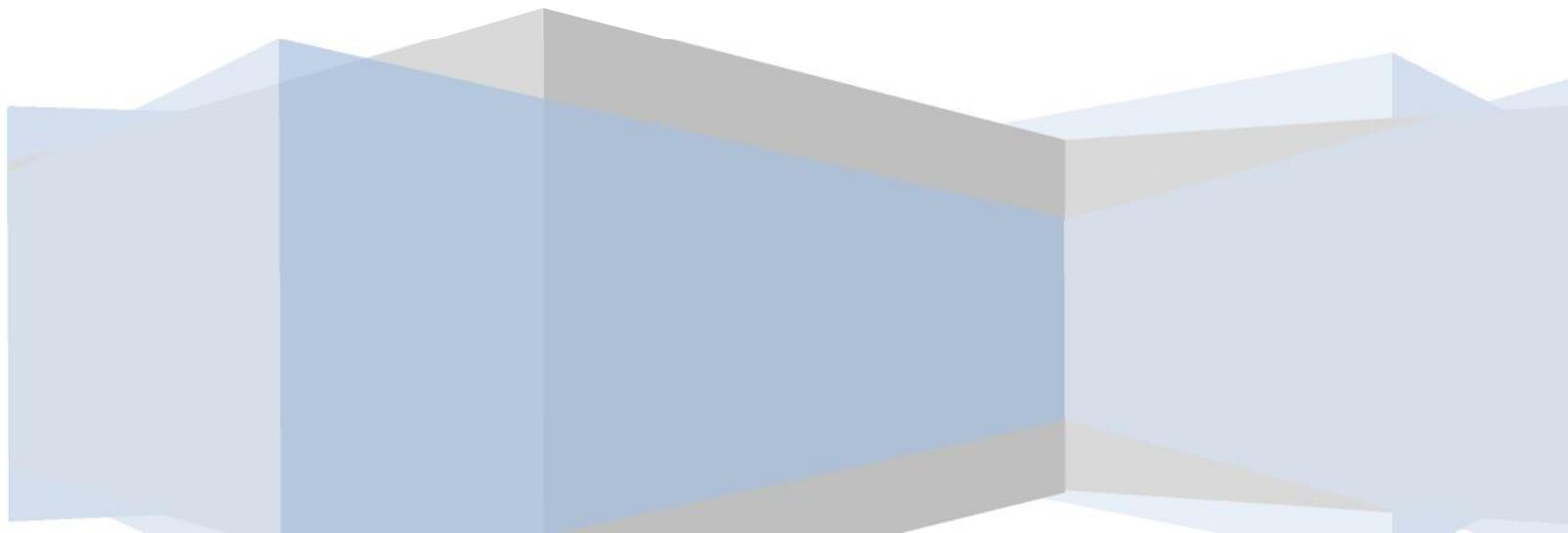




Lesson Plan: Political Ideologies

For Christian schools and home schools in Canada
(Grades 10 – 12)





ARPA Canada
www.arpacanada.ca
1-866-691-ARPA
mark@arpacanada.ca

Political Ideologies: Discerning the Right from the Left

One 50 minute lesson

Level – Grades 8 - 10

Applicable Courses: Social Studies, Worldview Studies, History

Overview for Teachers – Are you right wing or left wing, conservative or liberal? What do these terms even mean? We hear them all of the time, be it in the news or even in church. The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand some basic differences between political ideologies and then analyze how their Christian beliefs fit into these categories. Should Christians be conservative? Is there something wrong with the fact that many who identify themselves as Christians in Canada tend to vote exactly the same way as the rest of the population?

As evidenced in the chart below, each political ideology is guided by different worldviews. For example, a socialist perspective is much more optimistic about human nature than conservatism. Understanding the underlying worldview goes a long way in helping us determine their consistency or inconsistency with our Christian faith.

It is also important for students to understand that an ideology may sound good in theory but that does not necessarily translate to it being good in practice. For example, if the underlying worldview is optimistic about human nature and our potential (such as communism or socialism) it is actually out of step with reality (from our Biblical perspective) and can end up causing a great deal of harm.

Although one ideology may be more consistent with our faith, a Christian worldview does not fit neatly in any single category. The Bible emphasizes that we are citizens of God's kingdom first. Earth is our temporary home. Our ultimate king is God. We are commanded to obey our civil government (Romans 13) but not to the point of disobeying God. There is no clear calling in the Bible for civil government to do anything beyond restraining evil (through justice etc.) and promoting good so that we may live in peace (see *Belgic Confession* Article 36). These points seem consistent with the "conservative" category in the chart below. But the Bible also calls Christians to be generous and to share with those in need (2 Corinthians 8:1-14). This was especially evident in the early church where believers shared freely with each other out of love (Acts 2: 42-47). Private property and ownership is never disapproved of, but there are many warnings about greed and materialism. For example, Proverbs 30:8-9 asks God to give us what we need, not too much or too little. Capitalism and conservatism have also been associated with greed and a lack of compassion for the needy.

Suggested Reading:

[Belgic Confession Article 36](#): The Civil Government

[George Bush's Fact Sheet on Compassionate Conservatism](#): How is “Compassionate” Conservatism different than the traditional form? Why do you think there has been an increasing push in this direction among conservatives?

Procedure

- 1) Photocopy and distribute the chart below.
- 2) With the class, go through each category of political ideologies, explaining the worldview behind them and some examples. *This chart is only a starting point. Feel free to add to it or modify as needed.* It is quite general and should be appropriate for all high school students. Senior grades may be able to go a little more in depth on each of the categories. Try to keep this to 15 minutes if you want to have the assignment completed in a 50 minute class.
- 3) Explain how fascism is different from the other ideologies. It came out of a specific mentality in the early 1900's and fell out of favour after WWII.
- 4) After the students are familiar with the basic differences, divide them into four groups and have them each represent one of the ideologies (leaving fascism aside). Ask each group to come up with a case for what is Biblical about their ideology. They should be specific – provide Bible texts, Reformed doctrines, or other points to back up their points. They should have about 15 minutes.
- 5) Have the four groups face each other on two sides of the room. The right side (facing the teacher) should consist of the conservatives and liberals and the communists and socialists should be on the left (corresponding to traditional parliaments).
- 6) Give each group two minutes to give a standing defence of their ideology from a Christian perspective.
- 7) In the remaining time, allow for a moderated debate (teacher should be the “Speaker” of parliament) where each group can respond to the others by questions and comments.
- 8) Conclude by jotting down the three main strengths and three main weaknesses of each political ideology as judged by Biblical standards. Based on this, does there seem to be a ranking between the competing ideologies?

Comparing Political Ideologies

	Communism/Marxism	Socialism	Liberalism	Conservatism	Fascism
Description (Origins and Key Ideas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1800's (Karl Marx) - Workers control the economy - Own things together - No private ownership or property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1800's - State looks after you "from the cradle to the grave" - minimum wages are high - Very high taxes - Government pays for many things. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -1700's - personal freedom emphasized - some state controls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1700's - traditional, resist change - minimum government necessary - usually pro-business and anti-union - capitalism and free economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1920's - state controls industry - yearn for past glory - associated with racism/belief in racial superiority - private property
Worldview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - denies sinful nature and greed - based on evolution -no room for God (often anti-Christian) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - optimistic view of human nature - agnostic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - humanistic (people are number one, not God) - separation of church and state - freedom of religion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - religion is important - church and family should help poor and sick, not government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - anti-Christian - very evolutionist - Social Darwinism
Examples	Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - North Korea - Cuba - China (less now) - Russia (till 1990) 	Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sweden - Holland 	Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Canada USA Scotland England 	Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> USA (under Bush) Canada in the 1950's 	Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Germany under Hitler - Italy under Mussolini - Argentina