020 ballot

Unit 3 – Voter Rights

Lesson 3.1 – What is the history of Voting Rights in the U.S.?

Lesson 3.2 – What is Gerrymandering and how does it affect voter rights?

Lesson 3.3 – How has voter access been limited in recent years?

Unit 4 – How are Voters Influenced?

Lesson 4.1 – Political Socialization: What makes voters WANT to vote?

Lesson 4.2 – Voter Turnout: Why don’t more people vote?

Lesson 4.3 – Election Media Literacy: How do we access quality information?

Unit 5 – The 2020 Election Class Townhall

ELECTION 2020

GOALS

TEACHERS will have the opportunity to:

- Choose from a variety of topics for their students to engage with around election season
- Relate the lessons in this compilation to students' real lives
- Build a sense of community and engagement with students as they work together
- Measure growth in students' understandings about election and voting issues
- Improve students' ability to engage with people of voting age about the issues this election year

STUDENTS will be able to:

- Consider the presidential election through a civic virtue lens
- Compare and contrast views on the various ballot initiatives proposed for the 2020 Oregon ballot
- Apply data and information about voter suppression and voter access to current voting trends
- Create a plan for encouraging eligible voters to register and to vote
- Determine the factors that impact voter turnout
- Formulate options for fair voting districts
- Assess the history of voting rights in the United States
- Demonstrate what they have learned by testifying before members of the community

ELECTION 2020

THEME & PRE-UNIT STUDENT SURVEY

Why Voting Matters

In addition to information about Oregon’s gubernatorial and initiative issues, we have focused this year on the history of Voting Rights and access, as well as a thoughtful exploration into voter turnout and motivations.

Following is a handout you can give your students before beginning any of these elections lessons that gives them the opportunity to write their thoughts about the theme. Then a post-unit survey asks them the question again, and we hope you will see a significant increase in the use of evidence and understanding gained from these lessons.

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

ELECTIONS 2020
WHY VOTING MATTERS
Pre-Lessons Survey

1. What do you believe are the most important issues for voters in this year's presidential election?

2. Who do you believe should have the right to vote in the United States?

3. Why do you think people DON'T vote during elections in the United States?

3. What do you want to know more about when it comes to the election and voting this year?

TIPS FOR TEACHING IN POLARIZED TIMES

1. Plan ahead with intentionality
2. Set a tone of civility
3. Structure, structure, structure!
4. Stick to the plan

1. Plan ahead with intentionality

- Create a vision – How do you want classroom discussions focused on the elections, candidates, or politics to look like in your classroom? Your vision may include goals like:
 - Defending every student having an equal opportunity to speak and be heard
 - Teaching democracy
 - Making your classroom a safe space for all students
 - Ensuring fairness
 - Providing an opportunity for every student to speak and be heard
- Problem solve – What are potential obstacles or issues that could come up in your classroom preventing discussions from proceeding in the way you envision?
- Intentionally plan how to implement the classroom culture you envisioned – What topics are appropriate for discussion in your classroom?
 - Determine what topics and language are appropriate for discussion in your classroom
 - How will you allow for multiple viewpoints to be expressed in a safe appropriate manner?
 - Create classroom policies, norms, and procedures for discussing the elections and candidates
 - A good way to message this for students is using the terms “out of bounds” and “in bounds” to indicate topics and language that is appropriate or inappropriate for the classroom
 - Another good way to message this for students is using the terms “classroom language” vs. “campaign language”. Only classroom language is appropriate for the classroom.
- How will you respond? – Try to anticipate questions your students will ask and how you will respond.
 - How will you respond when students ask you whom you are voting for?
 - Remember to check your School District policy on discussing this with students!
 - How will you respond when students want to discuss something election related that is “out of bounds”?
 - How will you redirect students to “in bounds” topics?
 - How will you redirect students to use “classroom language” and not “campaign language”?
 - How will you recognize and respond to bias?

2. Set a tone of civility

- Use “civil” language in the classroom – Discuss election and candidates in an impartial, civil, respectful manner
 - “Classroom language” vs. “campaign language.”
 - Keep discussions “in bounds”
- Consider having students create a class civility agreement to reflect your classroom norms and procedures
- Eliminate humor or sarcasm from the classroom
 - Do not use humor or allow students to use humor when discussing candidates, their platforms, or the election.
 - Students often times do not pick up on humor and may misunderstand humor teachers or other students attempt to use in the classroom.
- Focus on the issues – Try to keep classroom time focused on the issues, instead of the candidates and their personal attacks
 - Don’t treat the campaign like a race or game by focusing on who is ahead in the polls or won a debate
- Set an example for students – Model your expectations for students by setting a good example whenever you discuss the candidates or election

3. Structure, structure, structure!

- Avoid surprises in the classroom – Implement structured procedures and norms for talking about the candidate and the election. Structured academic talk
 - Small groups
 - Journal prompts
 - No open-ended questions to students
- Monitor student discussions when in small groups to ensure students are keeping discussion “in bounds” and using “classroom language”
- Use prepared and moderated discussion to drive deeper learning about important issues in a safe and structure manner
- Encourage students to back up assertions and ideas with evidence
- Implement a specific procedure for what active listening should look like in your classroom and require students to practice active listening when others are speaking or sharing

4. Stick to the plan

- Be consistent – Once you develop norms, procedures, and “in bounds” topics, be consistent with implementing them in your classroom.
- Don’t be afraid to redirect students
- Share your plan with other teachers
- Share your plan with students and explain your rationale – this will promote student buy-in and help students understand you are not being arbitrary with your classroom policies
- If a student wants to discuss a controversial topic you feel unprepared to discuss, tell students you would like to schedule a discussion on the topic for a future date so that you have more time to prepare and develop a plan

Additional Resources

(www.classroomlaw.org for direct links)

- [Speaking Up for Civility](#)
- [Learning from Politics: 5 Actions to Help Students Embrace Civility- Education Week](#)
- [PD Café - Strategies for helping educators process the challenges of teaching during polarized times](#)
- [Civil Discourse in the Classroom Unit](#)
- [Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or Controversial Topics](#) -- Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan
- [Civil Conversation lesson plan -- Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago](#)
- [Embrace Civility in the Digital Age](#) – Oregon based organization
- [Culturally Responsive Teaching: A Guide to Evidence-Based Practices for Teaching All Students Equitably](#)- created by Education Northwest
- [Strategies for developing classroom culture](#)
- [A Call to Civility video -- University of Tennessee](#)

- [Civility and Free Expression in a Constitutional Democracy](#)

OR STATE STANDARDS

Grade 8 Social Studies

Civics and Government

- 8.2 Identify and understand how to apply the rights and responsibilities of individuals under the Constitution.
- 8.5 Examine and analyze important United States and Oregon documents, including (but not limited to) the Constitution, Bill of Rights, 13th -15th Amendments and Oregon Constitution.
- 8.7 Analyze the expanding eligibility of citizenship in the continuing struggle for the expansion of rights for ethnic and traditionally marginalized groups.
- 8.8 Analyze important political and ethical values such as freedom, democracy, equality, equity, and justice embodied in documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.
- 8.9 Analyze the effect of historical and contemporary means of changing societies, and promoting the common good.
- 8.10 Explain specific roles and responsibilities of citizens (such as voters, jurors, taxpayers, members of the armed forces, petitioners, protesters, and office-holders).

Historical Thinking

- 8.29 Use and interpret relevant primary and secondary sources pertaining to U.S. History from multiple perspectives.
- 8.30 Synthesize information and data to construct an account of historical events that includes multiple sources and varied perspectives.

Social Science and Analysis

- 8.32 Critique and analyze information for point of view, historical context, distortion, bias propaganda and relevance including sources with conflicting information in order to question the dominant narratives in history.
- 8.33 Analyze how a specific problem can manifest itself at local, regional, and global levels over time, identifying its characteristics and causes, and the challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address the problem.
- 8.34 Analyze and apply a range of deliberative and collaborative procedures to make decisions and take informed action.
- 8.35 Construct explanations using reasoning, correct sequence, examples and details with relevant information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanations.

Grade 8 Oregon CCSS Literacy in History/Social Studies

Reading Informational Text

- 6-8.RH.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- 6-8.RH.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- 6-8.RH.3 Identify key steps in a text’s description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered).
- 6-8.RH.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.
- 6-8.RH.5 Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).
- 6-8.RH.6 Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author’s point of view or purpose (e.g., loaded language, inclusion or avoidance of particular facts).
- 6-8.RH.8 Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

Writing

- 6-8.WHST.1 Write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content*.
- 6-8.WHST.2 Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes.
- 6-8.WHST.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- 6-8.WHST.6 Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and present the relationships between information and ideas clearly and efficiently.
- 6-8.WHST.8 Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.
- 6-8.WHST.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

OR STATE STANDARDS

High School Social Studies

Civics and Government

HS.1 Analyze the impact of constitutional amendments on groups, individuals, institutions, national order.

HS.4 Examine institutions, functions and processes of United States government.

HS.6 Examine the institutions, functions, and processes of Oregon’s state, county, local and regional governments.

HS.10 Explain the roles and responsibilities of active members of a democracy and the role of individuals, social movements, and governments in various current events.

HS.11 Examine the pluralistic realities of society recognizing issues of equity and evaluating the need for change.

HS.13 Examine and analyze provisions of the Oregon Constitution and the U.S. Constitution.

Historical Knowledge

HS.54 Evaluate continuity and change over the course of world and United States history.

HS.55 Analyze the complexity of the interaction of multiple perspectives to investigate causes and effects of significant events in the development of world, U.S., and Oregon history.

HS.58 Examine and evaluate the origins of fundamental political debates and how conflict, compromise, and cooperation have shaped unity and diversity in world, U.S., and Oregon history.

HS.61 Analyze and explain persistent historical, social and political issues, conflicts and compromises in regards to power, inequality and justice and their connections to current events and movements.

Historical Thinking

HS.67 Evaluate historical sources for perspective, limitations, accuracy, and historical context.

HS.68 Select and analyze historical information, including contradictory evidence, from a variety of primary and secondary sources to support or reject a claim.

Social Science Analysis

HS.71 Construct arguments using precise claims, integrating and evaluating information provided by multiple sources, diverse media, and formats, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary strengths and weaknesses.

HS.73 Identify and analyze multiple and diverse perspectives as critical consumers of information.

HS.74 Analyze an event, issue, problem, or phenomenon, critiquing and evaluating characteristics, influences, causes, and both short- and long-term effects.

HS.75 Evaluate options for individual and collective actions to address local, regional and global problems by engaging in self-reflection, strategy identification, and complex causal reasoning.

HS.76 Propose, compare, and evaluate multiple responses, alternatives, or solutions to issues or problems; then reach an informed, defensible, supported conclusion

HS.77 Engage in informed and respectful deliberation and discussion of issues, events, and ideas applying a range of strategies and procedures to make decisions and take informed action.

CCSS Literacy in History & Social Studies Grades 9/10

Reading Informational Text

- 9-10.RH.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- 9-10.RH.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- 9-10.RH.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social studies.
- 9-10.RH.5 Analyze how a text uses structure to emphasize key points or advance an explanation or analysis.
- 9-10.RH.6 Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.
- 9-10.RH.8 Assess the extent to which the reasoning and evidence in a text support the author’s claims.
- 9-10.RH.9 Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

Writing

- 9-10.WHST.1 Write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content*.
- 9-10.WHST.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- 9-10.WHST.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CCSS Literacy in History & Social Studies Grades 11/12

Reading Informational Text

- 11-12.RH.1 Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

- 11-12.RH.2 Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.
- 11-12.RH.3 Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- 11-12.RH.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).
- 11-12.RH.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- 11-12.RH.8 Evaluate an author’s premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.
- 11-12.RH.9 Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

Writing

- 11-12.WHST.1 Write arguments focused on *discipline-specific content*.
- 11-12.WHST.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- 11-12.WHST.8 Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the specific task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.
- 11-12.WHST.9 Draw evidence from informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.



QUOTES ABOUT VOTING

Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is by not voting.
~**Franklin D. Roosevelt (32nd US President)**

All that is needed for the triumph of evil is for good people to do nothing.
~**Edmond Burke (British statesman and philosopher 1729-1797)**

The vote is the emblem of your equality, women of America, the guarantee of your liberty. ...Prize it! Understand what it means and what it can do for your country. Use it intelligently, conscientiously, prayerfully. ~ **Carrie Chapman Catt (suffragist & founder of the League of Women Voters)**

Bad officials are elected by good citizens who do not vote. ~**George Jean Nathan, American Journalist (1882-1958)**

The most important office...that of the private citizen. ~**Louis D. Brandeis, US Supreme Court Justice**

The future of this republic is in the hands of the American voter.
~**Dwight D. Eisenhower (34th US President)**

The Voting Rights Act was, and still is, vitally important to the future of democracy in the United States. ~**Coretta Scott King**

Elections belong to the people. It's their decision. If they decide to turn their back on the fire and burn their behinds, then they will just have to sit on their blisters. ~**Abraham Lincoln (16th US President)**

The stakes are too high for government to be a spectator sport. ~**Barbara Jordan (Civil Rights leader and member of the US House of Representatives)**
