

LESSON 14

MORAL FOUNDATIONS & IDEOLOGIES

GUIDING QUESTIONS

How and why do moral judgments vary across the political spectrum? How can we improve political discourse and debate?

SUMMARY

Morals and principles can affect an individual's political perspectives and their position on the political spectrum.

In this lesson, students use the political inquiry process when reflecting on ideologies and political discourse. In the 'Minds On' activity, students explore the moral foundations theory and rank the principles in order of importance to them. Afterwards, students review research that suggests that our morals dictate our political orientation and assess this impact among themselves and their peers. In small groups, students practice developing arguments for specific public policies tailored to individuals on each side of the political spectrum. In the 'Consolidation' activity, students reflect on the link between morals and ideology, and consider their position on the political spectrum.

Teacher Note: Students should have completed Lesson 10 or a political spectrum quiz, in order to have an idea of where they sit on the political spectrum in advance of the lesson.

LEARNING GOALS

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Use the concept of *political significance* and *political perspective* to reflect on their own beliefs, values and worldview;
- Develop a sense of their civic self-image by examining their beliefs and morals (Citizenship Education Framework – Identity);
- Develop effective skills for political discourse and build positive relationships with diverse individuals and groups (Citizenship Education Framework – Active Participation);
- Demonstrate respect for others' perspectives (Citizenship Education Framework – Identity).

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- I can assess my own beliefs, values and worldview, and evaluate how it shapes my political perspective;
- I can explain how my civic self-image is shaped by my beliefs and morals;
- I can critically and thoughtfully discuss issues of political importance with people who hold different viewpoints than my own;
- I can demonstrate respect for others' perspectives that differ from my own.

CURRICULUM LINKS

CPC30 – Overall Expectations

A1. Political Inquiry: use the political inquiry process and the concepts of political thinking when investigating issues, events, and developments of civic importance

A2. Developing Transferable Skills: apply in everyday contexts skills developed through investigations related to civics and citizenship education, and identify some careers in which civics and citizenship education might be an asset

B1. Factors Affecting Political Engagement: analyse how various factors can contribute to, and present a barrier to, their own and others' political engagement

B2. Issues of Political Importance: explain the political importance of some current issues and analyse various perspectives associated with these issues

CPC30 – Specific Expectations

A1.5 use the concepts of political thinking (i.e., political significance, objectives and results, stability and change, and political perspective) when analysing and evaluating evidence, data, and information and formulating conclusions and/or judgements about issues of political importance in various communities and ways to address them

A1.6 evaluate and synthesize their findings to formulate conclusions and/or make informed judgements or predictions about the issues they are investigating

A2.2 demonstrate in everyday contexts attributes, skills, and work habits developed through investigations into issues of political importance

A2.3 apply the concepts of political thinking when analysing current events relating to issues of political importance at the local, national, and/or global level (e.g., an election result, a political protest, the release of a report by a government commission or a non-governmental organization[NGO] investigating a specific issue, an action taken by a political leader), in order to enhance their understanding of these issues and their role as informed citizens

B1.1 identify some agents of political socialization, and analyse how these agents affect their own personal political beliefs and engagement of others

B1.2 describe their own personal attitudes towards political engagement, including the extent and type of involvement they think appropriate

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B1.4 describe personal attributes, attitudes, and skills that enhance an individual's ability to be a responsible citizen and contribute to the common good (e.g., respect for others, perseverance, capacity for empathy, willingness to lead or take initiative, collaborative skills, oral communication skills, organizational skills)

B2.1 explain the political importance of some current local, national, and/or global issues

MINDS ON

1. Everyone has standards or principles that relate to what we consider right and wrong behaviors. Write down the following moral principles and ask students to describe them in their own words or provide examples: care, fairness, loyalty, authority, sanctity. This can be done individually first and then reviewed as a class (Activity 14.1).

2. The 'moral foundations theory', developed by Jesse Graham and Jon Haidt, suggests that these five concepts are said to describe universal moral concerns. Review the terms again to ensure alignment with the definitions below and invite students to provide relevant examples.

- Care – Reflects cherishing and protecting others. For example, it is wrong to harm someone else, but it is right to help those in need.
- Fairness – Justice should be interpreted based on shared rules, applicable to everyone. For example, it is wrong to cheat and treat people unequally, it is right to strive towards equity and equality.
- Loyalty – Standing with or prioritizing your group, family or nation. For example, it is wrong to betray your group, but it is right to put your group's needs first.
- Authority – Surrendering to tradition and legitimate authority. It is wrong to be rebellious to real authority, but it is important to respect tradition and your elders.
- Sanctity: rejection of disgusting things, foods or actions. It underlines the religious notion of trying to live in a more noble way.

3. Give students a few minutes to individually rank these five moral concepts in order of importance to them (Activity 14.1).

4. In pairs or small groups, have students share their rankings and explain their choices. Afterwards, give students a few minutes to re-consider their own rankings. Reflection questions: Did you change your rankings? Why or why not?

ACTION

1. Using Slide Deck 14, explain to students that researchers have found that there is a clear divide in terms of which moral foundations people prioritize on each side of the spectrum.

- Which principles does each side favour the most? Left-leaning people tend to more strongly endorse care and fairness, and right-leaning people tend to endorse the loyalty, authority and purity.
- How does this impact political discourse? Many people believe that society is becoming more polarized or politically divided, causing political discourse to become offensive. Naturally, when someone articulates their perspective on an issue, it is grounded in the moral principles they prioritize. However, this will not necessarily resonate with someone who sits on the other side of the spectrum.
- What can be done to improve political debate? First of all, we can respect that everyone has different life experiences and influences that shape their views. Secondly, we can try to modify our arguments during discourse to reflect the favoured moral principles of people who sit on the other side of the spectrum.

2. Ask students to reflect on their rankings from the 'Minds On' activity, compared to where they consider themselves on the political spectrum. Reflection questions: Does the theory hold true? Is there a clear divide amongst the principles? Have students Turn and Talk with a partner, then debrief as a class.

Use the strategy below to facilitate a debate on the following issues (or the arguments from Activity 14.2).

- Governments should strengthen preferential hiring treatment for minorities and women
- Health-care should be privatized
- Child-care should be fully subsidized
- Increasing the minimum wage is a good idea
- Using overwhelming military force is the best way to defeat terrorism in the world

Steps to facilitating the debate:

- a) Co-create criteria for positive discourse or a respectful debate. Sample criteria below taken from *Think Literacy* publication (Discussion Etiquette):
 - Take turns speaking – one person speaks at a time
 - Use supportive gestures and body language (maintain eye contact, nod to show you are listening, use encouraging facial expressions, don't use inappropriate gestures)
 - Listen carefully and attentively to other speakers
 - Encourage and support those around you
 - Avoid sarcasm and put-downs
 - Remain open to new ideas
 - Ask questions when you don't understand

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- b) Organize students into four-person teams, based on ideology if possible (two per each side of the spectrum). Each team selects a statement and splits into pairs, with each pair developing an argument for or against the proposition. Each pair must base their argument to attract support from both sides of the spectrum.
- c) Pairs then come back together into a four-person team and present their views to one other, one team acting as the presenters, the others as the listeners.
- d) Rather than refuting the other position, the listening team repeats back to the presenters what they understood. Listeners do not become presenters until the original presenters are fully satisfied that they have been heard and understood.

CONSOLIDATION

Ask students to read a list of propositions and determine where on the ideological grid (political spectrum) it would go and which moral principle it would align with (Activity 14.2). Students should assess their answers through discussion with their peers. Afterwards, have students go back and identify which propositions they agree with and respond the final reflection questions.

- To what extent does the news media, your friends and your education shape your personal political ideology? Explain and provide an example.
- Do your family's political views affect your own ideology? Explain and provide an example.

ACTIVITY 14.1: THE MORAL FOUNDATIONS

Write down your own definition of each moral principle. Then write down the formal definition discussed as a class along with how your definition differed. At the end rank the principles in order of importance to you.

MORAL PRINCIPLE	MY DEFINITION	FORMAL DEFINITION	HOW WAS MY DEFINITION SIMILAR OR DIFFERENT?	RANKING
Care				
Fairness				
Loyalty				
Authority				
Sanctity				

Explain your rationale behind your rankings:

ACTIVITY 14.2: POLITICAL ISSUES, VALUES AND BELIEFS, AND YOU

Read the list of propositions below and determine where on the political spectrum it would go and which moral principle it would align with. Check in with a peer to confirm your answers.

Afterwards, go back and identify the propositions with which you agree. This will help clarify your own political ideology/philosophy.

Civic issue	Political Spectrum	Moral Principle	Agree or Disagree
Drug possession should be decriminalized			
Using overwhelming military force is the best way to defeat terrorism in the world			
Capital punishment should be an option for some crimes			
Taxes should be lowered even though this may mean increased cuts to government programs			
The government should make stricter laws against private ownership of firearms			
People should be charged user fees every time they are hospitalized			
The government should spend more money on programs for the poor and disadvantaged			
Canada should expand its free trade agreement to include more blocs of countries such as Asia or Latin America			
Tuition costs for post-secondary education should be eliminated to allow equal opportunity for all			
Governments should strengthen preferential hiring treatment for minorities and women			

1. Examine the results above and consider your political ideology/personal philosophy. Does it clarify your political ideology? Describe your personal political ideological/philosophy in your own words.

2. Answer one of the following questions:

a. To what extent does the news media, your friends and your education shape your political ideology? Explain and provide an example.

b. Do your family's political views affect your own ideology? Explain and provide an example.