

Cycle 2 - Social World

Structure

Seminar/Socratic

Discussion/Debate

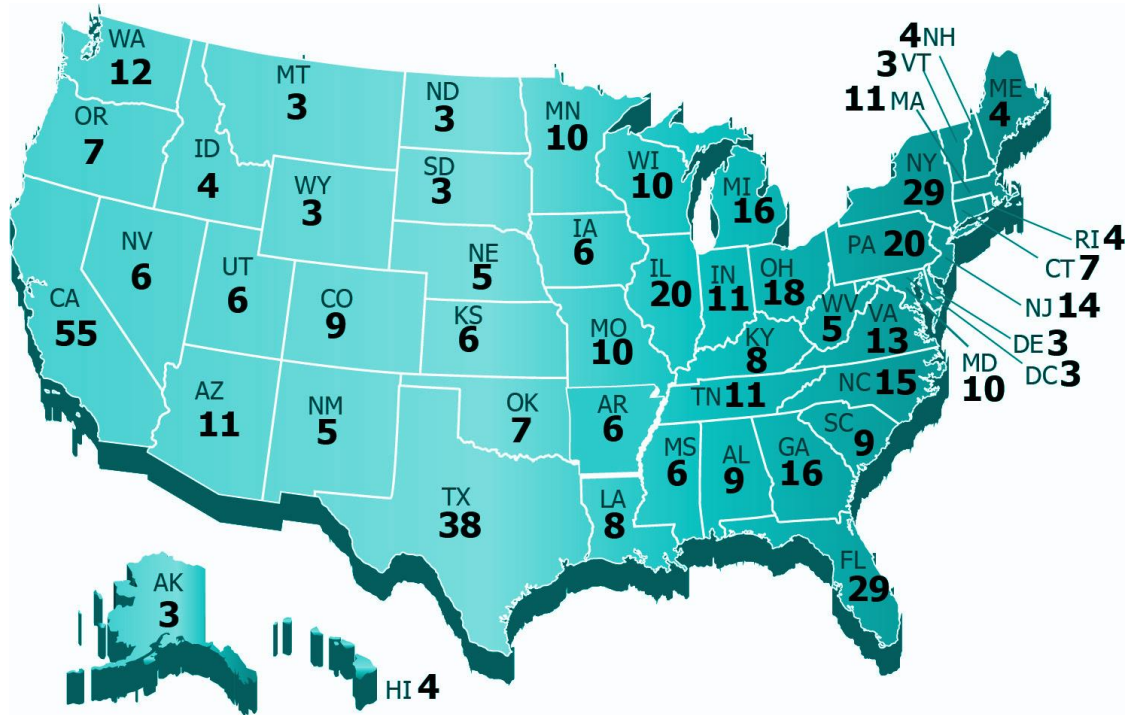
Name _____

Cycle 2 Structure Social World

What is the Electoral College?

When citizens of the U.S. vote for the president of the United States, they don't quite vote for the president.

Instead, they vote for a person called an "elector." That elector is part of a group called the Electoral College. The members of the Electoral College then choose the president.



The Electoral College system was described and explained in Article II of the U.S. Constitution. Basically, the states are given one electoral vote for every representative they send to Congress. For example, Iowa has 4 members in the House of Representatives, and 2 in the Senate. Therefore, they have 6 electoral votes. On election day, the citizens of Iowa vote for president. That vote is called the popular vote. Whoever wins the popular vote of that state then earns all of the electoral votes for that state. Not just some of the electoral votes - all of the electoral votes! Therefore, if the Republican candidate won 52% of the popular votes in Iowa, he or she would then earn 100% of the electoral votes. This system is called "WINNER TAKE ALL." All of the states go by the "Winner take all" system except Nebraska and Maine.

1. What is the popular vote?

2. Describe the "WINNER TAKE ALL" system.

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<p>3. Why was the Electoral College created?</p>	<p>In order to win the presidency, a candidate must win more than 50% of the U.S.'s electoral votes. Currently, there are 538 electoral voters. That means that the winning candidate must earn 270 electoral votes in order to declare victory.</p> <p>The Electoral College system was written in the Constitution for several reasons. Originally, the writers of the Constitution didn't really trust the average citizens to make the "correct" decision. Early on, the state governments picked the electors, and there was no popular vote at all. The citizens actually weren't given the right to choose their electors in all of the states until the Civil War.</p>
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<p>The technical obstacles to holding a popular vote also make the process very difficult in the late 1700s. It would have been necessary to collect all of the local vote totals and then transport those vote totals gradually - by horse and carriage - to the nation's capital - Washington D.C. This process would have taken months.</p> <p>For years, some people in the U.S. have argued that the Electoral College must go. They feel that the college has outgrown its function, and that a direct popular vote would be much more fair. Others feel that the Electoral College serves a purpose, and that it should remain.</p>	<p>4. What were some other reasons the Electoral College was originally created?</p>
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Reading 2 - Arguments Against the Electoral College

Those who want to remove the Electoral College have many reasons for wanting to do so. The most commonly mentioned recently is the fact that the Electoral College votes can actually have a different result than the popular vote. This has actually happened twice in the past 16 years. In the election of 2000, George W. Bush won against Al Gore in the electoral vote, even though Gore had actually accumulated half a million more popular votes. In the election of 2016, Donald Trump won against Hillary Clinton, even though Clinton earned almost 3 million more popular votes than Trump.

Those who have argued against the Electoral College have also pointed to the problem of “swing states.” These are states that seem to “swing” back and forth with each election. They have relatively even numbers of Democratic and Republican voters, and with each presidential election, they can swing either way. As a result, presidential candidates spend most of their time visiting the swing states, while states with large populations - like Texas and California, are often ignored. Even within the swing states, the candidates most often visit the regions with the highest populations.

With the way that the Electoral College works, it's often easy to guess which candidates will win most of the states. With the exception of the swing states, most of the state results can be clearly predicted before election day. This has a tendency to really discourage voter participation. For instance, in recent years, New York has always given their electoral votes to the Democratic candidates. Republican voters in New York state sometimes don't vote because they feel that their votes don't matter. In the presidential election of 2016, only 57.6% of eligible voters actually participated in the election. This is much lower the voter turnout in other developed countries, like Belgium (87.2%) and Sweden (82.6%).

Those against the Electoral College also argue that the electoral voters are unfair to those live in larger states. For example, if one were to total the number of eligible voters in Wyoming, Alaska, Delaware, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, Rhode Island, Montana, and Idaho, it equals approximately 6,290,345 people. These states have a total of 29 electoral votes. Florida also has 29 electoral votes, and its total number of eligible voters 15,839,713. This means that a vote in Montana counts 2.5 times more than a vote in Florida. Is this fair? Opponents of the electoral college say no.

Another reason why some oppose the Electoral College is their frustration with the “WINNER TAKE ALL” method. Remember, this method means that the person who wins the most popular votes in a given state wins all the electoral votes for that state. This makes it practically impossible for any candidate who is not a member of the Democratic or the Republican party to win any electoral votes. Although that candidate might win a good percentage of the popular vote, they often earn zero electoral votes. Those who are against the Electoral College think that this discourages democracy.

Finally, those who are against the Electoral College note that there are some sections of the United States that don't have a say at all. The people of Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and American Samoa are all U.S. citizens, however, they are not offered the chance to vote in U.S. elections, and have no electoral votes. Altogether, they have a total population of over 4 million.

Altogether, those who argue against the Electoral College see it as an outdated system, whose time has come to an end.

Reading 3 - Arguments for the Electoral College

Those who argue that the Electoral College should remain a part of U.S. presidential elections also have many reasons. First, they point out that the Electoral College prevents areas with a high population from dominating more rural areas. They argue that if the Electoral College did not exist, candidates would only visit large populated areas of the country, and would ignore those areas with smaller populations. Areas like California, New York and Texas would receive much more attention than states like Idaho or New Hampshire. With the Electoral College system in place, candidates are forced to visit more areas of the country. If the Electoral College system changed to a popular vote, it would pit rural areas of the country against the more urban areas. With the Electoral College, small states are better represented.

Those who argue to keep the Electoral College also point out that it lets minority groups have a voice in the process of choosing a president. “Minorities” are ethnic or religious groups that exist in smaller numbers in the United States. With the “Winner take All” system in the states, these groups can often make a big impact on whether a candidate wins the electoral votes for that state. Essentially, they can tip the total number of popular votes from one candidate to another, if they all support one particular candidate. Minorities are also more likely to live in the states with the most electoral votes. States like California, New York and Texas all have higher percentages of Latino, African American and Asian voters. If the Electoral College was removed, candidates would be more likely just to focus on white voters, since they represent a bigger percentage of the population.

Supporters of the Electoral College are encouraged by the stability the system has brought the country throughout its existence. Although third party groups have popped up over the centuries, for the most part, U.S. elections have had two major candidates. Those who advocate keeping the Electoral College see this as a positive. With only two major parties, these parties have to appeal to large numbers of voters. Electoral College supporters feel that this prevents candidates from focusing on one or two singular issues. Candidates have to understand a broad number of issues facing the nation, and have clear positions on all of them. By comparison, in countries with a popular vote, elections often have 20 to 30 major party candidates. This can make the election process confusing and time consuming.

Those who wish for the Electoral College to remain recognize that the system is not perfect. However, they think that it works better than a direct popular vote system ever would with the United States’ diverse population. Even though the system is over two hundred years old, it has served U.S. votes well, and it should stay.

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Reasons against the Electoral College (Reading 2)

[illegible]

Exit Ticket - The Electoral Debate

Directions: Please remember if you are not speaking you should be listening. Please take some notes on the debate by answering the following questions.

What are some of the ideas being presented by your classmates?	
What thinking is new to you?	
Has anyone changed your original viewpoint? Why? How?	
What questions do you have about what the group has stated?	

___**Complete** - Work provided above demonstrates student's thoughtful assessment of the information.

___**Incomplete** - Student provided some evidence of thinking, but the information provided was not complete, or answers were incorrect.

Yes,
however...

I disagree...

Ask a question or contribute to the discussion.

Don't you
think..

I find it a
problem
that...

Ask a question or contribute to the discussion.

Don't you
agree that...

What do you
think about...

Ask a question or contribute to the discussion.

From my
point of
view...

I take issue
with the idea
that...

Ask a question or contribute to the discussion.

Yes,
however...

I disagree...

Ask a question or contribute to the discussion.

Don't you
think..

I find it a
problem
that...

Ask a question or contribute to the discussion.

Don't you
agree that...

What do you
think about...

Ask a question or contribute to the discussion.

From my
point of
view...

I take issue
with the idea
that...

Ask a question or contribute to the discussion.

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Should the U.S keep the Electoral College? - Debate Assessment

CRITERIA	Score					NE
	5	4	3	2	1	
Preparation and Evidence SSP - 7.A.1 SSP - 7.A.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.7.2	Student explicitly and consistently draws on relevant, compelling textual evidence during the discussion. Student uses evidence to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.	Student explicitly and consistently draws on relevant textual evidence during the discussion. Student uses evidence to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.	Student explicitly draws on some relevant textual evidence during the discussion. Student uses evidence to probe OR reflect on ideas under discussion.	Student draws on little relevant textual evidence during the discussion.	Student does not draw on textual evidence during the discussion.	Student does not participate.
Effective Communication SSP - 7.F.1 SSP - 7.F.2 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.C	Student actively helps lead the discussion by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> engaging in relevant conversation <input type="checkbox"/> asking relevant questions <input type="checkbox"/> listening actively <input type="checkbox"/> responding to the ideas of others <input type="checkbox"/> making eye contact <input type="checkbox"/> maintaining a respectful tone and volume <input type="checkbox"/> drawing peers into the discussion 	Student actively participates in the discussion by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> engaging in relevant conversation <input type="checkbox"/> asking relevant questions <input type="checkbox"/> listening actively <input type="checkbox"/> making eye contact <input type="checkbox"/> maintaining a respectful tone and volume. 	Student participates in the discussion but may exhibit some or all of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> is sometimes off-topic <input type="checkbox"/> repeats what others have said without adding ideas <input type="checkbox"/> asks an unrelated question <input type="checkbox"/> only speaks a minimal amount 	Student participates in the discussion but: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> is sometimes off-topic <input type="checkbox"/> repeats what others have said without adding ideas <input type="checkbox"/> asks some irrelevant questions <input type="checkbox"/> does not always make eye contact <input type="checkbox"/> Student barely speaks 	Student has difficulty participating in the discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> is often off-topic <input type="checkbox"/> asks irrelevant questions <input type="checkbox"/> only repeats what others have said without adding ideas <input type="checkbox"/> Does not make eye contact <input type="checkbox"/> Student barely speaks 	Student does not participate