

LESSON 2

THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM

GUIDING QUESTIONS

What has shaped my political orientation? What is the relationship between my beliefs and values and my position on political issues?

SUMMARY

There are multiple points of view on every political issue and this diversity helps sustain a democracy.

In this lesson, students use the political inquiry process and the concepts of political thinking when reflecting on civic issues and ways to address them. In the 'Minds On' activity, students consider different perspectives on the minimum wage debate. Afterwards, students investigate their political leanings by answering a political spectrum quiz, reviewing the associated terms and applying their understanding. In the 'Consolidation' activity, students reflect on the aspects of their personal identity that affect their political orientation.

LEARNING GOALS

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

- Use the political inquiry process to evaluate and discuss issues of political importance;
- Use the concept of *political significance* and *political perspective* to reflect on their own beliefs, values and worldview, and those of others;
- Use the concept of *political significance* and *political perspective* to identify some agents of political socialization and how these affect their political beliefs;
- Develop a sense of their civic self-image (Citizenship Education Framework – Identity).

SUCCESS CRITERIA

- I can think critically about and discuss issues of political importance;
- I can assess my political orientation by examining my values and viewpoints;
- I can evaluate the most significant agents of my political socialization and how they affect my beliefs;
- I can explain how my learning is shaping my civic self-image through assessment of my political views.

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

A1.3 assess the credibility of sources relevant to their investigations (e.g., the reliability of the evidence presented in a source; the purpose, intended audience, and context of a source; the bias, values, and expertise of the speaker/author)

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

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

LESSON 2: THE POLITICAL SPECTRUM

MINDS ON

1. Open the discussion about minimum wage by asking how many students have part-time jobs. Remind students that they only need to share personal information if they feel comfortable.

2. Ask students if they are aware that the minimum wage increased from \$11.60 per hour to \$14 per hour at the beginning of 2018. Have students read the brief synopsis about the minimum wage debate in Ontario (Activity 2.1). This can be completed as a class or individually.

3. Afterwards, have students reflect on the following questions using the discussion strategy below.

- What is your opinion about increasing the minimum wage?
- What has shaped your opinion on this political issue? (e.g., family, friends, the media, personal experiences, social groups, religious institutions)
- What questions do you have about policies surrounding minimum wage? What more do you want to know?

Discussion strategy:

- Give time for students to reflect on the questions
- Divide students into groups of three and assign each group member one specific question to share with their group.
- Give groups time to discuss all three questions.
- Conclude by having a class discussion on the three questions and make notes of what questions remain and what they want to know.

ACTION

1. Review the concept of *political perspective*:

- *Political perspective* is a political thinking concept that looks at the way in which a person's beliefs and values can affect his or her position on, or response to, issues of civic importance.
- Perspective means that what you see or think is affected by your current situation and your life experiences. For example, someone directly affected by an issue sees it differently or has a different point of view from someone who is not directly affected.

Teacher Note: Explain to students that they have developed opinions on the political issue of minimum wage through their life experiences and even through this class activity. All of these experiences help to inform our political beliefs and to a certain extent, help us form an ideology.

2. Individually, have students answer a political spectrum quiz (Activity 2.2). Explain to students that there are no right or wrong answers, but the questions are meant to encourage reflection on their political perspective and civic self-image.

Afterwards have students reflect on the exercise either in a class discussion or in written form: What did you learn about your own developing political orientation/philosophy as a result?

Teacher Note: Encourage students to reflect on the credibility of the quiz. Who was it designed by? Who was it adapted by? Knowing who produces sites alerts you to what kind of bias may be found in them. Be careful of what and who you believe.

3. Using Slide Deck 2, review the concept of the political spectrum with two scales and the terms associated with the quadrant spectrum.

- The political spectrum provides a way to characterize different beliefs and ideologies, and distinguish between actions on civic issues.
- The political spectrum can also be viewed with two intersecting scales: one for economic/fiscal policies and one for social/personal policies. The underlying question is: To what degree should the government intervene or exert control in these two spheres.
- Liberal/Left-leaning people embrace social services and government intervention in the economy.
- Conservative/Right-leaning people support lower taxes, free markets and less government intervention in the economy.
- Libertarians advocate both personal and economic liberty (freedom).
- Authoritarians favour strict obedience to authority and government control, at the expense of personal and economic freedom.

4. Review the terms: socially conservative, fiscally conservative, socially liberal and fiscally liberal. Have students examine different viewpoints on a range of issues and ask them to label each viewpoint using the terms (Activity 2.3). Reflection questions for students:

- Which viewpoints do you agree with?
- Do you lean the same way on both scales? Does it make sense to have two scales?
- What is the relationship between your beliefs and values and my position on political issues?

5. Review the concept of political socialization agents and provide some examples (e.g., family, friends, the media, personal experiences, social groups, religious institutions). Ask students to create a mind map showing which political socialization agents have impacted their political perspective. Afterwards, provide time for students to share their mind map with their peers.

CONSOLIDATION

Ask students to fill out the 3-2-1 Exit Card (sample provided). Teachers can use this as assessment as/for learning and to address any confusions, as well as to structure future discussions.

“ONTARIO PASSES NEW MINIMUM WAGE LAW”

Minimum wage will rise in Ontario to \$14 an hour on Jan. 1 2018, with the increase to \$15 coming in 2019

Ontario has passed sweeping labour reform legislation, which includes increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour.

Currently at \$11.60 an hour, the minimum wage will rise under the legislation to \$14 an hour on Jan. 1, with the increase to \$15 coming in 2019.

The plan has proved largely popular in government polling and with labour advocates, though it is controversial with businesses, who say the increase is too fast and will lead to job losses.

The government and some economists argue that the hike will have some positive impact on the economy, as minimum wage earners get more spending power.

The Liberal government recently announced the provincial corporate tax rate for small businesses will be cut from 4.5 per cent to 3.5 per cent to help support businesses through the minimum wage transition, though Premier Kathleen Wynne said it was never intended to fully offset the impact.

The legislation also mandates equal pay for part-time workers, increases vacation entitlements and expands personal emergency leave.

While the \$15 rate is one labour advocates have been urging for years, and dozens of economists signed a letter in support of it, business groups have been pushing hard against it.

They say it will be difficult to absorb the increased costs over such a short time frame. The province's economic watchdog, the Financial Accountability Office, has estimated more than 50,000 people could lose their jobs due to the minimum wage increase.

A TD Bank report has estimated the minimum wage hike could cost the province's economy as many as 90,000 jobs by 2020. And an analysis from the Keep Ontario Working Coalition concluded over 185,000 jobs could be impacted.

— Allison Jones, *The Canadian Press* (Nov 22, 2017) (reduced slightly by CIVIX)

DEBRIEF QUESTIONS:

- What is your opinion on increasing the minimum wage? Highlight particular points in this article that informed your opinion and explain how they influenced you.
- In addition to this article, what factors have shaped your opinion on this political issue? (e.g., family, friends, the media, employment, personal experiences, social groups)
- What questions do you have about this issue? What more do you want to know? Where do you think you could go to find more information related to your questions?

Related opinion pieces:

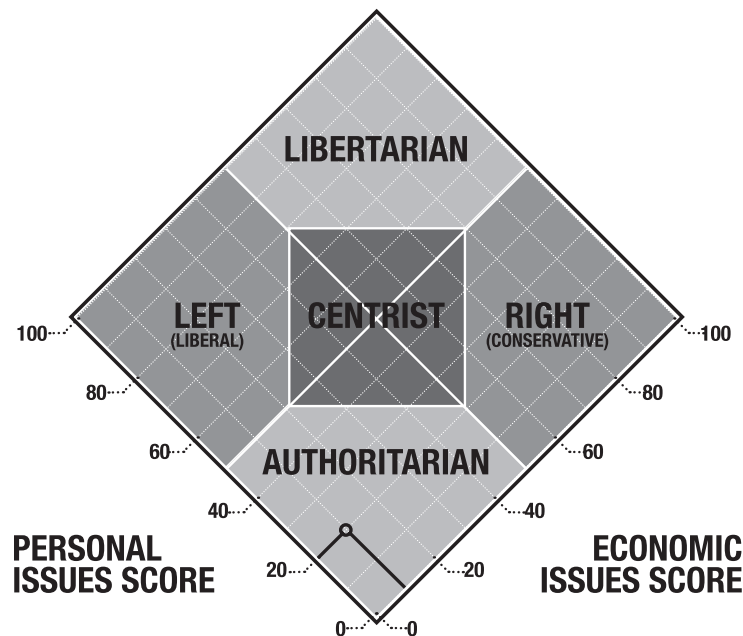
- *Why a \$15 minimum wage is good for business* (Maclean's)
- *Will a \$15 minimum wage be good for Ontario? Two experts debate* (CBC News)
- *Why a guaranteed minimum income is a better option than raising the minimum wage* (National Post)

ACTIVITY 2.2: THE WORLD'S SMALLEST POLITICAL QUIZ

Take the World's Smallest Political Quiz. Then use the Self-Government Compass to find your political identity. Circle **Y** when you agree with a statement, **M** for Maybe/Sometimes/Need-More-Information, or **N** for No.

Are you a self-governor on PERSONAL issues?	20	10	0
Government should not censor speech, press, media, or internet	Y	M	N
Drug laws do more harm than good and should be repealed	Y	M	N
There should be no laws or regulations concerning sex between consenting adults	Y	M	N
Private clubs and organizations should be free to admit or refuse any member	Y	M	N
Government should not interfere in arrangements between doctors and patients	Y	M	N

Are you a self-governor on ECONOMIC issues?	20	10	0
Businesses and farms should operate without government subsidies	Y	M	N
People are better off with free trade than with tariffs	Y	M	N
Minimum wage laws cause unemployment and should be repealed	Y	M	N
Government should not dictate hiring or employment practices	Y	M	N
Union membership should be voluntary, not compulsory	Y	M	N



To use the Self-Government Compass, mark your personal score on the left, and your economic score on the right. (See example of 20 per cent personal and 10 per cent economic.) Then follow the grid lines until they meet at your political identity!

This is a Canadianized version of the World's Smallest Political Quiz produced by The Fraser Institute, originally adapted for the November/December 1993 issue of the Canadian Student Review by John Robson. The U.S. version is published by Advocates for Self-Government, Inc., a 510(c)(3) non-profit organization in Atlanta, Georgia.

ACTIVITY 2.3: WHERE DO THESE VIEWPOINTS FALL?

Beside each statement, which represent different viewpoints (or perspectives), write down whether you feel it is fiscally conservative, socially conservative, fiscally liberal or socially liberal. Put an asterisk beside the viewpoint under each issue that most closely aligns with your beliefs and values.

JOBS AND THE ECONOMY	VIEWPOINT
The most effective way to create jobs is to lower taxes.	
The government can play a positive role in managing the economy and creating jobs, rather than simply letting the private sector be responsible for creating jobs.	
INCOME INEQUALITY	
A large gap between the richest and poorest in society should be avoided as much as possible.	
Inequality is not a concern. People who are financially successful are being rewarded for their contributions to society.	
SAME-SEX MARRIAGE	
Marriage is limited to the union of one man and one woman, and the law should reflect this definition.	
Any two persons should have the freedom and ability to be married.	
CORPORATE TAXES	
Corporations should pay more taxes.	
Corporate taxation prevents businesses from hiring more people and governments should reduce or keep corporate taxes low.	
INDIVIDUAL TAXES	
Wealthier people should not be taxed at a higher rate, because it may cause them and their businesses to move to another place that offers lower taxes.	
Wealthier individuals should pay a greater share of taxes than poorer individuals.	
DRUG USE	
Harsher penalties for drug crimes will reduce drug abuse.	
Drugs should be decriminalized. There should be sympathy and treatment for drug addicts, not prison sentences that further destroy their ability to function.	
GOVERNMENT SPENDING AND SERVICES	
There is good value in government services, such as education and healthcare, and higher taxes and government debt may be necessary to ensure these services are sufficient.	
Smaller government is the best approach, which means less government influence on the economy and fewer government services.	
REGULATION	
Policies that might be considered bad for businesses but are intended to alleviate social or environmental problems, like climate change, are important for the greater good.	
Regulation on businesses is not necessary because the free market provides sufficient incentives for businesses to pursue important social and environmental outcomes.	
HEALTHCARE	
People should have the choice to receive private or public health care. People who are able to pay for faster access to medical treatment should be able to do so.	
Privatization of health care would lead to inequality.	
STRIKE ACTION	
Going on strike is a justifiable way of communicating strong dissatisfaction in the workplace.	
Labour strikes should be banned because they are too harmful.	

ACTIVITY 2.4: 3-2-1 EXIT CARD

3-2-1 EXIT CARD	
3	Things I learned in the lesson today and I am sure that I understand: 1 2 3
2	Things confused me about this lesson: 1 2
1	Question/wondering I have because of this lesson: 1

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