

Voter Behavior & Election Results Lesson Plan

UNIT: Voter Behavior & Election Results	GRADE: 12 th Grade Civics/Government	TIME FRAME: 1-2 Days, 84 Min. Block	TEACHER: Chris Todd Windsor High School
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LESSON RATIONALE:

This lesson provides students with a stronger understanding of our American political culture, specifically voter behavior and election results. Students will examine and analyze the results of the 2012 elections through the use of several primary and secondary sources, as well as conduct their own voter turnout poll. Students will use the information they collect to draw conclusions regarding trends in voter participation, comparing their own community to both state and national voter turnout statistics.

CCSS/C3 STANDARDS:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2

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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

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.

D2.Civ.2.9-12. Analyze the role of citizens in the U.S. political system, with attention to various theories of democracy, changes in Americans’ participation over time, and alternative models from other countries, past and present.

D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

BIG IDEAS:

- Voting is an essential part of the American political process.
- Demographics and political socialization influence voters.
- Voting patterns fluctuate as a result of the beliefs and interests of American citizens.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- Why is voting an essential part of the American political process and why do citizens choose not to participate?
- What trends can be seen in voter turnout at the Local, State and National Levels?
- In what ways does a person’s demographics and political socialization influence their vote?

STUDENT SKILLS:

Students will be able to:

- use charts, graphs, and historical/current polling data to investigate, analyze and write persuasively about the voting habits of Americans at the local, state and federal levels
- create, conduct and analyze the results of a poll, and in doing so discuss and debate the usefulness and purpose of polls in the political process
- use primary and secondary sources to gather information in order to analyze and interpret voter behavior and election results for the 2012 Presidential Election

PERFORMANCE TASK:

Day #1 - Following a brief teacher directed explanation of the assignment, students would receive instructions regarding the "Voter Behavior and Election Results – Voter Questionnaire". The teacher would model possible answers for each of the question categories. Students complete the questionnaire for homework.

Day #2 – Students are broken into small groups to share and compile their data as a group. After small groups compile their data, they will share out with rest of the class as the teacher records the data on the board. Once all groups have shared, the entire class will complete "Table 1" on the "Voter Behavior and Election Results". Once the table is complete, the students will return to their small groups and will use the election data in Tables 1, 2 and 3 to respond to the questions. Once each group has had time to review the data, draw conclusions and complete their responses; the teacher will facilitate whole-class discussion on voter turnout and behavior.

Extension Activity – The "Reflection Essay" can be used as a second homework assignment or an extension activity of the "Voter Behavior and Election Results" discussion. The essay requires students to formally draw conclusions regarding the trends of various demographics on voter behavior.

RESOURCES:

- "Exit polls 2012: How the vote has shifted." The Washington Post November 6, 2012. June 15, 2014. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/politics/2012-exit-polls/table.html>>.
- "How groups Voted in 2012." Roper Center, University of Connecticut. June 15, 2014. <http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/elections/how_groups_voted/voted_12.html>.
- "*Election Day Registration, Turnout and Absentee Ballot Statistics*", Connecticut Secretary of the State. November 6, 2012. June 15, 2014. <http://www.sots.ct.gov/sots/lib/sots/electionservices/electionresults/2012/document9b_2012_vote_stats.pdf>
- "*2012 General Election Turnout Rates*", United States Elections Project, George Mason University. July 22, 2013. June 15, 2014. <http://elections.gmu.edu/Turnout_2012G.html>

Voter Behavior and Election Results

How does your town compare to the National Average?

As a class, you will participate in a survey assignment in order to become more connected to the voting process in the United States. This assignment will be a two-fold process. First, you will conduct a "Voter Questionnaire" as outlined below. Once everyone in the class has completed their questionnaire, we will compile our data as a class to create a "Town Voter Database". Second, as a class we will use the information from our "Town Voter Database" to compare the voter behavior in your town to that of both the state and national averages.

Part I - Voter Questionnaire

- (1) You will interview 5-7 adults who are of legal voting age (18 years or above) and who were eligible to vote in the 2012 Presidential election.
- (2) You are to ask these individuals if they voted in the 2012 Election
- (3) If their answer is "yes", you are to ask them to identify the motivating factor in their decision to vote.
- (4) If their answer is "no", you are to ask them to explain why they chose, and/or were unable to vote.
- (5) For either response ("yes" or "no"), you should ask your interviewee to identify the issue(s) in the 2012 Election that they found most important or relevant to their lives. You should also ask them to identify the issue(s) that they felt was most important to the state of Connecticut, or the town.
- (6) For either response ("yes" or "no"), you are to ask them if they plan on voting in the 2014 Mid-Term Elections, and why or why not.

Be sure to complete the survey chart on the following page as neatly and accurately as possible. The chart is due _____ . The information gathered by the students in this class will be used to compile the "Town Voter Database" which will be used in Part II.

Voter Behavior and Election Results

How does your town compare to the State & National Average?

Using the "Town Voter Database" compiled in class, complete table 1 below:

Table 1 – 2012 Presidential Election, Town Voter Database

Voter Category	% Voter Turnout
<i>Total Voting Average</i>	
<i>18-24 Average</i>	
<i>25-44 Average</i>	
<i>45-64 Average</i>	
<i>65+</i>	
<i>Estimated Voter Turnout 2014 Mid-Term Election</i>	

Table 2 – 2012 Presidential Election, State of CT, By Town

"Election Day Registration, Turnout and Absentee Ballot Statistics", Connecticut Secretary of the State

http://www.sots.ct.gov/sots/lib/sots/electionservices/electionresults/2012/document9b_2012_vote_stats.pdf

Table 3 – "2012 General Election Turnout Rates", United States Elections Project, George Mason University

http://elections.gmu.edu/Turnout_2012G.html

Voter Behavior and Election Results

How does your town compare to the State & National Average?

- (1) How does the data for “voter turnout” from our “Town Voter Database” compare to State of Connecticut’s data?

- (2) Are the voter turnout percentages similar or different? Why do you believe this to be the case?

- (3) How do the residents of your town compare to the overall state average for voter turnout? Why do you believe this to be the case?

- (4) How does the data from both the “Town Voter Database” and the State of Connecticut compare to the national average for voter turnout? In what ways is the data similar or different and why do you believe this to be the case?

- (5) Using the data collected as a class and your answers above, what conclusions can you draw about the voter behavior and election results in the your town?

Extension Activity:

Additionally, using the *Roper Center* statistics from the 2012 election, what conclusions can you draw about how demographics influence voting trends?

2012 ELECTION

2012	Group	Obama	Romney
All Voters	Pct.	51%	47%
SEX	Men	45	52
	Women	55	44
RACE	White	39	59
	African-American	93	6
	Hispanic	71	27
	Asian	73	26
	Other	58	38
AGE	18-29	60	37
	30-44	52	45
	45-64	47	51
	65 & over	44	56
INCOME	<\$50,000	60	38
	\$50,000-90,000	46	52
	\$100,000 & over	44	54
UNION HOUSEHOLD	Yes	58	40
	No	49	48
EDUCATION	Some HS	64	35
	HS graduate	51	48
	Some college	49	48
	College graduate	47	51
	Postgraduate study	55	42
PARTY	Democratic	92	7
	Republican	6	93
	Independent	45	50
POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY	Liberal	86	11
	Moderate	56	41
	Conservative	17	82
MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES	Economy	47	51
	Budget deficit	32	66
	Foreign policy	56	33
	Health care	75	24

SOURCE:

http://www.ropercenter.uconn.edu/elections/how_groups_voted/voted_12.html

Voter Behavior and Election Results

How does Your Town compare to the National Average?

Voter Questionnaire – 2012 Presidential Election

Name of Interviewee	Age Range (18-24) (25-44) (45-64) (65+)	Voted in 2012 Presidential Election (Yes/No)	If yes, what was the motivating factor in making the decision to vote? If no, what was the reason for not voting?	What issue(s) in the 2012 Election were most important in your life?	What issue(s) in the 2012 Election were most important to Your Town and the State of Connecticut?	Do you plan to vote in the upcoming 2014 Elections?

