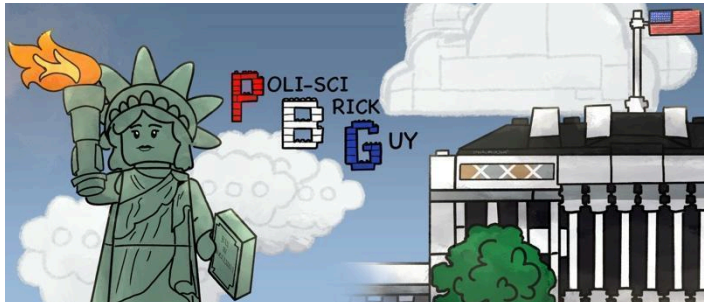




Lesson Plan: The Media's Agenda-setting Power & Horse Race Coverage

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Overview	In this lesson, students will examine the role of the media as a linkage institution by analyzing competing perspectives on journalistic objectivity and media bias. Using a Columbia Journalism Review article and a companion video, students will evaluate how the media shapes public opinion, influences political participation, and affects democratic accountability. Students will apply AP Government concepts to determine whether objectivity, fairness, and transparency strengthen or weaken democracy.
Essential Questions	• What responsibilities does the media have in a democratic society? • How does the media function as a linkage institution between citizens and the government? • To what extent does the media strengthen or weaken American democracy? • How can citizens critically evaluate news sources to become informed participants in the political process?
Lesson Objectives	1. Define the media as a linkage institution.

	2. Explain how media influences political socialization and public opinion. 3. Analyze arguments about journalistic objectivity. 4. Evaluate the role of the media in a representative democracy.
Suggested Unit in A.P. Government	Unit 5.12
Core Skills Used	4, Source Analysis
Activity Duration	45-60 minutes
Materials	• <i>LEGO Video: The Media's Agenda-setting Power & Horse Race Coverage</i> • Student Activity Handout • "In Defense of (the Right Kind of) Horse Race Journalism" by Greg Marx, 9/6/11, Columbia Journalism Review.
Procedure	Warm-up (5 min.): Ask students to respond to the following prompt: "Is it possible for the news media to be completely objective?" Do they think yes, mostly, sometimes, or no? They should defend their response in one sentence. Tell them, "Today we'll explore what journalists mean by 'objectivity' and why this matters in American democracy."
	Discussion and student work (40-55 min.): 1. Show <i>LEGO Video: The Media's Agenda-setting Power & Horse Race Coverage</i> 2. Have students participate in the following using the Student Activity Handout. 3. Discuss some background with the students. Ask them, "How does the media connect citizens to the government?" ○ informing the public ○ shaping political agendas ○ monitoring government ○ providing a platform for debate 4. Have students define the following vocabulary ○ linkage institution ○ watchdog journalism ○ agenda-setting

	○ framing ○ public opinion 5. Have students read “In Defense of (the Right Kind of) Horse Race Journalism.” As they read, they should annotate the text for the following points. This could be by writing on printed handouts or commenting on a digital copy. ○ the author's definition of objectivity ○ criticisms of "both sides" journalism ○ evidence supporting the author's argument ○ implications for democracy 6. Then, with a partner, students should answer the following discussion questions. ○ How does the author define "good" objectivity? ○ Why might simply giving equal time to opposing viewpoints be problematic? ○ Should journalists evaluate the truthfulness of political claims? ○ How could this affect citizens' ability to participate in democracy? 7. Joining the partners into small groups, have students discuss the following questions. ○ How does the media serve as a linkage institution? ○ Can the media ever be completely objective? ○ Is striving for neutrality always beneficial for democracy? ○ How does media coverage affect elections and policymaking? 8. Have students answer “Explain one way the media acts as a linkage institution and one challenge it faces in maintaining public trust” in a well-developed paragraph.
	Optional Extension: Students locate a current news story covered by two different outlets. Have them compare the headline, language, evidence, tone, and framing. Finally, students answer “Which outlet better demonstrated the kind of objectivity discussed in today's lesson? Support your answer with evidence.”