



THE

GREAT DEBATES™

POWERED BY THE MUSEUM OF BROADCAST COMMUNICATIONS

CURRICULUM & TOOLS

9TH-12TH GRADE



**POLITICAL CANDIDATES
PUBLIC OPINION AND SOCIAL MEDIA**



PRESIDENTIAL DEBATES: THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN INFLUENCING PUBLIC OPINION

This high-school lesson plan will help students improve their media literacy skills by looking historically at social media responses to presidential debate performances and examining how they reflect public opinion. Students will also learn how social media influences the opinion of people who have not seen the debate itself.

- Students will work on developing criteria for determining the value of social media posts to see which, if any, accurately reflect a broader opinion or influences others to adopt a similar understanding. Since social media allows the debate analysis to begin in real time while the candidates are on stage, it can be formative in shaping opinions — whether it is orchestrated or organic.
- Students will also begin to understand how social media can be harnessed (or co-opted) by a small force to shift public opinion.
- Finally, students will demonstrate their understanding of social media's influence by creating a social media post based on a debate.

The lesson includes observation of two presidential elections: Obama vs. Romney and Trump vs. Clinton (and will also include the expected debate between the two presumptive nominees when it occurs.) These narratives provide details on social media trends on Twitter and Facebook and the public's interactive conversation during and after the debate performances. Social media also shows us how highlighting that performance changed the trajectory of some candidate's campaign.

For the assessments, students will examine the hashtag trends for the Trump vs. Clinton political debates and evaluate what the posts suggest about the candidates. Students will review coverage through the online materials available at the Great Debate website of the Museum of Broadcast Communication. Students have the option to present their findings in writing, oral reports, or multimedia presentations, depending on interest and access to digital equipment and projections.

SUMMARY

This module presents shows students how to examine social media trends on Twitter and Facebook to gauge the post's insights into the public response to debate performance. It will also help students understand how social media can be used to influence public opinion. Students will look at both historical and current campaigns.

MATERIALS NEEDED

Teacher

- Access to website

Student

- Pens/pencils
- Worksheets
- Access to website, Student computers or ipads
- Assignment handouts

STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.6

Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.9-10.9

Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.9-10.6

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how an author uses rhetoric to advance that point of view or purpose.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to develop skills to assess social media with a critical eye, determining how the platforms can be used to change public perception and how they people may be unintentionally influenced by social media.
- Students will be able to weigh several primary source documents (debate footage and social media posts) to evaluate accuracy and effectiveness of the posts.
- Students will be able to verbalize why someone would use social media to influence public opinion on political candidates.
- Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of social media and debate information by presenting their findings in diverse formats, including writing, audio/visual, and spoken.

Teacher	Student	Minutes
<p>Present essential questions: How can social media have potential impact on elections? Discuss how elections generate a range of content about candidates, some of which is on social media and is not always validated. Discuss how some social media posts are biased and serve as propaganda for or against a candidate.</p>	<p>Students are listening, asking questions when necessary.</p>	<p>5 Minutes</p>
<p>Introduce Harmony Square: Students can play with a partner or individually. https://www.harmonysquare.game/en (See DATA in resources below.)</p>	<p>Students are on the web, playing the game in teams or individually.</p>	<p>10 minutes</p>

Teacher	Student	Minutes
<p>Ask students: Can social media change people's minds? Can it make it harder to understand a candidate's performance during a debate if you didn't watch? Is information on social media always reliable? How can you tell information is verified? Why is it important to understand correctly what a candidate says or believes?</p>	<p>Students are discussing as a class.</p>	<p>10 Minutes</p>
<p>Show clip of Obama vs. Romney discussing diversity in cabinet positions. Then show information from the Great Debates site about the trends on Twitter for #bindersfullofwomen</p>	<p>Students are listening.</p>	<p>5 Minutes</p>
<p>Discuss what students think the impact was of that statement. Then talk about how some commentators believe that moment lost the election for Romney.</p>	<p>Students are discussing.</p>	<p>10 Minutes</p>
<p>Give out assignment for students to look at the three Trump vs. Clinton debates. Give students their homework/in-class assignment to develop their own social media posts to influence public opinion. You may want to let students work in groups or by themselves. Students then strategize in class for their project. How will they present: written, spoken or multi-media?</p>	<p>Students will break into groups and decide what social media outlet to use.</p>	<p>10 Minutes</p>

Teacher	Student	Minutes
Homework: Two options, either a social media post or an Audio/video assignment. Teacher should model what this project would look like in its final product and explain the parameters of the assignment.	Students develop presentation.	At Home
Final Day	Students present or turn in papers.	3-5 minutes per presentation

ASSESSMENTS

Social Media Post	Students will choose a debate to focus on and come up with a social media post they think will trend based on the debate. Students will try to find a clever hashtag to use with it. If the students choose this option, they either need to explain their rationale in a 1-page paper, or put their post in a slideshow and verbally explain their rationale.
Audio/Video Blog Post	Students will create a 3-5 minute vlog post or an audio presentation on the debate, interpreting the three most important moments of the debate.

ADAPTATIONS OR ACCOMMODATIONS NEEDED

Learners	Adaptations/Accommodations
Highly Proficient	<p>Students will be able to identify likely influences of media, explain their logic and then discuss how the media can influence the public's opinion about a candidate, without seeing the candidate's performance.</p> <p>These students will be able to demonstrate their skill at writing or speaking in the homework assignment. If working in groups, these students will be able to help others understand the assignment better.</p>
ELL	<p>Students will be able to explain what a candidate did or said and how social media responded to that action or statement and formulate an opinion about whether the response was "fair."</p> <p>These students have the option of verbally completing their assignment rather than writing it, or creating a project using A/V technology. They also have the option to work in pairs if needed.</p>
Struggling Learners	<p>Students will be able to explain what a candidate did or said and how social media responded to that action or statement.</p> <p>These students have the option to either write or speak if they feel more comfortable doing one or the other for the project. They also have the opportunity to work in pairs to get help from others.</p>

RESOURCES

Please use **GreatDebates.org** as a reference for coverage clips and the full debate.

Additional websites:

Harmony Square, is a 10-minute, free-to-play online game in which players learn how political misinformation is produced and spread. It was developed by the University of Cambridge, UK in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State's Global Engagement Center and the Department of Homeland Security.

- **Play the game here:** <https://www.harmonysquare.game/en>
- **Data on the game's development is here:** <https://misinforeview.hks.harvard.edu/article/breaking-harmony-square-a-game-that-inoculates-against-political-misinformation/>

Ad Fontes Media — nonprofit and nonpolitical site which rates media bias.

AllSides While not a fact-checking site, AllSides curates stories from right, center and left-leaning media so that readers can easily compare how bias influences reporting on each topic.

Fact Check This nonpartisan, nonprofit project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania monitors the factual accuracy of what is said by U.S. political players, including politicians, TV ads, debates, interviews and news releases.

Twitter Policy

Facebook Policy

US State Department — The role of social media in US elections.

Teen Vogue — Social media has changed everything for teens.

Examples of right and left leaning fact checking for students to compare:

Media Matters A nonprofit and self-described liberal-leaning research center monitors and corrects conservative misinformation in the media.

NewsBusters A project of the conservative Media Research Center with a right-wing bias, NewsBusters is focused on “documenting, exposing and neutralizing liberal media bias.”

THE GREAT DEBATES PUBLIC OPINION AND SOCIAL MEDIA HOMEWORK

Name: _____ Class Period: _____

Due Date: _____

POLITICAL CANDIDATES AND PUBLIC OPINION

For this assignment, you are going to use social media to influence the public on the most important part of the debate. Please note, you are not required to go live with your post but you must construct it as though you were posting. Please read the directions carefully as you have two options:

Option 1

CREATE A SOCIAL MEDIA POST

- For this option, you will focus on one of the assigned debates and create a tweet, a Facebook or Instagram post about what you think is the **most important** aspect of the debate.
- Try to pick something that will educate those who did not see the debate.
- Try to formulate a post that you think might end up creating a trend or garner engagement, as in likes, shares, or comments. You should make your post informative but also attention-grabbing.
- Attach at least three hashtag to the post that are related to the subject — but first google the hashtags to verify they are relevant to your post.
- Type a one-page rationale on why you think your post highlights the most important part of the debate, and why you think it will garner engagement.

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- You may post but **you are not required to post** your tweet, Facebook or Instagram post.
 - **If you are not posting**, simply type it at the top of your rationale paper and include a picture, if necessary.
 - Please highlight your hashtags in blue if you are choosing **not** to post your social media post.
 - **If you are posting** the social media post, include a screen-shot of it at the top of your paper.
- Alternatively, you can orally present your rationale for your social media post to the class.
 - **If you are choosing to present** your rationale, you must use a PowerPoint slide with a screenshot of your social media post, or your typed social media post and accompanying picture and hashtag.

Option 2

VIDEO OR AUDIO BLOG POST

- For this option, you will focus on one of the assigned debates, then create a 3-5 minute A/V assignment, in the form of a video post or audio file.
- Find at least 3 highlights of the debate to focus on, and comment on why you think that moment is important to remember.
- Make sure to keep your vlog or audio post to 5 minutes, or most people on social media will stop watching.
- Be as creative with this as you like. Use of soundbites from the debate or other media is encouraged.

THE GREAT DEBATES PUBLIC OPINION AND SOCIAL MEDIA WORKSHEET

Name: _____ Class Period: _____

POLITICAL CANDIDATES PUBLIC OPINION AND SOCIAL MEDIA

HOW CAN SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT ELECTIONS?

Please answer these questions and be ready to
discuss your answers with the class:

BEFORE VIEWING DEBATE.

How can social media change how the public thinks about a particular candidate's debate performance?

How can social media make it harder to know how a candidate did in a political debate?

How can social media make it easier to know how a candidate did in a political debate?

Why is it important to be correctly informed about what a candidate says, does, or stands for?

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AFTER VIEWING DEBATE.

What was the impact of the “Binders full of women” statement?

Why do you think some media outlets believed this moment was the moment Romney lost the election?

How can social media posts be biased, and how can they serve as propaganda for or against a candidate? Give at least two examples of posts that were bias or served as propaganda.