



GOVERNMENT

AMERICAN AND GERMAN POLITICAL SYSTEMS

What impact does a different political system have on governance?

**Middle
School**

American and German Political Systems: What impact does a different political system have on governance?

C3 Framework Indicator	D2.Civ.1.6-8., D2.Civ.6.6-8., D2.Civ.10.6-8.	
Staging the Compelling Question	In this inquiry students will examine the political party systems of Germany and the United States to investigate how each party system differs, and what impact do these differences have on governance?	
Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3
What are the main political parties in Germany, and how do they influence government?	What are the main political parties in the United States, and how do they influence government?	How do Germany’s multi-party system and the U.S.’s two-party system compare in voter representation and governance?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Students will work in small groups to create a visual chart summarizing Germany’s major parties, their ideologies, and their influence on governance. Each group will be assigned 1-2 political parties to research.	Students complete a similar chart for the U.S., focusing on the Democratic and Republican parties, their platforms, and their influence on governance.	Students create a Venn diagram comparing the strengths and weaknesses of the two systems, focusing on representation, policy-making, and voter choice.
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
<p>Source A: “Germany’s Election in Polls, Parties and Policy Debates.” Reuters</p> <p>Source B: “Parties and Political Foundations in Germany.” Deutschland.de</p>	<p>Source A: The Democratic Party Platform, 2024. Ballotpedia, _</p> <p>Source B: The Republican Party Platform, 2024. Ballotpedia, _</p> <p>Source C: “Who Are the Main US Political Parties? - US Political System - National 5 Modern Studies Revision - BBC Bitesize.”</p> <p>Source D: “2024 Election: Live Results Map AP News.”</p>	<p>Source A: “How Voting Works in Germany.”</p> <p>Source B: “How to Build a Governing Coalition in Germany.”</p> <p>Source C: “Why US Elections Only Give You Two Choices.”</p> <p>Source D: “The Electoral College, Explained”</p>
Summative Performance Task	Argument: Students write an essay or create a presentation addressing the compelling question, supported by evidence from the charts, diagrams, and discussions.	
	Extension: Students create an infographic or digital chart showing how the number of political parties affects governance in each system.	
Taking Informed Action: Using your voice to make change	Understand: Research current challenges faced by political parties in both countries.	
	Assess: Evaluate how these challenges impact governance and representation.	
	Act: Propose reforms or solutions in a written or visual format to address these challenges.	

American and German Political Systems

Target Grade Level: 8

Target Course: Social Studies

Compelling Question

How do the political party systems in Germany and the United States differ, and what impact do these differences have on governance?

Inquiry Overview

In this inquiry students will examine the political party systems of Germany and the United States to answer the question: How do the political party systems in Germany and the United States differ, and what impact do these differences have on governance? Students explore how political parties function within each country's government structure, focusing on their roles, ideologies, and influence on policy-making.

Teacher Background Information

Germany's political system features a multi-party structure, with major parties like the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the Social Democratic Party (SPD), and newer parties such as the Greens and Alternative for Germany (AfD). The United States operates under a two-party system, dominated by the Democratic and Republican parties. Teachers should have a basic overview of the parties in both Germany and the United States. For background research, please see the below articles.

BBC Bitesize. "Who Are the Main US Political Parties? - US Political System - National 5 Modern Studies Revision - BBC Bitesize." BBC Bitesize, 14 Aug. 2013, www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zmc6fg8/revision/8.

"Parliament & Parties." Facts about Germany, www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/politics-germany/parliament-parties.

Suggested Time Frame

Four to five class periods (45 minutes each)

Concept List

- Political Parties
- Multi-Party vs. Two-Party Systems
- Coalition Governments
- Party Ideologies
- Electoral Representation

Instructional Resources

- Associated Press. “2024 Election: Live Results Map | AP News.” AP NEWS, AP News, Mar. 2024, <https://apnews.com/projects/election-results-2024/?office=P>.
- Associated Press. “Election 2024.” AP News, 2024, apnews.com/hub/election-2024.
- Ballotpedia. The Democratic Party Platform, 2024. Ballotpedia, https://ballotpedia.org/The_Democratic_Party_Platform,_2024.
- Ballotpedia. The Republican Party Platform, 2024. Ballotpedia, https://ballotpedia.org/The_Republican_Party_Platform,_2024.
- BBC Bitesize. “Who Are the Main US Political Parties? - US Political System - National 5 Modern Studies Revision - BBC Bitesize.” BBC Bitesize, 14 Aug. 2013, www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zmc6fg8/revision/8.
- Bertelsmann Foundation. “How the German Government Works.” YouTube, 6 Oct. 2016, www.youtube.com/watch?v=LqVqzE1utKw.
- Bertelsmann Foundation. “How Voting Works in Germany.” YouTube, 17 Sept. 2021, www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJoem1JNJ2A.
- Bertelsmann Foundation. “The Evolution of Germany’s Political Spectrum.” , 24 Oct. 2021, www.youtube.com/watch?v=C8qfQtbcNkA.
- Dr. Jörg Krämer. “German Bundestag - the Federal Republic of Germany.” German Bundestag, 2011, www.bundestag.de/en/parliament/history/parliamentarism/frg_parliamentarism/frg_parliamentarism-200324 .
- “Parliament & Parties.” Facts about Germany, www.tatsachen-ueber-deutschland.de/en/politics-germany/parliament-parties.
- “Parties and Political Foundations in Germany.” Deutschland.de, 14 Oct. 2017, www.deutschland.de/en/topic/politics/germany-europe/parties-and-political-foundations.
- “Party Systems | Different Political Parties Lesson Plan | ICivics.” I Civics.org, 2024, <https://ed.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/party-systems?back-ref-search=political%20parties&back-ref-filter=>.
- “Political Participation - How the US Political System Allows Democratic Participation - Higher Modern Studies Revision.” BBC Bitesize, www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/ztx22hv/revision/2.
- Vox. “The Electoral College, Explained - YouTube.” www.youtube.com, Vox, 31 Oct. 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajavsMbCapY.
- Vox. “Why US Elections Only Give You Two Choices.” www.youtube.com, 6 Mar. 2024, www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqWwV3xk9Qk.

NCSS Thematic Strands

Power, Authority, and Governance

- Standard 6.4: Explain how political parties influence government policies and provide individuals with opportunities for participation.
- Standard 6.5: Compare and contrast the roles of multiple political systems, including differences in party representation and governance.

Civic Ideals and Practices

- Standard 10.1: Explore civic practices and institutions that influence public policy and decision-making in different political systems.
- Standard 10.4: Identify and evaluate the roles of political parties in promoting the common good and civic engagement.

C3 Framework Indicators

- D2.Civ.1.6-8. Distinguish the powers and responsibilities of citizens, political parties, interest groups, and the media in a variety of governmental and nongovernmental contexts.
- D2.Civ.6.6-8. Describe the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people's lives.
- D2.Civ.10.6-8. Explain the relevance of personal interests and perspectives, civic virtues, and democratic principles when people address issues and problems in government and civil society.

Outcomes for Student Learning

- Describe the major political parties in Germany and the U.S. and their platforms
- Compare how political parties influence governance in both systems.
- Analyze the impact of a multi-party system versus a two-party system.

Germany-Related Learning Goals

- Identify major political parties in Germany and their ideologies.
- Understand Germany's coalition-building process.
- Analyze how Germany's proportional representation system affects party success.

Compelling Question

What impact do different political systems have on governance?

Introductory Activity

- Show a chart of Germany's major political parties and the U.S.'s Democratic and Republican parties. Ask students to think-pair-share:
 - What do you notice about the number of parties?
 - How might having more or fewer parties affect government decision-making?
- Students will understand or review party systems by using the resources and explainer from [icivics.org](https://www.icivics.org)

Resources

Source: "Party Systems | Different Political Parties Lesson Plan | ICivics." Icivics.org, 2024, <https://ed.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/party-systems?back-ref-search=political%20parties&back-ref-filter=> .

Supporting Question 1

What are the main political parties in Germany, and how do they influence government?

► Formative Performance Task 1

Students will work in small groups to create a visual chart summarizing Germany's major parties, their ideologies, and their influence on governance. Each group will be assigned 1-2 political parties to research. [

► Resources

- Reuters Staff. "Germany's Election in Polls, Parties and Policy Debates." Reuters, 16 Dec. 2024, www.reuters.com/world/europe/germanys-election-polls-parties-policy-debates-2024-12-10/.
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- "Parties and Political Foundations in Germany." Deutschland.de, 14 Oct. 2017, www.deutschland.de/en/topic/politics/germany-europe/parties-and-political-foundations.

Supporting Question 2

What are the main political parties in the United States, and how do they influence governance?

► Formative Performance Task 2

Students complete a similar chart for the U.S., focusing on the Democratic and Republican parties, their platforms, and their influence on governance.

► Resources

- Ballotpedia. The Democratic Party Platform, 2024. Ballotpedia, https://ballotpedia.org/The_Democratic_Party_Platform,_2024.
- Ballotpedia. The Republican Party Platform, 2024. Ballotpedia, https://ballotpedia.org/The_Republican_Party_Platform,_2024.
- BBC Bitesize. "Who Are the Main US Political Parties? - US Political System - National 5 Modern Studies Revision - BBC Bitesize." BBC Bitesize, 14 Aug. 2013, www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zmc6fg8/revision/8.
- Associated Press. "2024 Election: Live Results Map | AP News." AP NEWS, AP News, Mar. 2024, apnews.com/projects/election-results-2024/?office=P.

Supporting Question 3

How do Germany's multi-party system and the U.S.'s two-party system compare in voter representation and governance?

► Formative Performance Task 3

Students create a Venn diagram comparing the strengths and weaknesses of the two systems, focusing on representation, policy-making, and voter choice.

► Resources

- Bertelsmann Foundation. "How Voting Works in Germany." YouTube, 17 Sept. 2021, www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJoem1JNJ2A.
- Bertelsmann Foundation. "How to Build a Governing Coalition in Germany." YouTube, 27 Sept. 2021, www.youtube.com/watch?v=EYm4173s8kl. Accessed 28 Dec. 2024.
- Vox. "Why US Elections Only Give You Two Choices." www.youtube.com, 6 Mar. 2024, www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqWwV3xk9Qk.
- Vox. "The Electoral College, Explained - YouTube." www.youtube.com, Vox, 31 Oct. 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=ajavsMbCapY.

Summative Performance Task

Essay / Presentation	Students write an essay or create a presentation addressing the compelling question, supported by evidence from the charts, diagrams, and discussions.
Extension	Students create an infographic or digital chart showing how the number of political parties affects governance in each system.

Taking Informed Action

Understand	<i>Research current challenges faced by political parties in both countries.</i>
Assess	<i>Evaluate how these challenges impact governance and representation.</i>
Act	<i>Propose reforms or solutions in a written or visual format to address these challenges.</i>

Modifications for Differentiation

- Provide pre-filled templates for visual charts and diagrams for students needing support.
- Use subtitles on videos or translated articles for ELL students.
- Challenge advanced learners to explore smaller or emerging parties in both systems.



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