Is social media good for the American political process?

Supporting Questions

1. How has social media use evolved over the past decade?
2. Does social media open or close perspectives?
3. Did social media influence the 2016 presidential election?
Is social media good for the American political process?

| Inquiry Standard | HS.SI.1.0: To evaluate resources needed to solve a given problem  
| RH.11-12.3: To evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.  
| RH.11-12.9: To integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources. |

**Staging the Compelling Question**

Students will watch the YouTube video from Saint Louis University Professor Dr. Matt Carlson called “The Role of Social Media in the 2016 Presidential Election”.

Students will complete a See-Think-Wonder exercise in which they explore political hashtags: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ziYArzNHLqJZ0R](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ziYArzNHLqJZ0R).

**Supporting Question 1**

How has social media use evolved over the past decade?

**Formative Performance Task**

Students will complete a 1-page single spaced mini-DBQ answering the supporting question citing evidence from both sources.

**Featured Sources**

Source A: Social Media Fact Sheet  
Source B: How Millennials Use and Control Social Media

**Supporting Question 2**

Does social media open or close perspectives?

**Formative Performance Task**

Students will create a political cartoon of a divisive political topic that represents the opposite viewpoint of their personal beliefs, and will write a written reflection on the process.

**Featured Sources**

Source A: Confirmation Bias Video  
Source B: Political Environment on Social Media  
Source C: Digital World is Warmer Than You Think

**Supporting Question 3**

Did social media influence the 2016 presidential election?

**Formative Performance Task**

In groups of 4, students will complete a jigsaw and discussion of 4 articles.

**Featured Sources**

Source A: Did Social Media Ruin Election 2016?  
Source B: How Social Media is Ruining Politics  
Source C: Mark Zuckerberg’s Answer to a World Divided by Facebook  
Source D: For Better or Worse, Social Media is Politically Influential

**ARGUMENT**

Students will lead a Socratic seminar surround the overarching question “Is social media good for the American political process?”

**EXTENSION**

Following the Socratic seminar, students will write a brief written reflection examining the discussion and their thoughts.

**UNDERSTAND**

Students must understand the role that social media plays in the political process, and the positive and negative aspects of that role. Students must understand how human behavior surrounding bias and empathy also plays a role in using social media.

**ASSESS**

Students will be assessed on their ability to identify both the negative and positive roles social media plays in politics, and as group, will establish norms of behavior that they believe will encourage civil political conduct on social media.

**ACTION**

In small groups, students will great public service announcements on how to ethically and civilly use social media in political discourse.
Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry is for 11th or 12th grade American government students. The intent of this inquiry is for students to identify and understand how social media impacts the political process in both a positive and negative way, and how they are growing up in an ever-changing political environment.

Structure

This inquiry will take a minimum of 5-7 days. The introduction and staging of the compelling question will take 1 day. Supporting Question 1 should take approximately 2 days. Supporting Question 2 and 3 should each take 1 day. The Socratic should be 1 class period, and the informed action activity will take a minimum of 2 days to complete.
### Staging the Compelling Question

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compelling Question</th>
<th>Is social media good for the American political process?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Featured Sources** | - **Source A**: The Role of Social Media in the 2016 Presidential Election  
- **Source B**: See-Think-Wonder: The Hashtag as a Political Tool |

**Staging the compelling question**

The video from Saint Louis University provides students with a brief overview of the role that social media played in the 2016 presidential election, without expressing a particular opinion. The See-Think-Wonder activity will allow students to explore political hashtags to see how they are used on different social media sites in order to contribute to the political process.
Excerpt

In this YouTube video from Saint Louis University, Dr. Matt Carlson provides a brief overview of the role that social media played in the 2016 presidential election.

Source:
Excerpt

This Google Doc was created by the IDM's author to guide students through a See-Think-Wonder of using the hashtag as a political tool.

Source:
Schultz, Lauren R. “See-Think-Wonder: The Hashtag as a Political Tool.” Google Docs, Google, 15 Mar. 2017, docs.google.com/document/d/1ziYArzNHlqlZ0RKGmGQHYrEKLiAXScN7opsBzhPiVn0/edit.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Question</th>
<th>How has social media use evolved over the past decade?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formative Performance Task</td>
<td>Students will complete a 1-page single spaced mini-DBQ answering the supporting question citing evidence from both sources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Featured Sources | - **Source A**: Social Media Fact Sheet  
- **Source B**: How Millennials Use and Control Social Media |

The purpose of this question is to establish how social media has changed in the past 10 years. It establishes a foundation of how social media has increasingly become a part of the American political process.

**Formative Performance Task**

Students will complete a 1-page single spaced mini-DBQ answering the supporting question citing evidence from two sources: Pew Research's "Social Media Fact Sheet" and the American Press Institute's "How Millennials Use and Control Social Media". Both of these sources can be differentiated based upon student needs.
Excerpt

This fact sheet provides direct data about how social media is used over time and in different segments of the American population.

Source:
This article directly discusses how Millennials use and control social media, and how their use of social media is different from previous generations of people.

Source:
## Supporting Question 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supporting Question</th>
<th>Does social media open or close perspectives?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Formative Performance Task</strong></td>
<td>Students will create a political cartoon of a divisive political topic that represents the opposite viewpoint of their personal beliefs, and will write a written reflection on the process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Featured Sources</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
  - **Source A**: Confirmation Bias Video  
  - **Source B**: Political Environment on Social Media  
  - **Source C**: Digital World is Warmer Than You Think |
| **Additional Materials** |  
  - [Does Social Media Open or Close Perspectives.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/idm-dev/u/2/7/0/8/3313/2708070497ae3c97db2816eb9102b3965f0e22d69.pdf) |

This supporting question allows students to understand their own bias and how their bias shapes their interactions with social media. Reflection time allows students to understand why social media can be divisive.

### Formative Performance Task

Students will select a divisive political topic that they are passionate about and create a political cartoon that represents the opposite viewpoint of their personal beliefs. Students will briefly write and reflect on that process to answer the supporting question.
Supporting Question 2

| Featured Source A | Confirmation Bias Video |

**Excerpt**

Short video from Facing History and Ourselves about confirmation bias: [https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/vid.](https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/vid.)

**Source:**
Excerpt

This is a collection of statistics from Pew Research Center regarding the political environment on social media in the United States from 2016.

Source:
Excerpt

This is an article from the Washington Post that talks about how social media has the potential to build empathy.

Source:
After understanding the evolution of social media and how it impacts empathy, this question targets social media’s direct impact on the 2016 American presidential election.

**Formative Performance Task**

In groups of 4, students will jigsaw the articles (featured sources). When the jigsaw is complete, the original group of 4 will discuss and answer the supporting question using information from the article to support their decision. Each group will present their findings to the class, and must be able to ask questions from their peers regarding their decision.
Excerpt

This article from NPR covers several social media networks and how they played a role in the 2016 presidential election.

Source:
Excerpt

This article from Politico makes the argument that social media is ruining politics, referencing the 2016 presidential campaign.

Source:
Excerpt

This article from Wired details Mark Zuckerberg’s perspective that social media, in particular Facebook, is positive for politics and society.

Source:
Excerpt

This article from PC Magazine details how social media has an impact on politics, both positive and negative.

Source:
Summative Performance Task

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compelling Question</th>
<th>Is social media good for the American political process?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Argument</td>
<td>Students will lead a Socratic seminar surround the overarching question “Is social media good for the American political process?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension</td>
<td>Following the Socratic seminar, students will write a brief written reflection examining the discussion and their thoughts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Argument**

Students will use the information they have gathered from their investigations of the three supporting questions and their source material to have a Socratic seminar discussing the overarching inquiry question. Students will use their prior knowledge and knowledge they have gained throughout this inquiry to develop meaningful questions for academic conversation related to the topic.

**Extension**

Reflecting on the seminar and the unit will allow students the opportunity to examine themes presented throughout this inquiry, their feelings related to those themes, and guide them towards their personal answer to the inquiry question.
## Taking Informed Action

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understand</th>
<th>Students must understand the role that social media plays in the political process, and the positive and negative aspects of that role. Students must understand how human behavior surrounding bias and empathy also plays a role in using social media.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assess</td>
<td>Students will be assessed on their ability to identify both the negative and positive roles social media plays in politics, and as group, will establish norms of behavior that they believe will encourage civil political conduct on social media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>In small groups, students will great public service announcements on how to ethically and civilly use social media in political discourse.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students will write a script and act out a public service announcement (PSA) encouraging ethical and civil political discourse on social media. In their PSA, they must refer to at least 3 of the sources used in this inquiry in order to explain why this is necessary and how it will be accomplished. The PSA audience is Millennials and it will be video recorded. How the PSA is shared, is up to teacher and student discretion.