

Brussels-Lux Study Tour 2024

Name: Cheryl Healy	Subject/Grade Level: AP US Government and Politics/ 11-12
Unit Title:	Comparing the EU and the US: Powers, Values, and the Youth Vote
Unit Narrative:	This series of lessons will compare the EU to the US system of government in order to further understanding of each system. The unit will first address the powers of the EU and how those compare to the federal system in the United States. The next lesson will compare elements of US political culture to the values espoused by the EU. Finally, students will explore the role of the youth vote in both the EU And the United States including the voting age and efforts to increase turnout.
Learning Objectives/Essential Knowledge	
(From the College Board/ AP US Government and Politics)	
Content:	
1.7 Relationship Between the States and Federal Government Explain how the constitutional allocation of power between the national and state governments affects society	
1. Federalism is the system of government in the United States in which power is shared between the national and state governments. The exclusive and concurrent powers of the national and state governments help explain the ongoing debate over the balance of power between the two levels.	
2. Exclusive power is held by only one level of government and includes enumerated powers that are written in the Constitution, and implied powers that are not specifically written in the Constitution but are inferred from the Necessary and Proper Clause.	
3. Reserved powers are those not delegated or enumerated to the national government but are reserved to the states, as stated in the Tenth Amendment.	
4. Concurrent powers are shared between both levels of government such as the power to collect taxes, the power to make and enforce laws and the power to build roads.	
4.1 American Attitudes About Government and Politics Explain the relationship between core beliefs of US citizens and attitudes about the role of government.	
Different interpretations of core values , including individualism (each person has the ability to shape their life and destiny through the choices they make), equality of opportunity (all people are given an equal chance to compete), free enterprise (the market determines prices, products, and services), and rule of law (every person, even those in power, must follow and is accountable to the same laws that govern all), affect the relationship between citizens and the federal government and that citizens have with each other.	
5.2 Voter Turnout Explain the roles that individual choice and state laws play in voter turnout in elections.	

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1. Structural barriers (such as polling hours, availability of absentee ballots, etc.), **political efficacy** (the belief that an individual's participation in the political process will make a difference), and demographics can influence voter turnout in the US.

2. The following can influence voter turnout:

- Differences in state-controlled elections (the hours polls are open, Voter ID laws, variations in funding for polling places and workers, variations in types of voting allowed, such as voting by mail, absentee voting, and early voting)
- Variations in **voter registration** laws and procedures (registering in-person, online, or automatically)
- Election type (more turnout for presidential elections than midterm elections)

Demographic characteristics and political efficacy or engagement are used to predict the likelihood of whether an individual will vote.

Factors influencing voter choice include:

- Party identification and ideological orientation
- Candidate characteristics
- Contemporary political issues
- Religious beliefs or affiliation, age, gender, race and ethnicity, and other demographic characteristics

Skills:

Data Analysis

Analyze and interpret quantitative data represented in tables, charts, graphs, maps, and infographics.

3a. Describe the data presented.

3b. Describe patterns and trends in data.

3c. Explain patterns and trends in data to draw conclusions.

3d. Explain what the data implies or illustrates about political principles, institutions, processes, policies, and behaviors.

3e. Explain possible limitations of the data provided.

3f. Explain possible limitations of the visual representation of the data provided.

Big Ideas/Essential Questions

- **How does the United States system of government compare to that of the European Union?**
- **How do the organization and powers of the European Union compare to the US federal system?**
- **What are the essential elements of political culture and values in the United States? How do those values compare to the values espoused by the European Union? Why do political values matter?**
- **What is the importance of the youth vote in a democracy? How can a society mobilize young people to vote? Why is this important? At what age should someone**

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be allowed to vote in a democracy? How does the youth vote in the EU member countries compare to that of the youth voter turnout in the United States?

Learning Activities (1 week – 5 days): Lesson introduction, body, and closing

Day
1

Federalism/Power Sharing in the US v. EU systems

Objectives:

Students will be able to:

- Define the difference between a unitary, federal, and confederal form of government
- Compare the US federal system of government with the EU's confederal system.
- Identify and compare powers held by each system of government
- Explore challenges presented by each system.

Introduction:

- Show images that represent different powers held by the national versus state governments (ex. Speed limit, immigration, drinking age, taxes)
- Ask students what they know about how power is divided between the state and the national governments in the United States.

Direct Instruction:

- Define Federalism
- Define Unitary v. Federal v. Confederal forms of government
- Present the EU as an example of the confederation
- Provide definitions and examples of Enumerated, Shared/Concurrent/Reserved powers in the US federal system
- Compare to the structure of the EU: (using slides from this PowerPoint from the European Parliament (structure of the EU/ Shared Competencies)

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PSKEBvuI9R7lXj-wAphvVBg3gSf0TZxt>

- Show a clip from this video: Federal v. Confederal Government: Start at 2:26 for powers of the EU <https://youtu.be/HnarX3HPruA?si=8rPOyrvzAe1oykCv>

Activity in Small Groups:

Students compare the powers delegated in the federal system to the powers of the European Union using this resource: (teacher provides similar resource/graphic for federalism)

https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/role-european-commission/law/areas-eu-action_en

Questions to address:

- What are the primary differences in how powers are distributed between national and regional governments in the US and the EU? Consider specific examples of

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	<p>powers reserved for federal vs. state governments in the US and for EU institutions vs. member states.</p> <p>Activity/Assessment: Find a news article about an EU action and complete the following analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Summarize the action in your own words• Does this action reflect an exclusive competency, a shared competency, or a supporting competency?• How would this policy area be addressed in the US federal system?• What are some challenges to a confederal system such as the EU and the federal system of the United States? <p>Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Unit exam in the AP style addressing federalism
Day 2	<p>Political Values:</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>The students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define and articulate the concept of American political culture• Identify and explain the key elements of American political culture, including individualism, equality of opportunity, free enterprise, and the rule of law.• Compare and contrast the political values and cultures of the European Union and the United States, analyzing similarities and differences <p>Introduction: (Think/Pair/Share)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What are the top 5 things that Americans believe in (related to politics and government)?• Are there universal values? <p>Direct Instruction/Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Define American Political Culture• Introduce elements of American Political Culture/Values: Individualism, core values, including individualism (each person has the ability to shape their life and destiny through the choices they make), equality of opportunity (all people are given an equal chance to compete), free enterprise (the market determines prices, products, and services), and rule of law (every person, even those in power, must follow and is accountable to the same laws that govern all).• Ask students: Do all democratic nations share these values? How might values differ outside of the United States? <p>Show the following video on EU Values: https://youtu.be/Fh4uX_Grxrg?si=iQV35ZujmDDgiAyg</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask students to compare EU values to elements of US political culture. How are they similar? Different? What might account for those similarities and differences? <p>Activity: Students explore the Freedom House global freedom status comparing EU countries with the United States:</p> <p>https://freedomhouse.org/explore-the-map?type=fw&year=2024</p> <p>Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• AP style exam on learning objectives on political culture
Day 3/4	<p>Youth Vote:</p> <p>Objectives:</p> <p>The Students will be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• discuss the historical context, arguments, and processes involved in lowering the voting age to 18 in the United States, and assess the ongoing challenges and solutions related to youth voter turnout• Explore various factors that influence voting behavior and voter efficacy• Compare voting age and turnout among the European Union member states and the United States.• Evaluate and suggest potential measures that could increase youth voter participation in the 2024 election. <p>Introduction/Hook: Think/Pair/Share:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Why vote?• How do you predict that young people vote compared to other demographics? (turnout and party/ideology) Why?• What could increase the youth vote in the 2024 election? <p>Discuss as a class</p> <p>Direct instruction:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Factors that influence voting/ voter efficacy• Voter turnout rates in the US <p>Activity: Data Analysis: Voter turnout rates by demographic group</p> <p>(Choose one of the graphics related to youth vote)</p> <p>https://circle.tufts.edu/2022-election-center#how-young-voters-view-political-parties-and-democracy</p>

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<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/11/01/turnout-in-u-s-has-soared-in-recent-elections-but-by-some-measures-still-trails-that-of-many-other-countries/>

<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/record-high-turnout-in-2020-general-election.html>

- Identify a trend in the data regarding the youth vote and draw a conclusion to explain that data.

Discuss

Topic: How did 18 year olds gain the right to vote in the United States?

Students read the following article:

<https://www.rockthevote.org/explainers/the-26th-amendment-and-the-youth-vote/>

Questions for discussion based on the reading:

- What were the primary arguments for and against lowering the voting age to 18 during World War II and the Vietnam War?
- Discuss the process of how the 26th Amendment was passed and ratified. Why was it necessary to amend the Constitution rather than passing a regular law?
- The article mentions that despite the 26th Amendment, young voter turnout has historically been lower than older age groups. What are some reasons for this, and what measures could be implemented to improve youth voter participation?

Transition: The Youth Vote in a comparative context: The 2024 EU elections

Video:

Show the following video created by the European Parliament to advocate for the youth vote in EU elections in 2024:

<https://youtu.be/LoiAADEcIvg?si=-GKotVM6aQamryQL>

Discussion Questions (students first reflect in writing on their own. They then share with a partner before a large group discussion)

- What are the main arguments presented in the video to encourage young people to vote?
- What emotions did the grandparents' experiences evoke in you, and how did this impact your perception of the importance of voting?
- Do you think the video is persuasive? Why or why not?
- How effective do you think the use of personal, historical experiences is in conveying the message to vote?

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- This video was created for a European audience. Does the message resonate with a US audience? Why or why not?
- Can you relate any personal or family stories that reinforce the importance of voting?
- Do you feel more motivated to vote after watching the video? Why or why not?

Topic: The Youth Vote in the EU

Explore the chart of page 2 of this document:

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/749767/EPRS_ATA\(2023\)749767_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/749767/EPRS_ATA(2023)749767_EN.pdf)

- Which EU member states have a voting age lower than 18?
- Do you think the US should lower its voting age?

Activity: Structured Academic Controversy (SAC): Should the Voting Age Be Lowered to 16 in the United States?

Assign students to pairs and sides (pro or con); then create groups of 2 pro students and 2 con students.

Step 1: students use this resource to prepare their stance:

<https://www.procon.org/headlines/lowering-the-voting-age-top-3-pros-and-cons/>

Step 2: Students engage in the SAC process (**see attached SAC document**)

At the completion of the SAC, each group reports out on their consensus decision as well as if the process of the SAC changed their initial opinion on the issue.

Assessment:

Step 1: Research

Find an article on one of the EU countries with a voting age lower than 18. When did this change occur? Why? Has it impacted voter turnout?

Step 2: Write an opinion piece for the school newspaper. Address at least two of the questions below and include a reference to an article about one of the EU countries that have lowered their voting age. Please cite your source for your article in your Op-Ed.

1. Should the voting age be lowered to 16? Why or why not?
2. Would lowering the voting age increase voter turnout? Explain your answer?
3. Would lowering the voting age lead to an increase in civic knowledge and participation? Why or why not?

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4. Considering that Millennials and Gen Z will make up a significant portion of the electorate, how might their voting patterns and priorities influence future elections and policy decisions?

Possible Extension Activity:

- Interview a grandparent (or older friend or family member) on their views on voting. Why do they vote? (or not vote.) What experiences in their lifetime have shaped the ways in which they vote? Which major event(s) in your lifetime impacted your political beliefs? (ex, wars, presidents, depressions, recessions, singular events, could be national, state, local...)
- How has your politics and your views on voting changed over your lifetime: youth, college age, early adult, married/kids, career? Has your age or socioeconomic status impacted your politics?
- What political values do you think are most important?
- What would you want to say to young people about the importance of voting?

Additional Extension Activity:

- Create a video to promote the youth vote in the 2024 (could be based on the activity above.)

Resources and Materials

Additional Resources:

PowerPoint from the European Parliament (structure of the EU/ Shared Competencies/ EU values)

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1PSKEBvuI9R7lXj-wAphpVBg3gSf0TZxt>

Youth Vote:

<https://apnews.com/article/eu-elections-youth-vote-far-right-populists-a17c16fe4dd33848fc59ff02b109a44e>

<https://theconversation.com/2024-european-elections-who-are-young-europeans-voting-for-232058>

<https://www.cnn.com/video/2024/07/26/data-suggests-harris-could-pull-obama-level-youth-vote-says-generation-labs-cyrus-beschloss.html>