

## Comparative Politics: Political Parties of Canada and the United States

Submitted by: Murray Carlisle

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### Description:

This activity will introduce students not only to the belief systems of the two major political parties in the United States, but also to the major parties in our closest ally and neighbor, Canada. Knowledge of political ideology and how it impacts individual politics is essential to ensure that students become engaged in the American political system. Once students have grasped the structure of American political beliefs, it is vital that they understand the political ideologies and government structure of other countries. As citizens of the world, students will have a deeper understanding of how and why other countries behave the way they do and have the public policies that they have. This lesson is meant to be mere one part of a unit plan on comparative politics.

### Grade Levels:

Grades 11-12

### Subject:

American Government/Comparative Politics

### Duration:

Two ninety-minute sessions in the school computer lab for research

### Goal:

The goal is to develop student awareness of the political parties of Canada and the United States and to illustrate the differences and similarities between party politics of Canada and the U.S.

### Objectives:

The student will:

- Explore the websites of political parties of Canada and the United States
- Examine the platforms of each political party in Canada and the United States
- Evaluate the political ideology of a Canadian political party and an American political party
- Analyze some of the guiding principles of the major political parties of Canada and the U.S.

### Oregon Standard(s):

Understand participatory responsibilities of citizens in the community and in the political process (becoming informed about public issues and candidates, joining political parties / interest groups / associations, communicating with public officials, and voting).

### Background Information:

Before starting this activity, students will have examined the major platforms of the two major political parties in the United States (i.e., Republicans and Democrats). The students will already be familiar with the major differences and similarities between the two parties via classroom instruction and student research in the school computer lab. Students will have already taken an informal test to determine their political ideology (e.g., Are you a liberal or conservative?)

### Materials:

- School computer lab
- Pen/paper for taking notes

### Procedures:

1. Students will access the Internet in the school computer lab to research the history, political philosophy, and key documents of the Liberal and Conservative Parties.
2. Students will use the information gathered during the first computer lab session to write a comparative analysis between the Liberals and Conservatives and the Republicans and Democrats. The paper should discuss the similarities in ideology between the major political parties of Canada and the United States. Students will have several days outside of class to prepare their paper.

Students may access the following links in order to gather their initial information on the Liberal and Conservative Parties:

- <http://www.conservative.ca/english/index.asp>
- [http://www.liberal.ca/default\\_e.aspx](http://www.liberal.ca/default_e.aspx)

Student papers should address the following questions in three to five pages:

- What are the guiding principles of each political party in the US and Canada?
- Who are some of the important figures in each political party?
- What is the role of government according to each political party?
- What is the role of the individual according to each political party?
- How does each party believe government should address health care, the environment, free trade, and public education?

Students will also be encouraged to e-mail representatives of each political party in order to start a dialogue with a party official that could aid them in their research and analysis.

3. After completion of the student papers, the teacher will lead the class in a discussion regarding the beliefs of the Liberal and Conservative Parties in comparison to the political philosophy of the Republicans and Democrats. Students will use the information attained through their research to back up their analysis of the major political parties.

### Assessment:

The teacher will complete a formal assessment of the student paper (e.g., did the student address the questions presented in Step 2?) An informal assessment of student participation will take place during the class discussion/debate.

### Possible Modifications:

1. For English Language Learners: shorten the length of the paper requirement (1-2 pages only).
2. For special needs students with major writing problems, address the paper requirements in other ways: oral report either to the teacher or the class; change the format to a children's book with illustrations.