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# *Elections Syllabus*

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The focus of the *Elections* course is a simulation of American election campaigns. While emphasis is placed on the Presidential race, the course can be modified to include other types of elections, including those for U.S. Senator / Congressman, Governor or local political offices. As they create a microcosm of the actual election process, students take on the roles of candidates, campaign managers and staffs, as well as members of the media.

The course culminates in a school-wide rally and, ultimately, a mock election. It is designed as either a semester course for 50-55 minute classes or a mini-course of one quarter for block schedules. There are two pacing guides for each unit to reflect both time frames. The mini-course can run in conjunction with the actual national or state election. It is, therefore, recommended that it be offered in the fall semester.

## **GENERAL COURSE OUTLINE**

### **UNIT 1: COURSE ORGANIZATION**

#### Essential Questions:

- What are the course requirements?
- How is the election simulation coordinated?
- What might each student's role be in the program?

#### Topics for Class Discussion / Activities

- The phases of the election program
- Determining political party affiliation
- Defining specific roles in the simulation and students' interests / talents for those roles

### **UNIT 2: CAMPAIGN ISSUES AND RESEARCH**

#### Essential Questions:

- What are the major issues facing the voter in this election?
- Which sources will be most beneficial in researching the issues?

#### Topics for Class Discussion / Activities

- Key domestic and/or foreign issues of the election campaign
- The platforms of the leading candidates as they relate to the issues of the campaign

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### **UNIT 3: ASSIGNING SIMULATION ROLES**

#### Essential Questions:

- How will candidates be determined?
- What is the specific role and responsibilities of each class member?

#### Topics for Class Discussion / Activities

- In-class primary elections
- Coordination of campaign staffs / contracts
- Deciding on which issues to address in campaign speeches

### **UNIT 4: QUALIFICATIONS FOR OFFICE**

#### Essential Questions:

- What are the formal and informal prerequisites for the political office sought?
- What qualities should a candidate possess?

#### Topics for Class Discussion / Activities:

- Roles of the President of the United States (and / or other political officeholders)
- Constitutional qualifications for office
- Tradition / Customs which have determined officeholders

### **UNIT 5: THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION PROCESS**

#### Essential Questions:

- What is the unique nature of the process of electing the President of the United States?
- Should the Electoral College be eliminated as a way of selecting the President?

#### Topics for Class Discussion / Activities:

- Primary elections and caucuses
- Election campaigns
- National party conventions
- The Electoral College and the Presidential election
- Class debate: The Electoral College: Should It Continue?
- Creating electoral districts in the school
- Assigning “precinct captains” for electoral districts

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### **UNIT 6: The Political Campaign**

#### Essential Question:

- How should election campaigns be organized to ensure a victory for the candidates?
- What factors affect voter behavior?

#### Topics for Class Discussion / Activities

- Public Opinion and Propaganda
- Public Opinion Polls
- Voter Registration Campaigns

### **UNIT 7: CANDIDATES' SPEECHES / CAMPAIGN LITERATURE**

#### Essential Questions:

- Campaign Literature
- What are the elements of an effective speech?
- How have the candidate incorporated those same elements in their rally speeches?

#### Topics for Class Discussion / Activities:

- Creation and distribution of campaign literature
- Review of written speeches (1<sup>st</sup> draft)
- Oral presentation / delivery of speeches and related peer critique

### **UNIT 8: THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA**

#### Essential Question:

- How do the media impact election results?

#### Topics for Discussion / Activities:

- Past elections and the media
- Methods used by the media in affecting election
- Media coordinators and the simulation

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### **UNIT 9: RALLY / ELECTION COORDINATION**

#### Essential Question:

- What steps are still necessary to ensure the success of the school-wide rally and mock election?

#### Topics for Discussion / Activities:

- Peer critiques of 2<sup>nd</sup> and final drafts of candidates' speeches
- Assessment of work completed by each student as it relates to their individual responsibilities for the rally
- Assessment of the election / voter registration campaign
- The school-wide Election Rally
- The Mock Election

### **UNIT 10: FINAL ASSESSMENT**

#### Essential Questions:

- How closely did the class /school simulation correlate to an actual election?
- What factors affected the election outcome? Did the results parallel the actual election?
- How will students review for the final examination?

#### Topics for Discussion / Activities:

- Assessment of the election simulation for future programs
- School election results and the "real world" of American politics
- Class activities for review for the final examination