

The Political Perception Gap: Lesson Summary

SUBJECT	TIME REQUIRED	GRADE	SIZE OF CLASS
Social Studies	About 50 minutes, with options for additional activities	9-12 (partially adaptable for middle school)	Any

OVERVIEW

Do Republicans and Democrats understand what the other side believes? Students will see that those in each party are actually more similar to each other than perceived. Sections of the lesson plan also cover causes, consequences, and potential solutions to this political “Perception Gap,” along with various optional activities. Political depolarization organization [More Like US](#) has developed this lesson, with input from teachers and researchers. [Slides](#) and a [backup discussion](#) of the lesson plan are provided.

Phases

Objectives	- Students should understand the finding that Democrats and Republicans are often more similar to each other than they realize - As desired, students can explore causes, consequences, and solutions to this political Perception Gap - The lesson plan should reduce student anxiety about engaging in civil discourse, limit a possible sense of threat of voters across the political spectrum, and allow students to see that political options almost always involve more than binary choices
Research Informing Lesson Plan	- Substantial research from groups such as More in Common shows the prevalence of the Perception Gap, along with its dangers Many academic researchers find correcting misperceptions is a highly important part of reducing political polarization
Associated Survey	- The Civic Education Research Lab at Georgetown is conducting a pre- and post-lesson survey of the students - Participation in the survey is highly encouraged, but not required
Lesson Plan Activities	- Students begin by placing sticky notes on a board about their views of an average Democrat and Republican on immigration - Students then watch a video and learn more about the Perception Gap, with potential for exploration into causes, consequences, potential solutions, with additional options when more than 50 minutes are allocated

NATIONAL STANDARDS ALIGNMENT

- AP Government Unit 4
- Educating for American Democracy “We the People” Theme
- C3 Framework Dimension 3
- And many others: Alliance for Decision Education, Center for Civic Life, Common Core State Standards, ISTE, NAMLE Core Principles, NCSS Curriculum Standards

RESOURCES

- 2 sticky notes per student (ideally 1 Red, 1 Blue)
- Whiteboard / chalkboard
- A/V equipment for video & PowerPoint

