

LESSON 1

Democratic Voices in A Changing Society

LESSON ASSIGNMENTS

Pay very close attention when watching the video program. Review the video objectives and be prepared to record possible answers, in abbreviated form, as you view the video. The titles and numbers of the textbook chapters may differ from the video program. Keep in mind that the video program examines contemporary examples to illustrate your government in action. An attempt is made to show how you can participate in the political arena and bring about changes in the political process.

Video:

“Democratic Voices in A Changing Society” from the series, *Voices in Democracy: United States Government*.

Activities:

One or more activities may be assigned to this lesson. Refer to your syllabus.

OVERVIEW

This lesson examines the relationship between government and the people. A government is the institution through which society makes and enforces its public policies. There are different forms of government, but all consist of machinery and personnel. Whatever form the government takes, it has the authority to make and enforce public policy.

One important philosophical debate of the 1996 presidential election involved the proper role of government in society. In the U.S., the government has a broad impact on the lives of its citizens, and in return citizens have numerous ways in which they may influence their government. Since we live in a representative democracy we may participate in the election of those persons that represent us. We may also participate in interest groups and through forms of direct action, such as protests and demonstrations. Our government may be thought of as a political system that processes our demands, actions, and feedback into political outputs or public policies. The United States has experienced many changes in the last few decades that have altered the face of national politics and the perceptions we have of our abilities as a nation. We will continue to face important social, economic, and technological changes and we will be faced with the question of what role the government should or can play in addressing these issues and we will be asked what we as participants in a democracy can do.

LESSON GOAL

Understand the relationship between government, politics, and power in the United States democracy and the roles that people can play to affect policy and action.

VIDEO OBJECTIVES

The following objectives are designed to assist you in identifying the most significant aspects of the video segment of this lesson. You should take succinct notes while viewing the video.

1. Explain how people in a representative democracy can gain power to effect change.
2. Explain the role of media in providing timely information for people in a democracy.
3. Analyze some of the issues which the United States political system will probably face in the twenty-first century.
4. Compare and contrast the methods of organization used by the following political groups: American Indian Movement, the African American Movement, the labor movement, and the women’s movement. Which of the movements was most successful and why?

WEB ACTIVITIES

These activities are not required unless your teacher assigns them. They are offered as suggestions to help you learn more about the material presented in this lesson.

Activity 1

Visit the Direct Democracy Center at <http://realdemocracy.com/>. If you have trouble with this URL, do a search for direct democracy. Scroll approximately half way down the page to the “Topics for Discussion and Consideration.” Access the site “Amendment to the California Constitution” and read the proposed amendment.

In California the Direct Democracy Center has proposed an amendment to the California constitution that would create a direct democracy in California. First, the proposal calls for the creation of an electronic network that would allow citizens to vote from their homes in all elections. Citizens would also participate directly in all legislative decision making through the network by instructing their representatives in the state legislature on how they (the citizens) want their representatives to vote on each issue before the legislature. The representative would then be bound by law to follow the majority vote from the online poll.

Evaluate this proposal by describing the advantages and disadvantages.

Then take a position on arguing why California should or should not adopt this amendment. Justify your position in several paragraphs.

AND/OR

Activity 2

Access the “Amendment to the U.S. Constitution” and read the proposed 28th amendment to the U.S. Constitution. This proposal would provide for a nonpartisan direct representative democracy.

Analyze the effects of a nonpartisan election with reference to political parties. Would you be supportive of such a change? Why or why not?

Consider the implications of the proposed recall procedures on the federal level of government with reference to Supreme Court judges, the president, etc.

Discuss the pros and cons of repealing the 16th Amendment.

Would the rights of minority viewpoints be protected under the provisions of the proposed constitutional amendment?

PRACTICE TEST

After watching the video and reviewing the objectives, you should be able to complete the following Practice Test. When you have completed the Practice Test, turn to the Answer Key to score your answers.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE

Select the single best answer.

1. The man who in the mid-1960's organized the migrant farm workers in California into a union called the United Farm Workers was...
 - A. Cesar Romero
 - B. Henry Cisneros
 - C. Pancho Medrano
 - D. Cesar Chavez
2. CNN believes that to keep people informed with a full, fair breadth of viewpoints, they need to provide...
 - A. liberal and conservative views
 - B. many different foreign viewpoints
 - C. all kinds of views on particular events
 - D. all of the above
3. Which of the following women was mentioned as a leader in the civil rights movement for African Americans in the 1960s...
 - A. Elizabeth Dole
 - B. Frances Perkins
 - C. Rosa Parks
 - D. Janet Reno
4. Which of the following is considered the most successful political movement in the late 20th century?
 - A. The Christian Coalition Movement
 - B. The Native American Movement
 - C. The Women's Suffrage Movement
 - D. The Temperance Movement
5. Which of the following is considered the smallest minority group in the United States?
 - A. Women
 - B. African American
 - C. Native American
 - D. Asian American

ESSAY/PROBLEM QUESTION

6. Describe and analyze the various political actions taken by people to bring about change in the United States. Which of the political actions do you think would be the most effective way for you to participate and bring about changes you are most interested in achieving?

ANSWER KEY

The following provides the answers and references for the practice test questions. Video objectives are referenced using the following abbreviation: V=Video Objectives.

1. D Ref: V 4 (Video)
2. D Ref: V 2 (Video)
3. D Ref: V 4 (Video)
4. A Ref: V 1 (Video)
5. C Ref: V 4 (Video)
6. Ref: V 1 and V 4 (Video)