



Gerrymandering: Lesson Plan

Topic	
Gerrymandering is the manipulation of voting district lines in order to favor a particular political party, interest, or candidate or to disadvantage a particular minority.	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
Political Science, US History, Government	35-45 minutes
Video link:	
https://academy4sc.org/topic/gerrymandering-manipulating-democracy/	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how gerrymandering works. • Explain why gerrymandering is a problem. • Identify strategies to fight against gerrymandering. 	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
Census, Legislature, Redistricting, House of Representatives, Congress, Supreme Court, Commission, Minority	
Materials Needed	
Computers	
Before you watch	
<p>Have students explore this interactive map: What It Takes to Win: How Gerrymandering Will Skew the 2018 Election that shows the mismatch between the percentage of national votes each party receives and the projected number of seats each party receives. Students can move the bar to see what happens when the national vote changes and look at what would occur in their home state or in swing states. Some things to point out include that some districts always stay one</p>	



color or the other and some states flip very easily.

While you watch

1. What is the history behind the term gerrymandering?
2. What role has the judicial system played in gerrymandering?
3. What are some of the different redistricting processes different states have?

After you watch/discussion questions

1. Who do you think should draw the voting district lines? The elected representatives, themselves? An independent non-political commission? Computers?
2. How would you explain why this is an important issue to non-voters? How would you make them care?
3. Which criteria do you think are most important to consider when drawing a voting district? Keeping together communities that have common interests? Making districts as compact as possible? Making districts as competitive as possible?
4. How do you think gerrymandering affects how candidates campaign?
5. How do you think gerrymandering might make it hard for a candidate who is challenging an incumbent (the official who currently holds the office)?

Activity Ideas

1. Have students research some instances of gerrymandering in recent elections and present their findings to the class.
2. Have students find out what their districts look like and how the shape of their districts has changed over time.
3. Have students work in small groups to research how districts are determined in other countries and compare to the United States and prepare a short presentation for the class.
4. Have students work in discussion groups, each pretending to be a different group/community, and answer the questions on the worksheet.

Sources/places to learn more

1. Berman, Ari. *Give us the Ballot: The Modern Struggle for Voting Rights in America*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2015.



2. McGann, Anthony K, et al. *Gerrymandering in America: The House of Representatives, the Supreme Court, and the Future of Popular Sovereignty*. Cambridge University Press, 2016.
3. "This is the best explanation of gerrymandering you will ever see" *The Washington Post*, The Washington Post, 25 Mar. 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/03/01/this-is-the-best-explanation-of-gerrymandering-you-will-ever-see/>.
4. Wines, Michael. "What Is Gerrymandering? And Why Did the Supreme Court Rule on it?" *The New York Times*, The New York Times Company, 27 Jun. 2019, <https://nyti.ms/2FyWh8o>.