Concept Formation Lesson
Political Ideology

Context

Overview/Rationale

In this concept formation lesson, students will learn about the concept of political ideology.

Political ideology is an important concept in any Social Studies class, and holds particular significance in government classes. The concept is challenging to define since it incorporates such a vast array of topics, yet there are several key attributes that stand out. Political ideology shapes people’s views about society, and can also dictate how society functions when a particular ideology is implemented. Throughout history, political ideology has played a major role in shaping important events and movements. Political ideology not only refers to people’s political beliefs, but also explains their beliefs about society. Political ideologies are complex and express views about multiple aspects of society such as basic freedoms and rights.

This concept is important for students to learn about in their American Government class. Through the study of political ideologies, students can make connections to how they see the concept present in the modern world and in American politics; students will learn about liberalism and conservatism to see how these ideologies relate to the Democratic and Republican parties. This concept connects to the world beyond the classroom in that these students are seniors who are at or approaching the voting age. A firm understanding about what a political ideology is, especially in relation to predominant political ideologies in the United States, will serve to inform them and their voting practices in the future.

During this concept formation lesson students will gather a deep understanding of the concept of political ideology. Students will determine critical attributes of political ideology, construct their own definition of the concept, label the concept, and distinguish between examples and non-examples of political ideology. This lesson will foster students’ critical thinking skills as they analyze examples and non-examples, and will provide them with valuable content information for their study of political behavior. A concept lesson is especially appropriate to introduce important concepts to students since they will construct their own definition of political ideology; constructing their own definition will provide them with a greater understanding of the concept than what they would have gathered through simply copying down notes.

Background Information

The title of this concept formation lesson is political ideology. The lesson is designed for 12th Grade American Government classes. The lesson is designed to take sixty minutes of class time to complete in a ninety minute long class block. The objectives for this lesson address SOL GOVT.6a; GOVT.9a; NCSS Standards; and PASS Standards.
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Instructional Model

Concept formation lessons serve to provide students with a deep understanding of a word beyond simply knowing its definition. This lesson employs scaffolding as students build up the depth of their understanding about political ideology. In a concept lesson, students work with big ideas to organize and classify information that allows them to make their own conclusions about the concept. Students are called upon not only to construct *their own* definition of the word, but also to *apply* their definition to distinguish between examples and non-examples; this understanding allows students to apply the concept in new situations. During the lesson students will identify similarities and differences among examples of political ideologies, synthesize this information to create their own definition of the concept, label the concept, and conclude by classifying examples and non-examples of political ideology.

Students should engage in the concept formation model for political ideology since this is a theme that will remain present throughout their American Government course. Students need to have a firm understanding of this concept so that they can analyze different topics in government, and distinguish between an ideology versus a political party, religion, or even an economic system. Not only will this concept inform students’ thinking throughout the rest of the government course, but it will also influence their lives as American citizens. Most students reach the voting age in their senior year, and having an understanding of what political ideology is will help them to make informed decisions about *their own* political ideology.

Objectives

Academic

1. Students will be able to list key attributes of political ideology.
2. Students will be able to distinguish between examples and non-examples of political ideology.
3. Students will be able to examine different perspectives on the role of government (GOVT.9a).

Intellectual

1. Students will be able to use critical attributes to write their own definition of political ideology.
2. Students will be able to discuss critical attributes of political ideology in groups.
3. Students will be able to connect critical attributes of political ideology to historical events in American and world history.
4. Students will be able apply their knowledge about political ideology to connect the concept to current political parties in the United States (GOTV.6a).

Assessment

I will utilize two forms of assessment in the concept formation lesson. First, students will complete the concept graphic organizer and the two questions on the worksheet. This worksheet
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will be completed individually, and then discussed in pairs and as a whole class. Students will read four examples of political ideologies (liberalism, conservatism, fascism, and anarchism), and answer the following questions on the chart to gain an understanding about the similarities and differences of the examples: Are there stated beliefs about both government and the economy? What are the beliefs about how society should work? What are the political objectives? Students will also answer the two questions below the chart in order to connect ideas from the examples to American government. After the students complete the chart and questions individually, they will discuss their answers in pairs. Following this sharing exercise, I will ask the whole class to come up with similarities and differences among the examples; since students had the opportunity to discuss their answers in pairs they should feel more comfortable with sharing to the whole class. Students will receive feedback on their answers when we go over the chart and two questions as a whole class.

The second form of assessment will be a classifying worksheet. On this worksheet students will distinguish between examples and non-examples of political ideology. If the students identify any non-examples, they will be required to explain why that idea is not a political ideology. Reading the students’ answers to these worksheets will help me to determine the extent to which students have achieved the objectives of the lesson. Students will receive feedback on this worksheet when we go over the answers as a whole class. I will use what I learned from these assessments to inform my future lesson plans.

Content and Instructional Strategies

The Concept Definition

A political ideology is a set of political beliefs about the best form of government and economic system, and contains a variety of beliefs about how society should work.

Critical Attributes

- A set of political beliefs
- Expresses views about how society should work
- Expresses beliefs about the best form of government and the best economic system

Hook/Introduction 5 Minutes

I will begin by telling the students that we are going to participate in a concept formation lesson. I will introduce students to the structure of a concept formation lesson, and inform students that the purpose of the lesson is to gain a deeper understanding of a word through working with big ideas to organize and classify information that will help them to come up with their own conclusions about the concept.

I will first engage students in the concept lesson by showing a clip from the video “Make Mine Freedom” (1948). I will show students a brief clip starting at 1:40 and ending at 3:15. This clip shows a sample of ideologies without explicitly labeling the concept; this will help to spark students’ thinking about political ideologies without revealing the concept. After students view
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the clip, I will ask them about what they thought were key take-away points. We will discuss these points and I will facilitate our discussion to bring the students’ attention to the examples of political ideologies.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u6H63CD7uQA

Data-Retrieval Chart and Example Analysis 15 Minutes

I will pass out the graphic organizer handout (page 8) to the class. I will instruct them to work individually to fill out the chart and answer the two questions at the bottom of the page. I will instruct students to read the excerpts from the column on the left, and fill out the answers to the corresponding questions at the top of the chart. If I notice that the students are struggling to complete the chart, we will go over the first example together, and then I will instruct them to complete the remaining three individually.

Defining and Labeling the Concept 30 Minutes (Similarities/Differences 15 minutes, Critical Attributes/Definition 10 minutes, Brainstorm 5 minutes)

First, students will fill out the differences and similarities sections on their “Defining the Concept” worksheet. Students will identify the differences and similarities among the four examples from their graphic organizer chart. Students will work individually to complete these sections as I walk around to monitor the class and answer any questions. After students finish these sections, we will come together as a class and I will ask students to share what they came up with; I will write down what they share on the white board. I will begin by asking students to share their ideas for the differences. After discussing the differences from the “Defining the Concept” worksheet, I will ask students to share the similarities that they wrote down and we will discuss these as a class.

Next, I will instruct students to use this information to construct critical attributes for the concept. After the students complete this section individually, we will discuss their answers as a whole class. In order to complete the worksheet, I will instruct students to create their own definition of the concept using the critical attributes that the class just discussed. Students will share their definitions in pairs, and then I will ask one person from the class to share their definition with everyone. Students will listen to this definition, and together we will analyze it to see if it includes all of the critical attributes.

After the class has constructed a good definition of the concept, students will brainstorm different ideas to label the concept. I will reveal the concept to the students after all of their ideas are exhausted.

Classifying 10 Minutes

The lesson will conclude with an assessment worksheet (page 10) for students to apply the identified critical attributes of political ideology to new examples or non-examples of the concept. Students will complete the Concept Classification worksheet, which challenges students to distinguish between examples and non-examples of political ideology, and to explain why the non-examples do not fit with the concept. After the students turn in their competed work to their
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class folder, we will go over the assessment together to make sure that students know the correct answers. I will project the assessment worksheet onto the screen so that the entire class can see it as we go over the answers together.

Resources

White Board
White Board Marker
White Board Eraser
Projector/Projector Screen
Projector Remote
Computer Login
Computer with Internet Access
Working Link to “Make Mine Freedom” Video
Graphic Organizer/Data Retrieval Chart (50 Copies)
Defining the Concept (50 Copies)
Assessment Worksheet: Examples and Non-Examples for Classifying (50 Copies)

Differentiation

I will differentiate within this lesson to meet the needs of my students. I will challenge some students by giving them the opportunity to work individually on constructing their own definition of the concept and analyzing the examples and non-examples independently throughout the lesson. I will support other students by giving them the opportunity to work in pairs and groups, and also by constructing ideas together as a whole class.

Adaptations

I will adapt the lesson to meet the needs of students in the American Government classes with IEPs, 504 plans, or other specified needs. Since the IEPs for the students that I will teach are concerned with reading deficiency, I will make sure to include concise language in my graphic organizer chart and to limit the length of the excerpts provided in the list of examples and non-examples. There are three students who exit the classroom with their pair educator to complete tests and quizzes in one of the American Government classes; the pair educator reads the tests and quizzes to these students who struggle with reading. Since the pair educator will be in the room, I know someone will be available to help these students if they need the examples to be read to them out loud. Also, students will work in pairs for many parts of the lesson, so they will have the opportunity to talk about their ideas if they do not feel comfortable writing them down in the allotted amount of time.

Reflection

Naturally, I cannot plan for everything that could happen when I teach this lesson, yet there are some challenges that I have considered. I understand that I might have to prompt students when we look at the similarities of the examples together. Since I have not seen too much of this kind of work done in the classes that I observed, the students might not be used to analyzing examples
of a concept in such a way. I will guide students through this process, and perhaps remind them to look at the focus questions in order to construct some ideas about similarities among the examples of political ideologies. Also, these classes tend to be a bit chatty, so I will monitor the classroom by walking around and checking on the students’ progress; I will make sure, however, that I am not monitoring the classroom in an intimidating manner, but rather in a helpful way. Time management is another issue that I will have to be aware of. I will make sure to monitor the clock and make “time checkpoints” for myself to know if the lesson is running too long. Another concern that I will consider is the proper amount of time that I should assign for students to work on their individual and group activities. Since the class can get chatty, I need to make sure that I do not give them too much time to complete these activities since that might cause them to become disengaged from the lesson. If this seems to become an issue, I will put more of a focus on monitoring the class and walking around so that I can gauge students’ completion of the class work. Since students already worked with various political ideologies in their World History and American History courses, they should have enough prior knowledge to construct their own definitions and work with examples of the concept. If this is not the case, as it is possible that they forgot such information, I will make sure that I have a strong enough understanding about each example to be able to elaborate on it and teach them if needed. In addition, I will make sure that the students know that the point of the lesson is to engage students in thinking about the concept; it is not a guessing game. I will show students my appreciation for the answers that they share, and have them explain their reasoning behind each suggestion for the similarities and the classifying sections of the lesson.

Post-teaching

The lesson as a whole went rather well. I felt that the students were engaged throughout the lesson and after reviewing their assessment sheets most of the students seemed to have a solid understanding of the concept. I taught the lesson to two different American Government classes on two separate, though consecutive, days. This was helpful in that I had the opportunity to discuss the lesson with my Cooperating Teacher, reflect upon her suggestions, and make proper adjustments to the lesson for the next day. At the start of the first lesson I was very nervous. This was the first time I taught the senior class and I was concerned that they would not participate very much; fortunately my concerns were not necessary. Most of the students participated in the lesson by sharing what they came up with for similarities, differences, critical attributes, definitions, or suggestions for the concept. I was relieved when the students chose the three critical attributes that I constructed for the definition in my lesson plan, and happy to see that students were quite proud of their individual definitions enough so that a significant number of students volunteered to share what they wrote. During this first lesson, however, I spent most of my time in the front of the classroom as opposed to walking around to check on students’ progress; this was something I worked to change the second time around. I also struggled with finding an effective way to erase on the white board; this is something that I did not think about beforehand and consequently it took up some class time to figure out. At the suggestion of my Cooperating Teacher, I used the computer to project the notes sheet and wrote in the Word document as opposed to on the white board. The second time that I taught the lesson I felt much more comfortable, and I think this helped increase class participation, too. I provided the students with a question to consider when they watched the video hook, which helped spark discussion to lead into the Concept Graphic Organizer worksheet. Also, I collected students’
assessment sheets before we went over them as a class so that I could see their answers before they made corrections. I made a point to tell the students in both classes that we would be working “backwards” in a sense since the word would be that last thing that we learned, and I think this helped prevent confusion or frustration in wondering why they could not start off with the word. The students were successful with the format of the lesson which progressed smoothly and was completed within the projected time frame. The fact that I planned for enough time for each activity also helped the progression of the lesson in that I did not feel rushed and had time to hear multiple answers and suggestions for the similarities, differences, critical attributes, and definitions.

PASS Standards

Higher Order Thinking: 4
Students engaged in some higher order thinking throughout the lesson. Students analyzed the four political ideologies on the Concept Graphic Organizer worksheet to come up with differences and similarities. In addition, students distinguished between examples and non-examples of the concept on the assessment worksheet.

Deep Knowledge: 4
The lesson promoted deep knowledge in that it focused on understanding one particular concept. Students sustained focus on this concept throughout the entire lesson, becoming familiar with it and later analyzing it to broaden the scope of their understanding.

Substantive Conversation: 3
Students shared ideas and suggestions at various points throughout the lesson and applied ideas from the differences and similarities to construct critical attributes together. The conversation was not scripted and students had the opportunity to build upon one another’s comments, although sustained conversation was rare.

Connections to the World beyond the Classroom: 3
Students learned about political ideologies prevalent in the United States, abroad, and from different periods in history; although these examples were not explained in great detail. Students understood that these topics had connections to the world beyond the classroom, yet the focus of the lesson was not in making these connections. Students made some connections between political ideologies relevant to them as future voters in the United States.

Ethical Valuing: 2
Ethical valuing was not a focus in this introductory lesson, although students were exposed to issues and ideas surrounding different political ideologies; students could apply their background knowledge to consider the consequences of implementing some of the political ideologies.

Integration: 4
This lesson integrated technology and topics in history. Students investigated political ideologies of the past and present, and technology was used to show the video clip and to project the notes sheet.
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Concept Graphic Organizer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples of Concept</th>
<th>Are there stated beliefs about both the government and the economy?</th>
<th>What are the beliefs about how society should work?</th>
<th>What are the political objectives?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liberalism: This belief states that the government should play an important role in the economy. Liberals believe society should work to eliminate obstacles to freedom such as disease, poverty, and discrimination. Politics should focus on securing the rights of the individual.</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservatism: This belief states that the government should play a minimal role in the economy. Conservatives believe society should change gradually, and value stability. Politics should preserve what is established.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fascism: This belief states that the government should completely control the economy. Fascists believe society should be regimented. Politics should dictate every aspect of life.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anarchism: This belief states that the government should have no control over the economy. Anarchists believe society should function upon free cooperation of individuals. Politics is unnecessary and unwanted.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1) Which major political party in America holds views closest to liberalism?
2) Which major political party in America holds views closest to conservatism?
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Name: _____________________________________________ _______________

Defining the Concept

Differences
1) 
2) 
3) 
4) 

Similarities
1) 
2) 
3) 
4) 

Critical Attributes

Definition
Concept Classification

Directions: Read the four examples below and determine if they are an example or non-example of a political ideology. Use the critical attributes to inform your decision. Write “yes” if it is an example, and write “no” if it is not an example. If you answer “no,” explain why it is not an example of the concept of political ideology.

**Marxist socialism** stresses the importance of the state over individual rights. Marxist socialists believe goods should be shared rather than possessed by individuals. In Marxist socialism, the state controls goods and distributes them according to need. Society functions as a collective unit to serve the state, which protects the common good. The state controls all economic activity.

**Example or Non-Example? Why?**

**Capitalism:** stresses the importance of competitive economic markets and private or corporate ownership. Nations can employ capitalism in a political system without much or completely free from government control.

**Example or Non-Example? Why?**

**Absolutism:** places power within the hands of one ruler. This ruler practices complete control over the government and economic system of the society. Political objectives are determined solely by the ruler. Society also functions in accordance to the ruler’s wishes, yet usually follows a hierarchical system.

**Example or Non-Example? Why?**

**Buddhism:** stresses the importance of enlightenment. People are subject to suffering, endless births and deaths until enlightenment is achieved. Buddhists believe society should function according to the Middle Way, and moderation is valued.

**Example or Non-Example? Why?**