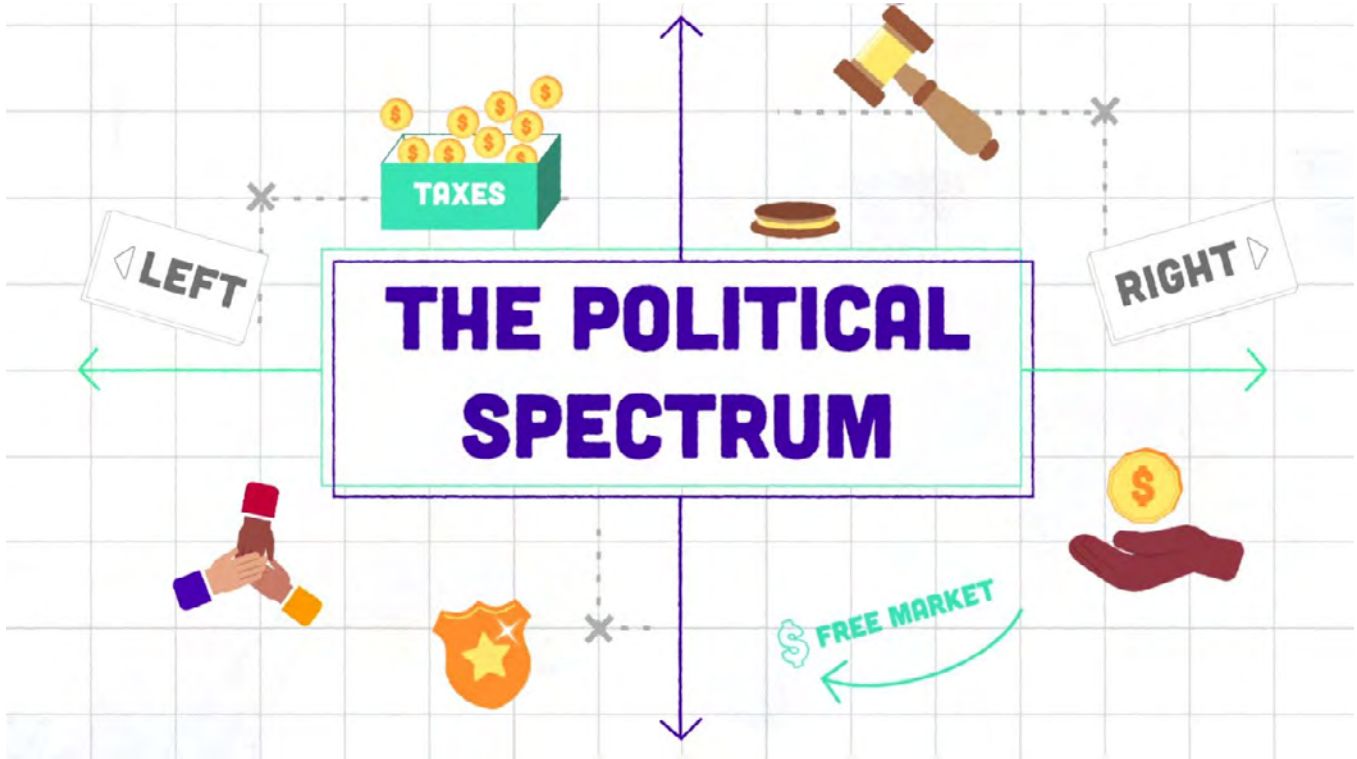


Lesson 4: The Political Spectrum



GUIDING QUESTIONS

- 1 How are people's beliefs and values connected to their political views?
- 2 What is your position on the political spectrum?
- 3 Why is it important to respect others' opinions and perspectives?

OVERVIEW

In a democratic society, people have different beliefs and values, which influence their position on political issues. Political parties bring together people with similar beliefs and political views.

In this lesson, students explore different political perspectives and the importance of respecting and engaging with others who hold different views. After learning about political parties at the provincial level in Manitoba, students participate in an online survey to better understand the political spectrum and which party they might be most closely aligned with.

LEARNING GOALS

By the end of the lesson, students can:

- analyze how beliefs and values shape positions and actions on political issues;
- describe different ideologies on the political spectrum;
- analyze their position on the political spectrum and which political party they might be most closely aligned with; and,
- demonstrate respect for others' perspectives.

Starter

1. Watch one of the videos below to introduce the idea of finding common ground with others and the importance of engaging in discussion with people that share different perspectives.
 - “[Worlds Apart: Open Your World](#)” (produced by Heineken): This video features a social experiment where strangers, who have opposing beliefs on topics like feminism and climate change, must work together to complete a challenge. After the challenge, their opposing views are revealed and they are given the option to either walk away or stay and discuss their political differences.
 - “[Environmental Activist Meets Retired Oil Worker](#)” (produced by RAD, part of CBC/Radio-Canada): In this video, a mother of three who is concerned about climate change engages in a discussion with a retired oil worker in Calgary about their political views. The conversation is in English, but French subtitles are included.
2. Using a Think-Pair-Share protocol, discuss the following questions:
 - What is the main takeaway from the video?
 - Why are conversations about political issues sometimes challenging?
 - What is one thing you think people could do to make political discussions easier to have?

Activities

1. Using Slide Deck 4 and “The Political Spectrum” video, review the concept of the political spectrum.

The **political spectrum** provides a way to characterize and distinguish between different policy positions and political ideologies. Often, economic issues and social issues are separated into two distinct dimensions (Handout 4.1).

- On **economic issues**, left-leaning people tend to support social services and government intervention in the economy. Right-leaning people tend to support lower taxes, free markets and less government intervention in the economy.
 - On **social issues**, people who identify as progressive tend to support the improvement of society through change and the promotion of social justice values. People who identify as social conservatives tend to support the preservation of traditions and established values.
2. Using Slide Deck 4, review the purpose of **political parties**.

- A political party is a group made up of people who share a similar political ideology and goals about society and government.
 - In order for the political party to have the chance to work towards its goals, the party tries to elect members to the Legislative Assembly.
3. Ask students if they can name any of the political parties and party leaders at the provincial level. Using Slide Deck 4, review some of the main political parties in Manitoba.

TEACHER NOTE

- Reinforce the idea that political parties at the provincial and federal level are different and distinct entities.
 - To see a current list of registered parties, please visit the Elections Manitoba website.
4. Explain to students that *Vote Compass* is developed by political scientists and aims to help people discover how they fit in the provincial political landscape. After answering a short online questionnaire, users will learn which political party is most closely aligned with their own views. The tool is designed for adults, but may be relevant for your students.

Arrange for computer or internet access so that students can complete the survey. It should take approximately 15 min to complete. Reinforce to students that there are no right or wrong answers but the questions are meant to encourage reflection on their political views.

Consolidation

Through a written reflection, ask students to consider their responses to the following questions:

- Do you agree or disagree with where you were placed on the political spectrum? Why or why not?
- What is one takeaway that you can apply outside of the classroom?

Alternatively, as students leave the room, ask them to share one word or concept that they learned today.

Extended Learning

Visit CIVIX's PoliTalks website (politalks.ca) to find a variety of resources to learn about perspectives and civic discourse. For example:

Lesson A4: Underlying Values

Students learn about personal and social values before participating in a perspective-taking game in which they explore how prioritizing different values produces different points of view.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

A **civic or political issue** is a topic or subject that people speak about because it affects many people in society. Often there are different opinions about how to view or address the issue.

The **political spectrum** provides a way to characterize different beliefs and ideologies, and distinguish between different policy positions and political parties.

The political spectrum can be constructed with one or more dimensions, where each dimension represents a distinct set of issues. One common method is to have one dimension (or axis) for economic policies and one dimension (or axis) for social policies, which creates a quadrant.

Canadians who are **left-leaning on economic issues** tend to support higher taxes and more government spending, more government involvement, and more social services.

Canadians who are **right-leaning on economic issues** tend to support lower taxes and less government spending, less government intervention, and the free market.

Canadians who are **progressive on social issues** tend to support policies that advocate the promotion of social justice issues by changing established practices and institutions. An example of such a policy could be addressing inequities by giving special treatment to disadvantaged groups.

Canadians who are **conservative on social issues** tend to support policies that advocate for the preservation of traditional values and established institutions. An example could be ensuring that everyone follows the same established rules.

A **political party** is a group of like-minded individuals with similar beliefs and a shared political ideology whose intention is to elect members to the legislative body and create meaningful political change.

Political parties are made up of interested members of the public. Anyone above the required age (usually 14-years-old) can be a member of a political party. Party members choose their party's leader and local candidates, and help them get elected.

Many people believe that society is becoming increasingly polarized or politically divided, causing political debate to become hostile with little room for compromise. We must respect that everyone has different influences and life experiences that shape their values and political perspectives, and that those things influence how they approach different issues.

ADAPTATIONS AND SUPPORTS

Language Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with key terms and definitions in advance (e.g., political issue, perspective, political ideology, political spectrum, political party). • Support students' understanding of political positions with real-world examples.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know your learners. Consider the cultural backgrounds of your students and be aware of discussions that may involve sensitive topics and could trigger an uncomfortable or unsafe environment. • Sharing opinions is always challenging. Be aware of issues that may be controversial and support students in positive ways if they are uncomfortable sharing their opinions. Offer written alternatives. • Ensure a respectful environment remains a focus as students share opinions with which others may disagree.
Accommodations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If working in pairs or small groups in the classroom is not possible, consider using Google Docs or Google Jamboard for collaborative activities and discussion.