

How is social media shaping the way we engage in the political process?



Source: [Untitled digital image]. Retrieved from <https://pixabay.com/en/social-media-board-structure-1989152/>. Used under CC0 1.0 Universal License.

Supporting Questions

1. How is social media being used in politics?
2. How can we determine the reliability of information in the news?
3. What are arguments for and against using digital media to participate in the political process?

Social Media and the Political Process

How is social media shaping the way we engage in the political process?

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| Connection to Connecting Theme/Enduring Understandings | Technological Innovation: The student will understand that technological innovations have consequences, both intended and unintended, for a society. |
| GSE for Social Studies | <p>SSCG15 Demonstrate knowledge of local, state, and national elections.</p> <p>e. Analyze the influence of media coverage, campaign advertising, and public opinion polls.</p> <p>SSCG16 Analyze the difference between involuntary and voluntary participation in civic life.</p> <p>b. Describe how citizens voluntarily and responsibly participate in the political process by voting, performing public service, being informed about current issues, and respecting differing opinions.</p> |
| Connection to Literacy Standards for Social Studies and Social Studies Matrices | <p>Literacy Standard:</p> <p>L9-10RH9: Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.</p> <p>L9-10WHST7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.</p> <p>Social Studies Matrices: Information Processing Skills</p> <p>7. interpret timelines, charts, and tables</p> <p>15. determine adequacy and/or relevancy of information</p> <p>16. check for consistency of information</p> |
| Opening Activity | Analyze how people in the United States consume the news. |
| Featured Sources | Document 1: Data table from the Pew Research Center about Pathways to News |

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| Supporting Question 1 |
| How is social media being used in politics? |
| Sample Instructional Activity |
| Create a graphic organizer. |
| Featured Sources |
| <p>Document 2: Excerpt from “Let’s Design Social Media that Drives Real Change”, <i>Ted Talks</i> lecture by internet activist and computer engineer Wael Ghonim (0:00 to 6:00 min)</p> <p>Document 3: Data table from the Pew Research Center about Social Media and Voting</p> <p>Document 4: Excerpt from article UC San Diego News Center article, Facebook Boosts Voter Turnout</p> <p>Document 5: Data table from the Pew Research Center on Reasons for following political figures on social media</p> |

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| Supporting Question 2 |
| How can we determine the reliability of information in the news? |
| Sample Instructional Activity |
| Evaluate a news site. |
| Featured Sources |
| <p>Document 6: Video from TED-Ed, “How to choose your news”</p> <p>Document 7: Excerpt from NPR article, “Fake Or Real? How To Self-Check The News And Get The Facts”</p> <p>Document 8: Excerpt from work by assistant professor Melissa Zimdar about her fake news list.</p> |

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| Supporting Question 3 |
| What are arguments for and against using digital media to participate in the political process? |
| Sample Instructional Activity |
| Create a t-chart. |
| Featured Sources |
| <p>Document 9: Video from We the Voters, “MediaOcracy”</p> <p>Document 10: Excerpt from Independent article, “Why social media isn’t the revolutionary tool it appears to be”</p> <p>Document 11: Data table from the Pew Research Center about social media as venue for political discussions</p> |

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|-----------------------------------|--|
| Summative Performance Task | PRODUCT PRESENTATION Create a public service announcement to educate the public on how to use social media. |
| | EXTENSION Hold a classroom debate. |
| Taking Informed Action | Conduct a survey on peers’ social media use. |

The Context

Background Essay: How is social media shaping the way we engage in the political process?

In an interview with the New York Times, Malala Yousafzai, the youngest person to ever receive the Nobel Peace Prize, discusses the relationship between social media and politics by suggesting people should “use it for the good purpose of highlighting the issues that children all over the world are facing” (2014). Ms. Yousafzai shares the example of the 276 Nigerian schoolgirls who were abducted by the terrorist organization Boko Haram in April 2014, explaining that “I came to know about Bring Back Our Girls because it was on Twitter, you could see it. I just heard this news from everyone, everyone was talking about it. So I think this is the way we can highlight what’s happening and we can speak for our rights.”

Ms. Yousafzai comments raise a significant question: How can we best use social media to be informed about current issues?

One way to participate in the political process is by being informed about current issues. No matter the age, we are all consumers of what’s happening in the world through media sources and our peers. Almost 70 years ago, people learned about the news from **broadcast media**, or television and radio.



However, with the wide use of the Internet in recent years, more people receive their news from **new media** such as online newspapers, blogs, and social media. These new mediums allow people 24-hour access to the most up-to-date news and provide an online platform to engage in dialogue with others around the world.

With the growing variety of news sources, consumers have to think about not just how they use social media, but how to navigate and evaluate the vast amount of information available. As new media becomes more prevalent, the issue of **fake news** has gained greater attention. Fake news is nothing new, but with 24-hour access to news information and sharing of news through social media, it is important for news consumers to sharpen their critical media literacy skills.

In a recent study of high school students, Sam Wineburg, a professor of education at Stanford, noted the problem of students being able to tell fake news from real. One finding from the study showed that “more than 30 percent of students thought a fake Fox News account was more trustworthy than the real one” (NPR, 2016).

This brings us to our compelling question for this inquiry, *How is social media shaping the way we engage in the political process?*

References:

Kantor, J. (2014, October 10). Malala Yousafzai, Youngest Nobel Peace Prize Winner Adds to Her Achievements and Expectations. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/11/world/asia/malala-yousafzai-youngest-nobel-peace-prize-winner-adds-to-her-achievements-and-expectations.html?smid=tw-share&r=0>.

Domonoske, C. (2016, November 23). Students Have 'Dismaying' Inability To Tell Fake News From Real, Study Finds. *National Public Radio*. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/11/23/503129818/study-finds-students-have-dismaying-inability-to-tell-fake-news-from-real>

Hart, D. (2014). *Government Alive! Power, Politics, and You*. Teachers Curriculum Institute.

[Untitled digital image]. Retrieved from <https://pixabay.com/en/twitter-facebook-together-292994/>. Used under CC0 1.0 Universal License.

Documents

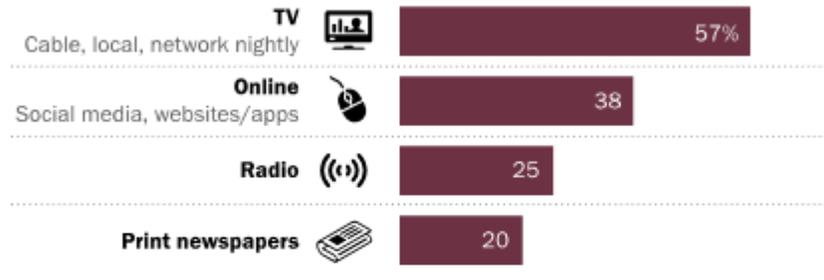
| Document # | Source Information |
|-------------|---|
| Document 1 | Pew Research Center. (2016). <i>About Four-in-ten Americans Often Get News Online</i> . [Digital Image]. Retrieved from http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2016/07/PJ_2016.07.07_Modern-News-Consumer_1-01.png |
| Document 2 | Ghonim, W. (2015, December). Let's design social media that drives real change [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/wael_ghonim_let_s_design_social_media_that_drives_real_change#t-323879 . |
| Document 3 | Pew Research Center. (2012). <i>Social Media and Voting</i> . [Digital Image]. http://www.pewinternet.org/files/old-media/0B63D6BD610E4D57ACF7F99D11454DAC.jpg . |
| Document 4 | Kiderra, I. (2012, September 12). Facebook Boosts Voter Turnout. <i>UC San Diego News Center</i> . Retrieved from http://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/pressrelease/facebook_fuels_the_friend_vote . |
| Document 5 | Pew Research Center. (2014). <i>Reasons for following Political Figures on Social Media</i> . (Digital Image). Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/2014/11/03/cell-phones-social-media-and-campaign-2014/pi_2014-11-03_internet-politics-2014_03/ . |
| Document 6 | TED-Ed (Producer). (2014, June 5). Damon Brown: How to choose your news. [Video file]. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/q-Y-z6HmRgl . |
| Document 7 | Davis, W. (2016, December 5). Fake or real? How to self-check the news and get the facts. <i>National Public Radio</i> . Retrieved from http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2016/12/05/503581220/fake-or-real-how-to-self-check-the-news-and-get-the-facts . |
| Document 8 | Zimdars, M. (2016). False, Misleading, Clickbait-y, and/or Satirical 'News' Sources. Retrieved from https://docs.google.com/document/d/10eA5-mCZLSS4MQY5QGb5ewC3VAL6pLkT53V_81ZyitM/preview . |
| Document 9 | Vulcan Productions (Producer). (2016). MediOcracy. <i>We the Voters</i> . [Video file]. Retrieved from https://wethevoters.com/film/mediaocracy . |
| Document 10 | Chenoweth, E. (2016, November 16). How social media helps dictators. <i>Foreign Policy</i> . Retrieved from http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/11/16/how-social-media-helps-dictators/ . |
| Document 11 | Pew Research Center. (2016). <i>Many Users See Social Media as an Especially Negative Venue for Political Discussions, but Others See It as Simply "more of the Same"</i> . [Digital Image]. Retrieved from http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/10/25/the-political-environment-on-social-media/pi_2016-10-25_politics-and-social-media_0-02/ . |

Document 1

Source: Bar graph and data chart from the Pew Research Center, "About Four-in-ten Americans Often Get News Online," 2016.

About four-in-ten Americans often get news online

% of U.S. adults who often get news on each platform



% of each age group who often get news on each platform

| | 18-29 | 30-49 | 50-64 | 65+ |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| TV | 27% | 45% | 72% | 85% |
| Online | 50 | 49 | 29 | 20 |
| Radio | 14 | 27 | 29 | 24 |
| Print newspapers | 5 | 10 | 23 | 48 |

Note: Just 1% said they never got news on any platform (not shown).

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

"The Modern News Consumer"

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Document 2

Source: Wael Ghonim, Egyptian internet activist and computer engineer, TED Talks lecture on “Let's Design Social Media That Drives Real Change”, December 2015, https://www.ted.com/talks/wael_ghonim_let_s_design_social_media_that_drives_real_change#t-323879. (0:00 to 6:00 min)

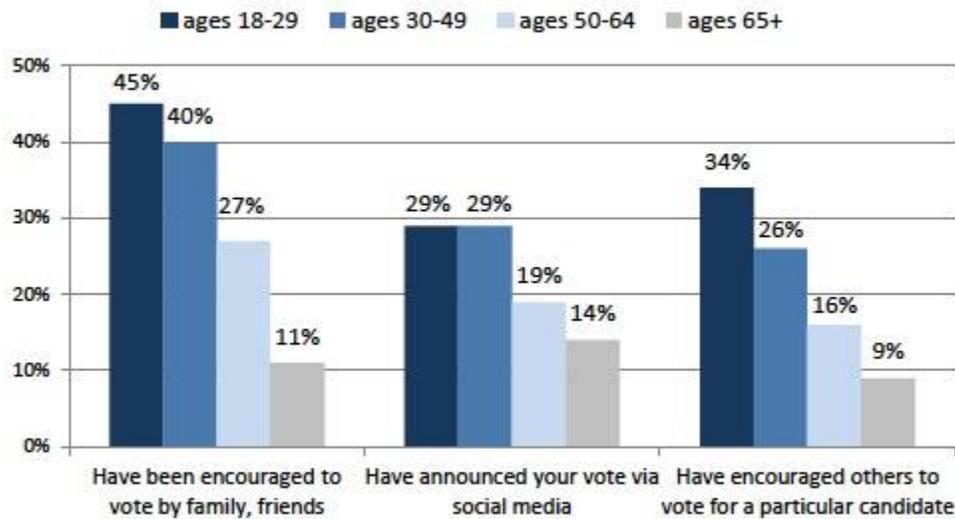


Document 3

Source: Bar graph from the Pew Research Center, "Social Media and Voting," 2012.

Social media and voting

% of registered voters in different age groups who have used social media like Facebook or Twitter to receive/send voting messages or announce their presidential choice



Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project survey conducted on landline and cell phones in English from November 1-4, 2012. N =861 for registered voters and margin of error for entire sample is +/- 3.7 percentage points. N for ages 18-29=104. N for ages 30-49=215. N for ages 50-64=258. N for ages 65+=255.

Document 4

Source: Inga Kiderra, Director of Communications for the Social Sciences at University of California at San Diego, excerpt from article "Facebook Boosts Voter Turnout," published by UC San Diego News Center, September 2012.

About one third of a million more people showed up at the ballot box in the United States in 2010 because of a single Facebook message on Election Day, estimates a new study led by the University of California, San Diego.

Published in *Nature*, the massive-scale experiment confirms that peer pressure helps get out the vote – and demonstrates that online social networks can affect important real-world behavior.

“Voter turnout is incredibly important to the democratic process. Without voters, there’s no democracy,” said lead author James Fowler, UC San Diego professor of political science in the Division of Social Sciences and of medical genetics in the School of Medicine. “Our study suggests that social influence may be the best way to increase voter turnout. Just as importantly, we show that what happens online matters a lot for the ‘real world.’”...

...The researchers estimate that the direct effect of the Facebook social message on users who saw it generated an additional 60,000 votes in 2010. But the effects of the social network – of social contagion among friends – they say, yielded another 280,000 more, for a total of 340,000. In other words, Fowler said, the social network yielded an additional four voters for every one voter that was directly mobilized...

...The researchers also show that the message affected people at two degrees of separation: the friends of the friends of social-message recipients were also more likely to click on the “I voted” button, yielding an additional 1 million acts of political self-expression....

Document 5

Source: Data chart from the Pew Research Center, "Reasons for following Political Figures on Social Media," 2014.

Reasons for following political figures on social media

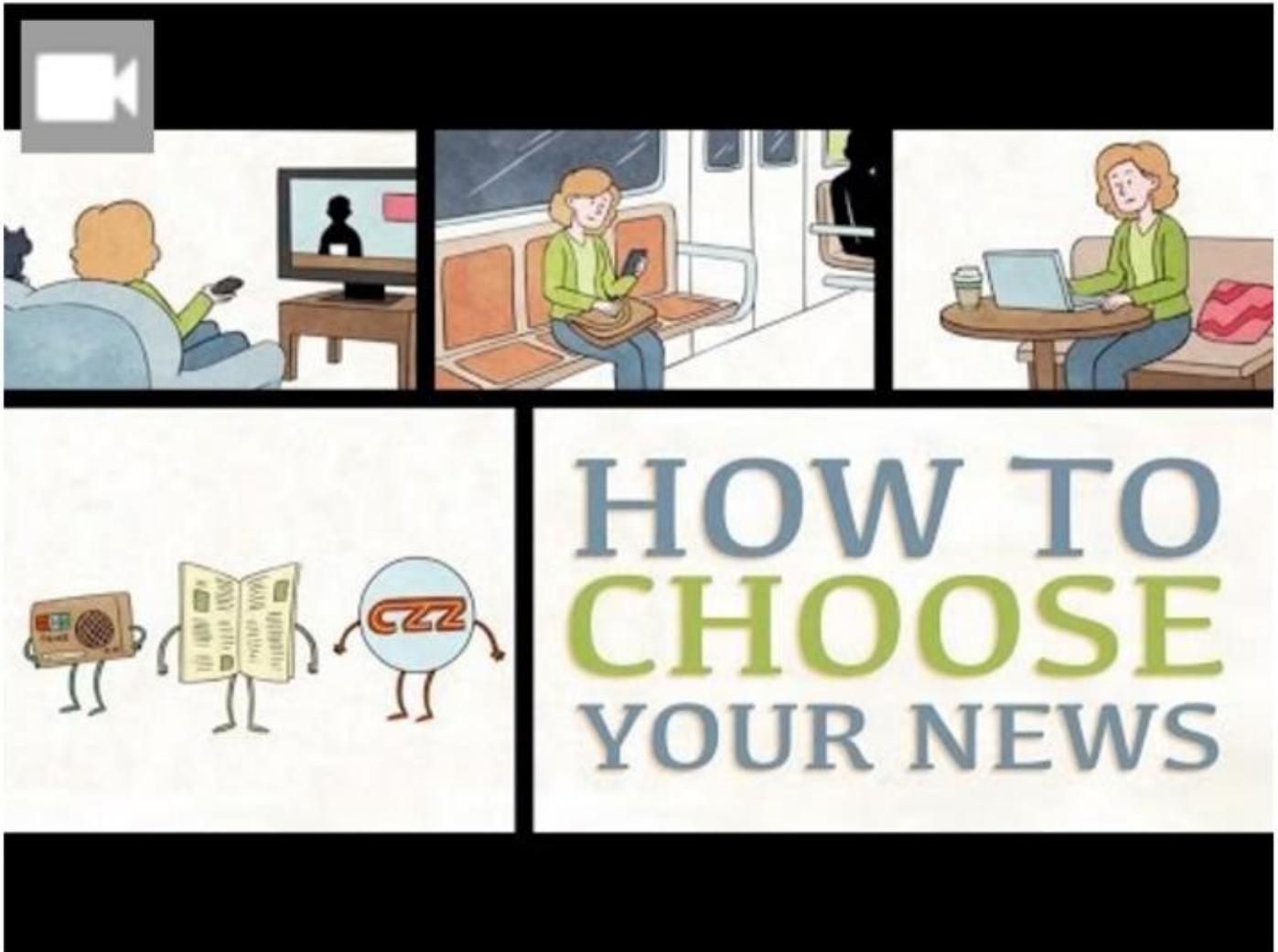
| | 2010 | 2014 | Change |
|---|------|------|--------|
| <i>Helps me find out about political news before others do</i> | | | |
| Major reason | 22 | 41 | +19 |
| Minor reason | 43 | 28 | -15 |
| Not a reason | 34 | 30 | -4 |
| <i>Makes me feel more personally connected to the political candidates or groups I follow</i> | | | |
| Major reason | 36 | 35 | -1 |
| Minor reason | 35 | 36 | +1 |
| Not a reason | 30 | 28 | -2 |
| <i>The information I get on these sites is more reliable than the information I get from traditional news organizations</i> | | | |
| Major reason | 21 | 26 | +5 |
| Minor reason | 32 | 32 | 0 |
| Not a reason | 47 | 40 | -7 |

Survey conducted Oct. 15-20, 2014. Based on registered voters who follow candidates for office, political parties, or elected officials on social networking sites like Facebook or Twitter.

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Document 6

Source: TED-Ed (Producer). (2014, June 5). Damon Brown: How to choose your news. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/q-Y-z6HmRgl>.



Document 7

Source: Wynne Davis, a Digital News Intern with National Public Radio, online article “Fake or real? How to self-check the news and get the facts,” December 2016.

Read the article by visiting the following link:

<http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2016/12/05/503581220/fake-or-real-how-to-self-check-the-news-and-get-the-facts>



Fake Or Real? How To Self-Check The News And Get The Facts

December 5, 2016 · 12:55 PM ET

WYNNE DAVIS



Guido Rosa/Getty Images/Ikon Images

Document 8

Source: Melissa Zimdars, assistant professor of communication and media at Merrimack College, excerpt from her work “False, Misleading, Clickbait-y, and/or Satirical ‘News’ Sources,” published in 2016.

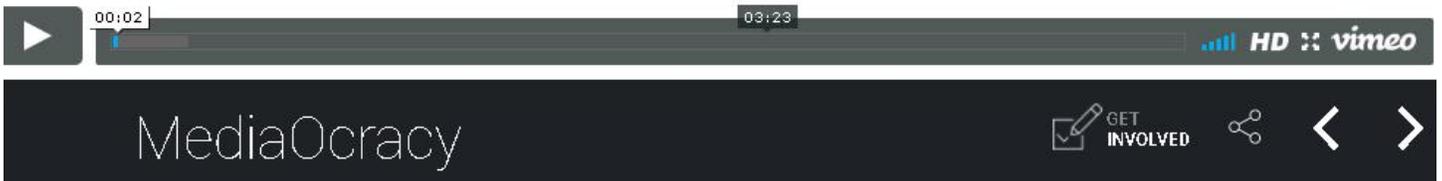
Some people are asking which news sources I trust, and all I can say is that I read/watch/listen very widely, from mainstream, corporate owned sources (*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Forbes*) as well as *The Atlantic*, National Public Radio, and various local and alternative sources with different political perspectives (*Truth-Out*) some of which are included on this list. The problem: Even typically reliable sources, whether mainstream or alternative, corporate or nonprofit, rely on particular media frames to report stories and select stories based on different notions of newsworthiness. The best thing to do in our contemporary media environment is to read/watch/listen widely and often, and to be critical of the sources we share and engage with on social media.

Document 9

Source: Vulcan Productions (Producer). (2016, September 14). MediOcracy. *We the Voters*. [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://wethevoters.com/film/mediaocracy>.



**WE THE
VOTERS**



Document 10

Source: Erica Chenoweth, professor and associate dean for research at the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver, excerpt from news article on “How Social Media Helps Dictators,” published in *Foreign Policy*, November 16, 2016.

[W]hat is sometimes known as “liberation technology” is not, in fact, making pro-democracy movements more effective. It’s true that we’ve seen more episodes of mass mobilization since the rise of digital communications than we did before. But we should note that the stunning rise of nonviolent resistance came long before the Internet. The technique has enjoyed widespread use since Gandhi popularized the method in the 1930s and 1940s. And in fact, nonviolent resistance has actually become less successful compared to earlier, pre-internet times. Whereas nearly 70 percent of civil resistance campaigns succeeded during the 1990s, only 30 percent have succeeded since 2010. Why might this be?...

...First, as political scientist Anita Gohdes has carefully documented, governments are simply better at manipulating social media than activists. Despite early promises of anonymity online, commercial and government surveillance has made internet privacy a thing of the past...

...Second, the turn to social media among popular movements has degraded the experience of participating. Activists and “clicktivists” might connect and pay attention to an issue for a short amount of time, but they often fail to engage fully in the struggle...

...Third, social media can have a demobilizing effect by enabling armed actors to threaten or even coordinate direct violence against activists. For instance, in the midst of the Libyan uprising in 2011, Muammar Qaddafi’s regime coopted the country’s cell phone network, sending text messages that ordered people to go back to work. It was a chilling warning that the government was watching — and that failing to comply would have consequences. ...

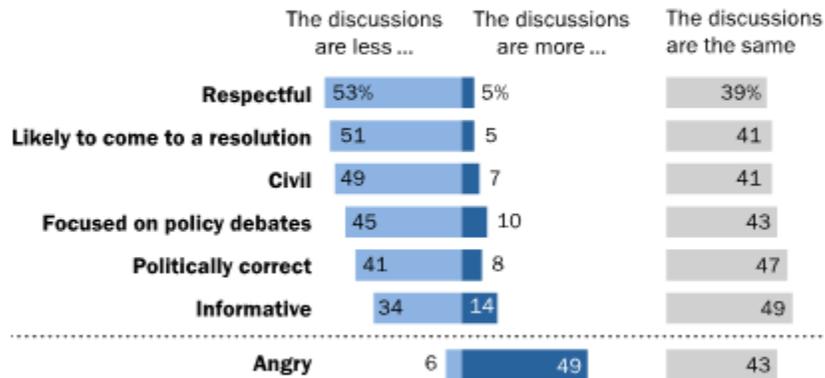
...Misinformation can spread on social media just as fast (or faster) than reliable information. Reports of Russian trolls manipulating a polarized information environment to influence the recent U.S. elections are a case in point. And misinformation is only compounded by peoples’ tendency to select news sources that confirm their prior beliefs. The echo chambers so prevalent in the social media serve to further divide societies instead of uniting them behind a common cause...

Document 11

Source: Bar graph from the Pew Research Center, "Many Users See Social Media as an Especially Negative Venue for Political Discussions, but Others See It as Simply 'more of the Same'," 2016.

Many users see social media as an especially negative venue for political discussions, but others see it as simply "more of the same"

% of social media users who say their political discussions are more or less _____ compared with other places people might discuss politics



Source: Survey conducted July 12-Aug. 08, 2016.
"The Political Environment on Social Media"

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Opening Activity

To set the stage for the compelling question *How is social media shaping the way we engage in the political process?* the teacher will engage students in a “turn and talk” about the following questions: Where do you get your news from? How do your parents get the news? Next, the teacher will engage students in a whole class discussion about their responses. After students have shared how they and their parents stay informed, the teacher will display the data chart that shows how people get their news and ask students the following questions: Where do most people get their news from? What are the pros and cons of the shift to using social media as a platform for getting the news? Are you surprised by this data? Does this data relate to you and your parents’ consumption of the news? At this point the teacher will introduce the compelling question and have students unpack the terms “social media” and “political process” before beginning the inquiry lesson.

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| GSE Standards and Elements | <p>SSCG15 Demonstrate knowledge of local, state, and national elections.</p> <p>e. Analyze the influence of media coverage, campaign advertising, and public opinion polls.</p> <p>SSCG16 Analyze the difference between involuntary and voluntary participation in civic life.</p> <p>b. Describe how citizens voluntarily and responsibly participate in the political process by voting, performing public service, being informed about current issues, and respecting differing opinions.</p> |
| Literacy Standards Social Studies Matrices Enduring Understanding(s) | <p>Social Studies Matrices: Information Processing Skills</p> <p>7. interpret timelines, charts, and tables</p> |

Instructional Activity #1

Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question, *How is social media being used in politics?*, asks students to examine cases studies of different ways social media has been used in politics. The teacher can divide students into home groups and assign them one of the case studies to analyze. On a graphic organizer, students will identify the type of social media used, summarize the example, and record evidence that describes the role the media had in the political process based on their assigned case study. Next, students from each home group will divide into expert groups and share their findings with their peers. While experts share what they learned, their peers will record notes on the graphic organizer. (Documents 2-5)

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| Literacy Standards Social Studies Matrices Enduring Understanding(s) | <p>Literacy Standard:</p> <p>L9-10RH9: Compare and contrast treatments of the same topic in several primary and secondary sources.</p> |

Student Handout: Social Media and Politics (Graphic Organizer)

| Doc # | Type of Social Media | Summary | Evidence |
|--------------|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | | | |
| 5 | | | |

Instructional Activity #2

Supporting Question 2

The second supporting question, *How can we determine the reliability of information in the news?*, requires students to use their digital literacy skills to evaluate the credibility of a news site(s). First, the teacher will have students watch a video on how to choose news and read tips on how to spot misleading/satirical/inaccurate news. The teacher can ask students to read a tip and then share aloud another example or explain the tip in their own words for the teacher to formatively assess their understanding and clarify misconceptions. Next, the teacher will need to pre-select two or more news articles (at least one misleading/satirical/inaccurate and one real). Examples of misleading/satirical/inaccurate news sites are available from the list of "[False, Misleading, Clickbait-y, and/or Satirical "News" Sources](#)" compiled by Melissa Zimdars, an assistant professor of communication and media at Merrimack College. This list can be found at the following link: https://docs.google.com/document/d/10eA5-mCZLSS4MOY5QGb5ewC3VAL6pLkT53V_81ZyitM/preview

Before sharing the misleading/satirical/inaccurate news article/site with students, review the material to make sure it is age appropriate. Then, students will employ the digital literacy strategies to analyze the examples of real and misleading/satirical/inaccurate news and use the evaluation checklist to determine which is real and misleading/satirical/inaccurate. (Documents 6-8)

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| Literacy Standards Social Studies Matrices Enduring Understanding(s) | <p>Social Studies Matrices: Information Processing Skills</p> <p>15. determine adequacy and/or relevancy of information</p> <p>16. check for consistency of information</p> |

Student Handout: News Site Evaluation Checklist

| Criteria | Description of Source | Reliable? | Unreliable? |
|--|-----------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Pay attention to the domain and URL | | | |
| Read the "About Us" section | | | |
| Look at the quotes in a story | | | |
| Look at who said them | | | |
| Check the comments | | | |
| Reverse image search | | | |

News Site Evaluation Checklist adapted from:

Davis, W. (2016, December 5). Fake or real? How to self-check the news and get the facts. *National Public Radio*. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/sections/alltechconsidered/2016/12/05/503581220/fake-or-real-how-to-self-check-the-news-and-get-the-facts>.

Instructional Activity #3

Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question, *What are arguments for and against using digital media to participate in the political process?*, requires students to analyze multiple perspectives concerning political news consumption and participation on social media. Students will watch a video, read an excerpt from an article, (Documents 9-11) and analyze a data chart to weigh the pros and cons of using digital media to stay informed and engage in political discussion. Students will record the pros and cons on a T-chart. The teacher can ask students to weigh the various opinions and take a stand using examples, reasons, and evidence to support their argument.

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Student Handout: Pros and Cons of Using Social Media to Stay Informed (T-Chart)

| Pros | Cons |
|------|------|
| | |

Summative Performance Task

PRODUCT PRESENTATION Create a public service announcement to educate the public on how to use social media responsibly to engage in the political process. Options: a) how to distinguish real from misleading/satirical/inaccurate news; b) how to engage in online political dialogue; c) how to use social media as a platform for political activism

EXTENSION Students will have a classroom debate to decide how much of a role social media should have on the political process.

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| <p>Literacy Standards Social Studies Matrices Enduring Understanding(s)</p> | <p>Literacy Standard: L9-10WHST7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.</p> |

Taking Informed Action

UNDERSTAND Research how people use social media to stay informed based on age group.
ASSESS Survey student body to determine how they use social media to engage in current events and the politics.
ACT Share findings on how peers’ social media use compares to the archival research.

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