

Three-Day Unit

Where political views come from, how we measure them, and what each outlook believes. Built from a unit taught in a 12th-grade AP U.S. Government classroom in a Michigan public school.

3 CLASS PERIODS + EXTENSION · GRADES 11–12, ADAPTABLE FOR 9–10 · PAPER OR LIVE

LEARNING TARGETS

From the Michigan classroom, reusable as written:

1. Describe different political ideologies regarding the role of government in regulating the marketplace.
2. Describe different political ideologies regarding the role of government in addressing social issues.
3. Explain how different ideologies impact policy on social issues.

STANDARDS

AP U.S. Government and Politics, Unit 4:

American Political Ideologies and Beliefs, which covers political socialization, measuring public opinion, and ideology and policymaking.

State civics. The source classroom maps the unit to Civics 3.5.1 in the Michigan K–12 Social Studies Standards. Use your state’s standard on political ideologies and the role of government.

C3, NCSS and Common Core. The indicators this unit supports are quoted in T5.

THE UNIT AT A GLANCE

WHEN	THE QUESTION	MAIN ACTIVITY	COPY (OPTIONAL IN ITALICS)
Night before	—	A family member takes the Quiz at home	H3 + one H1 per student
Day 1	Where do your views come from?	Take the Quiz; compare with family	H1, H2 · <i>Slides A, B</i>
Day 2	How do we measure ideology?	The line against the chart	<i>Slides C</i>
Day 3	What does each outlook believe?	Five regions; steelman	H4, T3 · <i>Slides C, L3</i>

THE NIGHT BEFORE: THE TAKE-HOME

At the end of the class before day one, send each student home with H3 and a copy of H1 for a parent, guardian or other adult at home. Keep the direction short: “Have someone at home take this and bring the sheet back tomorrow.” Hold the discussion for day one, when the comparison lands.

A student without an adult available can ask an older sibling, a relative or another adult they trust, or can write instead about where one of their own views came from.

How to use this plan. Each day starts on its own page, so you can print only the days you teach.

DAY 1 · POLITICAL SOCIALIZATION: WHERE DO YOUR VIEWS COME FROM?

MINUTES	STEP	WHAT YOU DO	WHAT STUDENTS DO
0–5	Predict	Hand out H2. Students privately choose a label and write one sentence on why.	Complete Part 1 of H2.
5–15	Take the Quiz	Paper or live. Live: keep the class chart hidden until day two.	Take the Quiz and mark the dot.
15–30	Lecture and discussion	The agents of socialization: family, media, school, faith, peers and events. Keep one question running: “What are you consuming, and who chose it?”	Name the sources of one of their own views.
30–42	The comparison	Students privately compare their result with their family member’s. Debrief without asking anyone to disclose a result: “Raise your hand if you landed closer to your family member than you expected.”	Complete the student half of H3.
42–50	Discuss and reflect	Use the questions below, then Part 2 of H2.	Discuss; complete H2.

DAY 1 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Where did your three strongest political opinions come from? Can you trace each one to a person, a platform or an experience?
2. If your result landed near your family member’s, is that evidence your views are borrowed or evidence you were raised with good ones? How would you tell the difference?
3. What would it take for your dot to move? Has anyone here changed their mind on a political question, and what did it?

Teaching notes

- In many classrooms the apple lands near the tree, which makes a vivid demonstration of socialization. When it doesn’t, ask what else shaped the student’s views: friends, media, school, faith or a single experience.
- Keep every comparison private. Students decide what to share, and no one reports a family member’s result to the class.
- Collect H2 at the end of class and keep it for day three, when students can revisit their prediction.

DAY 2 · MODELS OF IDEOLOGY: THE LINE AND THE DIAMOND

MINUTES	STEP	WHAT YOU DO	WHAT STUDENTS DO
0–15	Walk the line	Draw the left–right line. Place issues on it one at a time and let students place themselves. It works until it doesn't: where does "legalize marijuana but cut taxes" sit?	Place themselves and the issues; find the cases that don't fit.
15–30	Reveal the class picture	Show the class chart from day one, or a paper tally. The students along the left–right band show what the line captures. The students outside the band show what the second score is for.	Describe the shape of the class results.
30–40	The measurement lesson	Both models are instruments, every instrument has error, and more scores explain more people at the cost of simplicity. This is also the AP link to how public opinion is measured.	Weigh what each model captures and misses.
40–50	Discuss	Use the questions below.	Discuss.

DAY 2 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Name a real public figure the left–right line describes badly. What information does the second score add?
2. Look at our class results. What does the shape of the cloud say, and what can't it say, given who is in the room?
3. A teacher who has used the Quiz for years found that its results compared well with much longer ideology tests. How could our class test that claim?
4. If you could add an eleventh statement to the Quiz, what would it be, and which score would it count toward?

Teaching notes

- **A quick way to walk the line:** read statements from H1 aloud, one at a time, and ask where a person who agrees would stand. The economic statements sort neatly from left to right. The personal statements are where the line starts to struggle.
- **Paper tally:** if you tallied regions on day one, put the counts back on the board. A rough class picture is enough for the discussion.
- **For the measurement lesson,** ask what a good instrument needs: it should measure what it claims to (validity), give similar results each time (reliability), and be short enough that people finish it.

DAY 3 · FIVE REGIONS ON THEIR OWN TERMS

MINUTES	STEP	WHAT YOU DO	WHAT STUDENTS DO
0–10	Set the rule	Every outlook gets described the way its supporters describe it before anyone critiques it. Show the caricature table in T1 section 6, or Slides C.	Name a caricature they have heard.
10–30	Equal time	Give each region the same time through lecture, discussion or video: Libertarian, Progressive, Conservative, Authoritarian and Moderate. The back of H1 describes each one.	Take notes on each region's core values.
30–45	Steelman	Students start H4 on the region farthest from their dot. Share T3 .	Draft the steelman.
45–50	Wrap up	Assign the rest of H4 as homework.	Finish H4 at home.

DAY 3 DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe your own region the way its harshest critic would. What does the critic get right?
2. Pick the region farthest from your dot. What is its strongest argument that your region struggles to answer?
3. Some of you changed answers to see what moves the dot. Which answers carried the most weight, and does that match the issues you think matter most?
4. Why might someone's economic views and personal-freedom views differ? Is consistency across both scores a virtue, or a matter of temperament?

From the source classroom: students were most curious about the libertarian region because it was the one they knew least, and some retook the Quiz, changing answers to see how the chart responded. Name it and encourage it. The instrument is teaching them the two scores.

EXTENSION · ONE OR TWO DAYS

- **The steelman essay.** Argue the strongest case for the region farthest from your result, in its own vocabulary, then answer the best objection to it. Grade with **T3**.
- **The instrument-comparison lab.** Take the Quiz and one long-form ideology test, then compare results, question count and question types. Details in **T1**.
- **Film day.** Show “Beyond Labels” with **L3** and **H5**.
- **AP free-response practice.** Students argue how a libertarian, a progressive and a conservative would each approach one current policy question, naming the score that drives each answer.

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