

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 shaped by the unequal distribution of political and social power.

International political agreements require compromises between countries with a wide range of values and priorities.

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 • Evaluate how factors, forces, events, or people influence developments, outcomes, or decisions (significance, relevance, and pertinence) • Assess the origin, purpose, quality, and impact of political data (evidence) • Analyze the methods used by the media, governments, and other important groups to influence public perception of an issue or event (political perspectives) • Explain how different ideologies and worldviews shape perspectives on the same political issue and information (political perspectives) • Analyze interrelationships between objectives and intended or unintended results (interrelationships, objectives, and results) • Assess the factors that cause political stability or instability (stability and change) • Recognize the influence of implicit and explicit ethical judgments in political decision making, and formulate positions on issues of ethics in politics (judgments in political ethics) 	<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 • role of mass media in democratic societies • power relationships between citizens, government, and other bodies in the creation of public policy • scope and characteristics of the international system • issues in local, regional, or national politics in Canada • issues in global politics, such as security, conflict management, development, and sustainability

Curricular Competencies – Elaborations

Evaluate how factors, forces, events, or people influence developments, outcomes, or decisions (significance, relevance, and pertinence):

Sample activities:

- Analyze the role of several important political factors (e.g., ideology, public opinion, economics, institutional factors, identity politics, role of media) in a recent political decision, and assess which factors were most significant in the final outcome.
- Examine a case study of a political decision or outcome, and consider different interpretations of the factors that contributed to the outcome.

Assess the origin, purpose, quality, and impact of political data (evidence):

Key question:

- What factors influence the accuracy of opinion polling data (e.g., sample size and composition, bias in the question asked, polling method, such as by telephone or online forum)?

Analyze the methods used by the media, governments, and other important groups to influence public perception of an issue or event (political perspectives):

Sample activity:

- 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.

Explain how different ideologies and worldviews shape perspectives on the same political issues and information (political perspectives):

Key question:

- How do political perspectives change over time? What would cause this? Look at voter demographics and draw inferences.

Recognize the influence of implicit and explicit ethical judgments in political decision making, and formulate positions on issues of ethics in politics (judgements in political ethics):

Sample activity:

- Choose one of the following topics and conduct a debate:
 - Should politicians be held accountable for keeping promises made in campaigns?
 - Are we responsible for the well-being of future generations?
 - What ought to be done about the growing inequality between rich and poor?
 - Do countries have obligations outside of their own borders?

Content – Elaborations

structure and function of Canadian and First Peoples political institutions:

Sample topics:

- parliament, provincial and territorial legislatures, First Peoples governance
- reform of institutions

Content – Elaborations

- Senate of Canada
- power of the Prime Minister
- British monarch as Canada’s head of state

major ideologies and political systems*Sample topics:*

- ideologies and systems:
 - democracy, liberalism, capitalism, authoritarianism, conservatism
 - command-economy
 - libertarianism
- left-to-right political spectrum
- political compass

election processes and electoral systems:*Sample topics:*

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

Key questions:

- Should Canada reform its electoral system? Explain your answer.
- Should the voting age be reduced? Explain your answer.

power relationships between citizens, government, and other bodies in the creation of public policy:*Sample topics:*

- theories of power that range from authoritarian to democratic:
 - *power over* (power to compel, direct, or dictate) versus *power to* (power to influence, enable, empower)

Key questions:

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