

Review of TCI HS Gov Unit 3

Headings from text indicated in **blue**

Quotes from text indicated in **red**

Unit 3: Political Participation and Behavior

Lesson 7 – Citizen Participation in a Democracy Introduction

“a country that is held together not by blood or history, but by ideas.”

Yes, it is true that our country is held together by ideas. We are also held together by history, which is currently being erased, misrepresented and rewritten in many instances. Please don't minimize the importance of history. Accurate and complete history is important to understanding our path and the reasoning behind the ideas.

Section 1 - Citizenship, Civic Rights, Civic Responsibilities

African Americans' Long Struggle for Civil Rights

This section does not provide critical context on Jim Crow Laws. After the Civil War, freed slaves made stunning progress in education, economic independence and representation in the US Congress. This was a threat to the Southern establishment, not to the country, as a whole. The Jim Crow laws were statewide, not national.

The text centers on struggle and completely ignores the remarkable successes of former slaves. This includes the rise of a very affluent class of blacks as well as having one of the most accomplished schools in the nation. The first woman millionaire was a black woman. This was reversed during the Progressive Era and the country was re-segregated by Wilson. The author should read Thomas Sowell's landmark book Black Rednecks and White Liberals.

Without this context, one would be led to believe that there is no evidence of the capabilities of our black citizens, which is a stark departure from the truth. Students need to accept the strengths and capabilities of every race rather than seeing them as oppressed victims.

Rights and Responsibilities

The definition of "**undocumented immigrants** [undocumented immigrant: a person who has come to the United States to live and work without the required legal papers]" clearly exhibits a political agenda. The correct and unbiased term is "illegal immigrants." The opposite of "legal" is "illegal".

The discussion of personal responsibilities of a citizen curiously omits self-responsibility and economic self-reliance.

Section 2: Becoming an American Citizen

This section offers extensive detail on the process but sidesteps the opportunity to inform students on the issue of "anchor babies".

Section 3: Political Culture in the United States

"Equality. The value of equality focuses on equal access to opportunity, without regard to race, religion, or gender." The text gets points for including the concept of equality rather than equity. It would be much stronger if a contrast between the two concepts were included.

The text also fairly represents the other American Values of Liberty, Democracy, Individualism, Liberty, Justice and the Rule of Law, Patriotism, Optimism and Civic duty.

The discussion of Socialism omits critical discussion regarding redistribution of wealth and our Founder's belief that what is earned

through one's own labor should not be involuntarily taken and given to someone else.

The inclusion of environmentalism as a political ideology is baffling. The text attributes environmentalism to the "liberal" faction, rather than recognizing the fact that everyone wants a clean environment. Many conservatives, centrists and libertarians are dedicated to preserving the environment.

Section 4: How Americans Engage in Civic Life

While citizen involvement is important, the text minimizes the importance of being informed on the details of what our government is doing and, instead, focuses on activism. Activism is important, but the forms of activism which are discussed are methods used more by one side of the political spectrum. Also, speaking with one's congress people, both state and national, is important but not emphasized.

Civic engagement takes many forms, from writing letters to organizing protests. These photographs illustrate just some of the ways citizens can make their voices heard.

Attend a Public Meeting



Find out what's going on in your community by attending a public meeting. You might be surprised to discover how many decisions affecting your life are made close to your home.

Volunteer in a Political Campaign



Get involved in a political campaign. Share the excitement of election night as volunteers wait for the votes to be counted.

Circulate a Petition



Take part in a petition drive for a cause you care about. Oftentimes, you can sign a petition online.

Organize a Fundraiser



Raise money for a worthy cause. The challenge is to help people feel good about both asking for donations and giving them.

Organize a Demonstration



Put your passion to work by organizing a demonstration. Sometimes actions really do speak louder than words.

Get Involved in a Service Project



Find a way to give back to your community. You will feel good about yourself while making a difference.

Summary

Fine.

Lesson 8 - Parties, Interest Groups and Policies

Introduction

The only example given is a PAC for the Republican Candidate. Because the Democrat Party uses PACs far more extensively (and expensively), an example of from that side of the isle should also have been included. This implies bias.

1. Political Parties in the United States

"While all kinds of Americans support either party, a Republican is more likely to be white, male, and relatively affluent. A Democrat is more likely to be a member of a minority group, female, and less affluent."

This characterization is not only decades out of date, but also prejudicial. In recent years, there has been a major shift of minorities and women toward the Republican Party as more become aware of the factual history of the Democrat Party. The wealthiest people in the world are major contributors to the Democrat Party, undermining the biased statement in this text.

2. Interest Groups in America

"*Lobbying.* Many interest groups rely heavily on lobbying to advance their interests. Lobbying is an attempt to influence the policy process by persuading public officials to favor or oppose action on a specific issue. Lobbyists speak to members of Congress and their staffs, testify before congressional committees, and offer comments at hearings held by executive agencies."

This section omits the fact that lobbyists contribute large sums to political campaign. By doing so, many politicians are unduly influenced by the lobbyists at the expense of their constituents.

This lesson consistently uses examples of the liberal organization and infrequently uses conservative examples. In the "litigation" discussion, Judicial Watch could have been effectively used as an example of an organization which uses litigation to make our government more transparent.

3. Making Public Policy

“Other issues take a long time to become part of the public agenda. One example is climate change. For years, scientists have been warning about the effects of greenhouse gas emissions on Earth’s climate. But for the most part, their concerns were ignored. As scientific knowledge and evidence of climate change have mounted, however, it has found its way onto the public agenda of many public officials and lawmakers.’

A concern with this statement is that it does NOT mention the fact that public debate and discussion of climate change has been censored and scientific disagreement squashed. Another issues that has taken a long time to become part of the public agenda is censorship. This would be a good opportunity to educate on how consideration of all viewpoints yields a better outcome.

“Making a Policy Work: Implementation After a policy is adopted, it must be implemented. Usually, implementation is assigned to a specific government agency. That agency then becomes responsible for making sure the new policy works.”

A critical point on policy and how our government operates is completely ignored here. Rather than do their legislative duty, congress passes generalized laws and then relies on unelected agency administrators to flush out the details of the regulation. Those regulations have the force of law, and the agency then has the power to act as investigator, judge, jury, and enforcer of these regulations. Courts of Law systemically do NOT overrule these unelected agencies, giving unconstitutional power to these agencies.

Summary

The only issue is that the problem of Agency regulation remains unaddressed.

Lesson 9 – Public Opinion and the Media

1. The formation of Public Opinion

"Public opinion is shaped by journalists, politicians, and other opinion makers. Scholars who support this view observe that most of us don't have time to become informed on every issue. Instead, we look to influential **opinion makers** for information and advice. These opinion makers may be journalists, public officials, business leaders, or activists. Because they have access to the media, "their" opinions can become "our" opinions."

A major omission in this section is the documented fact that our government works actively, yet silently, to shape public opinion. "Project Mockingbird", in which the FBI paid journalists to write stories that portrayed a specific, biased narrative, is such an omission. Another is the active control of entertainment through the CIA's Creative Artists Agency. Scripts are written, movies and TV productions are made in support of the official narrative. Celebrities are used to support government initiatives.

2. Measuring Public Opinion

This section is evenhanded. Especially useful is the inclusion of "The Misuse of Public Polling" which includes the use of polling to shape public opinion rather than measure it.

3. The Impact of Mass Media on Public Opinion

"Although blogs are popular news sources, bloggers are not required to follow the same standards for accuracy as professional journalists, so their reports should be read with caution."

Nowhere does this section include the fact that few professional journalists engage in independent, factual reporting. There are very definite narrative that are pushed, typically omitting important facts. The "Fact Checkers" are frequently paid political activists

rather than neutral investigators. The current state of the media, whether mass media or independent media, is “reader beware”. One must do substantive investigation to determine what is fact and what is propaganda.

4. The influence of the Media in Political Campaigns

Fair.

Summary

“Though today’s journalists seek to report information accurately, many news outlets have reputations for having a political bias or slant. A bias toward one point of view will affect, for example, the facts and details the writer chooses include or exclude, the people quoted, and the general emphasis of the story. Some stories try to elicit an emotional response in the reader. They may make a claim without backing it up with evidence, or the evidence may be weak.”

This statement is accurate and neutral.