

Elections

STAGE 1 – DESIRED RESULTS

Context: Elections

While the Constitution created the structures and functions of the U.S. Government, our traditions and the interpretations of the founders have created ways in which people can influence government and enact policy change. Involvement in an election is a way for individuals and groups to engage with the government. The election process has many players and moving parts, and all of them are important in helping people influence the government. In this unit, students grapple with the following questions: Why are elections important? Which major players are involved in elections? How do elections influence the government? How are individual citizens and groups of citizens impacted by elections? How can people get involved with elections?

Purpose: Elections

The Elections unit is the next step in students exploring the proper role of government in a democracy. In this project cycle, students take on one of four roles—campaign manager/staffer, interest group leader, political party leader, or member of the media—in a mock presidential election. Through five tasks, students see how each role influences the outcome of an election from the primary phase through general election season. They also master some of the new skill objectives newly emphasized in the redesigned course framework; for example, students practice analyzing quantitative data in the role of candidate team member as they craft a campaign plan based on voter demographic information. Through a series of tasks, from announcing their candidacy to the general election, students familiarize themselves with public opinion, political ideology formation, polls, and the voting characteristics of the electorate. They also learn the complex relationships between interest groups, political parties, and the media as they navigate and influence the campaigning process in their respective roles. With campaign platforms and promises presented and finalized, students vote to elect the next president of the United States at the end of the cycle. Once the president is elected and sworn in, students learn about the roles of the president and the impact that a presidency, and the political party it supports, can have on the political process and the proper role of the government.

Driving Questions

How are elections run?
To what extent do elections reflect the will of the people?

2018–19 College Board Redesigned Curriculum Framework

Units

Unit 4: American Political Ideologies and Beliefs
Unit 5: Political Participation

Big Ideas

Primary: Civic Participation in a Representative Democracy (PRD)
Secondary: Competing Policy-Making Interests (PMI); Methods of Political Analysis (MPA)

Enduring Understandings and Learning Objectives

- ✓ MPA-1.: Citizen beliefs about government are shaped by the intersection of demographics, political culture and dynamic social change.
 - MPA-1.A: Explain the relationship between core beliefs of U.S. citizens and attitudes about the role of government.
 - MPA-1.B: Explain how cultural factors influence political attitudes and socialization.

- ✓ MPA-2.: Public opinion is measured through scientific polling, and the results of public opinion polls influence public policies and institutions.



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- MPA-2.A: Describe the elements of a scientific poll.
- MPA-2.B: Explain the quality and credibility of claims based in public opinion data.
- ✓ MPA-3: Factors associated with political ideology, efficacy, structural barriers, and demographics influence the nature and degree of political participation.
 - MPA-3.A: Describe the voting rights protections in the Constitution and in legislation
 - MPA-3.B: Describe different models of voting behavior.
 - MPA-3.C: Explain the roles that individual choice and state laws play in voter turnout in elections.
- ✓ PMI-4: Widely held political ideologies shape policy debates and choices in American politics.
 - PMI-4.A: Explain how the ideologies of the two major parties shape policy debates.
 - PMI-4.B: Explain how U.S. political culture (e.g. values, attitudes, and beliefs) influence the formation, goals, and implementation of public policy over time.
- ✓ PMI-5: Political parties, interest groups, and social movements provide opportunities for participation and influence how people relate to the government.
 - PMI-5.A: Describe the linkage institutions.
 - PMI-5.B: Explain the function and impact of political parties on the electorate and government.
 - PMI-5.C: Explain why and how political parties change and adapt.
 - PMI-5.D: Explain how structural barriers impact third-party and independent candidate success.
 - PMI-5.E: Explain the benefits and potential problems of interest group influence on elections and policy-making.
 - PMI-5.F: Explain how variation in types and resources of interest groups affects their ability to influence elections and policy-making.
 - PMI-5.G: Explain how various political actors influence public policy outcomes.
- ✓ PRD-2: The impact of federal policies on campaigning and electoral rules continues to be contested by both sides of the spectrum.
 - PRD-2.A: Explain how the different processes work in a U.S. presidential election.
 - PRD-2.B: Explain how the Electoral College impacts democratic participation.
 - PRD-2.D: Explain how campaign organizations and strategies affect the election process.
 - PRD-2.E: Explain how the organization, finance, and strategies of national political campaigns affect the election process.
- ✓ PRD-3: The various forms of media provide citizens with political information and influence the ways in which they participate politically.
 - PRD-3.A: Explain the media's role as a linkage institution.
 - PRD-3.B: Explain how increasingly diverse choices of media and communication outlets influence political institutions and behavior.



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Students will know/Learning Targets (Content):	Students will be able to/ Learning Targets (Skills):
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The concepts and functions of political socialization and public opinion. 2. The role and influence of interest groups, media, and political parties on the elections process. 3. The evolution of campaign finance and the role of political action committees. 4. The nominations and campaigns process in elections. 5. The political spectrum and how political ideology influences policy positions for candidates, parties, interest groups, etc. 6. The similarities and differences between processes such as a caucus, open and closed primaries, etc. 7. The general election process, the importance of the Electoral College, and voting behavior/patterns. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Act as a player in a presidential election: campaign manager/staffer, interest group leader, political party leader, member of the media, or presidential candidate. 2. Research political platforms and craft responses to various situations during a nomination process and general election simulation. 3. Write to inform and explain ideas to a variety of audiences in different outlets such as campaign memos, news stories, interest group pamphlets, speeches, etc.

College Board Disciplinary Practices

Practice 1: Apply political concepts and processes to scenarios in context.

- 1.a. Describe political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors.
- 1.b. Explain political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors.
- 1.c. Compare political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors.
- 1.d. Describe political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behavior illustrated in different scenarios in context.
- 1.e. Explain how political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors apply to different scenarios in context

Practice 3: Analyze and interpret quantitative data represented in tables, charts, graphs, maps, and infographics.

- 3.a. Describe the data presented.
- 3.b. Describe patterns and trends in the data.
- 3.c. Explain patterns and trends in data to draw conclusions.
- 3.d. Explain what the data imply or illustrate about political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors.
- 3.e. Explain possible limitations of the data provided.
- 3.f. Explain possible limitations of the visual representation of the data provided.



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STAGE 2 – ASSESSMENT EVIDENCE

Culminating Challenge

Students work towards the general election. In this culminating task, students must appeal to large voting blocs, which requires that students learn about voting behavior and past voting patterns. At the end of this task, students vote for a president, and a winner is announced and sworn into office. In the next cycle, students will learn that presidential elections have major implications for the Supreme Court, since the president can appoint members to the Supreme Court.

Formative Assessments

- Reading and Vocabulary Quizzes
- Practice Free Response Questions
- Checks for Understanding (exit tickets, interactive notes, use of student response systems, etc.)
- Task 1: Task varies by role assignment
- Task 2: Team-generated media plans
- Task 3: The primary debate/election; task varies by role assignment
- Task 4: Political strategy and campaign finance plan; tasks vary by role assignment

Summative Assessments

- Authentic Assessment: The general election debate; task varies by role assignment
- Unit Exam consisting of 40 multiple-choice questions, two free response questions (College Board AP Exam questions), and a simulation task



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STAGE 3 – LEARNING PLAN

Intro to Elections Cycle

Introducing the Elections cycle provides an opportunity to learn about political beliefs and ideologies as well as how voting and elections relate to American values around democracy. Students are introduced to public opinion and polling (LO4.E.1; see appendix for details). The tasks in this cycle vary slightly based on the roles of the students, but they closely follow the timeline of an actual presidential race.

Task 1: Linkage Institutions and Election Race Analysis

In Task 1, students gear up for the primary race. Campaign teams announce their candidacies and give stump speeches to win over potential electoral blocs. Interest groups form their political agendas and determine which candidates to support. Political party leaders prepare for primary elections and set their campaign platforms for the general election. Media outlets provide coverage through the entire process. In this task, students become familiar with all the players in a presidential election, navigate election processes, and gain an understanding of the major political parties in the United States, and learn about polling and campaign finance.

Task 2: Media

In Task 2, campaign teams and political party leaders navigate the primary election process, while interest groups back candidates and contribute to the campaign. The media covers the election process while airing advertisements for campaign teams. The success of each candidate team is determined through polling, which is determined by political party, media, and interest group support.

Task 3: Nominations, Campaigns, and Primary Debate

In Task 3, students participate in caucuses and primary elections while learning about the roles of political parties. Students once again practice literacy skills by working with core texts. Once the political parties announce their candidates, students move on to Task 4.

Task 4: Road to the General Election (Strategies, Finance, and Voting)

In Task 4, students learn about the importance of interest groups, campaign financing, media, and the Electoral College as they gear up for the race to 270. Candidate teams must work together closely to ensure a successful bid for the oval office. Candidate teams that did not make it past the primary will shift roles and become swing states.

Task 5: General Election Debate

By the end of this cycle, students should have a nuanced understanding of the presidential election process, a deeper understanding of the two major political parties in the United States, and a deeper understanding of how linkage institutions can help connect individuals to the political process.

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2018–19 College Board Redesigned Curriculum Framework

Elections Foundational Texts

N/A

Elections Supreme Court Cases

- *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (2010)*

-Excerpts from opinions in **Citizens United v. FEC** can be used as teaching materials when students learn about campaign finance reform (typically approaching Task 4).



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