

BIG IDEAS

Understanding how political decisions are made is critical to being an informed and engaged citizen.

Political institutions and ideology shape both the exercise of power and the nature of political outcomes.

Decision making in a democratic system of government is influenced by the distribution of political and social power.

Learning Standards

Curricular Competencies	Content
<p><i>Students are expected to be able to do the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze data; and communicate findings and decisions • Assess the significance of political issues, ideologies, forces, decisions, or developments, and compare varying perspectives on their significance at particular times and places, and from group to group (significance) • Analyze political data and assess the reliability of sources (evidence) • Compare and contrast continuities and changes for different political institutions and organizations at particular times and places (continuity and change) • Assess how underlying conditions and the actions of individuals or groups affect events, decisions, and developments, and analyze multiple consequences (cause and consequence) • Explain and infer different perspectives on political issues, decisions, or developments (perspective) • Make reasoned ethical judgments about political issues, decisions, and developments (ethical judgment) 	<p><i>Students are expected to know the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • structure and function of Canadian and First Peoples political institutions • major ideologies and political systems • election processes and electoral systems • methods used by media, governments, or political groups to influence public opinion • political power in democratic and non-democratic societies • current and future public policy • scope and characteristics of the international system • issues in local, regional, national, and international politics

Curricular Competencies – Elaborations

- **Use Social Studies inquiry processes and skills to ask questions; gather, interpret, and analyze data; and communicate findings and decisions:**

Key skills:

- Draw conclusions about a problem, an issue, or a topic.
- Assess and defend a variety of positions on a problem, an issue, or a topic.
- Demonstrate leadership by planning, implementing, and assessing strategies to address a problem or an issue.
- Identify and clarify a problem or issue.
- Evaluate and organize collected data (e.g., in outlines, summaries, notes, timelines, charts).
- Interpret information and data from a variety of maps, graphs, and tables.
- Interpret and present data in a variety of forms (e.g., oral, written, and graphic).
- Accurately cite sources.
- Construct graphs, tables, and maps to communicate ideas and information, demonstrating appropriate use of grids, scales, legends, and contours.

- **Assess the significance of political issues, ideologies, forces, decisions, or developments, and compare varying perspectives on their significance at particular times and places, and from group to group (significance):**

Sample activity:

- Evaluate the most significant electoral issues in a particular election campaign. What did each political party try to establish as the key issue for voters and why?

- **Analyze political data and assess the reliability of sources (evidence):**

Key question:

- Can people on different sides of a political issue agree on the objective facts involved in the issue?

Sample activities:

- Analyze the origin, purpose, perspective, and veracity of a claim made in a political speech.
- Analyze how language can be used in a political statement or speech to obfuscate.

- **Compare and contrast continuities and changes for different political institutions and organizations at particular times and places (continuity and change):**

Key question:

- How do political perspectives change over time? What can cause this?

Sample activity:

- Examine the role played by a Canadian political institution (e.g., Governor General, Senate, Supreme Court) over time and assess how its role and power have changed or stayed the same.

Curricular Competencies – Elaborations

- **Assess how underlying conditions and the actions of individuals or groups affect events, decisions, and developments, and analyze multiple consequences (cause and consequence):**

Sample activities:

- Analyze the role of several important political factors (e.g., ideology, public opinion, economics, institutional factors, identity politics, the media) in a recent political decision.
- Examine the intended and unintended consequences of a political decision or policy change.

- **Explain and infer different perspectives on political issues, decisions, or developments (perspective):**

Sample activity:

- Compare the coverage of a political event or topic in different mass media or in the social media feeds of different people.

- **Make reasoned ethical judgments about political issues, decisions, and developments (ethical judgment):**

Sample activity:

- Conduct a debate about a current or past political decision.

Content – Elaborations

- **structure and function of Canadian and First Peoples political institutions:**

Sample topics:

- federal, provincial, and territorial legislatures
- First Peoples governance
- roles of executive, legislative, and judicial branches

- **major ideologies and political systems:**

Sample topics:

- ideologies:
 - liberalism
 - conservatism
 - democratic socialism
 - Libertarianism
- political systems:
 - democracy
 - theocracy
 - dictatorship
 - totalitarian state
- left-to-right political spectrum and two-dimensional representation, such as the political compass

Sample activities:

- Take online tests designed to represent your views on a linear or two-dimensional spectrum. Compare the questions asked and the methodology of two such tests.
- Compare the way terms such as “liberal” and “conservative” are used in Canada, the United States, and other countries.

- **election processes and electoral systems:**

Sample topics:

- electoral systems:
 - single-member plurality (first past the post)
 - proportional representation systems
 - single transferable vote
 - majoritarian
 - consensus-model elections in Nunavut and Northwest Territories
- processes for local, provincial, and federal elections
- outside factors in elections, such as opinion polls, campaign financing, third-party involvement, election advertising, and social media
- history of voting rights in Canada

Content – Elaborations

Sample activities:

- Analyze the media coverage of one day in an election campaign or a significant day in politics. Review a variety of print, web, and broadcast sources. Consider placement and size of stories, images chosen, accuracy, and reporting bias.
- Compare electoral systems in Canada and another jurisdiction.

• **methods used by media, governments, or political groups to influence public opinion:**

Sample topics:

- lobbying
- media campaigns
- propaganda
- awareness or information campaigns
- public consultation

Sample activity:

- Prepare a case study of the influence of media, government, or political groups in shaping public perception of an issue.

• **political power in democratic and non-democratic societies:**

Sample topic:

- theories of power:
 - *power over* (power to compel, direct, or dictate) versus *power to* (power to influence, enable, or empower)

Sample activities:

- Identify and assess the leading factors empowering certain groups in society while disempowering others.
- Analyze the circumstances in which political power shifts from one group (or amalgam of groups) to another.

• **current and future public policy:**

Key question:

- When are governments proactive in the creation of policy and when are they reactive to the needs and demands of the population?

Sample Activity:

- Simulate the policy-making process on a current issue that involves the articulation of stakeholder perspectives (e.g., parliamentary committee stage, local community engagement process).

• **scope and characteristics of the international system:**

Sample topics:

- sovereign states
- intergovernmental organizations:
 - *United Nations*
 - NATO
 - EU

Content – Elaborations

- non-governmental organizations
- social movements
- multinational corporations
- international law
- terrorism

Sample activities:

- Hold a model United Nations meeting.
- Simulate the meeting of another global organization.

• **issues in local, regional, national, and international politics:**

Sample topics:

- economic development
- sustainability
- conflict resolution