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Analysis of the Obama Election: Will It Bring Rights and Representation for Minorities?

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Rationale

Nov 5th, 2008, the election results are in and its official - the next president of the United States will be Barack Obama. The environment in Kenwood Academy, a public school in the heart of the south side Chicago Hyde Park neighborhood is, to put it lightly, overjoyed. Students in their Obama tee shirts are cheering in the hallways, high fiving, smiling, asking each other where they were the moment they found out that their Illinois senator, the school's local celebrity, the man who lives only a block from the school, would be, is going to be, the next president of the United States. As these students filed into my classes, I prompted them with, "Now what?" They look around the room not really understanding what I meant by the question but understood that I was referring to the election. What I wanted my students to realize was that yes, this day would be remembered as a landmark day in the civil rights movement, but that it was only one small step in a very tall staircase. Steps had been taken before, but still many lie ahead.

Based upon the success of my previous curriculum unit, "Road to the White House, Campaign for the Presidency," this year's unit will investigate the effects of the landmark 2008 presidential election on the rights of the diverse electorate who placed President Obama in the White House. The title of my unit, "Analysis of the Obama Election: Will it Bring Rights and Representation for Minorities?" reflects the needs of my student body, as 99% of Kenwood Academy's students are classified as minorities. Kenwood Academy students were a part of the 2008 election on many different levels, from door to door campaigning, working the election polls, and traveling to the democratic national convention and the presidential inauguration. Being a part of this process left the students feeling empowered, and made me proud of their involvement in, and enthusiasm for, a national presidential election. Even though I was pleasantly surprised by my student's interest, I would like for them to delve deeper into the election, analyzing its genesis and its role as a catalyst for "change" - not only for their rights but also for the other millions of President Obama supporters as well as the whole population of America he serves.

I have decided that a good way of creating a thread, an integral part of this year's course, which will be woven throughout each unit taught this year, is to have a sampler or "tapas" unit at the beginning of the year. Spanish tapas give a little taste of a particular dish, but allows for many small dishes, with a similar theme, to be tasted in one sitting. That is the mission of this unit, to give students a taste of each of the larger units that

we will be exploring throughout the year. The students that have chosen to enroll in my class are eagerly awaiting, talking about and analyzing our new president, but I want to make sure that they can put everything that we are discussing this year into an evaluative context and help them come to a place where they can view the election with a critical and judgmental eye. The theme of the sampler unit is to allow students to view the election using the lens of those who do not share their same race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, geography, language and/or any other divisive factors. The goal is that when students look at the election from alternate angles, students will gain a higher understanding of the factors that formulate the views of America's diverse electorate.

Tapas Course 1 - We the People...which people?

"We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America." ~ US Constitution

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." ~ Declaration of Independence 1776

"We the People of the United States" which people? All people? "All men are created equal," does this exclude women from that equality? Does this make every man equal in every way? "Life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness," is that for everyone or only a select few? At the beginning...the beginning of our nation that is, the Declaration of Independence was designed to send a message to the British crown that was oppressing the American people, and the United States Constitution that followed, established the rules and guidelines of this new nation. The Constitution included these grandiose statements of equality and rights that sound as if they were to be provided by, enjoyed by, and protected for all. Now that we had thrown off the shackles of our oppressors and established a democracy, this "equality for all" was the code all Americans were to live by. But is that really the way it was? Was the new nation truly designed to be that way?

Historically speaking the new democracy was not fair and equal for all. The founding fathers, all white, Christian men, did not design the new government considering the rights of today's minorities. This government was to be democratic in the sense that each colony (now state) would be represented in laws crafted for the whole country, but only the male land owning elites within those states would be able to elect representatives to make choices on their behalf. All others would have to yield their personal opinions to the decisions of this select voting group.

Looking back at these two documents, and comparing the two in their meanings, intentions, and applications, gives today's scholars a clear understanding of the founding fathers' goal. Most historians would agree that it is fairly clear that the intention of these documents was to keep power within the hands of the white male landowning class. The rights of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness (of others) came second or in some cases at the behest of this ruling class; a ruling class ready to fight to keep those rights (and ultimately power) in their hands rather than in the hands of the minority class.

Strategies:

Who is declaring independence? What reason do colonists have to form a new nation and why was it so unbearable to live under British rule? Who was making this decision to become independent and would the construction of this new nation provide equality for all? Who wrote these rules down and were these rules fair and just for all people that they governed?

These are some of the questions that I would like students to ponder after reading the original versions of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Through discussion of these questions and analysis of select phrases in both documents, we will decide whether the founding fathers took into account the feelings, needs, and wants of minority groups. Students will then read alternative versions of the documents written by and with different minority groups in mind and decide if they are more inclusive of the rights of other groups that live in the United States.

We will look specifically at article 1 sec 2 of the constitution known as the 3/5 compromises. This article limited the representation of the southern slave owning states by accounting only 3/5th s of all blacks in the total population of the state. This actually lowered the south's representation in congress, which limited their voting power rather than having blacks count equally as whites, which would have given them more representatives. Many deem this article as a way for the constitution to state the belief of the inferiority of blacks. Students will discuss whether they believe this part of the constitution helped or hurt black rights during the construction of our government system.

Students will break up the preamble into segments and define terms, the meaning of key phrases, and look at how the passage could stand alone, or how it is used to join together the entire document. Does the meaning of separate phrases add up to the whole essence of the preamble, or do they together lose the spirit of freedom that many of the separate phrases seem to bring out? Students will discuss and write a short position paper and present their work to the class.

After they have presented, and discussed why they think or don't think that the original constitution addressed minority rights, they will form groups to create a new constitution. This constitution will be a brief document or amendment to the current one creating certain rights or protections that will ensure equality and social justice. They will have read a copy of the *We the Other People* constitution as inspiration for their new constitution.

Tapas Course 2: Bob Bartlett

I take this story from Professor Robert Burt, who led the seminar for which this unit is derived. He tells it much better than I do, probably because he watched it unfold in front of his eyes as he sat in the gallery of the Senate that day. I will use his version from his book "Constitution in Conflict" by Robert A. Burt pages 304-306.

During the final months of the 1968 congressional term, a number of congressmen were trying to get the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Fair Housing Act) passed before the summer recess, however they could not get the bill to a vote with constant revisions being added during debate. Vice President Hubert Humphrey attempted to rally senate Democrats to call for a cloture of debate and call the bill to a vote. They would need sixty-seven votes,

or one more than two thirds to pass the cloture and bring the bill to a vote. Humphrey met with those Democrats that he thought he could convince to call for cloture because at that time he did not have a guaranteed sixty-seven votes. One would be one of the original senators from Alaska, Democrat Bob Bartlett. A relatively small, quiet senator from the rural state of Alaska was seen as a potential ally and crucial vote for cloture. Humphrey sought out Bartlett and asked him if he would vote for cloture so that he could get the bill to a vote before the recess. Bartlett replied that he could not. He stated that even though he supported the bill on moral grounds, Alaska did not have a sizable number of blacks, so this bill really did not affect those he represented. He added that Georgia Senator Russell had offered him appropriations for a highway that would link Alaska and the continent forty-eight if he either abstained from voting or voted against the bill. Russell even agreed to travel to Alaska to help campaign for Bartlett's reelection and make it clear to Bartlett's constituents that Bartlett was the one that got them the highway.

Humphrey could not argue with Bartlett's reasoning on the grounds of that he was doing what was best for his constituents, which would ensure his reelection bid at the end of the year. All Humphrey asked of Bartlett was to wait until the last minute of the vote to come into the senate floor and whisper to in his ear if his vote were needed. Humphrey did not want Bartlett's vote to be wasted if it was not the deciding vote, as this could cost Bartlett his highway deal, which Humphrey did not want to jeopardize. Bartlett listened to Humphrey's offer, but assured him that even if he was the deciding vote, that he could not vote for the bill.

The date of the vote arrived, and senators moved to the roll to cast their vote. Many did so in private so as to not alert opposition to their vote, fearing reprisal by hard line proponents for and against the bill. Just as the vote was finishing, the large doors to the senate chamber opened and the diminutive Senator Bartlett entered the room. As he walked down through the doors, Humphrey met eyes with the lonely Bartlett. Humphrey hammered his senate gavel and called out "Senator Bartlett from Alaska... may I please have your vote!" Bartlett looked astonished that Humphrey was calling him out. That was not the plan that they had agreed on. Bartlett waved his hands as if to say, "do not call on me, leave me out of this." Again Humphrey hammered his gavel and shouted out, "Senator Bartlett from Alaska...what is your vote?" Bartlett kept walking down the senate stairs ignoring Humphrey's call. Humphrey would not be swayed by this lack of response, hammering even harder and shouting even louder, "Mr. Bartlett...your vote?" Bartlett looked up, meet eyes with the Vice President and gave him a thumbs up, "Yes" was his vote. The Vice President hammered his gavel and announced the cloture by that one vote. Bartlett's vote had been the 67th vote, just enough for the cloture.

Professor Burt, at that time a senator's aide, was awed at what had just unfolded and needed to know what had just happened. That was not the plan that had been agreed upon by the Humphreys and Bartlett. The next day Burt called Bartlett's office to ask the senator's staff why he had changed his position. His assistant said that he stated that as a senator he should act like one, and do what was right, and what was just, and that was to vote for the bill. Later that year Bartlett would lose his life to a heart attack, however without his contribution, the 1968 Civil Rights Act would never have been passed.

The moral of this story was that Senator Bartlett had to make a choice between what he knew to be morally right for the country and what would be fiscally right for his constituents. Bartlett knew that although the country might gain from his choice to vote "yes," he would lose any reelection attempt and his state would lose a much needed transportation link to the greater United States, a potentially huge blow to their economy. At the foundation of American democracy is the question of whether an official of an electorate should represent the will of the majority, or the will of their own conscience. Which ideology will work towards the betterment of the whole? Is it a representative's job to represent the needs of his constituents, or perhaps a moral high ground that a majority of voters have not realized, one that might even be detrimental to the

constituency itself? At times these two choices might not be the same, and a decision must be made. Many members of congress and even the president might say that there is a factor of "the ends justifying the means." That is to say, that in casting their vote, it might not help their constituents, might not be morally correct, and might not even benefit the nation right now, but it is a decision that will, in the long run, help the community through a system of reciprocal favors (i.e. Bartlett's highway deal).

Strategies:

Students will read the first half of the story of Bob Bartlett's civil rights vote and create a pro/con chart of his choices, then decide the decision he should make. I will reveal the second half of the story (casting of vote) and students will debate whether or not his decision was the right decision to make. It is easy to look back at this decision today and say that Bartlett's choice was the obvious one, but students will have to put themselves in the minds of the constituents who voted for him and would be adversely affected by Bartlett's loss of highway funding. I will conduct a role-play, giving students scenario slips putting them into the role of congressmen from different districts, each having different agendas and stances on the issue. They will have information about their district, allowing them to weigh in a particular bill, one that the whole class will vote on. For some this bill will be detrimental for their local constituency, but better off for the nation as a whole for one of a variety of factors (economic, moral, environmental or majority issues). An example would be a law restricting pollution. A law such as this might hurt a congressmen's local factory by causing them to spend more money on pollution controls rather than jobs, but it will potentially benefit local and national ecosystems.

Others students will have different views on this same issue. Students will have to decide whether they will be a trustee or delegate with their vote. They will have to write a brief explanation as to why they made their decision and what factors were considered before casting their ballot. Students will meet in the "house floor" where I will moderate a debate on the issue. Students will have to speak in front of the congress (the class) as to why they should vote or not vote for the bill. Students will listen to the debate and will then have a bit of time to "make deals" before the vote. Students will be able to gain resources by "holding out" for deals before casting their vote. Students will also be able to trade some of their resources to gain a yes or no vote from unsure congressmen. In the end, the congress will come to a vote. The class will discuss the result, including the how and why of congressmen making those votes and create a consequence chart that could have future vote information inputted to create a deciding outcome. After the students create this chart, they will analyze how these decisions impact minority groups, in particular whether or not these decisions pit minority group's interests against each other.

Tapas Course 3 - President of the Whole World and all of its beautiful people.

The President of the United States is an elected official by the citizens of the United States, but in a sense, he has a power that represents the interest of the world population. With the United States government's growing international role, by choice or by circumstance, the executive branch leader must think though the repercussions on the world population of all of his decisions. The needs of the world population are diverse in their needs, many of which may be different then those of US citizens. Many voters only see their immediate needs and will only vote for a representative that will insure the maintenance of their lifestyle or one that they aspire to. Presidential candidates make promises in the hopes that they will reach a diverse group of voters to

gain support for their campaign and get them elected. Often these promises will be impossible for the candidates to honor, so (once elected) a candidate must make hard decisions about which items need should be addressed first. A president generally has high approval ratings at the beginning of their term to make the promises that they had stated a reality.

Barack Obama is no exception to this rule. During his long campaign, he made many campaign promises to make radical changes upon his election to the office of the president. Many of these groups rallied behind his campaign for "change" and "hope" because of these promises. Some of these voters felt as though they had been marginalized by the outgoing administration, kept in the dark, and were willing to sign over their support for a promise, without a guarantee of any actions. Now that Obama has been installed into the office of president, these groups want to see the changes that they were promised. Whether it was gay rights with "don't ask don't tell" policies, an economic stimulus through increased job programs and minimum wage increases, healthcare reform for unemployed workers, or to ending the war in Iraq and bringing home servicemen overseas - all of these groups are waiting for these promised changes.

A prime example of this conflict of what a group of those who elected him and what he represents to them think, and what he as president in the minds of the majority of Americans believe he should do, is in the Gates-police officer incident. After the exchange between Professor Gates, a highly distinguished professor at Harvard University, and a decorated Cambridge police officer, there was seen to be pressure by many of those supporters of the president in the minority community suggesting that he should weigh in on the current state of race relations of minorities and law enforcement officials. How the president handled this delicate situation would polarize the president's constituents and be seen this way in public opinion polls. How the president handles delicate situations like this will be an examination of his ability to weigh the opinions of those who elected him, and the country as a whole he represents.

Strategies:

Students followed the 2008 presidential campaign, the issues discussed, and the differences in how each candidate planned to address each of these issues during their presidency. Now that Barack Obama has been elected, the American public will decide if he has kept his campaign promises. Students, through use of research methods, will decide which promises candidate Obama made to various groups, in particular those he made to minority groups, and whether President Obama has, or has not begun to fulfill them. Students will analyze whether the promises Obama made during the campaign were ever meant to be fulfilled, or were they a symbolic gesture towards the minority group causes. Was the election of a minority president a gesture in itself or will he actually push congress to pass legislation that betters minority groups? Through Bloom's Taxonomy of spiraling questions, students will explore whether this presidential choice was an example of a coalition of a diverse group of voters bonding together to elicit group change, or was it a rebellion against the outgoing administration's inability to address the needs of minority voters.

Through different research methods, students will analyze the promises candidate Obama made during the campaign, and how he has acted on them now as president. Students will chart out promises he had made during the campaign on a number of key areas, healthcare, education, economy, foreign policy, and the environment. They will research what has been done on these issues since his election and what the White House has done to advocate to congress on their agenda. Students will look at websites, speeches to chart out campaign promises.

Tapas Course 4 - Polling, Statistics, Data, do all these numbers really mean anything?

"Numbers never lie." Although I am not sure who said this and in what context it was said, but in the political world, knowing polling numbers is as important as any other piece of information a political player can have. Political players, those in a position to affect government policy, those covering the game, and the citizens watching the game all have a stake in the use of political polls. The roots of political polling have been traced back to the French Revolution. The French Minister of Finance, Jacques Necktar, pointed out the importance of measuring investor confidence in understanding the effects of economic policy decisions. Later wording in the Declaration of Independence identified that policy was at the "consent of those governed" (Now 2007). Presidents as far back as Lincoln recognized that public opinion must be understood first in order for the president to execute the populace's will. Using the most updated technology and communication, political agents can utilize polling information in various ways such as understanding the electorate or expressing to the world the feelings of society.

The current president and his administration have used polling in a variety of ways. From the beginning of his campaign, Obama used thorough analysis of public opinion polls to "check the pulse" of his potential voters. Understanding the data that is produced from these polls is a complex science and one that is still becoming better understood. For example, this can be seen in the polling from the 2008 New Hampshire primary. Obama had won the Iowa caucus and was hoping to do the same in the New Hampshire primary. Public opinion polls from various sources had him leading Senator Hillary Clinton by 8.3 percentage points. However, when the primary had finished, Clinton was victorious by 2.6 points. Pollsters learned that voters, who said they would vote for Obama, when finally reaching the voting booth, could not cast their ballot for a black man. Some attribute it to the Bradley Effect; voters say that they will vote for an African American, although they plan to vote for the white candidate, because they fear they will appear racist to the pollster conducting the poll. The reverse was also shown to be true, as seen in South Carolina where Obama won by 28.9 points, contrary to his 11.6 point lead in pre-election polls. Greenwald and Guterbock, of University of Virginia's Center for Survey Research, believe that the reason for the difference in predicted vs. actual outcome reflected the difference in the number polled vs. actual voters, rather than the Bradley Effect. Polling firms take into account that not everyone polled will actually go to the poll and vote. Pollsters use screening questions to ascertain the likeliness that the person will actually vote. Pollsters then adjust the numbers, using a formula, to get a true representation of potential voter's opinions. This leads many to believe that the polling was not calibrated correctly. This practice may explain the disparity between predicted vs. actual poll numbers in both New Hampshire and in South Carolina (Aldhous 2008).

An article by Janet Elder in the New York Times stated that polls are "better at helping reporters understand people's opinions than they are at predicting how people will behave." (Elder 2008) The New Hampshire 2008 primary example of that; people expressed their desire to see a black president, but just couldn't convince themselves into actually casting a ballot for one. Elder goes on to say that polls do not always measure how committed voters are to their candidate. "Those who said they were going to vote for Mrs. Clinton were more strongly committed to her than those who said they would vote for Mr. Obama." (Elder 2008)

Whether polling data is exact and always accurate, which it definitely is not, the importance of the information that it contains is not contested. Now that President Obama is in office, his administration believes that reading the public is just as important as it was on the campaign trail. President Clinton used polling

extensively to understand the public while in office. Dick Morris, one of Clinton's advisors, told Clinton that the president was "better at reading polls than any pollster I know." (Heith 2000) Knowing what the voters want (as opposed to what political agents think they want) helps the president craft his message to Congress and back to the people, showing that the president is listening to the peoples' interests and protecting the stance that the majority of Americans share. In 1994, after Republicans had won back control in the house and the senate, Clinton started to rely more on opinion polling, and utilized Morris's assistance to brief him on its findings. "Over the course of the first nine months of 1995, no single person had more power over the president," Communications Director George Stephanopoulos has said of Morris (Frontline Clinton). Obama used analysis of the public opinion polling to his advantage to win the democratic nomination against tough contenders, and also the general election. Obama has tried to keep his pulse on the public's feelings on various issues before issuing his official stance and agenda.

However, if always siding with the majority would get a president's approval ratings to stay up, the rights of minority groups would become less important to a president. As was discussed earlier, there are times that a minority viewpoint is the "right" moral stance to take. Various minority groups played a crucial role in getting Obama elected, and are hoping to see changes made in their favor. However the president must keep the members of groups, like the National Rifle Association, where their members will vote based on this one issue alone. How those minority communities view the president's stance on issues can only be measured by opinion polling. Obama knows that if he mimics Clinton's strategy of incorporating polling briefings into policy meetings, he will have that knowledge before acting and keep his approval ratings up.

Strategies:

New Hampshire is an excellent example of how polling data isn't always exactly accurate. Students will read about the build up to the New Hampshire primary and how the polling data falsely predicted that Obama would win. Students will make assumptions on why the polls were incorrect. After the primary last year, students, probably from what they heard in the press, believed Obama's loss in New Hampshire was a race issue, due to the Bradley Effect (although the students will not know that as such). By analyzing both pre and post primary polling data, students will see if the data supports or disproves the theoretical "Bradley Effect" theorists.

Moving forward with the analysis of polling data, students will look at figures from various political polling firms on the president's current stance on policies, to determine whether or not they align with the his stances voiced during campaigning. Students will be broken up into groups based on an issue. These issues will be decided by what latest polls are posted, but the choices will most likely include the economy, healthcare, foreign policy, social issues, education, and environment. Students will put themselves in the role of political advisors to the president, played by me the teacher. I will tell them the stance stated during Obama's campaign, and students will advise me on how I should act on that issue based on current polling data. Students will have to justify how the numbers lead them to their suggested action. I will use questioning to flush out holes in their data, and its solidity could be questioned.

We will discuss if political polling data benefits or hinders the current president's choices. Students will read about Clinton's White House and formulate an opinion of polling's effectiveness in how that administration used it to shape their agenda.

Tapas Course 5 - Votum

vote (n.) c.1460, from L. *votum* "a vow, wish, promise, dedication," noun use of neut. of *votus*, pp. of *vovere* "to promise, dedicate" (see *vow*). The verb in the modern sense is attested from 1552; earlier it meant "to vow" to do something (1533).

The etymology of the word vote, from the Latin word *votum*, meaning a wish or promise, is quite interesting when thinking about today's voting behavior. Over the past three elections, United States voter turnout has steadily increased, creating close elections and passionate voters. The meaning of vote can be seen as a contract between those casting the ballots and those whom will be elected. The wish and promise are shared between both, each expressing their hopes, but also the needs and concerns for themselves, as well as society. The voters, by casting their ballot, express their will and support to a chosen representative. The candidate, on the other hand, makes a vow to represent their constituents by acting as a delegate, or a trustee. The candidate promises to make decisions for the betterment of their community even if unpopular. The act of voting can be as simple as pushing a button or checking a box, but what it represents is complex in the depth of its effect.

Voting goes back to early civilizations or communities with democratic governments in which people expressed their wishes through a show of hands or yells of "yea" or "nay." Modern voting (in America and throughout the rest of the world) is now conducted in a more efficient manner due to increased voter turnout - the ballot system. The word ballot comes from the Italian *ballotta*, meaning little ball, because early voters dropped a bullet or ball shaped rock into a jar to cast their vote. Later, slips of paper were adopted to make counting votes easier (Lepore 2008). It was a great honor to cast your ballot for the candidate that you felt would represent you the best, even if others did not agree. For most of the 18th and 19th centuries, election polls were surrounded by violence. Election judges were trained in various self-defense mechanisms in order to run an election precinct effectively. The openness of voting, using systems such as color coded ballots or ballots prepared by party officials for voters to hand in, often caused rampant violent behavior at polling locations. Many minorities were too afraid to go to the polls fearing their safety and well being. John Stuart Mill, the son of a Benthamite, did not believe a secret ballot would solve these issues. Opponents would state, "Voters need to exercise it [voting] privately to exercise it well, because the electorate, unlike the legislature, consists of men of unequal rank. The powerless will always be prevailed upon by the powerful; only secrecy can protect them from bribery and bullying" (Lepore 2008). The secret or Australian ballot was adopted soon after.

Today, secret ballots have not rectified the original fear of minority voters choosing to cast a vote. Since the passage of the 15th and 20th amendments, the number of black and women voters has slowly increased over time, but not with the immediacy that the authors of the amendments had hoped. In 2008, the number of minorities that voted was a drastic increase from previous elections. Time will only tell whether the percentage of voting by minorities will increase and thus rights and representation for them.

Strategies:

This course looks at the primary act of voting and how it has evolved in the United States. Using a New York Times article on the history of voting in the United States, the class will analyze raw voting data from the 2008 election. By analyzing state-by-state voting, and voting trends as a whole, each group of students ultimately has a common goal. Viewing data from a variety of angles, students will see that data can be used to validate

many different outcomes and form solid conclusions.

Students will present their findings to the class, driving a class wide analysis of the 2008 election results. This unit will lead into the next unit's discussion of minority representation in individual districts.

Tapas Course 6 - Please More Members of Congress who look like me!

The legislative branch was designed as the branch of the people, meaning that each state's representatives were not decided by the whole country, but rather by each individual voting district within a state. Therefore, each member is elected by the constituents of their district, giving them the opportunity to make decisions (vote) based on what was best for their district. There are 535 members of the 111th US congress. Of those members, 154 (roughly 29%) are minorities or people of color (US Congress). 40% of the US population is white and male. This leaves 60% of the US population that is considered a minority of some sort (2000 US Census). There is an overwhelming disparity between the make-up of the US population (i.e. the majority of people are in some way considering a minority in either ethnicity or gender) and those who represent them in congress (white, male). There are many ways to analyze this disparity. One way to do so is to examine gender and racial repression in this country. In the previous tapas course 1, the foundations of our nation addressed this question. The systems of gerrymandering and voting trends can be evaluated to see how political seat borders have increased/decreased the number of minority members in congress. Another way to explore this disparity is to explore the route minority members took to become a part of the U.S. Congress. By analyzing the methods in which minorities are elected to congress, my students can determine if a minority representative is actually representing the minorities of their district (with legislation and voting behavior) and whether a congress that is truly representative of the actual demographics of the nation has any bearing on minorities rights.

Illinois, the state in which I teach, and Chicago, the city in which all my students reside, has many members of congress that would be classified as minorities (women and/or people of color). There is a rich and distinguished tradition of minority Illinois representatives in US government, a legacy that is becoming even more prominent. President Obama, former Illinois senator was the only African American in the senate and has now become the first minority President in the history of the United States. His successor, Senator Roland Burris, continues as the lone African American in the Senate. Of the 21 total congressmen from the state of Illinois, 9 are minorities (roughly 42%). This figure is considerably higher than the national average. Many of these representatives have served in Washington for some time and are strongly supported in their districts. There are many reasons for the continued success of Illinois' minority senators. Chicago's population is not only very large, but it is also extremely diverse. More than half of the state's population lives within the Chicago metropolitan area; over half of that population can be classified as minority (2000 US Census). Chicago has always been a city segregated by race and ethnicity, with immigrants and minorities forming densely populated, homogeneous neighborhoods. When district lines are drawn every ten years, these densely populated neighborhoods, largely dominated by one racial or ethnic group, give rise to districts that are reflective of that minority population. This has led to a consistent minority representative in Congress from these districts.

Recent years have seen minority politicians from non-traditional areas making inroads in being elected to office and moving into positions of power in the government. The legislative branch, rather than the executive

or judicial branch, is often the logical first step towards surmounting the present majority. 2009 has seen the first minority in the executive branch (President Obama) and the first Latina in the judicial branch (Justice Sotomayor). While these are certainly landmark events, the driving question of this curriculum unit still remains: will all of these appointments lead to more rights for minority Americans? Are these elected officials a representation of changes in race and gender? To gain a better understanding of this question, this tapas course will have students analyze their voting records of their local representatives to determine if they are truly representing the interests of their constituency.

Many websites have been created to track congress members legislation and voting records. This is available to anyone who accesses these websites. Which allows every citizen to see for themselves how their representative is acting and whether it is in accordance or to the benefit to the district. These sites are used by many political players from national parties, to challengers seeking office, to political action committees drumming support for a politician or even a cause. The ease of Internet access in today's society allows even the computer novice to read through this information and become a more informed voter. Hopefully voting age Americans to make contenance decisions on their representatives will use these sites more.

In "Tapas Course 4 - Polling, Statistics, Data, do all these numbers really mean anything?" polling data was used to understand if President Obama has really held up the policy change promises that he had made during the campaign. Course 6 will reinforce the understandings of that analysis by looking at the demographics of the actual voters who voted President Obama into office as the first minority president. Looking at the 2008 election results, minority voters were more likely to vote for Obama than McCain by more than 10% in certain minority groups and as high as 91% in others. Along gender, Obama margin of victory was greater in women, 13% to men 1%. The votes were quite similar cross referencing gender and race, meaning that looking at race results non dependent on gender, was a more determining factor in voting behavior. In every race segment, women had a higher percentage of voters for Obama than McCain. The only segments that McCain had higher percentages of votes were by white Americans (CNN Exit Polling).

What does all these statistics mean? Well they do give political analysts a better understanding of the voters who voted each way, but the fact that in almost every category based in race, religion, gender, occupation and income moved toward Democratic in their presidential vote says something about the candidate, but also the change in society over even four years (Pollster.com). Looking at voting by a state to state, Obama was able to win traditional Republican states. This can be seen by the increase in minority voters voting in 2008, but also by amount of voters, who voted for George W. Bush in 2004, changing parties and voting for the Democratic candidate Barack Obama. In the majority of counties nationwide, Obama changed more voters to the Democratic ticket than McCain did for the Republicans (Voting Shift Map).

By both looking at congressional representation and also the 2008 presidential election from the view of understanding whether minorities are being represented and whether those representatives are making policy changes that are leading to more rights for those who have been historically been stricken of rights, will be integral in the overall goals of this curriculum unit.

Strategies:

Students will research the nine minority representatives from Illinois, in particular their rise to their seat in congress. Students will also scrutinize each congressman's committee membership, bills that they have written or cosponsored, and their voting record. By analyzing this information, students should be able to get a picture of their representative, their previous political affiliations and professions, as well as their actions while in congress.

Students will also study each district that has elected their respective congressmen. Students will research the demographic breakdown of the district and analyze what issues would likely be of importance to the constituents of that neighborhood. This analysis will help students to make some decisions on where the constituents would stand on major issues. Students will use data from polling sites, media and various other outlets. The class will formulate a rationale to address whether or not their representatives are truly representing their constituent's interests in congress. Students will work in groups to discuss each representative and their district and then report on their research findings. After students present their findings, the class will discuss how the congressmen from Illinois represent the state's minorities. A larger part of the discussion will focus on the congress as a whole, in particular if our Illinois congressmen (in addition to those from other states) are doing an adequate job of representing minorities nationwide.

Maps and charts are a great way to look at the results data and understand it's meaning geographically, but also as a measurement of different information. Having students look and decipher these mediums can get them to express their knowledge of the material covered in the course, but also relate different information together. Students will form groups and look at one map and one chart. They will write down what they see in each, how the map and the chart relate and what the significance of there results would be to understand the big picture of the 2008 election. We will post the maps and charts up and the students will present their findings. The class will discuss what they see in the charts and how it relates to the overlying theme, which is minority representation.

Tapas Course 7 - Fight for the right to Party!

Political parties have become a major part of the American political landscape. Every policy has to be dissected categorized as either a Democratic policy or a Republican one. The parties are generally associated with liberal or conservative ideologies. The United States has become a two-party system in which the Democratic and Republican political machines control the respective sides of center. This center shifts occasionally, but there is a definite divide amongst red and blue. Where is purple you might say? Many feel that the two political parties have fought off third party options and in so doing have blended themselves into similar policy stances. They have both become, in essence, purple.

The histories of the two parties are very different. The Democratic Party was born under Thomas Jefferson who fought for state rights and individual freedoms. The Republican Party emerged during the abolition movement, to stand against slavery and for women's rights. Today these parties, ideologically speaking, have switched. Democrats pass economic and policy reforms to create big government with the idea of equality for all. Republicans want to reduce the size of government, laissez-faire economic policies and family values supported by white America. Many of the reasons for the evolution of these political parties can be traced back to the movement against slavery in the mid 1800s and the immigration and women's movement in the early 19th century.

Today, many see the two parties as: one which represents and supports the rights of minorities, and one which does not have a minority following. Whether these differences in the parties come from inherent party beliefs and choices, they can be seen in voting habits and fundraising support. Looking back at tapas course 7, a high percentage of minority voters supported Obama and the Democratic Party. His largest margin of voters was from various minority demographics. As also covered in course 7, the majority of minority representatives

are mostly from the Democratic Party. Will the Republican Party respond to this shift in voting behavior and public opinion and move the party to meet the voters? If personal political ideology is moving towards acceptance and encouragement of equal power in the hands of minorities, then the Republican Party needs to conform and cater to the public's evolution. Only time and social changes will tell if there will be a party shift to appease these groups and win elections, or whether isolating and unifying the white racial population majority, as seen over the past eight years, will prevail.

Interest groups have become a major leg of the iron triangle the three-sided relationship between congress, interest groups and the bureaucracy. They have an overwhelming ability to raise campaign funds for candidates in all levels of government. Due to the media's ability to directly target potential voters (in many mediums) politicians recognize the high cost. Interest groups have provided a target audience for political candidates to tap. They are able to specify a message, garner support through campaign contributions and in the end votes. Interest groups, with the power of the dollar can sway congressmen to their side's opinions. In tapas 4, the National Rifle Association was used as an example of this ability to sway power with a devoted group of members and raise huge sums of money for candidate to support legislation on second amendment rights.

Both political parties and interest groups have had an influence on the modern political environment. Their power to elect and maintain a politician's seat in office has led to their continued influence. Minority membership in many interest groups has led politicians to analyze how they will garner their support. The 2008 election showed that getting groups of minorities to support the same candidate is a successful strategy for a victory.

Strategies:

Students will write about why they feel that the United States has a two party system. They will analyze whether that system is beneficial in representing American interests or whether reform should be made to increase the power of third party groups in this country. By looking at the current two parties and researching other political parties and their differing viewpoints on issues, students will be able to formulate an opinion of whether or not to increase the effectiveness of a third party. Students will debate different strategies and changes to the Constitution that might be made to successfully bring other parties to local and national prominence.

Interest groups have become a huge player in the US political system. Students will chart whether interest groups would most likely support the Democratic Party or the Republican Party. They will be given a list of different group's mission statements and be asked explain why they feel that they would support a particular party. The class answers will be tallied and we will discuss the results. We will compare the 2008 campaign contributions with party affiliation and determine if the groups help or hinder minority rights and representation.

Tapas Course 8 - Does the Supreme come with everything?

President Barack Obama just had his first Supreme Court nominee confirmed. Justice Sonia Sotomayor represents many victories as she takes her seat on the bench. She is a woman, only the third to hold the position of justice in the court's 220 year history. Aside from being a woman, she is the first person of Latin descent to be put on the court. Many feel this appointment would not have happened under any other president. A minority president sees the impact a non-majority point of view can have on shaping this country, and felt that it should be heard in the highest court in the land.

Sotomayor's ascension to the Supreme Court was not an easy one. Her childhood was spent as a Puerto Rican girl living in a housing project in New York's Bronx neighborhood. Both she and her family desired better for her driving her to finish high school with honors, later graduating from Princeton University and Yale Law School. She would practice what she learned in law school in all levels of the New York court systems. To be nominated and confirmed as one of nine justices serving our country, is an accomplishment for anyone, but somehow all the more impactful to a self made Latina.

However Sotomayor's confirmation hearings were full of questions in particular her stance on a New Haven court case and its implication on race and the law. The case, deemed the New Haven Firefighter Case, showed Sotomayor's opinion to uphold the lower courts decision giving the city of New Haven the right to throw out a written test for consideration for promotion, thought controversial by many judicial committee senators. The media and many people against Sotomayor's confirmation pointed out that her position was based on her belief that the race and gender of a justice molds their interpretation of the Constitution and the law. Sotomayor did not deny that each justice's legal and personal experiences shape how they interpret the constitution and the cases tried in front of them. Her critics cited the New Haven Firefighter case as a prime example of when this theory of experienced bias determined her decisions.

Race, gender, and sexuality are all issues that the court is asked to decide on. Justices Scalia and Thomas have stated that they believe in strict interpretation of the Constitution (60 Mins). However other justices believe it is a living document that should reflect society's changes. The role the court deciding how laws and society react to issues of race, gender, and sexuality is left to nine individuals. Whether Justice Sotomayor's personal background will lead to reform that is more progressive than current society remains to be seen. Through the discussions in the seminar "Rise, Fall, and Rise Again of the Civil Rights Movement" the Supreme Court's decisions have led to moments of social change. *Brown v. Board of Education* provides one such example. The *Brown* case, in 1954, led to the rise of the modern civil rights movement. Many saw the case as the government saying society was ready for "separate but equal" to be abolished. Whether the court system should be an agent of societal change or a mirror of society's wishes is debatable, but the question of judicial activism or restraint of a justice based on her minority point of view will be seen under Justice Sotomayor.

The judicial branch is not the only branch of government bringing up questions of race, gender, and sexuality in today's society. Secretary of state Hillary Clinton is currently challenging traditional gender roles with her continued success in a predominantly male role. Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. a lauded and venerable professor at Harvard University became a victim of racial profiling in his own home. How social issues and minority rights are handled has become front-page news, and in turn conversation.

Strategies:

From the seminar "Rise, Fall and Rise again of the Civil Rights Movement," I will assign the readings from the New Haven Firefighter Case. Reading, analyzing and discussing the facts of the case and the opinions of the Supreme Court written by Justices Alito and Ginsburg, students will form an open understanding of the case, and the evidence presented. We will do a mock trial, with two groups presenting the evidence of the case as if they were hoping to sway the court, to be played by nine students. The two presenting groups, one representing the plaintiff and one the defendant, will present opening arguments. These arguments will be written to point out the evidence that could sway the justices to their side. After opening statements, students will debate the case in an open forum with cross-examination questioning. The justices will then be allowed to ask questions, which will be answered by both sides. The final step will be rebuttals and final statements. The justices will cast a silent vote to decide their personal victor. Justices must defend their decision after the decision of the court is revealed. Each student will have to write a summary of the relevance of this court case on race in America. They must incorporate content from the discussions the class had about Sotomayor's biography, Race and Henry Louis Gates Jr., and Brown v. Board of Education. Students will form an opinion of the role race plays in the constitution and the judicial system.

Tapas Course 9 - Everyone's right to equal education

Every year without fail, there seems to be a short fall of supplies or funding for some program at the school where I teach. This is not a rarity in Chicago Public Schools or in many urban school districts, but within Illinois, all districts do not always feel this problem. Illinois has one of the highest discrepancies of education dollars of any state in the country. While some schools are running on \$3000 per pupil others are running on \$30,000 (Chicago Urban League). The disparity runs down many lines, but generally speaking, schools where students of color tend to attend (in urban areas in Chicago) are disadvantaged.

The Chicago Urban League, an organization that advocates for African American's social change through education, economic progress programs, and grass roots community organizing, has led a movement for education reform in Illinois. This has taken the form of lobbying and speaking to government officials protesting and a lawsuit against the state of Illinois based on the Brown V. Board of Education case of 1954.

The economic downturn has led to a statewide pinch of many expenses including education, however cuts have not been equitable in their implementation. Most schools statewide are funded primarily by local property taxes. Though the economic losses have hurt almost every area, some schools have supplementary funds that could be cut, whereas other urban schools end up cutting major programs.

The 2008 election brought a local Chicago politician to the presidency, and with him CEO of Chicago Public Schools Arne Duncan to the top education seat in the country. The hope is that the Secretary of Education might bring education reform in this country. Chicago Public Schools enacted a program called Renaissance 2010 in which over 30 schools city wide and 45 schools state wide were opened as charter schools using a competitive, community based application model. The goal of this program is to increase the number of high quality education options for students (Renaissance 2010). Analysis of this system has shown achievement gains in many areas, however many neighborhood school advocates believe that this system further perpetuates the divide amongst the have and the have-nots. Failing neighborhood schools are being closed

down to make way for new competitive charter schools. Charter schools are held accountable by their ability to meet certain achievement gains each year, keeping their charter. These schools are free to choose entry requirements as they see fit, rather than take all local students. The struggle to find a way to produce the highest number of students that meet local, state and national standards has been one that Chicago Public Schools has been engaged in for some time.

Now that former Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan is leading the Department of Education, the question is: will he install similar programs on a national level? With education getting billions of dollars through the federal stimulus package, passed by both congressional houses and signed into effect by President Obama, what will Duncan use that money for?

Strategies:

Mikva Challenge is a not for profit organization devoted to creating civic leaders, activists and policy makers. Through many programs they have organized, students have been able to get involved in civic action. Last year, students were able to analyze funds from a wide variety of schools, and understand the budgetary choices each school must make. Each group was given a school budget based on a model school; each school's demographics were also listed. Some schools were able to raise more money based on higher property values, thus higher tax revenue. Those schools were able to afford nicer school facilities, lower student to teacher ratios, and funding for extra curricular programs. Students discussed the causes and effects of this system, and what can be done to create a more equitable educational system.

Students will repeat this activity using current school budgets (including our own) and analyze what cuts have been made from the previous year. After discussing the state of Illinois policy of allocating education dollars and local property tax revenue, students will look at the case brought by the Chicago Urban League against the state of Illinois that the decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* has not been carried out, and that segregation, by funding, still exists.

Students will write their US congressmen, state representatives, and the Secretary of Education letters about what they have learned about education funding in Illinois. Students will also address what reforms they would make to produce a more equitable educational system.

Lesson Plan Outlines

Tapas Course 1 - We the People...which people?

Mission: Students will explore the Declaration of Independence and US Constitution with the goal of understanding the intent and effects on minorities.

Bell ringer: Who is declaring independence? Who was making this decision to become independent and would the construction of this new nation provide equality for all?

In-class activities: Discussion of Bell ringer. Students will break into groups and break down the documents (Declaration of Independence and Constitution), read the night before. They will write down phrases and key points that they found important and analyze the key phrases of the preamble and the opening of the

Constitution as separate segments for meaning. We then will analyze them together to see if the means of the pages add up to the meaning of the whole. We will come together as a class, discuss, and reflect on the class consensus.

Reflection: Did the founders of our nation truly believe in equality for all? Why or why not? How might this be hypocritical in what our new nation was rebelling against?

Homework: Read alternative constitutions from "We the Other People"

Mission: Students will create their own constitution based on what they believe to be the deficiencies of our current constitution.

Bell Ringer: If you could change or add one thing to the Constitution, what would it be and why?

In-class activities: Students will be prompted with bell ringer. We will discuss it, and then break back into the groups from the previous day. They will outline various groups' constitutions, and identify which would be adopted to govern the United States. Students can use the current US Constitution as a basis for their own, but should note the things that they wanted to change or add. They should use the "We the Other people" reading as a reference and inspiration. Each group will present their new Constitution and the class will discuss the similarities, difference and semantics of each.

Reflection: Why haven't these changes we have suggested actually been done? What reasons would society have of not making them?

Homework: Expand on your reflection answer to formulate a comparison of why your suggestions for the constitution were not added when it was originally written, or in today's society. You should have \hat{A} $\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 pages of writing.

Tapas Course 2 - Bob Bartlett

Mission: Using the story of Bob Bartlett, students will decide whether elected representatives should be delegates or trustees.

Bell ringer: Read Bob Bartlett story (1st half)

In-class activity: The class will read the story of Bob Bartlett from "Constitution in Conflict" by Robert A. Burt pages 304-306. Students will stop reading and fill out a pro con chart of what Bartlett should have done before finding what he actually did. We will read the second half of the story, and discuss whether his actions were justified. We will discuss what it means to be a trustee and delegate.

Reflection: Was Bob Bartlett's actions justified? What would you have done in his shoes?

Mission: Students will act out the bill voting process, taking into account what it means to be a trustee and delegate.

Bell ringer: Each student gets a slip with a congressmen's general information and mission in regards to the congress bill discussion.

In-class activity: Bill vote activity, followed by a discussion of the events that occurred during the activity. As a

class, we will create a cause and effect chart to show how actions lead to consequences for certain groups, specifically minority groups.

Reflection: Why was it hard weighing what you believe was right and what you believe was best for your constituents? Explain.

Tapas Course 3 - President of the whole world and all of its beautiful people.

Mission: Students will compare campaign promises made by candidate Obama and what actions have been taken to get these laws enacted (if any).

Bell Ringer: Write down what promises you believe candidate Obama made when running for president in 2008.

In-class Activities: Discussion of bell ringer. Using chart provided, pairs of students will list a promise for each topic that candidate Obama addressed. After completing this chart, groups will research what movement has occurred on each topic. Pairs will determine if the President has made a conscious effort to address the promises he made during the campaign, or if his message has changed. The research will be followed by class discussion of each topic.

Reflection: Has the President come through on his promises or has he changed his stance now in office? Explain

Homework: Watch and read about the Clinton White House use of public opinion polling (PBS Special)

Tapas Course 4 - Polling, Statistics, Data, do all these numbers really mean anything?

Mission: Students will understand the relationship public opinion polling has on the president's actions.

Bell Ringer: What is the Bradley effect? Do you believe that it had an effect on Obama's primary loss in New Hampshire? Explain.

In-class Activities: Discussion of bell ringer. The class will read an article from the New York Times on the outcome of the 2008 New Hampshire primary. Students will discuss what happened and if they believe race was an issue in voter decisions. Students will be broken up into groups and given a topic for research. These topics will reflect the same topics in tapas course 3. Students will research polling sites write observations of current polling on an issue, how the President is polling and prepare a presentation on the material found. Each group will report back to the class as to their findings. Students will report back as if they were advisors to the president, and will offer to suggestions to me about my next steps as president.

Reflection: How might public opinion polls shape how President Obama acts in regard to these issues? Should he pay attention to polling or not? Explain.

Homework: Read New York Times article on History of Voting in the United States.

Tapas Course 5 - Votum

Mission: Students will understand the history of voting in the United States and analyze 2008 presidential election results.

Bell ringer: Using the data in front of you, what general observations can you make?

In-class Activities: Discuss bell ringer and New York Times article on history of voting. Class discussion should be directed on how voting has changed in modern times. Using the data packets of 2008 presidential election results, groups will analyze the data through various demographic lenses. Students will present their findings to the class and as a whole we will come up with general theories of the results.

Reflection: What results from the data chart helped you to better understand why minority groups voted for Obama over McCain? Explain.

Tapas Course 6 - Please More Members of Congress who look like me!

Mission: Students will look at their own congressmen and Illinois minority representatives in congress to better understand if they are representing the minority groups that elected them.

Bell ringer: What criteria would you weigh in deciding a candidate for congress?

In-class Activities: Discussion of members of congress and their own criteria for a congressman. Break students into groups to research assigned congressmen. Students will have to find specific information to help them present to the class about their congressmen. They will also have to find out information about the districts that they represent the issues that are important to the population. Each group will be given voting data and maps showing voting habits for the region. Students will use them as a part of their overall analysis of their district and representative.

Reflection: Do you believe that the congressman of your district represents the people of the district views? Why or why not?

Homework: Students will be asked to interview their family and voting age friends to see if they agree with the classes findings about their own representative, and how if any it changes their support for them.

Tapas Course 7 - Fight for the right to Party!

Mission: Students will analyze the two major political parties that the US currently has and research alternative third parties.

Bell ringer: Do you find your stance on an issue is shared at all times by either the Democratic or Republican Party? Why or why not?

In-class Activity: Students will research the two major political parties and find out their stances on major certain main issues. Groups will be assigned a third party, and they will also find their stance on those issues. They will chart their findings and share with the class.

Reflection: What issues were the third party that you researched different from the two major parties, and do you think that if they were given equal funding, would be able to compete with the major parties? Explain.

Mission: Students will chart interest groups party affiliations to better understand political party ties.

Bell ringer: Looking at your sheet of interest groups, which group do you recognize with and why?

In-class: Students will pair up and fill out interest group/political party work sheets. Students will be asked to

explain their answers. The class will tally votes, and discuss the class's results. We will then compare results to 2008 campaign contributions.

Reflection: What surprised you most about the interest group/political party connections? Explain.

Homework: Students will read and note take on New Haven Firefighter Case readings as well as Brown V. Board of Education Readings.

Tapas Course 8 - Does the Supreme come with everything?

Mission: Students will debate and discuss New Haven Fighter Case and its relationship to race in America.

Bell Ringer: Do you agree more with Justice Alito or Ginsburg's opinion? Explain why.

In-class Activity: Students will take part in a mock trial by reenacting the New Haven Firefighter Case. Students will play the plaintiff, defendant, or court justices. After the court presents the decision, we will discuss the opinions of the real Supreme Court Justices.

Reflection: How might the actions of the police in the Henry Louis Gates Jr. incident and this New Haven case both be linked to race in America? Explain.

Homework: Expand on reflection to form 1 to 2 pages position paper

Tapas Course 9 - Everyone's Right to Equal Education

Mission: Students will analyze and reflect on the educational funding system that is in place in Illinois is equality.

Bell ringer: Do you feel each school in the state should get equal funding? Why or why not?

In-class Activity: Students in groups will take part in school budget activity. They will share with the class their decisions. The class will discuss school funding, equity and the current economies affect on school funds. Students will read the summary of the case being brought against the State of Illinois by the Chicago Urban League and analyze their case to what they have discussed.

Reflection: What changes would you make to the current educational funding system in Illinois?

Homework: Write a letter to your congressmen; state representative and the Secretary of Education explain what you have learned about education funding in Illinois. You should include what you feel would make education more equitable.

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