Environmental Policy

What role should the government have in overseeing environmental policy and protecting the environment?

Unit Five

Contents

Environmental Policy Abstract

Scientists and researchers worldwide began taking note of Earth's warming surface in the early 1800s. Still, it wasn't until the late 19th century that postulations of humans' role in the changing climate (mainly through the burning of fossil fuels) emerged. Since then, the world's understanding of the Earth's ever-changing climate has broadened, and so have various actions to combat accelerating global warming. Aside from global warming, governments must address other facets of climate change and environmental issues; including atmospheric pollution, threats to biodiversity, unsustainable agricultural practices, limited natural resources, clean water shortages, garbage overflow, and more. All these problems, and many more, fall within environmental policy.

Environmental policy is unique in that it requires international compromise and collaboration, particularly concerning inherently global issues such as climate change. Settling on international policies and treaties with terms agreeable to all countries involved can be difficult, which is why progress has historically been slow. Part of the problem is that signing and ratifying global treaties can be lengthy, and several conventions are often necessary to reach formal agreements.

However, several domestic and international policies have thus far worked to preserve and protect various parts of the environment, all of which have had differing levels of success. On a global scale, measures have been passed to protect endangered species through the 1973 Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), preserve the Ozone layer through the 1987 Montreal Protocol, and prevent global temperatures from rising too quickly through the 2016 Paris Agreement. While the Montreal Protocol is the only UN treaty to date to have been signed by all 198 member states, most treaties do not receive unanimous support - this can be problematic because it can inhibit the success of the treaty, particularly if some countries opt not to participate if others do not.

On the domestic level, the United States first began addressing climate concerns on a large scale in the 1900s. Under the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, who is often regarded as the first environmentalist president, significant environmental conservation steps were taken. Through the establishment of national forests, public parks, reserves, and more, Roosevelt protected

approximately 230 million acres of public land. Later, in the 1970s, numerous critical environmental policies were passed under Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon, including the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Toxic Substances Control Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The creation of the Environmental Protection Agency, the federal agency charged with overseeing environmental protectionism efforts and enforcing environmental restrictions on corporations, was also critical during this time.

This unit examines the factors associated with environmental policy and examples of successful and failed policies on both the global and domestic levels. Students will gain a contextual understanding of various environmental problems and unusual proposed solutions. They will also take an in-depth look at how different political ideologies approach environmental policy and use their understanding of the nuances of environmental policy to participate in debate and conduct their democratic simulation. Throughout this unit, students will be working on understanding various ideological answers to the overarching question: What role should the government have in overseeing environmental policy and protecting the environment?

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Climate Change

Climate change refers to long-term changes in temperature and weather. For instance, the temperature has been increasing (global warming) while the weather has become more unpredictable. Since the 1800s, human activities have been the primary cause of climate change, especially through **industrialization**. Climate change can be naturally occurring or anthropomorphic. Previously, the Earth has undergone heating and cooling phases; factors contributing to this climate change include the sun's intensity, volcanic activity, and changes in naturally occurring greenhouse gas concentrations.

However, natural causes alone cannot explain the faster-than-ever occurrence of climate change. Humans have long contributed to climate change through greenhouse gas emissions. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stated that the levels of carbon dioxide, nitrous dioxide, and methane are unprecedented. Furthermore, burning fossil fuels for electricity and transportation is the primary source of human-generated emissions. As a result, **anthropomorphism** has been a major cause of climate change.

Scope of Climate Change

Climate change is detrimental as not only it destroys not only the environment, but also human life, through consequences such as shifted shorelines, declined agricultural activity, reduced food supply, and extreme weather conditions. Through these secondary effects, climate change has disproportionately impacted various geographical areas, specifically lower-income and rural areas where resources are already scarce. In addition, not many areas have the means to combat extreme weather events, and regions with weaker infrastructure will take longer to recover from catastrophic events such as floods, hurricanes, and typhoons.

While climate change detrimentally harms local communities, it also bodes widespread consequences for the federal government; in April 2022, the White House assessed that climate change could cost the United States two trillion dollars each year through investments in natural disaster relief, flood insurance, and crop insurance. A report by the University of Chicago

estimates that America could lose roughly one to four percent of its GDP annually by the end of the century due to the effects of climate change on labor and energy. Hence, climate change must be addressed before its damage becomes irreversible.

Notable Domestic Policies

The United States has addressed climate change through legislation at both a domestic and global level. At the domestic level, the United States has engaged in the following actions:

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

The U.S. Congress passed NEPA in 1969; it was one of the first laws written to establish a national framework for protecting the environment. The act ensures that all branches of government give proper consideration to the environment before enacting significant legislation. Specifically, NEPA's requirements are most commonly invoked when airports, buildings, and other infrastructural developments are proposed or funded.

National Climate Task Force

In 2021, President Biden created the nation's first national climate task force, establishing several climate-related milestones. These milestones include achieving a net-zero economy by 2030 and reducing U.S. greenhouse gas emissions to 50-52% below 2005 levels.

Climate Emergency Act of 2021

Sponsored by Senator Elizabeth Warren, Senator Cory Booker, and other senators, the Climate Emergency Act urges the President to declare a national emergency related to climate change. It also urges the President to invest in projects to mitigate the climate change emergency through large-scale government investments.

Notable Global Policies

From a global standpoint, the United States has engaged in the following policies:

Paris Climate Agreement

The United States has collaborated with other nations to tackle climate change on a global scale. America is part of the Paris Climate Agreement, an international treaty on climate change adopted in 2015. The agreement set a global framework to avoid dangerous global warming; it aims to limit global warming to below two degrees celsius while strengthening other countries to handle the effects of climate change. However, some have argued that the Paris Climate Agreement has failed to address the "free-rider problem," in which countries would benefit from efforts to curb emissions regardless of their contributions.

Montreal Protocol

Established in 1987, the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer aims to regulate the production and consumption of substances that damage Earth's ozone layer, which in turn would protect humans from the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays. Specifically, the agreement aimed to phase out hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), or gasses used worldwide in refrigerating and air-conditioning. The Montreal protocol reduced the use of ozone-depleting substances by creating timetables for both developed and developing countries. In addition, a multilateral fund was developed to assist developing countries in moving away from such substances. Overall, the agreement has achieved some success, as countries were able to phase out 98% of ozone-depleting substances compared to 1990 levels; from 1990 to 2010, countries have been able to reduce greenhouse emissions by the equivalent of 135 gigatons of establishing summary, climate change is a major facet of environmental policy that the United States has attempted to grapple with for decades, both locally and globally. This issue is more relevant than ever, especially as global warming worsens and disastrous weather events become the norm.

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Guided Activity: Politicization of Environmental Policy

Overall Question: How and why did environmental policy become politicized? Is there a way to mitigate this polarization to reach a legislative compromise?

Activity Structure

Approximate Time: 50 - 60 min

Objective

- To understand perspectives in the environmental policy argument, students will analyze ecological policy through the lens of either a Democratic or Republican Senator.
- Working with another peer representing the opposite "party," students will complete an activity in which they research various climate change viewpoints.

Introduction (5 - 10 min)

- Introduce the activity. (Note: The sample below is provided as a reference, but variating introductions tailored to each class can also be used).
    - *Today, we'll be working to understand how environmental policy became such a polarizing topic throughout the past few decades. As a class, we will then attempt to work through those differences to reach a compromise so that meaningful legislation protecting the environment can be enacted.*
    - *Half of you will represent Democrats, while the other half will represent Republicans. Thinking within the boundaries of your ideologies, you will work with a peer of the opposite party to research and analyze documents and sources relating to environmental policy. The goal is to work through your ideological differences to reach a compromise on environmental policy.*
- Each student should read the activity context (attached on pg. 3). This can be assigned homework the night before if needed. Briefly summarize the context and discuss parts not fully understood by students.
- Evenly split the class into "Democrats" and "Republicans." After, randomly create pairs of one Democrat and one Republican.

Collaborative Work (30 min)

- Students should work in teams on the activity (found on pg. 4) for around half an hour.

Conclusion (15 - 20 min)

- Now, the class should regroup to share their insights from the activity. This part is flexible, and various ways of summing up the activity include
    - Selecting multiple groups to share their answers to the document questions.
    - Having students answer the overall question and then reaching a consensus as a class.
    - Have students reflect on the activity.
    - Coming up with a solution as a class to depolarize environmental policy.

Background

Even during the latter portion of the 20th century, environmental policy enjoyed bipartisan support and collaboration; both political parties agreed on the science and decided that protecting the environment was necessary for human life and global welfare. However, that does not seem to be the case in the modern day. Democrats are widely known for supporting environmental policy, while Republicans have been against it. Conservatism can be traced back to the **Transcendentalist Era** in the nineteenth century when luminaries such as Henry David Thoreau advocated protecting national parks. In turn, it inspired grassroots movements, particularly in the 1960s century. Environmentalists would lobby Congress members, resulting in a flurry of new legislation concerning clean drinking water and the restoration of Lake Erie. These grassroots movements grew in the form of NGOs, which wielded political influence.

However, a shift in environmental policy was observed during the presidency of Ronald Reagan. He supported private development, and his policies demonstrated how he sought to minimize the responsibility of the federal government; in other words, the government should not play a significant role in regulating environmental policy. Ultimately, Reagan's presidency ushered in a Conservative era which we are still in today; this is reflected in the values of the current Republican Party.

As a result, environmental policy – especially climate change – has become a polarizing issue. Currently, 82% of the GOP believe that the Biden administration is taking climate change in the wrong direction, which stands in stark contrast to the 79% of Democrats that believe that the Biden administration is taking climate change in the right direction. The divide over climate change is political, which has serious consequences. The average increase in global temperature has been 0.32 degrees Fahrenheit since 1981. It has manifested in more extreme and catastrophic weather events, such as the California wildfires.

Therefore, protecting the environment and conserving Earth's natural resources has become more urgent. Yet, political divides and partisan politics have hindered the passage of meaningful legislation. Compromises must be made to preserve the future of our Earth. Through this activity, you'll work through finding and leveraging the common ground you and your political counterpart share to drive meaningful progress.

Paired Activity

Directions: From either a Democrat or Republican perspective, research evidence for the following questions is designed to be ordered from least polarizing → most polarizing. Working with your partner, come up with a combined answer. It's okay to disagree! However, the goal should be to work around these disagreements and reach a consensus on the facts. These questions could be answered on a separate piece of paper.

What are the causes of climate change and pollution?

- What have leaders in your party said about this issue?
- What has led them to this conclusion? (i.e., facts, data, figures)
- What financial industries are most responsible for climate change and pollution?
- Consolidated Answer (include how similar your original answer was to your partner's answer).

What is the scope of climate change and pollution (In other words, how bad is the problem)?

- What have leaders in your party said about this issue?
- What has led them to this conclusion? (i.e., facts, data, figures)
- What adverse events have climate change and or pollution led to?
- How are climate change and pollution impacting ordinary Americans? Are certain groups being impacted disproportionally?
- Consolidated Answer (include how similar your original answer was to your partner's answer).

Are treaties (both domestic and international) a plausible solution to the climate crisis?

- What have leaders in your party said about this issue?
- What has led them to this conclusion? (i.e., facts, data, figures)
- What treaties have been pursued on both the national and global scale thus far?
- Consolidated Answer (also include how similar your original answer was to your partner's answer).

Should the government get involved in environmental policy (as it relates to climate change, pollution, clean water, etc.)?

- What have leaders in your party said about this issue?
- What has led them to this conclusion? (i.e., facts, data, figures)
- What government actions have been pursued in the past?
- Consolidated Answer (also include how similar your original answer was to your partner's answer).

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Atmospheric Pollution

Introduction

Atmospheric pollution is the contamination of the atmosphere by any chemical, physical or biological agent that modifies the natural characteristics of the environment. Pollutants include household combustion devices, motor vehicles, industrial facilities, and forest fires. Most air pollution is caused by energy use and production, as burning fossil fuels releases toxic greenhouse gasses and chemicals into the air.

Atmospheric pollution is a severe concern for the environment. Combustion of fossil fuels emits greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere, exacerbating global warming and climate change. Not only is climate change impacted by air pollution, but air pollution is worsened by the effects of climate change; with a type of air pollution, smog, further exacerbated by the increased heat from climate change. It also negatively impacts public health, as it causes respiratory and other diseases; and increases morbidity and mortality rates. Currently, about 9 out of 10 people globally live under conditions with pollution levels that exceed the limits provided by World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, with low and middle-income countries suffering the

most severe levels of air pollution. Four out of ten US residents live in areas with unhealthy pollution levels.

Scope of Atmospheric Pollution

Atmospheric pollution disproportionately impacts people living in industrial zones near incinerators, oil refineries, ports, toxic waste dumps, or other sources of pollution. This makes them more prone to respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, neurological damage, cancer, and even death. People of color, racial and ethnic minorities, and lower-income groups are at higher risk of death from exposure to air pollution. Racist zoning policies and discriminatory lending practices like redlining have kept polluting industries, highways, and industrial facilities in primarily black neighborhoods rather than white neighborhoods. Practices like this have caused people of color and those with lower incomes to bear more immense consequences from air pollution. Disparities in the impacts of air pollution increase the need for relevant government agencies and organizations to provide all people with similar degrees of protection from environmental hazards like air pollution.

Air quality is essential in combating climate change and reducing its global impacts, especially for vulnerable populations more exposed to pollutants. Improving and regulating air quality is also crucial in improving public health and well being, as poor air quality increases the chances of illnesses and worsens health conditions. It also contributes to economic prosperity by reducing healthcare costs and boosting worker productivity.

The Role of Renewable Energy in Curbing Atmospheric Pollution

Renewable energy is an alternative to fossil fuels and helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions that drive global warming and atmospheric pollution. As fossil fuels are the primary source of greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants, which have adverse health and environmental impacts, air quality improves when fossil fuel use is replaced with that renewable energy. Transitioning to renewable energy sources that do not emit pollutants like solar or wind power

would improve the area's air quality by reducing delicate particulate matter produced by fossil fuel-burning power plants. Although some renewable energy alternatives like geothermal power and biomass emit some air pollutants, they do so at a much lower rate than conventional fossil fuel combustion.

Notable Policies

Clean Air Initiative

The United Nations, the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment,) and Climate and Clean Air Coalition established the Clean Air Initiative, calling on governments to commit to achieving air quality safe for people and to align air pollution policies with climate change goals. Member states can implement policies such as introducing **e-mobility** and sustainable mobility policies to reduce transport emissions and monitoring and assessing the number of lives saved and health gains from air pollution policies.

Global Air Quality Guidelines (AQGs)

These new global guidelines recommend new air quality levels to protect public health and the environment. It identifies classical pollutants like particulate matter, emphasizes health risks associated with air pollution, and highlights sustainable practices that reduce certain types of particulate matter that increase air pollution.

Clean Air Act

In the US, the Clean Air Act, established in 1970, is a federal law that regulates air emissions from stationary and mobile sources. It authorizes the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to establish National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) to protect public health and regulate emissions of hazardous air pollutants. The CAA aimed to establish NAAQS in every state by 1975 but failed to meet the deadlines. After a series of amendments to set new goals for achieving NAAQS, it continues to develop national policies, standards, programs, and

regulations to control air pollution. Since 1970, its implementation and technological advances in innovation have improved air quality in the US.

The CAA's Prevention of Significant Deterioration (PSD) program outlines a permit scheme for pollutants. If a new air pollutant is to begin construction, it must obtain a permit according to the guidelines of the PSD. This helps protect air quality, particularly in natural wilderness areas with high levels of biodiversity.

State Smoke Management Plans

Most states have adopted smoke management plans to prevent smoke from fire from entering populated areas, including residential areas, to avoid violations of NAAQS, and to protect the public from safety hazards that could be harmful.

Natural Resources

Background

Over its four billion years of existence, planet Earth has changed continuously, whether it be its ecosystems, species, or available resources. The abundance of natural resources once found within, underneath, and upon the Earth has dwindled as the human race continues to push the limits in their efforts to learn best how to extract and exploit the resources found on Earth. While natural resources have proved an invaluable tool in many of the great machinery, discoveries, and conveniences we enjoy today, their use comes at the expense of our home's health. The profound role of humans in hastening the decline of our planet has led many to turn to governmental bodies to hold necessary parties accountable.

Coal

The Eastern Appalachian Coast, Midwest, far West, and Alaska are some of the most coal-rich areas in the United States (“Coal Explained”). After being mined and processed in these areas, coal has become a major source of electricity and gasoline around the country with Americans relying heavily on this fossil fuel to support workers and fuel homes, buildings, cars, and machinery. Despite seeming abundant, coal is in fact a dwindling resource. Our planet has a limited amount of coal currently accessible because the fuel requires a million years to form fully. Not only does the mining of coal contribute to the exhaustion of this vital nonrenewable resource, but it simultaneously causes tremendous damage to the planet. The burning of coal can lead to increased carbon dioxide levels, affecting air quality, wildlife, nature, and climate.

To combat the issues surrounding coal usage, the Energy Policy Act of 2005 reduced dependence on nonrenewable energy sources, increased the use of alternative fuels and renewable energy, and promoted energy efficiency (“Summary of the Energy Policy Act”; “The Paris Agreement”; Urpelainen and George). Globally, the Paris Agreement and its 195 member countries monitor and reduce the contribution of all participants to the growing climate crisis, including the limiting of all fossil fuel emissions (“Governments’ Fossil Fuel Production Plans Dangerously out of Sync with Paris Limits”; “Paris Agreement - Status of Ratification”). A unanimous effort is necessary from all nations, especially the coal-dominated United States, to alleviate the damage of burning coal.

Trees

Spanning from sea to shining sea, thousands of trees grow in the United States. These leafy plants consume carbon dioxide, filtering and improving air quality, and play a key role in global ecosystems, providing countless benefits, both environmentally and otherwise. However, as both concentrations of atmospheric carbon dioxide and deforestation levels skyrocket worldwide, the quality of air continues to deteriorate. Many species that call forests and jungles home are left

vulnerable from the loss of trees, while erosion continues to rise due to the lack of tree roots holding the soil together.

The Repairing Existing Public Land by Adding Necessary Trees Act, or REPLANT Act, of 2020 attempted to rectify the damage of deforestation and the lumber industry by providing funding to plant over a billion trees in the United States in the next decade ("Lawmakers Introduce Bipartisan, Bicameral Legislation to Plant 1.2 Billion Trees on National Forests"; "The REPLANT Act"). Like the REPLANT Act, the Trillion Trees Act would place the United States at the forefront of the efforts to conserve and protect trees by planting a trillion worldwide ("Westerman Leads Bipartisan Introduction of the Trillion Trees Act"). Ensuring the health of our green planet depends on protecting its trees, arguably one of its most important resources.

Sand

Blue waters and great expanses of sand are critical features of the American coastline, yet our beaches are losing their sandy touch.

Rising tides, the construction of dams, and fuel mining all contribute to erosion that washes sand away from coastlines. Without coastline protection, communities close to the coast are more susceptible to tsunamis and tropical storms. Sea and wildlife populations that rely on the coastline are without habitats due to fleeting sand. Similar to the creation of coal, sand is practically nonrenewable, requiring thousands – sometimes millions – of years to form from the weathering of rocks.

Nonprofit organizations like Glass Half Full NOLA and Plant the Peace help our disappearing coastlines by collecting glass bottles to recycle into artificial sand to replace its missing natural counterpart ("The EPA's Role in Protecting Beaches"). The Coastal Zone Management Act and Beach Act Program compensates states and tribal groups for preserving, protecting, and expanding natural beach resources, while monitoring efforts with data collection, scientific studies, and set criteria. The combined work of citizens and the government to protect sand is vital to guarantee the existence of beaches and coastline areas for future generations.

Conclusion

As human interest overtakes environmental interest, resources around the nation and world are exploited without care for the long-term impacts. Serving as national regulators and rule-makers, governments are now tasked with managing and correcting the misuse by individuals and corporations of these vital resources. In areas where the government fails to create practical solutions, individuals may come together to form nonprofit organizations to handle the local problem; wildlife tale action and policy are critical features in solidifying the ability of Earth to last billions of more years with its needed resources.

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Agricultural Practices

Introduction

From the Neolithic Revolution through the Industrial Revolution in the late 1700s and the Green Revolution in the mid-20th century, agricultural methods have continued to develop and intensify. As the human population continues to grow, greater amounts of natural resources, including land and water, are required to sustain the increasing demand for higher agricultural productivity. Meanwhile, research and new agricultural innovations boost crop yield.

Environmentally Harmful Practices

Certain agricultural practices harm the environment by unsustainably exploiting resources and polluting natural ecosystems. Many techniques and modifications such as poor animal feeding practices, misuse of chemicals, and livestock grazing have extensive environmental impacts.

Poor Animal Feeding Practices

Improperly managed animal feeding practices can result in agricultural livestock waste contaminating water sources. Industrial systems like Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) confine large numbers of animals in small spaces, intensifying air and water pollution. Waste from these facilities is often stored in lagoons, piles, or other rudimentary systems without proper maintenance or oversight, leading to further environmental degradation and harm to nearby communities.

Irrigation

As the demand for water extraction for food production rises, increasing amounts of water are used for cropland irrigation. Irrigation involves the artificial application of water to soil through

systems such as tubes, pumps, and sprays. It is primarily used in regions with low or irregular rainfall, drawing water from sources like groundwater, rivers, surface water, and springs. The effectiveness of irrigation systems depends on how water is distributed across fields. When poorly managed or monitored, these systems can contribute to non-point source (NPS) pollution, which originates from multiple sources. This pollution can contaminate agricultural water, spreading bacteria, viruses, and parasites to crops, animals, and humans, potentially causing health risks.

Overgrazing

A large percentage of agricultural territory is used as pasture for livestock, surpassing other types of land use. Overgrazing can cause damage to grasslands, as plants are regrazed over and over again before adequate time for recovery, posing many environmental problems. Overgrazing decreases soil health and fertility, increases unpalatable or invasive plant species, and lowers plant species diversity. It can also lower livestock breeding rates, damaging the economy and disrupting trade.

Plowing

Plowing is the process of turning soil before sowing seeds or planting. Traditionally done by farmers with oxen, it is now primarily carried out using tractors. While plowing remains a common agricultural practice worldwide, it reduces biodiversity and contributes to global warming. By breaking up and disturbing the soil, plowing exposes it to wind and rain erosion, degrading soil quality and health. It can also lead to the runoff of chemicals such as fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. Additionally, as plant matter in the topsoil decomposes, it releases carbon dioxide and methane into the atmosphere, increasing air pollution.

Excessive or Disproportionate Use of Fertilizers and Pesticides

Farmers use fertilizers, pesticides, and other additives to enhance plant growth and meet the demands of a growing global population. These inputs help produce enough crops for food, clothing, and other essential products. Fertilizers supply critical nutrients such as phosphorus, nitrogen, and potassium and can even be engineered to improve human health, making them vital to agricultural production. However, excessive or improper use of fertilizers and pesticides can lead to soil contamination and nutrient imbalances. A major concern is the runoff of these chemicals into nearby rivers and lakes, triggering eutrophication, which disrupts marine ecosystems and reduces biodiversity.

Impact on Farmers and the Economy

With climate change destabilizing many natural processes that sustain modern agricultural practices, it is becoming increasingly difficult for farmers to maintain their current farming methods, posing a threat to many livelihoods and communities.

Notable Policies

Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018

As a part of the Farm Bills, or Farm Acts, administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) that govern programs related to agriculture and farming, this act authorizes policies in a variety of areas including commodity programs, agricultural trade, conservation of agricultural lands, and public health and nutrition.

Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA)

This law requires that manufacturers only produce new chemical substances with prior notification before manufacturing and must thoroughly test these substances and identify where

risks or exposures of concern may be found. The importation of fertilizers requires approval by the USDA, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and/or the destination State's Department of Agriculture.

Global Action Plan (GAP) for the United Nations Decade of Family Farming 2019-2028 (UNDFF)

The UNDFF outlines how governments should develop and improve legal and institutional frameworks to create sustainable family farming practices. It also aims to raise awareness of the vital role played by family farmers worldwide.

Continue research with these resources (clickable links):

LAW ON FERTILIZERS

Ask USDA

Summary of the Toxic Substances Control Act | US EPA

Laws and Regulations | USDA

2018 Farm Bill & Legislative Principles

USDA ERS - Farm & Commodity Policy

Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018: Highlights and Implications

Process Safety Management - Overview | Occupational Safety and Health Administration

FAQs: New Regulation to boost the use of organic and waste-based fertilizers

Water Contamination | Other Uses of Water | Healthy Water | CDC

Popular Unsustainable Techniques Used in Modern Agriculture

Industrial Agricultural Pollution 101 | NRDC

Agriculture and the environment - OECD

Excessive and Disproportionate Use of Chemicals Cause Soil Contamination and Nutritional Stress | IntechOpen

How GMOs Are Regulated for Food and Plant Safety in the United States | FDA

GMOs — Top five concerns for family farmers – Farm Aid

Why we are against GMOs

Do GM crops damage the environment? | Royal Society

What are the socio-economic impacts of genetically modified crops worldwide? A systematic map protocol | Environmental Evidence | Full Text

Impacts of Genetically-Modified Crops and Seeds on Farmers

The Environmental Impact of Genetically Modified Crops - Health & Human Development | Montana State University

Avoid Overgrazing Your Pastures

The Lasting Effects of Overgrazing on Rangeland Ecosystems

Domestic and International Environmental Protection: Guided Activity

Objective: Through participating in these guided activities students should be able to recognize the overlap and significance of international and domestic efforts to protect the environment. By the end of this activity, **students will be able to**:

- Examine necessary critical areas of environmental improvement
- Explain international issues and current efforts

- Explain issues in the United States and policy solutions
- Compare international efforts with US policy for identical issues
- Discuss the role governments play in protecting the environment
- Discuss responsibility toward the environment

Duration: Two Class periods (50 minutes each). One period should be devoted to working with their assigned group on their assigned issue to research at least three examples of their topic. (50 minutes) On the second day, students will meet with their counterparts and discuss. (50 minutes)

Structure:

- The size of groups can be adjusted depending on the size of the class, but ideally, students should be broken up into groups of five or four. An even number of groups must be made for the discussion to work.
- Each group will receive a partner group that will have the same environmental topic as them. One group will look at the topic from a domestic (United States) perspective and the other a global perspective.
    - **Example of environmental topics**
        - Renewable Energy
        - Deforestation
        - Climate Change
        - Atmospheric Pollution

Research (Day one):

To ensure students research well enough to successfully discuss with their partner group a whole class period should be set aside. While researching, students should record information about the **state of the topic in their assigned area (the US or worldwide)**, **efforts dedicated to their topic, and the impact of the efforts**. Students should find information on **at least three efforts**. Students may decide how best to format this information whether in a chart or listed out. The teacher should remind the students to avoid risky sites like dot coms and Wikipedia, and encourage them to seek out dot gov, org, edu, and other scholarly sites. The research can be a collaborative effort with students discussing as they go, however all should fill out their sheets

with their information. This paper should not be collected by the teacher at the end of day one or day two.

Discussion (Day Two):

Students will meet in their groups again, this time also with their partner group, and share their findings. Each group should go one at a time and allow each member to share their findings. After all the members from one group have shared, the other group should share their findings. Upon completion, they should get into the discussion portion. Using both their information and what they have just heard from their partner group, the students should answer the following question. Each question should be posed and students should all attempt to speak. No set time will be put in place for each question and the students have the freedom to move along at whatever pace they see fit. Beforehand, they should be reminded to discuss each fully. If any other questions arise the students may discuss those as well if time permits. The discussion should come to a natural conclusion when the students feel they have said all they need to.

Question for the Discussion:

- How does the level of severity of this issue in the United States compare to worldwide?
- What current efforts have been made to resolve this issue?
- How are the international and domestic efforts similar?
    - Purpose?
    - Actions/requirements?
- Who is more successful in handling this issue?
- Whose responsibility is it to remedy the effects of this issue?

Conclusion:

No set time limit will be placed on the discussion, but teachers should remind students that afterward, they need to complete a final task. Once students discuss their given topic and the efforts of their region to address the issue caused by the topic, they should consider this **final question**:

- **Should environmental protection be addressed as a global matter through the collaboration of many governments or separately within each country?**

After discussing this final question with their group, students should write their answers in a detailed paragraph (including information from their discussion). The paragraph will be turned in to the teacher at the end of class.

Renewable Energy

Overview

As the technology industry has become more advanced, the United States has discovered many forms of renewable resources, including wind, hydropower, solar, biomass, and geothermal energy. Renewable energy provides power and fuel diversification. While renewable energy is more sustainable than fossil fuels because it does not produce greenhouse gasses, can be replenished quickly, and reduces some types of air pollution, it can often be challenging to obtain renewable energy. Renewable energy is not widely used because of cost and infrastructure barriers. Many developed countries, including the United States, recognize the potential of renewable energy and attempt to eliminate the obstacles by investing in the industry.

Discuss scientific pros & cons of different forms of renewable energy (sustainability, yield, noise pollution, etc.)

Although the United States, among others, is investing in renewable energy, some various pros and cons lead to conflicts between opposing political parties.

Pros

Pros	**Cons**
❖ *Renewable energy is more environmentally friendly than fossil fuels*. Renewable energy is a clean	❖ *Renewable energy is less reliable than fossil fuels*. If there are bad weather conditions, some renewable energy

energy source with a tiny environmental footprint. If the entire world used renewable energy, 13 million deaths caused by air pollution and other environmental causes could be prevented. Clean air could be provided to 99% of the global population suffering from breathing air surpassing air quality limits.

- *Renewable energy would create an entire job industry.* Three times more jobs than in the fossil fuel industry are created for each dollar invested in the renewable energy industry. Although 5 million jobs would be lost from the fossil fuel industry, 14 million new jobs would be created in the renewable energy industry.
- *Renewable energy would positively impact the economy in the long run.* According to the United Nations, to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, $4 trillion worldwide would need to be invested in the renewable energy industry until 2030. Additionally, $5.9 trillion was spent in the fossil fuel industry globally in 2020 and this increases every year. However, although the upfront costs might seem daunting, the renewable energy sources can not be used. For instance, solar panels can not produce electricity when it rains, so generators resort to traditional power sources.
- *Renewable energy sites require lots of space.* Renewable energy farms require more space than conventional power stations. With increasing urbanization and industrialization, finding places to put energy sit will be difficult. Deforestation might need to occur to make space for renewable energy farms.
- *Renewable energy sources are initially expensive.* The future of renewable energy sources can sometimes be quite uncertain and requires a significant upfront investment. Many political figures are hesitant to invest in an industry with no predictable outcome.
- *Renewable energy devices would need to be disposed of environmentally friendly.* When a renewable energy device fails over time, hovers be disposed of in a way that will not be toxic to the environment. Although many initiatives have been put in place to find a way to recycle renewable energy devices, no concrete solutions have been developed as of yet.

industry is expected to save the world $4.2 trillion per year by 2030.	Experts predict that hundreds of thousands of renewable energy device parts will need to be recycled or disposed of in the next decade. The International Renewable Energy Agency predicts that 78 million metric tons of solar panel waste will accumulate by 2050. Additionally, renewable energy sources need to be manufactured cleanly.

Scope of Renewable Energy

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, renewable energy sources accounted for 12.2% of the U.S.'s energy consumption and 20.1% of electricity generation. 834 billion kWh of electricity will be generated in 2020. During that year, coal consumption was reduced by 20% and solar energy consumption increased by 9%, and wind energy consumption increased by 14%.

Conclusion

Renewable energy sources can be utilized in many ways, and their consumption increases every year. However, policymakers continue to argue about the practicality and the risks associated with investing in renewable energy. Despite the many pros of renewable energy, there are also many cons.

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Moderate Liberals

Overview

Moderate liberals have ambitious goals to combat climate change and promote renewable energy. They advocate for bills that will significantly reduce the impact of climate change and support Sustainable Development Goal Thirteen: Climate Action, as set by the United Nations. The liberal theory puts pressure on the distinction between two groups: the private and public sectors.

Principles/Underlying Philosophies

Moderate liberals believe that the two sectors contributing to climate change are the private and public sectors. They believe that actions typically considered private have public consequences. Driving, having children, taking a shower, and investing in certain businesses are just a few examples. Although these are personal choices of an individual, their indirect effects on the

environment are public. Many bills have been proposed regarding the public consequences of private actions, however, none have been to liberals' liking.

Additionally, moderate liberals oppose building pipelines from oil extraction sites to U.S. refineries so the oil can be transported. This is a controversial topic between political parties. Moderate liberals believe that oil pipelines should not be built because they cause excavation damage, and leaks can cause lots of harm to the environment. Instead of building oil pipelines, funding should be invested in renewable energy sources.

Policy Beliefs

Moderate liberals tend to support policies that call for the use of less carbon energy sources. Some of these policies might include but are not limited to subsidiaries for electric vehicle purchases and renewable energy funding. Many moderate liberals believe that climate change is one of the most pressing issues in the United States and that ambitious measures must be taken to eradicate global warming and climate change. On the other hand, although they want to eliminate climate change, a few moderate liberals disagree with the ambitious climate budgets.

Recently, most moderate democrats have shown support for “cap-and-trade” legislation. “Cap-and-trade” legislation provides monetary incentives or punishments depending on a company's pollution emission levels. This encourages companies with large environmental footprints to reduce their impact on the environment.

Specific Policies

In 2009, the American Clean Energy and Security Act was proposed by progressives Henry Waxman and Ed Markey. However, moderate Democrats did not support this bill because the United States economy was still recovering from the Great Recession and they felt it was inappropriate to pass a bill that would affect Americans’ economic recovery. Although the bill

passed in the House of Representatives, 44 Democrats voted against it, and the bill eventually failed in the Senate.

With the changing times, moderate liberals' beliefs have shifted surrounding climate change. They have announced that they aspire for the United States to reach zero emissions by 2050, a goal set by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. As of late, most moderate liberals support the Clean Electricity Performance Program that incentivizes the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from electric facilities. This bill would be in place from 2023-2030 and would apply to all United States electric utilities. Targets are set that detail the amount of clean energy necessary for an electric facility to utilize. If these electric utilities do not meet the target, monetary penalties will be inflicted on them. On the other hand, if electric utilities achieve or surpass the targets, they will receive grants from the U.S. Department of Energy.

Over the last several decades, moderate liberals and progressives have disputed climate action plans. President Joe Biden's Build Back Better plan has received mixed responses from moderate liberals. Some moderate liberals, such as Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chair Joe Manchin, do not support the bill because of its expensive climate action plan and extensive social service programs. However, many moderate liberals agree with Biden's $3.5 trillion reconciliation plan for climate change, although they might disagree with other aspects of the Build Back Better plan. Even within the moderate liberal party, there are many disagreements.

Conclusion

Although many will argue about the extent climate change bills should cover, mostly everyone can agree that climate change is an important issue that must be addressed. Most moderate liberals call for a significant reduction of fossil fuel use and a shift towards renewable energy sources, however, there is still conflict between moderate liberals. However, politicians strive to find common ground to pass climate bills relating to renewable energy.

Bill-Based Activity

Analyze the similarities and differences between the American Clean Energy and Security Act and the Clean Electricity Performance Program, both cap-and-trade legislation. Students should write a page essay about the following questions.

1. What are the differences between the American Clean Energy and Security Act and the Clean Electricity Performance Program?
2. Why did most moderate liberals vote against the American Clean Energy and Security Act but for the Clean Electricity Performance Program?
3. How do you think moderate liberals would have perceived the American Clean Energy and Security Act if the United States was not in a recession?

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Moderate Conservatives

Overview

Unlike many conservatives in American politics, those that consider themselves to be moderate are far more likely to express concern for the state of the environment. Thus, moderate conservatives are more likely to state that the federal government should craft more policies that would protect the environment, with one Pew Research poll from 2019 recording 65% of moderate to liberal conservatives saying that the federal government is doing too little to reduce the effects of climate change. However, when it comes to considering environmental policies, the economic impacts of these policies are acknowledged by moderate conservatives. They concede that environmental policies, when implemented alongside other nations, can benefit the international community and domestic companies should they be implemented correctly.

Philosophy

Moderate conservatives agree that human activity is an attributing factor to the environment and that it ought to be the government’s top priority. In a break from most of the conservative base, moderate conservatives seek *greater* government action on this matter, more in line with liberal views, and believe that there ought to be an international effort to protect humanity from the worsening climate. However, they do caveat that these policies should be able to benefit American businesses, which they think will be negatively impacted by the transition to a new energy source in a bid to safeguard the environment.

Policies

Climate Change

When it comes to climate change, moderate conservatives join the majority of Americans in agreeing that climate change is not only a major issue that must be dealt with; they also agree that it is an issue of our own making, a sharp divide from the wider conservative skepticism towards the linkage between human activity and the rising climate and whether climate change is a threat to our country. As such, moderates are far more likely to support climate change policies that aim to reform how the United States treats the environment, such as controlling carbon emissions, encouraging businesses to switch to cleaner sources of energy, and in general making that transition away from fossil fuels. These policies will be described further in-depth below.

Atmospheric Pollution

According to a Pew Research poll that measures how open American conservatives are to climate policies, moderate conservatives are far more likely to support policies that would do more to limit carbon in the atmosphere. The most popular of these solutions is planting a trillion trees to absorb emissions, allowing for a natural re-integration of artificially developed carbon, and preventing it from collapsing into the atmosphere. From this, 93% of moderate conservatives agree that this would be the most beneficial, which sets a pattern of greater moderate support for increasingly substantive policies. Of those policies polled, 81% of moderate conservatives supported giving businesses tax credits to develop carbon capture technologies, 76% supported creating more stringent regulations on carbon emissions from power plants, 67% supported imposing a carbon tax on corporations, and 65% supported creating tougher regulations on vehicle fuel efficiency standards. While these policies enjoy less support from moderate conservatives than liberals, the former cohort still supports such measures more than the traditionally conservative segments of American society.

Natural Resources/Renewable Energy

Regarding what natural resources the United States ought to use and their relation to the environment, a vast majority of moderate conservatives support developing alternative sources to augment the American economy. According to a poll from Pew Research that broadly measures the American public's view on climate change and the associated policies, most seek to prioritize renewables over fossil fuels, with 77% of the general population concurring with such a goal. Of that 77%, 82% of moderate to liberal conservatives concur, compared to only 49% of traditional conservatives. In effect, moderate conservatives seek to decarbonize the US economy; some moderates have reflected this mandate in recent decades. The former Republican governor of California Arnold Schwarzenegger (yes that one) established the first roadmap to reduce climate change and pollution in California, and former Republican New York Governor George Pataki created what would become the Clean Energy Standard, which mandates that 80% of American energy would hail from emissions-free sources by 2030.

Agricultural Practices

Moderate conservatives, generally speaking, also support reforming how American farms operate. However, agricultural reform is shared amongst traditionally conservative farmers, which makes examining moderate policy rather muddled. So, rather than focusing on moderate conservatives, on the whole, this section is dedicated to analyzing farmers' approach to environmental protection, as their actions better encompass the moderate approach conservatives would have towards agricultural reforms.

Farmers, a traditionally conservative cohort, have recently allied themselves with liberal organizations and farmers to combat climate change by adapting their agricultural practices. Specifically, large-scale farmers are engaging in practices such as no-till farming, which keeps carbon from escaping the soil when said soil is damaged for planting crops, and alternating their traditional harvests with crops that infuse the soil with nutrients and keep carbon trapped underground, such as oat, rye, and radishes. Large-scale farmers have also adopted advanced machinery that strategically applies chemical pesticides so that wider swathes of plants are damaged, which would have otherwise prevented them from capturing carbon (PBS).

Smaller-scale farms, liberal and conservative alike, have since worked together in drafting policy recommendations and actions that ought to be taken to take on climate change. One such coalition called the Food and Agriculture Climate Alliance (FACA), which among them includes two moderate chairs from the moderate conservative National Council of Farmer Cooperatives and the liberal center Environmental Defense Fund, unveiled a list of policies and conditions that would underpin wider climate policy initiatives; those conditions being that they are implemented on a volunteer basis, be grounded in scientific rationale, and should be able to maintain consistency throughout the entire chain. Their ideas are shared with proposed pieces of legislation at the federal level, which institute economic incentives for farmers to transition to sustainable apparatuses, yet the costs of these systems prove to be a major sticking point for everyone involved.

Conclusion

Moderate conservatives believe that the US government ought to do more to defend the environment and push the US economy towards a more sustainable energy network, diverging greatly from the more traditional conservative base. Yet, their policy initiatives are more gradual and moderate than the more drastic policies of progressives due to their nature of being more cautious about how policies ought to be implemented.

Guided Activity

Students will come together into groups and analyze two bills that propose two different solutions to dealing with climate change. Students will be asked to review the bills and determine which solutions are feasible in combating climate change while preserving the economic activity of American businesses. They will ask the following questions:

- What aspect(s) of climate/environmental change does the bill aim to reform? (Natural Resource Use, Agricultural Practices, Renewable Energy)?

- What are the potential effects of such a reform?
- What are the drawbacks?
- What incentives (if any) are provided to induce such a change? Would they work?

Students will then draft a brief statement that answers these four questions and any additional critiques that are brought up in the discussion. The group will then issue a recommendation as to whether a moderate conservative should vote for this bill, justifying whether or not they should.

Progressives & The Environment

Overview

Progressives typically take on a left-wing role and often find a foundation in many aspects of the Democratic Party or membership while leading progressive reform to advance communities and individuals. Generally, progressives tackle the intersectionality and interactions of social equity and policy within the economy, **social welfare**, and the focus of this section— the environment. Progressives emphasize environmental health, and the government's role as a steward of **sustainability**, as a determinant of varying impacts upon populations.

Principles

The Progressive movement relies on spearheading climate change and environmental health to optimize economic, infrastructural, and social policy, recognizing the need for reform in such areas to promote **environmental stewardship** and advocate for racial and social justice along all facets of livelihood. The government and citizens should practice environmental stewardship, which the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration defines as one who engages in responsible use, consumption, sustainable practices, and regard for the Earth's **natural resources** to conserve the environment's health to empower ecosystems and human-ecosystem interactions. Specific points of advocacy and change focus on climate change, natural resources, energy usage, and agricultural practices. Progressives are unique in that, collectively, they reject

corporate contributions and financial donations in commitment to their mission to disconnect the further propagation of economic inequity and associated social and environmental health disparities. They press for more impactful, extreme actions while advocating and lobbying for change as they recognize their efforts towards change will be resisted, despite its necessity. Progressives rely on civicism and political engagement of the Americans they serve and organize and encourage citizen **mobilization** towards a just society.

Policy Beliefs

A prominent progressive stance on climate action is the proposal of the **Green New Deal**, as proposed by Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Sen. Bernie Sanders, which emphasized the need to move towards eco-friendly policies to ensure economic stability. From the proposed policy report released by *Data for Progress*, the Green New Deal will "meet the scale and urgency of environmental challenges," "bring job growth and economic opportunity," "is popular among American voters and can mobilize them" and "distributes benefits equitably. " Specific policies focus on the phase-in of a **low-carbon economy**, distribution, increase, and protection of clean air and clean water, expansion of sustainable farming practices and restoring land, and **urban sustainability** calling for optimization of public transit, and green-house gas capture while ensuring the creation of 10 million new jobs. Progressives believe that public policy cannot be racially or socially just if the impact of climate change and environmental practices are not carefully regulated and considered and prioritized high-impact changes.
Consequently, Progressives tend to refute tools and policies already in place, such as **cap-and-trade programs**, for their low impact and nature of the treatment of the crisis rather than prevention. Progressives, such as the platform by The Vermont Progressive Party, support policies that protect and restore land resources and public spaces, as well as provide support to local farmers and sustainable agricultural practices to promote and provide access to healthy living and nutrition for communities, especially those of marginalized persons such as low-income families.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the extremism of Progressives' action reflects the urgency and scale of many issues facing Americans today, such as and not limited to hunger, pollution-related illness, unemployment, homelessness, and systemic racism. Thus, they aim for a more-representative, responsive government of the typical working American citizen to better serve constituents, especially in the above issues of public policies that intersect with environmental health and the impact of climate change. Progressives continue to press for immediate climate action to ensure a more equitable future.

Bill-Guided Activity (30 minutes)

A progressive-supported policy, the **National Environmental Policy Act**, was the first major environmental law that required Federal agencies to consider the impact of their proposed projects or actions on environmental health and communities presented in a statement. The requirements, as delineated by NEPA.GOV are as follows: *"(1) The environmental impact of the proposed action; (2) any adverse effects that cannot be avoided; (3) alternatives to the proposed action; (4) the relationship between local short-term uses of man's environment and the maintenance and enhancement of long-term productivity; and (5) any irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources that would be involved in the proposed action" (Excerpt directly taken from NEPA.GOV)*

Using the information above, groups of 4-5 students should create a scenario where an official is proposing a project in your local community that has effects to be determined. An example could be the building of a new condominium for low-income residents along a local river's reservoir. Students within groups should split amongst themselves. One will report why the project is needed, and the other will advocate for reasons against implementing the project using reasons of community impact. In the end, the two teams should work together to determine alternatives to the proposed action.

Groups will present their discussions and alternative solutions to the class in 1-2 minutes.

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Libertarians & The Environment

Overview

Libertarians generally acknowledge that global warming and associated issues exist and that, should they continue, they will be a detriment to future generations. However, unlike other political ideologies, libertarians believe that counterintuitive government policies are to blame for the deteriorating liberalization environment, thereby saying that the government should step aside regarding environmental protection.

Philosophy

The long-standing belief that government is the issue and not the solution continues to underpin the libertarian philosophy behind environmental protection, and they point to trends in government activity to augment their arguments. In the case of environmental protection,

Libertarians often point to the government's protection and subsidization of the ethanol and automotive industries and maintenance of inefficient public services, including the federal highway network and Postal Service, as being the principal reasons why the government cannot be trusted to protect the environment.

Policy Beliefs

Climate Change

On a general level, Libertarians find that to ward off the effects of climate change, there ought to be a competitive **free market** to allow for businesses to independently develop **green infrastructure** and for individuals to utilize natural resources without much, if any, interference from the government. Such a policy goal would be executed through the abolition of the Environmental Protection Agency and allowing individual businesses to fight climate change on their own in a market that is eager for innovation, free from government intervention. Libertarians generally oppose policies that would grant the government leverage in dealing with the environment, as it would lead them to potentially over-regulating key industries and burdening good-faith actors within those sectors, while the actual agitators would get away with relatively fewer losses.

Natural Resources/Renewable Energy Sources

Libertarians support the deregulation of key renewable energy industries, including wind, solar, and nuclear-based energy, while supporting the deregulation of fracking. In particular, Libertarians have held firm in their support for nuclear power, and they argue that it ought to be the central energy source governments need to support as opposed to oil, and as such, would support policies that would allow for nuclear energy to increase, such as deregulation of their industry.

However, beyond the deregulation of key energy industries, the idea that individual companies and conservation organizations would be better able to independently manage resources through

the clear enforcement of **property rights** and individual responsibility underpins Libertarian policy in this field.

Air Pollution/Agricultural Practices

In a very similar manner, Libertarian policy is underpinned by the notion that individual Americans and independent parties, such as businesses, are individually responsible for their use of natural resources and, thereby, the emissions they emit as a result of usage, free from undue intervention from the federal government.

In the case of air pollution, however, Libertarians believe that since air pollution can cause injury to property and individuals, they find that the courts ought to prevent any party from releasing pollutants into the atmosphere (it assaults the rights of the individual and their property). Libertarians, thus, do not find it fit for a legislature to pass any measures that would impose any restrictions across a wider industry that contributes to pollution, as they argue it would negatively impact those businesses that do intend to minimize air pollution. This does pose a philosophical issue for libertarians as this would make any action against pollution irreconcilable with their views of a free market generating wealth and prosperity for Americans.

Regarding agriculture, libertarians support the abolition of subsidies for agricultural industries that pose a direct threat to the environment. Chief among them is the ethanol industry, which relies heavily on corn production and is the key ingredient in the energy source. Ethanol, when produced, releases carbon dioxide and methane into the air, adding to the number of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere.

Conclusion

The Libertarian view on environmental policy is a very nuanced case as it fundamentally revolves around the individual and business being morally astute enough to independently harness the powers of their rights and the free market to help stop climate change. This is

combined with the notion that government intervention is counterproductive due to their mishandling of environmental protection and that they should not be trusted.

Bill-Based Activity

Students will convene and attempt to draft a bill that would deal with the issues associated with climate change, yet also appeal to key Libertarian officials. Two group members will act as these Libertarian politicians, and the group must negotiate to get the bill written. The following must be considered:

- Is this a bill that is effective in dealing with climate change?
- Is it a practical solution?
- Does it appeal to Libertarians and wider political ideologies?
- Were all views taken into account when drafting the legislation?

Each group will present their bills to the Teacher, who will determine whether or not these bills will see a vote on the floor. This is reflected in the grade they would receive, with As reflecting that it would be seen on the floor outright, Bs reflecting it will be seen pending a few minor changes, Cs reflecting it will be seen pending some more important changes, and so on.

Political Similarities: Progressives & Moderate Liberals

Overview

Progressives and Moderate Liberals share many similarities due to their grounding within the Democratic Party. Progressives make up the most left of the party with extreme changes focused on identity, social justice-based issues, and social welfare. Moderate Liberals currently make up a large percentage of the Democratic Party. These members take left-leaning stances on social-based issues but favor a more right-approach to fiscal opportunities and economic reform and emphasize domestic issues over international intervention.

Overall, both identities have the same goal with results that emphasize aggressive policies to protect and invest in environmental health and social welfare. They both recognize Climate Change as one of the greatest threats to the nation.

Shared Philosophies

Fossil Fuel & Greenhouse Gas Emissions

According to a 2016 PewResearch data set, both Moderate Liberals and Progressives have high regard and concern for the environment and issues surrounding actions attacking climate change. In this study, over 76% of progressives agree on the need to introduce power plant emissions, and 71% are for a carbon emission reduction. Around half of the Moderate Liberals are expected to agree. Both groups likely cite fossil fuel emissions as a harbinger of climate change and find it necessary to transition to alternative or clean energy sources.

Moderate Liberals recently voiced support for an ambitious, cost-hefty progressive bill in favor of the transition to electric vehicles titled the Clean Electricity Performance Program that incentivizes the reduction of greenhouse gas usage in electric utilities. Specifically, moderate liberals cite the economic investment into green energy, innovation, and technology as one of the most impactful areas spearheaded by Progressives, which still contains heavily progressive language.

Climate Change

Moderate Liberals and Progressives agree on the seriousness and the implications of the current climate crisis we face. 64% of Moderate Liberals are likely to support climate-change initiatives that tend to root within the Progressive Party, according to a 2021 Chicago Council Survey. However, they are less likely to engage in international affairs regarding climate change with Progressives in international environmental policy domains due to interference and effect on the global supply chain, as well as infeasibility in the U.S. reaching its goal proposed as an international leader. The majority of Moderate Liberals do agree on the fact that climate change has been a result of direct human impact, aligning with a significant Progressive stance. Despite

support for environmental intervention, many Moderate Liberals take issue with the 2019 proposed Green New Deal as ambitious and overzealous in caution of upending the American economy but emphasize the potential for impact within the same domain. They aspire for a more tangible, directly-impactful plan and infrastructure and find great allyship with aggressive, immediate progressive policies like the call for a clean energy standard and a national cleanup of oil and methane gas leaks from large corporations and companies that are often intertwined within progressive plans. In 2022, both Moderate Liberals and Progressives put pressure on the White House for more immediate and extensive provisions against Climate Change to be added to President Biden's Build Back Better package.

Environmental Practices

Though Moderate Liberals have a more fiscal bent than Progressives, they still share similarities in the philosophy of ecological practices intertwined within the economy and the efforts to reduce them or make a transition. A 2019 Pew Research study found that only 29% of Moderate Liberals, and 12% of Progressives, support offshore drilling practices by corporations, meaning a whopping 71% and 88%, respectively, oppose it. Likewise, moderate liberals and Progressives are likely to oppose coal mining, with opinions toward hydraulic fracturing declining. These shared stances encourage discovering solutions to environmental practices highly used in the American economy to make them much more eco-friendly while being cost efficient for the producer and consumer.

Moderate Liberals and Progressives find cooperation in the representation of agricultural workers and matters as a party affected highly by climate change and environmental practices. Both work to garner more support for farmers, especially in bridging the gap between rural and urban agricultural farmers both from high fossil-fuel areas and low fossil-fuel areas.

Shared Policy & Bills:

As of July of 2022, the following bills have not yet progressed further past the house and into law or policy and therefore should only be referred to for educational purposes.

Bill 1. H.R.1512 - 117th Congress

Title: Climate Leadership and Environmental Action for our Nation's Future Act

Provision: Including and emphasizing the transition from fossil fuels to 100% clean energy and zero-net greenhouse gasses by 2050.

Moderate Liberals and Progressives agree, and both support the transition to clean energy by 2050; moderate Liberals recognize the proposed 2035 goals as being ambitious, whereas Progressives are more hopeful.

Bill 2. H.R. 763 - 117th Congress:

Title: Energy Innovation and Carbon Dividend Act of 2019

Provision: Introduction of a revenue-neutral carbon tax on "producers or importers of the fuels and is equal to the greenhouse gas content of the fuel multiplied by the carbon fee rate" (Bill summary)

Moderate Liberals support a revenue-neutral carbon tax on fossil fuel companies proposed by Democrat peers, assuming there is a financial safety net or alternative mechanism to back it, such as a levy on imports or to prevent international outsourcing from less-strict countries.

Conclusion

Progressives and Moderate Liberals share the same vision and goal, despite holding different life values at different weights. Moderate Liberals are keener on domestic issues rather than international intervention while safeguarding the economy with a more fiscally conservative approach. Yet, they both fight for the same ideals, equality, and justice through all sorts of lenses, especially in addressing the climate crisis, and differences in the past two decades have blurred. They both support green initiatives that are pressing and imminent and consistently press for immediate action-directed legislation that benefits all types of Americans in the different sectors and looking classes.

Bill-Based Activity:

As seen above, Moderate Liberals and Progressives are incredibly similar. The following exemplifies a bi-partisan, progressive-backed bill detailed below.

Use your understanding of the similarities described above and external research to determine whether Moderate Liberals and Progressives would agree with or disagree with the following provisions noted below and explain why. Note that there may be explanations and debates for both agreement and disagreement. Rewrite provisions you may suspect to be divisive to make them inclusive and agreeable to both Moderate Liberals and Progressives.

U.S. Climate Act:

1) to demonstrate Congressional support and cooperation with executive branch effort to restore the U.S's indispensable leadership in global cooperative efforts to combat climate change;

2) to provide resources, authorities, and support for enhancing the U.S.'s ambition and commitment to solving the climate crisis, including climate action-specific assistance and multilateral fund contributions ;

3) integrate considerations for climate change into broader U.S. foreign policy decision-making and the United States national security apparatus. . . *(Excerpt directly from The United States Climate Leadership in International Mitigation, Adaptation, and Technology Enhancement (U.S. CLIMATE Act) of 2021 Document)*

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Overview

Among the American public, there are vast differences in opinion regarding environmental policies and regulations. The majority of moderate conservatives and progressives agree upon active government involvement in efforts to combat environmental issues like climate change and pollution. Both political groups realize the severity of environmental concerns and advocate for change in the status quo, supporting increased government intervention in environmental affairs.

Shared Philosophies

Climate Change

About one-third of conservatives believe the government is doing too little to combat the effects of climate change, and more than half of moderate conservatives think the government should play a more active role in reducing the impacts of climate change. While the overwhelming majority of liberals, including progressives, believe that humans profoundly contribute to climate change, moderate conservatives believe that the extent of this impact is not quite as profound. Despite having differing views on how human activity affects climate change, both groups largely believe environmental policies aimed at reducing the impacts of climate change are effective. Although moderate conservatives are more concerned with how climate change impacts the economy, a belief that certainly influences key policy decisions, both groups still favor taking action to mitigate the impacts of climate change through relevant government measures (even at the expense of the economy).

The majority of moderate conservatives and progressives both favor initiatives such as planting trees to absorb carbon emissions, providing tax credits to businesses to help develop carbon capture and storage mechanisms, implementing harsher regulations and taxes on carbon emissions from power plants or businesses, and increasing fuel efficiency for cars to reduce fossil fuel use and emission of greenhouse gasses.

Atmospheric Pollution

Both groups advocate for increased governmental action to mitigate issues surrounding climate change, including efforts to improve air quality. Because reducing air pollution can contribute to economic development – a key conservative priority – by reducing healthcare costs and boosting worker productivity, moderate conservatives tend to favor policies that combat air pollution and enhance the air quality for the public. This elicits similar standpoints among conservatives and progressives on government involvement and policies related to reducing atmospheric pollution.

Agricultural Practices

Both groups are largely aware of the harmful effects of certain agricultural practices on the environment and are in favor of implementing policies to regulate the use of these practices by replacing them with more sustainable alternatives. For example, both moderate conservatives and progressives advocate for decreasing usage of fertilizer and pesticide to reduce nutrient pollution, waste, and other detrimental consequences, particularly for farmers and those living in nearby areas.

Renewable Energy and Natural Resources

Both progressives and moderate conservatives believe that the US government should prioritize renewable energy production and use wind or solar power (among other forms of renewable energy) over fossil fuels. In fact, the vast majority of both groups – approximately 82% of moderate conservatives and 90% of progressives – support the development of alternative energy sources and oppose further expansion of fossil fuels. Additionally, most conservatives agree with progressives on installing and developing more solar panel and wind turbine farms. On the other hand, over half of conservatives or moderate conservatives are in favor of environmentally harmful practices such as increasing offshore drilling and oil production, hydraulic fracturing, and nuclear power plant production. These activities significantly increase energy production and

enable the US to limit its involvement with foreign investment, bolstering the American economy.

Shared Policies or Bills

Clean Air Act

The Clean Air Act (CAA) is a federal law that regulates emissions that cause atmospheric pollution. It authorizes the EPA to impose National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) that aim to reduce the health risks and environmental harm associated with air pollution. It identifies sources of pollution, addresses pollutant standards, and works with states to develop state implementation plans.

Both groups agree on the CAA and other efforts by the EPA to regulate air quality by limiting emissions of certain air pollutants from sources like chemical plants, factories, and utilities, especially for people living or working near these sources. Because the CAA protects the public from air-related health problems, and thus boosts worker productivity, the CAA is considered a good economic investment, particularly for moderate conservatives who prioritize economic stability.

H.R.8337 - Carbon Sequestration Collaboration Act

This act requires the Secretary of Energy to carry out a carbon sequestration research initiative. With the increasing urgency of combating climate change on the policy level, this bill aims to apply this research to enhance scientific understanding of sequestered carbon, develop **carbon sequestration** technologies, and undergo other investigations of how carbon sequestration can play a role in efforts to combat climate change.

S.483 - Pesticide Registration Improvement Extension Act of 2018

This bill outlines and revises standards for pesticide use by extending the authority of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to collect annual fees to maintain the registration of pesticides.

Both groups endorse this legislation as they believe improving the pesticide registration process will help restrict the use of pesticides and thus reduce environmental damage from excessive pesticide use.

Bill-Based Activity

Duration: 1 hour 30 minutes

Overview

Students will draft a legislative bill on air pollution through the lens of different political views: moderate conservatives and progressives. They will mimic the legislative process to get hands-on experience in researching the evidence that supports their policy, collaborating with other political views, and coming to a consensus on a final bill. This activity aims to train students to become more aware of the overlapping areas and common beliefs between moderate conservatives and progressives and apply these similarities to the policy-making process.

Activity structure

1. (30 minutes) Students will split into two working groups: moderate conservatives and progressives. In each group, they will research facts, figures, and other essential information that lay the foundation for evidence in support of their policy, notable policies, and bills that have previously been passed by each political view (and whether they should be changed or not), and key points that the group holds to importance, coming to a collaborative policy brief supported by research.

2. (10 minutes) Then, all students will be brought back to the whole class to draft the bill as a whole class. Each group will briefly share the key points of their policy brief, explaining how the research supports or influences their overall stance and policy decisions.

3. (40 minutes) After each group has shared their policy briefs, they will split into 4 different groups that have a similar number of students from each group and dive into the legislative process. Based on the research and policy briefs done in the first step of the activity, they will draft a bill in their groups. Because they are split into 4 mixed groups, they can observe differences or similarities between how each group approached the bill drafting process with the same policy briefs.

4. (10 minutes) Finally, they will reflect on their experience and compare how each group used their policy briefs to draft a bill. They may choose the bill that most effectively balances both views and fits other goals and standards for sustainability and the environment.

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Progressives & Libertarians

Overview

Despite being on opposite ends of the political spectrum, progressives and libertarians see climate change as an existential crisis that ought to be dealt with swiftly; otherwise, humanity will be in serious jeopardy. However, this shared outlook is divided along its rationale, with progressives believing climate change is a matter of fighting for social justice and equity, while libertarians see climate change as a detriment to individual and property rights. Moreover, these two cohorts disagree on policy grounds, specifically concerning the role of the government in

combating climate change. Progressives believe the government is the only agent capable of fighting the effects of climate change, and thus should have its powers expanded. At the same time, libertarians say that government is a key reason why the environment is in such a state, and thus should have its powers curtailed.

Policy & Philosophy Perspectives

Progressives and Libertarians have little similarity regarding policy and philosophy in general, and environmental policy is a key example of such differences. At the broadest level, progressives support the idea of a proactive government, one that utilizes the vast resources of the state for the betterment of the many. This would, of course, mean supporting existing government agencies and their activities and expanding upon their authority through broadened mandates, which are often tied to large injections of funds to facilitate such projects. In other words, progressives seek aggressive action on climate change and want to use the tools of the government to fight it.

The most notable program progressives have advocated for in the recent past was the Green New Deal, a 14-page framework that called upon the United States government to begin investing in green energy and shifting away from fossil fuels. The Green New Deal did not provide tangible policy; instead, it was more akin to a resolution in that it called for the government to act on its words rather than codify any such action.

Moreover, progressives have also advocated for policies that tie into the economic concerns of conservatives and libertarians, including “Economic Patriotism,” a policy platform developed by Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-Massachusetts) that encouraged American businesses to develop and utilize “climate-friendly technologies,” thereby preserving the environment while allowing for businesses to innovate and cut costs. This plan did not take full effect as Warren did not win the presidency in 2020. However, the idea that a transition to clean energy can, and should, be a vessel for an improved economy was a core tenant in the platform of Joseph R. Biden’s presidency.

Progressives have leveraged key proposals during the first two years of Biden's presidency, the most notable being the policies outlined in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (otherwise known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)) and the Build Back Better bill (BBB). The BIL passed Congress with such policies as developing a charging network of electric vehicles and environmental remediation. However, the BBB plan, which focused on increasing investments in green energy supply chains and expansion in energy programs, failed to pass Congress as the Senate could not meet a 60-vote threshold.

Libertarians also find that private sector involvement and innovations in energy infrastructure are crucial to fighting back against climate change, similar to progressives to some extent. However, libertarians also find that the government should not be involved in fighting climate change; it should be removed from the equation entirely.

Libertarian policy revolves around the independent use of resources and individual innovation to fight against climate change with as little government regulation as possible. This is showcased in the libertarian view of deregulating key energy sectors, especially the nuclear energy sector, which libertarians have always defended as the principal source that would guide America out of its energy crisis. Their arguments here point to the fact that when industries are deregulated and free from onerous government rules, they would be free to innovate and develop their green technologies because not only would it make their enterprises more successful, which is the key aim in a truly free market economy, but it would also safeguard others' rights, individual and property, which is another fundamental tenant to the libertarian philosophy.

Beyond this, they have also called for the defederalization of combating climate change; that is, they seek to remove the capacity to protect the environment from the hands of the government. As such, they wish to remove any government influence from this policy area, centralized around the abolition of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the government's principal environmental policy body. This also means that they oppose the Green New Deal, which would provide a significant augmentation to government authority and, thereby, regulation. The arguments for such opposition to the EPA and GND are rooted in the same vein as all libertarian policies: government intervention has been counterproductive in solving issues and cannot be

trusted in crafting policies that would help Americans. Therefore, the government cannot be trusted to deal with fixing the environment, and only individual firms and citizens must do so on moral and economic fronts.

Conclusion

Libertarians and progressives both see eye to eye on the environment, as they both view the changing climate as a critical area that Americans must attend to. When it comes to solutions, however, they could not be any further apart: where one side favors a stronger, more proactive government approach, the other favors a plan without government or a severely curtailed government. Yet, in practice, there is some overlap, as both sides favor encouraging businesses to adopt greener technologies and methodologies to save the climate and simultaneously improve the American economy. Much as they are very different, progressives and libertarians can agree that a greener, or much cleaner, America will be good for the citizenry, the economy, and the world.

Bill-Based Activity

Students will convene into groups and be divided into two subgroups: progressives and libertarians. Both subgroups will adopt their assigned ideology's views and work together to craft a bill to address a predetermined issue (nuclear energy, agriculture issues, etc).

Each group should answer the following questions:

- What is the issue?
- Is there a general plan to approach the issue?
- What resources are there to develop that plan?
- Can American businesses be incentivized to help in this issue?
- What resources can the US government spare?

- What would the consequences be?
- Is the plan feasible?
- Will it benefit or harm the country 30 years down the line?
- Can it be sustained?

Each team will develop a bill framework and submit it to the teacher, who will analyze it, determine if all of these questions were accounted for, and issue a grade as a result.

Moderate Liberal and Moderate Conservative: Environmental Protection

Background

Our government from the foundation was tasked with protecting the people by the people on matters like health, welfare, and security. As time has progressed, aging our planet, the government's responsibility has expanded to include environmental matters. While ideological differences arise within many politicized issues, including environmental protection, moderate conservatives and liberals frequently align to pass policy. Major environmental policy today exists due to bipartisan efforts through compromising and consolidating the similarities between conservative and liberal thinking on environmental protection.

Ideological Viewpoints

Liberalism and Conservatism live outside the two main political parties, Democrats and Republicans, like the liberal **Green Party** and the **Conservative Constitutional party**. The lack of widespread support for these third parties often results in the consolidation of their ideas by larger parties to produce results and followers. Typically, environmental policy is associated with liberalism due to the emphasis placed on implementing more regulation and policy, often impacting businesses and major industries. Conservatives have a history with environmental

protection as they heavily supported the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970, one of the first governmental environmental protections, and the Environmental Protection Agency was created in 1970. Over time Conservative priorities have shifted away from ecological efforts, with many modern Conservatives expressing dislike for the EPA and NEPA. Changing viewpoints on both sides have altered the conservations around ecological protection to consider factors like indigenous communities, major industries, and businesses' increasing divisiveness. While these added factors increased the ideological divide over environmental protection, the need for bipartisanship has also increased to enact any efforts successfully.

Infrastructure Act

Passed as a bipartisan bill, the infrastructure act attempts to unify conservative and liberal ideals in handling many environmental issues. The action targeted infrastructure issues around the country, hoping that the effects would positively impact the environment. Lead water pipes around the country are being replaced by a safer material to improve water quality. Significant investments in transportation such as public transit, passenger rails, airports, ports, electric vehicle accommodation, and roads and bridges are in place from this act. Focusing on transportation can mediate issues in fossil fuels that frequently arise disputes between both sides. Due to their significant contributions, large corporations are typically targeted with regulations and restrictions to limit fossil fuel usage and the resulting greenhouse gas emissions. This solution is supported by liberals but draws strong criticism from conservatives. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Act invests millions of dollars into advancements to the environment's potential harm, supporting liberal environmentalist beliefs while not conflicting with conservative major industrial beliefs.

Climate Solutions Caucus

Climate change has become a widely contested issue, with many on other sides of the spectrum having strong opinions on its validity. Constant debates and stalls within congressional efforts to pass climate change-related policy have created a bipartisan Senate Climate Solutions Caucus for

mediation. Chaired by Democratic Senator Chris Coons and Republican Francis Rooney, the coalition of twelve senators works together to strategize solutions to energy efficiency, climate change, emissions reduction, and other environmental issues.

Conclusion

The priority for environmental protection grows as our planet grows, increasing the responsibility of those in our government. Both sides must come together frequently to implement the best solutions. Even on opposite sides of the ideological spectrum, moderate liberals and moderate conservatives manage to come together to formulate and pass legislation on environmental issues.

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Moderate Liberal and Libertarian Overlap on Environmental Policy

Overview

To different extents, moderate liberals and libertarians agree that the government should not dominate the country's environmental policy. Pew Research Center found that 35% of moderate liberals believe that the government is handling environmental policy appropriately, while, aligning with their ideology, libertarians have previously advocated for the abolition of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). There are not many similarities between moderate liberal and libertarian views on the environment; however, both have disagreed with extremely progressive policies.

Shared Policies & Philosophies

Moderate liberals have supported less government spending, while libertarians have supported practically none. As enacting any environmental policy would require some form of federal spending, the moderate liberal and libertarian philosophies have overlapped in rare moments.

In November 2024, the House of Representatives passed the Build Back Better bill, which included a core environmental component-a record $555 billion toward protecting against climate change. However, the bill did not pass the Senate, as moderate Democrat Joe Manchin voted against the environment package. Opposing governmental spending and overreach, Libertarians would not support this social policy either. However, only a few moderate liberals would believe that climate change policy is governmental overreach, as many are in favor of environmental policy.

Libertarians and moderate liberals agree more strongly on the notion of renewable energy, although for different reasons. As libertarians encourage a **laissez-faire** market, they would support innovations in renewable energy since it would allow for freedom of choice amongst consumers and promote a thriving economy. It is important to note that libertarians are not against helping the environment-they simply don't see a place for the government in the issue. Meanwhile, moderate liberals also support economic innovation in green energy; however, they also see a salient need for a transition to renewable sources as it would curb the impact of fossil fuels. For this reason, they rely on the government to provide incentives for such a transition.

Conclusion

In summary, one key area of overlap for moderate liberals and libertarians, is renewable energy, as both believe that it would benefit the economy. Despite the other disagreements between the two ideologies regarding the government's role in environmental policy, renewable energy appears to be a strip of common ground.

Bill-Based Guided Activity (45 minutes)

The goal of this guided activity is to understand the extent to which moderate liberals and libertarians agree on the implementation of renewable energy sources.

For thirty minutes, groups of four (two Libertarians, and two Moderate Liberals as randomly assigned by the teacher) should work to draft a renewable energy policy bill that would incorporate the perspectives of both ideologies. In other words, the group should attempt to reach a compromise. Students should research previous legislation to support their work.

After, the class should reconvene for 10-15 min to recap any other similarities between libertarians and moderate liberals; groups could also present their bills.

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Moderate Conservative and Libertarian Overlap on Environmental Policy

Overview

Overall, moderate conservatives and libertarians have similar views on the current state of environmental policy. They believe that the government should not be heavily involved in regulating policy and that economic benefit should be prioritized over the environment. However, not all conservatives believe this, with the Pew Research Center finding that 24% of conservatives believe that the federal government is doing too little to reduce the effects of climate change. Aligning with their ideology, libertarians are more extreme in their beliefs on government regulation and have previously advocated for the abolition of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Hence, moderate conservatives and libertarians disagree on the extent to which the federal government should facilitate environmental policy. However, giving freedoms to industries and promoting economic choice is a key area of overlap.

Shared Policies & Philosophies

Moderate conservatives and libertarians believe that the government should take a more lax approach to environmental policy. Specifically, both groups would oppose the Green New Deal, as it would transition the United States away from fossil fuels. This would restrict the economy, which already relies heavily on fossil fuels and natural gas; to improve the energy sector, House Republicans have unveiled a plan that would increase oil and gas exports.

Preferring autonomy above all else, libertarians would support withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement, which was an action that former President Donald Trump took during his time in office. Recently, the majority conservative US Supreme Court ruled against the EPA, limiting its ability to regulate greenhouse gasses. This reflects an overall trend of conservatives attempting to limit the role of government in setting forth environmental protections.

Conclusion

Regarding the environment, libertarians and moderate conservatives have similar views regarding minimal government involvement, with libertarians taking a more radical approach to the matter. Both groups support innovations in the energy sector and believe that the economy should be prioritized the most.

Bill-Based Guided Activity (45 minutes)

Students will analyze The Green New Deal and attempt to modify the legislation to garner moderate conservative support.

Pair students in groups of three to four. First, they'll research:

- Why Republicans don't support the Green New Deal
- What environmental bills Republicans have supported in the past.

Using the knowledge gained from their research, students will propose revisions to The Green New Deal.

Optionally, utilize the activity's last ten to fifteen minutes to recap the proposed revisions as a class. Note any similarities or differences in the approaches.

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Debate

Duration: about 140 minutes (2h 20m)

Topic: What is the ideal alternative to using fossil fuels and how do the costs and benefits of each compare?

Overview

With ambitious goals of reaching net zero emissions by 2050, replacing fossil fuels with other sources of energy is crucial. This shift requires substituting fossil fuels with low-carbon or carbon-free energy sources such as wind power or hydroelectric power. Remember, this debate is not to single out one energy source and argue its sole use, but to deconstruct various aspects of the proposed alternatives that must be considered in the process of implementing them.

In this debate, students will consolidate their knowledge of alternatives to fossil fuels and foster their language and critical thinking skills. The debate is divided into two main sections: research and debate. First, students will research the two proposed alternatives to fossil fuels: nuclear power and wind energy. They will research their costs and benefits, their impact on the environment and society, the national and international context surrounding the alternative, and other relevant information essential to implementing or prioritizing alternatives to fossil fuels. After organizing their research into a research brief, they will split into random teams to debate the ideal alternative to fossil fuels.

While most students will take part in the debate as team members, there will be 3 student judges who will evaluate the arguments of each side and decide the ideal alternative to using fossil fuels. Judges will briefly explain the debate timing and structure to the whole class before the debate and will direct the debate. The judges can divide tasks of answering questions, directing the debate, and summarizing the debate and the judges' evaluations.

Structure

Research and preparation (60 minutes)

1. (45 minutes) Students will split into teams of 6 (with 3 or 4 members per side) to research the two fossil fuels: nuclear power and wind energy. Using the ‘student guide’ below, each team will research the provided alternative’s costs and benefits, its impact, and other essential information that may add to the debate. They should research potential counterarguments to the other side, as this may be useful in making rebuttals in the debate. Students in each team may divide the work into each side, but all students must understand the other side as students will ask questions and make rebuttals to the other side during the debate.

2. (15 minutes) Then, each team will organize the research into a debate guide that they can use during the debate. This can be a simple outline with main speaking points and potential counterarguments.

Debate (65 minutes)

1. (5 minutes per side, 10 minutes in total) First, students will present arguments from each side. Each side of the team will present its arguments against the opposite side of another team. For example, the three Team A members arguing for wind power will be paired up with and debate the three Team B members arguing for nuclear power. One member should present an introduction providing context and an outline of their argument, and each member of the corresponding side should present a point.

2. (5 minutes) Before cross-examination and rebuttals, each side will gather in their teams to discuss major points made by the other side, organize their arguments, and prepare rebuttal arguments and questions.

3. (5 minutes per side, 10 minutes in total) After each side has presented their arguments, there will be time for further cross-examination and rebuttals. Any members from each side can freely make rebuttals and answer questions posed by the other side. However, each member should answer at least one question or make a rebuttal.

4. Depending on the number of students per class (estimated to be about 20 students), each debate will take about 25 minutes. Because each debate is short, all students must be clear and coherent in their speech, to deliver their argument and move the debate forward.

Judgment and reflection (15 minutes)

1. (10 minutes) Judges will gather together and vote on the ideal alternative based on prior research before the debate and notes taken during the debate.
2. (5 minutes) Reflecting is just as important as the debate itself! Students will discuss their responses to the debate itself and how they played a role in the whole process. They should also discuss how each alternative can play a role in replacing fossil fuels and how they can have a reciprocal relationship, within the bigger energy ecosystem.

<u>Student Guide</u>

Judges

1. *Write down key points and evaluate.* When you're taking notes during the debate, make sure to write down the main talking points from each side and briefly evaluate their validity, reliability, coherence, and pertinence to the debate.

Debaters

1. *Be specific.* To avoid repetition and increase the depth of the debate, all students are encouraged to incorporate detailed case studies or examples into their arguments. Instead of generally speaking about how wind power has economic value, mention and demonstrate an array of examples that show how wind power can alleviate pressures from increasing exposure to international market volatility resulting from rising fossil fuel prices.
2. *Draw from reliable sources and minimize bias.* When you're doing research, to ensure that the debate is supported by trustworthy sources, students should check whether their

chosen sources are reliable and reputable sources. But that's only half of the problem– it's easy to cherry-pick evidence or distort evidence to fit your argument. So, you should incorporate holistically analyzed evidence into your argument even if that weakens your stance, or add a caveat that allows others to know the validity of the evidence.

3. *Think in terms of and frame your argument around context.* Because this debate takes place in a particular place and time– both national and international contexts– each argument should be placed within a real-world context that considers policy decisions or political tendencies of current politicians, policy-makers, or other stakeholders.

Works Cited:

"How to Debate Guide." *New Zealand Schools' Debating*, https://www.debating.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2006/08/NZ-Schools-Debating-How-to-Debate-Guide.pdf. Accessed 30 July 2022.

"Wind Energy: Advantages and Disadvantages." *Stanford*, 11 December 2014, http://large.stanford.edu/courses/2014/ph240/lloyd2/. Accessed 30 July 2022.

Democratic Simulation: Environmental Policy

Introduction

By the end of this unit, students should understand the implications and effects of policies put into place on the environment. Many activities with economic purposes, including agricultural farming and other means of manufacturing and production, tend to suffer from increased divisiveness within state houses and on senate floors due to the ramifications of interruption. Many policies in place today, such as carbon cap taxes or cap-and-trade laws aim to combat air pollution, while others such as the Clean Water Act restrict pollutants created from water runoff on land. While environmentally sustainable, these acts limit the business and agricultural practices of companies and individuals. This activity aims to unify students in creating a solution for an environmental issue by forming legislation.

Activity: Students pose as a lawmaking body and work to pass a piece of legislation that protects the environment while also protecting affected individuals to the fullest extent. NOTE: For the sake of classroom timing, the legislative process will be simplified for that period.

Duration: 3 Class Periods

1st Class Period: Research

Students shall vote for one of the four various sectors within the environment to be the topic of legislation:

- Lake Pollution
- Air Pollution
- Coal Mines
- Agricultural Regulations

Students should spend this time working together to research current stances, initiatives, and legislation within that framework. Students have the option of being assigned a senator at the discretion of the teacher or taking on their role that aligns with their efforts and beliefs. Students should first identify what aspects (public health, economic growth, climate change) is most important to them and using that, should split into groups that will ultimately form their blocs of respective bill-writing efforts. Below are some resources to begin your research:

- the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (www.epa.gov)
- American Public Health (www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/environmental-health)
- National Environmental Health Association (https://www.neha.org)
- Center for Disease Control National Center for Environmental Health (https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/)

The creation of legislation begins with the initial drafting of the bill. Using your research, begin your bill by using the following questions to guide you. Remember the bill should aim to protect affected individuals as well.

Guiding Questions

1. What is the main purpose of the bill?
2. What communities and identities will this bill affect?
3. What are the current practices that positively impact this sector of the environment?
4. What are the current practices that negatively impact this sector and the environment?
5. Referring to questions 3 and 4, how do these practices affect humans and other animal inhabitants as either a biosocial health determinant or factor of quality of life?
6. What are the economic ramifications of your bill?
7. Identify a "WHO" — who will be responsible for the bill? Who will be asked to take action or get involved locally, federally, or internationally? Think about the benefits and consequences of international involvement.

2nd Class period: Writing the Bill

Using their research and guiding questions, Students should begin bill-writing, if not already started. The following framework for a bill has been provided:

Title: A Bill To . . . *(Main Purpose of Bill)*

BE ENACTED BY THE CLASS SENATE

Section 1. ***(Goal, followed by called actions and/or explicit details)***

Section 2. ***(Goal, followed by called actions and/or explicit details)***

Section 3. ***(Goal, followed by called actions and/or explicit details)***

. . .

Introduced for Congressional Debate by ***(Bloc/Group Name of Individuals)***

The bill should include 3-5 sections or *provisions*, including one delineating a time/date for the provision to be implemented. Before the class ends, a group of students should volunteer or be selected by the teacher to introduce their draft of the bill next class or use the order of submission. All bill drafts should be submitted, regardless of whether it is introduced or not as homework assignments if unfinished.

3rd Class Period: Legislative Procedures

Using their research, Students should take on the role of a legislator. As with any lawmaking body, students should be aware of the differing ends and attributes of the political spectrum and those who currently serve in the U.S. Senate.

- Class members should suggest and vote on introduction and debate speaking times. (Suggestion: 3 minute and 45-60 second speaking times, respectively)

- The students will introduce the draft onto the “floor” where it will go up for debate and amendments.

- Students will debate either in favor or against this bill, preferably 3 students for and 3 against.
    - Students may offer amendments to which students will vote using the rule of simple majority
    - The bill will be “re-introduced” with the amendment during debate

- If the bill fails to pass, another bill may be introduced in order of submission to the instructor for debate.
    - The bill must have majority support in votes to pass for signature upon Governor or President (instructor) into law

The goal of the students is to ultimately pass a bill the class can agree upon as a whole within the allotted class period.