

## Growing Voters and Election 2016: High School

### Activity Title: **Candidate Debate / Prepare for Press Spin (Part 2)**

Students will participate in a classroom debate between two candidates representing two political parties. They will also prepare for media coverage. There is an optional second level activity to complement this debate (see **Hack the Spin!** GrowingVoters.org activity.)

Teachers are already familiar with students debating the two party presidential candidates. This activity suggests a fuller experience to involve the whole class by dividing into teams with different roles. Preparing and practicing for a debate, as well as role-playing the journalists and other specialists, gives the whole class a bigger stake in the debate.

#### Overview

To be an informed voter requires that we critically listen and analyze the information in the debates, speeches, and commercials of each candidate to insure we make an informed decision when we cast our votes. It is important to research the issues and critically view the vast amounts of information disseminated during the campaigns.

Upon completion of this learning module, students will be able to separate propaganda from process, gain media literacy, and see behind what efforts are directed to get voters to choose a candidate to support.

#### Essential Questions

1. What criteria do people use to select their candidate for President?
2. What process do we use to elect our officials in the United States, and does that the election process work well?
3. What is the purpose of the candidate debate in shaping public opinion?
4. How does commentary and media coverage of the candidates and issues influence how the public perceives their choices in the election?

#### Objectives

Students will identify for themselves the issues that require the voters' decisions.

Students will understand the role and issues of each party.

Students will role-play influential individuals in the current political arena, including opinion-makers.

Students will understand the issues in the campaign and be able to debate them.

Students will understand the role of media coverage on influencing public views on the candidates.

#### National Standards

Locate, organize, analyze, and use information from various sources to understand an issue of public concern, take a position, and communicate the position.

Evaluate the ways in which public opinion can be used to influence and shape public policy.

**Teach the Presidential Election:** A range of technology-infused classroom activities, resources, and tools are **available for free** at [GrowingVoters.org](http://GrowingVoters.org), a non-partisan educational effort to enliven and motivate student engagement in the political process. Professor Jo-Anne Hart is the project creator with support from *Lesley University* Graduate School of Education, Cambridge, MA: [Hart@Lesley.edu](mailto:Hart@Lesley.edu)

Identify the sources, evaluate the justification, and analyze the implications of the rights and responsibilities of citizens.

### Activity Instructions:

#### Procedure

1 Students will become a member of a political party in the United States through a teacher selected selection process. Suggestion: students will pick a REP or DEM party card out of a hat or teachers will assign students to a political party.

Students will further be put into teams divided accordingly based on class size and teacher preferences for activity purposes:

1. A Democratic Party Prep Team to prepare and support Hillary Clinton in the debate
2. A Republican Party Prep Team to prepare and support Donald Trump in the debate.
3. A Media Consultants Republican Team to develop “spin” analysts for the post-debate media room.
4. A Media Consultants Democrats Team to develop “spin” analysts for the post-debate media room.
5. A Journalists Team to generate questions in advance and then conduct interviews with (spinners) experts following the debate in the media room.
6. (optional)A Video (or Audio) Crew Team to use webcams, cell phones, or video camera to film/record debate plus spin interviews.

#### Preparation for Debate:

1. Students will research, create, and turn in a list of 10 resources about their representative party.
2. Students will peruse primary source documents from prior presidential election debates, including online video footage and editorial commentaries.
3. Students will outline the details of what they know about the Presidential electoral process and any questions they have about how it works or about the role of political parties.
4. Students will generate debate questions on the major issues affecting their party and its platform.
5. Each prep team should think up arguments and then prepare and practice to counter their opposing candidate in the debate.
5. Students should seek out debate footage from a previous election and watch the interpretation and re-interpretation in the coverage to see how it is done.

#### Specific team play\*\*:

Each **candidate prep team** selects a student to play each Presidential candidate (either Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton). Each complete team must work together to prepare their candidate before the debate:

Identify key issues and where the candidate stands (and where the opponent stands)

Identify key arguments and points which each candidate should try to make about himself and against the other candidate

Anticipate tough points which the opponent will make and need to be countered.

Put the candidate through a practice session with the other team members playing the part of the opponent and the journalists posing questions to the candidates.

Each **media consultants team** selects party notables and/or key specialists to be spokespeople for each candidate in the post-debate media room. Depending on time and number of students available, there can be multiple “spinners” for each party. Students should look up this process to discover the types of people who are put into these positions and simulate those selections. Each team then works to prepare the spin experts for their interpretive work following the debate. This means:

- anticipating the issues which are most likely to come up during the debate
- understanding how the assigned party wants the messages of the key issues to be interpreted and explained by the spin expert in the media room.
- practicing taking what the candidate may have said, misspoken, or not said “on message” and re-interpreting it so that it fits the message that the party is looking for on that issue.

(tip: study online footage of spin experts. Example is YouTube.com footage of spin experts interpreting and declaring who won after presidential candidate debate.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z2StvPrEvTk> )

**Journalists team**: Identify key issues and generate questions for candidates during debate, follow-up questions for debate analysis, and questions for spin experts to interpret the debate in post-debate media room.

Pose questions during debate.

Interview party notables and pundits in post-debate “spin room”.

Time permitting, journalists team can develop a “news analysis” story to report on the debate afterwards (i.e. who “won”, what key sound bites were noteworthy, what was newsworthy about the debate, what the media and party pundits had to say about the debate). This can be a TV news (video) story or a newspaper print story, or an online story.

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\*\*Note that advance preparation can be (homework) outside the classroom and consider using a BLOG or a GOOGLE doc for each team to keep track of their questions and their work.

## **Add VIDEO or Audio versions of Debate Coverage**

**See additional Growing Voters activity ideas and instructions**

**Suggested extension assignment**: use the same raw film footage and student crews edit two different “stories” or debate coverage each showing different conclusions (or spin) with the same material.

**Video or Audio Crew team** (optional) see Hack the Spin! Activity

Materials:

Internet Resources: [http://www.ikeepbookmarks.com/Growing\\_Voters](http://www.ikeepbookmarks.com/Growing_Voters)

Magazines Newspaper TV

Activities:

1. Prepare candidates with Debate Camp practice.
2. Stage a debate between the candidates.
3. Have journalists pose questions during the debate and for the spin room.
4. Have party notables and political pundits interpret, analyze and spin the debate afterward.
5. Conduct a de-brief on the debate: who won and why?
6. Students compose a post reflecting on their experience and conclusions about the debate.

Additional Ideas:

1. Party Slogans, Posters, Music
2. Do candidate debate activity with **Vice-Presidential** Candidates

Assessment Rubrics included below.

<b>Teamwork Assessment Rubric</b>				
	<b>Above Standard</b>	<b>At Standard</b>	<b>Below Standard</b>	<b>Points Earned</b>
	<b>(3)</b>	<b>(2)</b>	<b>(1)</b>	
<b>Use of Class Time</b>	Group members came to class prepared and equipped; made effective use of time; were always on task and actively involved in the project.	Usually came to class prepared and equipped; usually made effective use of time; were usually on task and actively involved in the project.	Group came to class unprepared a majority of the time, not using time effectively or staying on task.	
<b>Project Execution</b>	Group completed each step with virtually no intervention from teacher; utilized problem-solving skills.	Completed each step with some intervention from teacher; utilized problem-solving skills.	Considerable help from the teacher was needed.	
<b>Synthesis</b>	Consistently worked together as a well-coordinated team; team members pulled their own share.	Usually worked together as a well-coordinated team; team members usually pulled their own share.	Team did not work together and effectively divide tasks. Outside intervention was necessary; team members did not pull their own share.	
<b>Team Name</b>			<b>Total Points</b>	

<b>Debate Rubric</b>				
	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Points Earned</b>
<b>Process</b>	Uses original approach effectively. Highly organized, uses vivid, precise language, and delivers with ease.	Somewhat organized, few facts to back opinions, slightly prepared.	Needs improvement in organization and preparation. Unsure delivery.	
<b>Execution</b>	Interesting Logical Order, fluid delivery, clear connections in materials. Good use of delivery techniques.	Somewhat logical delivery. Slightly unclear connections in material. Delivery techniques need some work.	Disorderly delivery. Does not connect with material.	
<b>Delivery</b>	Engages audience. Clear and understandable. Uses appropriate language. Takes turns.	Lacks clear delivery. Teamwork somewhat fluid.	Delivery unclear, use of teamwork needs improvement. Does not engage audience.	
<b>Student's Name:</b>			<b>Total Points</b>	

<b>Spin Rubric</b>				
	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Points Earned</b>
<b>Process</b>	Uses original approach effectively. Highly organized, uses vivid, precise language, and delivers with ease.	Somewhat organized, few facts to back opinions, slightly prepared.	Needs improvement in organization and preparation. Unsure delivery.	
<b>Execution</b>	Interesting Logical Order, fluid delivery, clear connections in materials. Good use of delivery techniques.	Somewhat logical delivery. Slightly unclear connections in material. Delivery techniques need some work.	Disorderly delivery. Does not connect with material.	
<b>Delivery</b>	Engages audience. Clear and understandable. Uses appropriate language. Takes turns.	Lacks clear delivery. Teamwork somewhat fluid.	Delivery unclear, use of teamwork needs improvement. Does not engage audience.	
<b>Student's</b>				