

September 2008

The Father Ted Colleton Scholarship Program

Welcome back to another stimulating academic year. At *The Interim* we look forward to serving educators in a modest way by continuing to provide resources that may help you in lesson planning on topics often difficult to research.

We are proud to announce the 7th annual Father Ted Colleton Scholarship Program co-sponsored by *The Interim* newspaper and Niagara Region RTL. Please bring the scholarship program to the attention of your students and encourage them to participate. Direct them to visit our website www.theinterim.ca and click on the scholarship icon. Details are provided, including an application form, requirements, and information about Father Ted Colleton. There are three prizes of \$1000 each. The essay component involves writing an original essay of 800-1000 words on the following theme:

In 2008 the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights is 60 years old. From a pro-life perspective, what needs to be done to make it properly and fully applicable in our nation? (Hint, use diverse sources and resources. You may wish to speak to elected officials about the topic and include such discussion in your essay.)

The Canadian and American Elections



Two nations. Two neighbours. Two political systems. Both nations are in the midst of a general election. Canadians may choose to elect a majority government, while Americans will make an historic choice,

either the first black president or the first woman vice-president. Canadians go to the polls on October 14, while the Americans vote on November 4.

The simultaneity of these elections offers a welcome opportunity to compare and contrast various aspects of their respective systems of government, how the rulers are elected and how the parties conduct their election campaigns. There are three sections to this study of the elections

Section I presents the composition and structure of Parliament and Congress respectively. **Section II** looks at the actual electoral campaigns, length of official campaigns, the parties, strategies and issues, media coverage and advertising expenses. **Section III** addresses the nature and importance of life issues in the campaigns north and south of the 49th parallel.

Section I The Systems of Government: Canada and the United States

Canada

Canada is legally a **constitutional monarchy** with a monarch as titular Head of State. This means that in a ceremonial sense the Queen, Elizabeth II is the reigning monarch, but she rules through her representative in Canada, the Governor General. In theory authority rests in a monarch whose power is derived from her divine right to rule. But in reality, Canada enjoys a **parliamentary, representative government** with a Prime Minister who rules and exercises power.

Because of history and geography Canada is a **confederation**, meaning that it has two major levels of government according to the British North America Act. There is a national government with its headquarters in Ottawa and there are provincial and territorial governments. Each level of government has its own distinct powers and responsibilities.

There is one Parliament for the whole country. The actual or practical ruler in Canada is a **Prime Minister** who functions as the monarch's chief minister and whose advice she and her representative (the Governor-General) must accept according to long established parliamentary traditions.

Canada's Parliamentary System boasts three branches of government, the executive, the legislative and the judicial. The **executive** consists of the Prime Minister and his Cabinet and the Prime Minister's Office. The **legislative** branch introduces and passes the laws. Parliament has two houses or chambers: the **House of Commons** whose 308 members are elected by the people in various ridings (designated representative districts) from across the country, based on population and according to allotment by province; and the **Senate**, having 104 members who are **appointed** by the Governor-General upon the recommendation of the Prime Minister. The provinces and regions are represented in this upper house according to a formula. Finally, the third



branch is the **judicial** branch, consisting of the Supreme Court of Canada and corresponding provincial Superior Courts. It is their responsibility to interpret the constitutionality of laws passed by the legislative branch in light of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms passed in 1982.

The national Prime Minister (and each provincial Premier) governs through a **Cabinet**, a group of elected officials who head up various departments of government like defence, health & welfare, justice, transport, finance, etc.



The **Prime Minister** is a member of House of Commons and is the **leader of the political party that obtains the majority of the parliamentary seats or ridings** as a result of a national election. The leader of that winning party is invited to form a “government”, that is, to choose a Cabinet to run the affairs of state and to be held responsible by the House of Commons.

There are several political parties competing for the privilege of governing. The party that wins the greatest number of seats gets to form that government. A change in government occurs either as a result of a national election or as the result of a **vote of confidence** in the House of Commons.

If there is no clear majority following an election there are two choices possible: the original Cabinet can resign and the leader of the largest opposition party can be asked to form another Cabinet that would enjoy the confidence of the majority of the members of the House of Commons. Or, the original Cabinet can stay in office and meet the newly elected House hoping to enjoy its confidence. If the majority of the members in the House of Commons vote “no confidence” then the “government” is deemed to have been defeated, thus triggering an election prematurely.

Traditionally a Member of Parliament or member of a provincial legislature is elected for a 5-year term of office. **Members of the Cabinet** (whether federal or provincial) have no fixed “term”. Instead every federal cabinet minister serves at the pleasure of the Prime Minister and all of them must be or become members of the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada. The Cabinet has sole power to prepare and introduce bills providing for the expenditure of public money or imposing taxes on the population.

If one or more cabinet ministers do not agree with a policy or action of the Government they must either resign, or accept it and defend the policy. This is known as the principle of “cabinet solidarity”. In either scenario it is possible to have a vote of confidence that is not successful, in which

case the government and cabinet must resign since they no longer enjoy the trust or confidence of the people.

www.parl.gc.ca/information/library/idb/forsey/author-e.asp

www.parl.gc.ca/Information/about/education/resources/index-e.asp

Questions to Consider

1. Is Canadian government democratic?
2. What are the strength and weaknesses of the Parliamentary system?
3. Are there sufficient checks on the power of the Prime Minister?
4. What factors likely play important roles in how and who the Prime Minister chooses for the Cabinet?

The Systems of Government – United States



Photo: Dianne Brydon

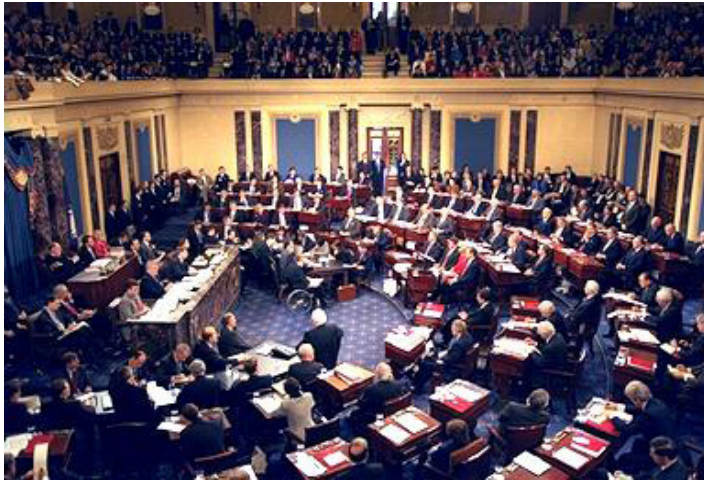
The United States is a democratic republic that espouses certain democratic ideals: **popular sovereignty**, meaning that the people are the ultimate source of the government’s authority; **representative government**, meaning that qualified citizens elect representatives to exercise power on their behalf; **federalism**, an arrangement where powers are shared by different levels of government; and **checks and balances** to prevent abuse of their respective powers by state and national governments.

The national government was given specific powers to collect taxes, regulate interstate commerce, coin money, regulate currency, set standards of weights and measures, declare war, raise and maintain an army and navy. In addition, the national government also enjoys “implied powers” to pass any law “necessary and proper” for it to fulfill its responsibilities.

The state governments were given control of educational policy, criminal justice, business and professional regulation and public health, among a variety of important powers. While national and state governments share powers to levy taxes, borrow money and charter corporations, **other powers** not expressly granted to the national government and not expressly denied to the state governments are **reserved for the states**.

There are three branches to the American government, the **executive** (consisting of the office of the President), the **legislative** (consisting of Congress made up of the House of Representatives and the Senate) and the **judiciary** (consisting of the Supreme Court and the various appellate courts across the land).

The President executes or carries out the laws. It is his duty to enforce the law of the land. The Congress introduces and passes laws. The Courts exist to interpret the laws according to the intent of the Constitution. There is a checks and balances system in operation among the three branches. The President does not sit in Congress. He is also the civilian commander in chief of the armed forces. The Congress controls the tax and spending power. The Supreme Court members are recommended by the President but ratified by the Senate.



There are 435 members in the House of Representatives, based on population, and 100 members in the Senate, with 2 senators per state regardless of size or population. This means that a state like California or Texas have no more powers in the Senate than little Delaware or Hawaii.

American citizens **indirectly** vote for their president, their chief executive officer and their Head of State. When Americans go to the polls to vote every 4 years in a presidential election they are not really voting for the president. Rather they are voting for their **state electors** who will vote for the candidate they want. This process is determined by each individual state. The electors make up what is called the **Electoral College** and are the people who actually elect the president.

The process of selecting electors varies among the states through intra-party struggles called **primaries** and **caucuses**. Through primaries, the political parties nominate electors at their state party conventions. Through caucuses electors are chosen by a vote of the party's central committee in each state. Then on the day of the general election always the first Tuesday of November of the election year, the voters of each state choose the electors they want. In December, the electors meet to cast their ballots for president and vice-president. Some states bind their electors to vote with the popular majority. There are two states that apportion the electoral votes based on the popular vote obtained by the candidates in those states. In January, the ballots are counted and if no candidate wins the majority of the electoral votes, or if 2 candidates are tied, then the House of Representatives selects a president from among the 3 presidential candidates with the most electoral votes

A little math will show that the Electoral College system makes it possible for a candidate to actually lose the nationwide popular vote, but be elected president by the Electoral College.

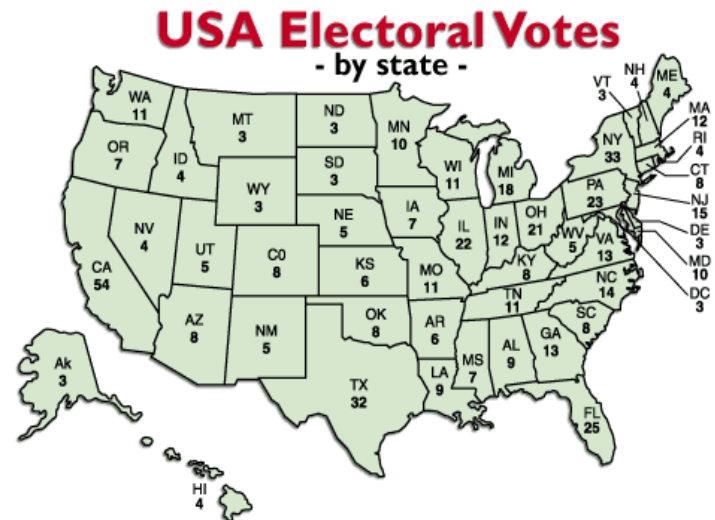
In fact, it is possible for a candidate to not get a single person's vote – not one – in 39 states or the District of Columbia, yet be elected president by winning the popular vote in just 11 of these 12 states:

State	Electoral Votes	State	Electoral Votes
California	54	Ohio	21
New York	33	Michigan	18
Texas	32	New Jersey	15
Florida	25	North Carolina	14
Pennsylvania	23	Georgia	13
Illinois	22	Virginia	13*

* Either state could be the 11th state

There are 538 total votes in the Electoral College and a presidential candidate must win a majority – 270 – electoral votes to be elected. Since 11 of the 12 states in the chart above account for exactly 270 votes, a candidate could win these states, lose the other 39, and still be elected.

Each state has as many electors as it has senators and members of the House of Representatives, for that total of 538 electoral votes. The number of electors per state varies according to population. The larger states like California will have a lot more electors than smaller states like Rhode Island. Because of this reality presidential candidates focus their campaigns on winning individual states, not on winning a national majority. Therefore they put their time and resources into the larger states that have the most electors. For an individual to win, he/she must win the majority of **270 electoral** votes, regardless of who wins the popular vote.



The system works only through organized political parties. The two national parties are the Democrats and the Republicans. Third parties may field candidates but only on rare occasions do they have any impact on the race. Each party is allowed to make its own internal rules for the selection of its candidates.

The political parties in each state contend for the electoral votes. The winner takes all. Therefore, whichever party has the most votes will carry all the electoral votes of that individual state. The president is chosen based on the majority of electoral votes and not the national popular

vote. Within the individual state, therefore, the vote of the ordinary citizen has a good deal of significance.

But why is this system in place? When the Electoral College was established, there were only 13 states and they varied greatly in size. With no national media or transit system, the idea of candidates waging nationwide campaigns in 1787 was not likely or practical. Moreover, the citizens of the new country were suspicious of a national government, and small states feared that a direct election of the chief executive would result with one of the larger states, such as New York, dominating the political landscape. So the Electoral College was among a series of compromises which gave additional power to members of the smaller states to make them feel comfortable joining the American Union.

The Electoral College process is somewhat controversial with strong arguments from both its supporters and detractors. For a current list of Electoral votes assigned to the individual states according to population and congressional districts go to www.fec.gov/pages/elevote.htm. It also shows the changes that have occurred over the past three census periods. California, for example gained 8 electoral votes and Arizona gained 3 electoral votes since 1990, while Illinois and Michigan have lost 3 each.

Sites Used:

- www.learnnc.org/media/lessons/davidwalbert7232004-02/electoral-college.html
- www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/faq.html#process
- www.fourthbranchofamerica.com/electoral_college.shtml
- encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_1741500781/united_states_government.html
- usgovinfo.about.com/library/weekly/aa022000b.htm

Questions to Consider

1. a) What is meant by representative government?
b) How are Canada and the United States both representative democracies?
2. Based on the process for selecting the chief of government, which system of government is more responsible to the people?
3. Why did the framers of the American constitution set up a system of indirect election of the president, the chief executive of the nation?
4. Is the "Electoral College" system outmoded in the modern world? What precautions were originally put in place to prevent mob rule? Is it an anti-democratic practice today? Could it create a constitutional crisis?
5. In Canada the disparity between the size of ridings across the country may result in the same kind of imbalance between large and small ridings. Does the population disparity mean that democracy is lacking?
6. Research and then compare and contrast the offices of Canadian Prime Minister and American President with reference to
 - a) qualifications for the office
 - b) how are they elected
 - c) term of office and removal from office
 - d) powers of the office
 - e) succession to the office
 - f) relationship to legislative branch and judicial branches of government

g) how they are checked or held accountable
h) how they choose their Cabinets

7. In theory and practice, which office is more powerful, that of Prime Minister or that of President?

8. How do the Cabinets get formed in the two systems of government?

For discussions of the pros and cons of the Electoral College system consult the following sites:

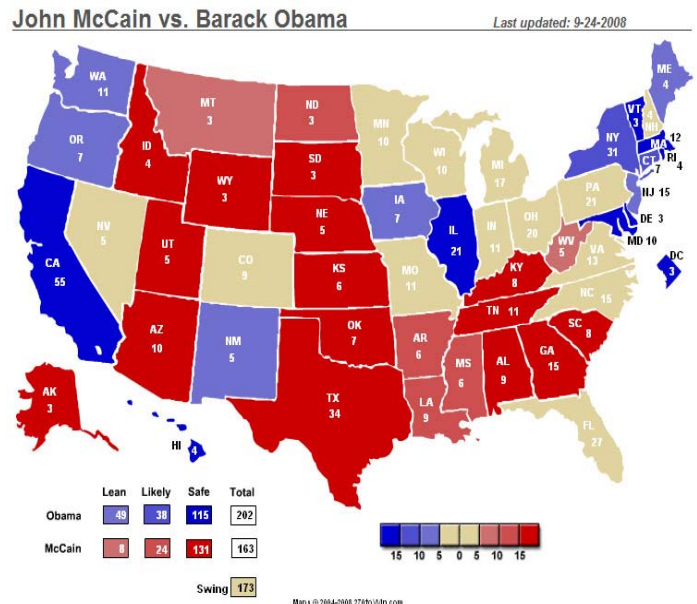
- www.fairvote.org/e_college/today.htm
 - query.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=FB0D11F9355A0C7A8EDD A10894DC404482
 - www.wordiq.com/definition/United_States_Electoral_College
- For arguments in favour of maintaining the *status quo* of the Electoral College system consult:
- www.avagara.com/e_c/reference/00012001.htm
- For a "different" take on the whole controversy regarding the Electoral College system, see Natapoff's arguments:
- www.politics1.com/p2004.htm
 - sg.biz.yahoo.com/040915/68/3n51z.html
 - web.mit.edu/newsoffice/2004/elections-0303.html

Section II Issues, Media, Finances, Student Involvement

Key Issues in the 2008 Canadian Election and American Presidential Election

Issues are supposed to decide the outcome of elections according to the pundits and often they do. Parties want to identify as important those issues that they feel will gather maximum support from the electorate. The media sometimes chooses to make certain issues relevant and downplays other issues by ignoring them altogether.

Prior to elections the parties do polling to place them-



selves in a strategic position to win. This may entail polling nationally, or with focus groups in different provinces or states. What are the key issues? Who decides? There is competition among the parties, their spin doctors and media talking heads, to make certain topics/problems/developments/gaffes become issues. The public can be swayed by the presentation of “the issues” and the debate of those “issues”. How does one keep track of what parties and candidates say about the issues? How can one make an intelligent decision in casting a ballot? Given the complexity of some of the issues and the opposing points of views it is a challenge to exercise one’s franchise.

Here is a suggested activity to make the whole election experience more meaningful to the students:

1. Have one half of the class track the Canadian election campaign and the other half cover the American election. The two groups create a chart on which they record the positions of
 - a) McCain and Obama on the major issues. The chart could consist of five columns with these headings: A - the issue, B - McCain’s position, C - Obama’s position, D - similarities, E - differences.
 - b) Ditto for the Canadian leaders and parties, Stephen Harper and the Conservatives, Stephane Dion and the Liberals, Jack Layton and the NDP, Gilles Duceppe and the Bloc, Elizabeth May and the Green Party.
2. Have students research the issues as reported in news-magazines, newspapers, television, radio and other media like internet sites and blogs run by various organizations with distinctly partisan views. Have students also consider other issues that do not make it on the main radar screen and inquire as to why that may be.

The American election issues may include:

- a) The financial “bailout plan”
- b) Terrorism, War in Iraq and Afghanistan, National Security
- c) Employment, Outsourcing of American jobs, Free Trade, NAFTA
- d) Social Security reforms, health care, prescription drugs
- e) Education
- f) Immigration reform
- g) Life issues - Abortion, Same-sex Marriage, Stem Cell Research
- h) Appointment of Judiciary
- i) Energy Dependency
- j) Change, Leadership and Trust
- k) Tax cuts, growing budget deficit
- l) Experience

The Canadian election issues include:

- a) The environment
- b) Health care
- c) Infrastructure and cities
- d) Leadership
- e) War in Afghanistan
- f) Award of the Order of Canada to Henry Morgentaler
- g) Crime and justice
- h) The Economy (problems, jobs, prices, standard of living, taxes)
- i) Funding for the arts
- j) Green Shift carbon tax

k) Other issues

Media’s Role in Elections: Telling the People “What’s Going On”

Media coverage can influence election campaigns. They can be the friend of a candidate or political party or the sworn enemy of same. The most important role of the media should be to objectively observe and report on the positions the candidates take in the election and report fairly on what the voters view as the biggest issues. The media should not be cheering for particular parties or leaders. They should be raising legitimate questions about issues and policies and informing the public. The media ought to contribute positively to the whole election process so that the voting public can make informed choices when casting their ballots.



Elections are supposed to be the principal means by which citizens can express their approval of or opposition to the way public affairs are being run in a country. The health of democracies largely depend on the level; of public involvement in the political process. But, seldom does the voter turnout exceed 65-70% of the eligible voters. There may be many reasons for this situation, including the poor work of the media in covering election campaigns. Andrew Coyne in a *Maclean’s* magazine article blames the media for concentrating too much on the superficial aspects of elections. (*How journalists get in the way of the election Sept 17*)

www.macleans.ca/canada/opinions/article.jsp?content=20080917_10717_10717

Of course, there is media bias and it shapes people’s minds. The public needs to understand how much the media affects their opinions and be able to screen the media and look at the issues more objectively.

Also different parties seem to have control over one type of media vs. another. For example, in the United States, the Republicans seem to dominate radio talk shows, whereas the Democrats dominate national TV. In Canada there is a more subtle influence where radio and television stations claim to be neutral but often exhibit a left of center stance. But much depends on individual radio and television journalists.

There is another important role for the media, namely

being the conduits for delivering a message to the voters through campaign ads. Political advertisements on TV have become one of the fastest growing sources of TV revenue during the elections. TV is one of the most influential forms of media and the candidates make use of this, blasting a single message to a mass audience, or tailoring appeals to local communities.

Depending on the amount of money fundraised, the candidates can spend more or less on campaign ads. There are a lot of tactics involved in advertising and a lot of money is spent. A candidate must decide what type of media and where he or she is going to focus on.

Media create interest and hype by highlighting the results of opinion polls during the election campaigns. Some claim that they do not heed the polls since they are constantly changing, on the other hand some political operatives depend on these poll findings to shape their campaigns and to change tactics according to these polls. There continues to be great controversy over the use of polls, their veracity or reliability, and their general influence on the electorate.

www.edgate.com/elections/inactive/public_opinion_polls/

Questions to Consider

1. What do you think is the most important function of the media during an election?
2. How has the internet changed the election coverage of the established media? Has it changed the way that the political parties have structured their campaigns?
3. a) Compare and contrast the daily reporting of the major networks on their coverage of the U.S. presidential campaign and the Canadian election campaign respectively for any two-day period. (CBS, MSNBC, FOX NEWS and CBC, CTV, GLOBAL NEWS)
- b) Are the reporters objective, or are they biased and intent on influencing the viewers? Use the reaction of various media to the presidential debates and leaders' debates as a case in point.
4. Does the media influence the organization, timing, and length of campaigns and the style and content of actual election campaigns?
5. How effective are political cartoons as a form of debate? What about the impact of television satire like that found on Saturday Night Live, The Mercer Report, or any of the other late night comedy shows?
6. What is the role of public opinion polls? Are they just reporting opinions, or are they shaping peoples' minds?
7. a) Do people put too much faith in these polls that are changing every day and allow them to shape their own opinions?
- b) Should polling be banned during the last two weeks of a campaign?
- c) Is the polling process manipulated?
- d) Are polls important to the outcome of the presidential and leaders' debates?
8. How much money do parties put into media/ad campaigns? Does money influence the results?
9. Observe the political ads run by the different parties on television, the internet and in newspapers. What is the nature of the ads run by each party? Positive? Negative? Are they effective or a waste of money?
10. What makes a television political ad powerful and effective? Give examples.

Costs of Election Campaigns

There is a general feeling that election campaigns have become too expensive, especially in the United States, where running for the presidency may reach the \$1 billion plateau. Many legitimate questions arise regarding the ever-spiraling costs of holding elections and running for political office. Some observers fear that the future of democratic government is doomed. The enormous costs of campaigning means that only the extremely wealthy can participate, or only people with huge financial backing of special interest groups or companies. The whole system stands to be corrupted by the influx of big sums of money. Others maintain with some justification that the internet has leveled the playing field somewhat, making it a more democratic source of numerous political donations. The internet makes it possible to reach millions of people who can contribute small amounts and thus affect the outcome of elections by their sheer numbers.

Questions to Consider

1. How much do parties raise for election purposes? Which parties raise the most? Which parties spend the most?
2. What are the major sources of election finances?
3. Who are the biggest individual donors? Which are the largest corporate donors? Why do some companies donate to more than one candidate or more than one party?
4. Are there any controls on the amount of money that can be raised or the amount that can be spent, nationally or riding by riding?
5. Are there considerable differences in the financing of elections in Canada and the United States?
6. What incentives would there be for individuals and companies to donate to political candidates or to political parties?
7. Is public tax money available to candidates running for office? Should it be? Why treat political donations more generously than charitable donations?

Stimulating Student Interest in Political Activities

Political apathy abounds. Only 55% to 70% of the electorate bother to vote in general elections in Canada and the United States. Youth in particular seem to be alienated by the political process for any number of reasons. And yet, participation in the political process ought to be an exciting prospect. Schools can help to elevate political intelligence by encouraging students to become involved. Here are some suggested ways to do this.

1. Students can volunteer to help out in the local election campaign headquarters for the candidate of their choice (telephoning, mailing out literature, delivering brochures, stuffing envelopes, putting up lawn signs, etc.)
2. Jargon is the special vocabulary that is used in a particular field. Baseball has jargon (homer, southpaw, etc.) Politics and campaigns also have their own jargon, for example, *caucus*, *landslide*, *platform*, *exit polls*, *popular vote*, *spin doctors*, *lame duck*. Have students describe their meaning and then make predictions about what the word might mean in an election context. Familiarity with the lingo may spur greater interest and understanding.

3. Role-play a television news interviewer. Prepare interview questions for the local candidate or the national leader based on research of the candidate's background and stand on important issues. Use the video taping capabilities of the communications department in the school.
4. Prior to the role-playing, brainstorm and discuss what makes a good interview question. Point out that open-ended questions elicit more information than closed-ended questions (questions that require a yes/no or one-word answer). For example, if a reporter only has time to ask one question, which question would be more effective?
*Do you care about pollution? or
 If you were elected, what would you do to help cut pollution?
 What is your view on abortion? or
 Are there any circumstances under which you believe a woman should have access to abortion?
 How is your campaign going? or
 What is your stand on banning hand-guns?*
5. Invite a news reporter from your local newspaper or the high school student newspaper to speak to the class about the challenges of interviewing political candidates or their operatives.
6. Hold an all-candidates' meeting at the school, either for the entire student body or for select groups, like the seniors who are eligible to vote, or students enrolled in history, civics and/or politics classes.
7. Play a snippet of a television news show in which a person is interviewed. Have students critique the interview. Did the interviewer ask good questions? Did the subject answer what was asked? Did the interviewer remain fair and objective? (there are many YouTube samples to choose from).

Section III

Life Issues in the U.S. Elections

Health care, the war in Iraq, education, immigration, energy independence, protection of the environment, economic problems, abortion, same-sex marriage, and national security seem to be the major key issues of the 2008 US elections.

"You can ask economic questions, foreign policy questions, fiscal questions, et cetera; [and these] will bubble to the surface because that's what the media are mainly paying attention to; but if you look underneath that, especially where a community looks at itself to be religiously serious - which is a majority of Americans - the thing that cuts most deeply is the culture of life questions."

Father Richard John Neuhaus,
 editor of *First Things* magazine

www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2008/sep/08091702.html

John McCain is the Republican candidate and Barack Obama is the Democratic candidate for the Presidency. From the *Focus on the Family* voters guide, here is a thumbnail summary of where McCain and Obama stand on life and family issues. This is a good source because one can listen to the candidates themselves as well as to the commentary of others.

www.citizenlink.org/content/A000006338.cfm

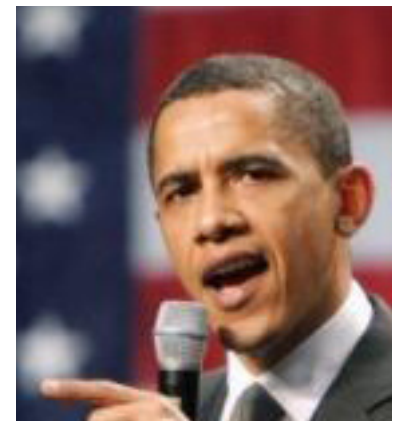
McCain:

- would support a federal law prohibiting human cloning
- would not support or continue President Bush's ban on the use of federal funds for research on human embryonic stem cell lines created after August 2001
- supports the federal funding of destructive embryonic stem cell research
- does not support Medicaid-funded abortions
- would support laws requiring abortion clinics to show all women an ultrasound of their unborn baby
- supports a federal parental notification plan
- would fight to protect the integrity of federally defined abstinence-until-marriage programs
- does not support a U.S. Constitutional amendment to define and protect marriage as the union between one man and one woman
- would veto any bill that would weaken any provision of the federal Defense of Marriage Act
- would veto any bill that would provide federal civil rights protection based on sexual orientation
- would veto any federal "hate crimes" law, and leave prosecution of such crimes to state and local authorities
- would veto any bill to overturn the statutory ban on homosexuals serving in the military
- opposes legislative initiatives that emphasize border security over all other forms of immigration law.
- supports President Bush's decision not to renew the federal ban on assault weapons.



Obama:

- would not support a federal law prohibiting states from engaging in research in which a human embryo is destroyed
- would support a federal law prohibiting human cloning
- would not support or continue President Bush's ban on the use of federal funds for the research on human embryonic stem cell lines created since Aug. 2001
- supports Medicaid-funded abortion
- opposes a federal parental notification law
- would not fight to promote the integrity of a federally defined abstinence-until-marriage education.
- does not support a U.S. Constitutional amendment to define and protect marriage as the union of one man and one woman
- supports a repeal of the provision of the Defense of



Marriage Act (DOMA), thus freeing the government to give marital benefits to same-sex couples. Also says that he would support a repeal of the DOMA that declares states do not have to recognize same-sex “marriages” from other states, thus leaving courts free to require such recognition under the constitutions “full faith and credit” clause

- would support a bill giving federal civil rights protection based on sexual orientation and “gender identity”
- would sign a federal hate crimes law that included protections based on sexual orientation and “gender identity.”
- would sign a bill to overturn the statutory ban on homosexuals serving in the military
- opposes President Bush’s decision not to renew the federal ban on assault weapons

Sites Used:

- www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/issues.html
- www.barackobama.com
- www.johnmccain.com
- <http://uspolitics.america.gov/uspolitics/elections/issues.html>
- www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._presidential_election,_2008
- www.america.gov/
- <http://projects.washingtonpost.com/2008-presidential-candidates/issues/candidates/barack-obama/>
- <http://projects.washingtonpost.com/2008-presidential-candidates/issues/candidates/john-mccain/>
- www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2007/jul/07072005.html

The Views of Leaders and Parties on Life Issues in the Canadian Election

In contrast to the American election where life issues figure so prominently, in Canada every effort is made to keep life issues safely under the rug. Before the election was called, the Conservative government made absolutely certain that it sent out the proper signal to the electorate regarding a “contentious” and “divisive” issue like abortion. There had been a private member’s bill before Parliament, C-484 and it had passed in the first two readings. The bill sought to protect the unborn baby and recognize its humanity by making it a separate punishable crime for violence done to it while its mother was assaulted. Fearing that it would reopen the abortion debate, Rob Nicholson, the Conservative Justice Minister, announced that the government would introduce its own more limited bill to increase the punishment for violence against pregnant women. In the process of announcing its intention, Nicholson made it clear that the government wished to prevent any debate about abortion, however indirectly.



Secondly, on Canada Day, it was announced that the Order of Canada, the highest civilian honour that can be bestowed on a Canadian citizen, was to be granted to abortionist Dr. Henry Morgentaler, in recognition of his

work to expand abortion rights for women. The announcement back on July 1 outraged the majority of Canadians, prompting many holders of the **Order of Canada pin** to return it to the Governor General in disgusted disappointment that this honour was being given to such a recipient and for such an unworthy reason. Such a public affront to decent citizens could not be contemplated in the United States. Yet, in Canada, it seems that those who work in the abortion field are rewarded with public honours and to wild acclaim among some people.

The third point to note is that in Canada currently there is no abortion law. There has not been one since 1988 with the Supreme Court’s *Morgentaler* decision. All five federal political parties and their respective leaders have pronounced themselves to be pro-choice, that is in favour of permitting abortion with no restrictions whatsoever. There are a considerable number of individual MPs who are pro-life and favour introducing some protection for the unborn and placing limits on the practice of abortion. Polls consistently show that the majority of Canadians want some sort of abortion law and some limitations placed on abortion. But there appears to be a well-orchestrated effort to muzzle debate on this issue.

The best source for discussion of this aspect of the political landscape is LifeSite News. Several of the top current stories on the issue can be found there:

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Bishops of Quebec Unanimously Support Cardinal’s Decision to Return Order of Canada Bishops say it is “imperative to launch a cry of alarm” over the right to life

September 17, 2008 , By John-Henry Westen

In a letter released last week, the Bishops of Quebec note that they unanimously approve Montreal Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte’s decision to turn in his Order of Canada over the nomination of abortionist Henry Morgentaler to the Order. The letter points to the Quebec legislature’s unanimous opposition to the Unborn Victims of Violence Act and the nomination of Morgentaler to the Order of Canada as “particularly disturbing” since they falsely suggest a “social consensus” on abortion.



“If we take the future of society to heart,” say the Bishops, “it is urgent to hold a civilized and respectful debate on the ethical and legal respect for all human life, including life that is developing in his mother’s womb and asks to be accepted.” The Bishops point to the contradiction of providing first-rate medical care for premature babies in the face of a total lack of concern for fetal rights. “At a time when we invest a lot of human and financial resources to save babies born prematurely, this refusal to consider that the fetus is a human being and he can have rights concerns us deeply,” they said.

Explaining their opposition to the award for

Morgentaler, the letter says, "As for us, we can not but express our profound disagreement with this act insofar as it honours a practice repudiated by a large portion of the population and which deprives the country of citizens which are sorely needed."

The statement notes that the Bishops, "believe it is imperative to launch a cry of alarm and urge governments and the general population to reflect deeply on this subject." The Bishops also call for measures to address the "economic and cultural causes of abortion and provide real support to couples and single women faced with difficult choices."

"In addition to being a human tragedy, abortion is a political problem," says the statement. "It involves the state, guarantor of the common good and respect for human rights. It also calls each and every one of us to develop a deep sense of the dignity of every human life and to commit ourselves practically to persons in difficulty."

See the full statement from the Quebec Bishops' Conference (in French):

www.eveques.qc.ca/communiqués/2008/20080911.html

A Non-Partisan Pro-life Point of View



One of the foremost spokespersons for the pro-life cause in Canada is Jim Hughes of Campaign Life Coalition, the national grassroots organization that has been battling in the political arena for the past 30 years. During a wide-ranging interview he gave insightful remarks on the implications of recent events in the field of life issues and the prospects for progress in this area. Hughes also gave wise

advice regarding how to vote strategically and with an informed conscience given the very limited options available in the current election.

Here are some of the questions posed by Steve Jalsevac, the director of LifeSiteNews:

LifeSiteNews: A federal election has been called – what is your response to that, being the leader of Canada’s national pro-life political organization?

Jim Hughes: Well, unfortunately, my first reaction is "hohum." There don't seem to be any clear cut issues facing the Canadian electorate. The issues that are important to us have been carefully concealed and the parties are still fighting like crazy to ensure that the topics don't even come up. You see the majority of polls in Canada time and again showing people in Canada want some restrictions on abortion and despite that, you have all these wishy-washy or just plain cowardly politicians refusing to take a strong stand.

LifeSiteNews.com: If there is a pro-life leaning Liberal candidate and a pro-abortion, or at least, no response Conservative candidate - what does the

voter do?

Jim Hughes: If it were me, I would vote for the pro-life Liberal. I have voted for Liberals, Conservatives, Reformers, - even in my early days, I voted for the NDP. I voted for the FCP candidate. I don't think I have ever had the opportunity to vote for a CHP candidate but I have cast my vote for candidates from different parties based on the candidate's position. And, although people will say, if your candidate does not stand a chance of winning, aren't you wasting your vote. Not at all.

I think you are wasting your vote when you vote for somebody who is pro-abortion in the hope that he will be part of a majority who is going to change things. He is not going to change the things that matter most to you, that is, the crucial life and family issues, because the Prime Minister is going to give him a free-vote and he is going to vote according to his conscience, so to speak, and he is not going to vote with us. So, it looks rather bleak but, by the same token, I believe you just have to keep battling.

LifeSiteNews.com: Why have the Conservatives not done anything at all about the trashing of religious and conscience rights by the Human Rights Commissions?

Jim Hughes: They think that it is not a winning issue politically and would hurt their chances of winning a majority. So the HRC victims were sacrificed to political pragmatism. The Conservative backroom strategists believe the party is better off trying to woo the people who are in the mushy middle and eventually when they get into power, perhaps then they will do something about the HRCs. ...

For the complete interview go to LifeSiteNews.

LifeSiteNews Interviews Canadian National Pro-Life Political Organization Leader on Federal Election - Part I

"You have a widening gulf between the electorate and the people running for office" says Jim Hughes

www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2008/sep/08091512.html

Interview with Canadian National Pro-Life Leader Jim Hughes on the Election - Part II

"You are wasting your vote when you vote for somebody who is pro-abortion in the hope that he will be part of a majority who is going to change things"

Questions to Consider

1. How do Canada and the United States differ so greatly in the public debate over life issues? Why is this so?
2. Is there any evidence that the issue is just below the surface in Canada?
3. Of what significance is the Morgentaler Order of Canada controversy to this public debate? Is it of greater significance in some parts of the country? Surprisingly the issue may have legs in the province of Quebec.
4. Why are all five major political parties silently pro-choice in their platforms?
5. According to Jim Hughes what is the best way to vote in the election from a pro-life perspective?
6. Although there has been heated discussion on the issue of Human Rights Commissions and their controversial decisions regarding conscience and various freedoms, why is this not a big election issue?

www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2008/sep/08091602.html

Election Coverage in Canada

National and community newspapers carry many election stories throughout the course of the campaign. Each of the major dailies in the large urban centers like Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa and Winnipeg has an internet presence as well. Ditto for the television media. These particular sites give an interesting perspective on election coverage. But one needs to be aware of the possible bias in each site.

Election Rabble

<http://election.rabble.ca/post/50287694/the-rabble-rouser-election-coverage-in-print>

This site claims to provide a “progressive election analysis”. That translates to mean a left-of-centre analysis if judged from their article blogs.

Lifeline Communications

www.lifelinecom.com/

As the site states in its own words “Our media analysis will feature our NewsInfluence Index, which offers an indicator of the tone, volume and prominence of campaign coverage in major national news media.” This offers a distinct service and different approach to election coverage.

CBC Canada Votes

www.cbc.ca/news/canadavotes/

The cbc.ca offers comprehensive coverage including a Voter Tool kit that explains what makes Canada’s electoral system tick, readers that could submit questions to CBC journal-

ists using the Daily Answer feature or have their say about campaign issues through Your View. The site also tries to include new perspectives with news and views from young voters, an interactive approach via election trivia and games. The availability of audio and video reports, comparisons of party platforms, journalist and voter diaries, guest columnists and a political cartoon gallery make it an interesting site indeed. The viewer, nonetheless, should be on guard for possible bias.

www.j-source.ca/english_new/detail.php?id=2776

In an article Robert Washburn says “When accessing a news media website, especially ones related to an election, it is necessary to evaluate them on two fronts: their contribution to democracy/democratic values and how they contribute to educating their audience in preparation to vote.”

www.ctv.ca/mini/election2008/

Canada’s other national network also has a very good election web site. It offers many solid features, including videos of the day’s top stories, blogs, poll trackers, political analysis by veteran observers of the Ottawa scene like Mike Duffy.

www.studentvote.ca/home.html

From the site itself, we get a clear idea of its intentions to educate and activate young people, get them to participate in the democratic process enthusing them at a young age. Concern with low voter turnout remains a major public policy issue in Canada and it makes the organizers of the sitewant to elevate the level of political knowledge and civic literacy among young Canadians. The purpose of the site is to help young people begin a “habit of democratic participation that will last a lifetime”.



How to join *The Interim Plus* via the group page:

1. Locate the group (groups.yahoo.com/group/TheInterimPlus/).
2. Click on the Join This Group button on front (home) page.
3. If you are not signed in, you will be asked to enter your Yahoo! ID. If you do not have a Yahoo! ID, you can register by clicking on the Sign Up link.
4. Set your membership preferences. When you join, you can choose a profile you would like to display to the group, select the email address at which you would like to receive group messages, choose how you receive group messages, and more.