

Gerrymandering

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Gerrymandering is in the AP Human Geography course articulation.

IV. Political Organization of Space

B. Spatial political patterns reflect ideas of territoriality and political power at a variety of scales

1. Evaluate the nature and function of international and internal boundaries

e. Voting districts, redistricting, and gerrymandering influence the results of elections at various scales

Here is a classroom sequence for discussing gerrymandering.

| <i>Teacher</i> | <i>Student</i> | <i>Notes</i> |
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| (1) | | Have a copy of the handout ready for each student. Uses basic image from Ingraham article. Pass out handouts at the beginning of the lesson. |
| (2) “You have 50 people. You know 3 things: (1) whether they are Republican or Democratic, (2) where they live (residential pattern, like a seating chart), and (3) population (how many and how many of each party). Label that diagram 1.” | Students label diagram 1 on paper. | Have the image projected on an interactive white board or on chart paper. If you have markers or colored pencils, students may want to outline the squares as blue or red. |
| (3) “Now, you need 5 districts with perfect representation. Draw those on diagram 2.” | Students draw the districts on their paper while 1 student (or a group of 2) draw the representation on diagram projected on the interactive white board or chart paper. | |
| (4) “What do you get? What do your districts look like?” | | Allow discussion. |
| (5) “Now, let’s label the next diagram #3. Blue controls the state. What happens if you try to draw 5 compact districts? What do you get?” | Students draw the districts on their paper while 1 student (or a group of 2) draw the representation on diagram projected on the interactive white board or chart paper. | Allow discussion. |

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| <p>(6) “Now, let’s move to diagram 4. Label the last diagram as #4. Let’s say you are with the red party and you want your party to win more seats. How do you draw the districts?”</p> | <p>Students draw the districts on their paper while 1 student (or a group of 2) draw the representation on diagram projected on the interactive white board or chart paper.</p> | <p>Allow discussion.</p> |
| <p>(7) “Red is 40% of the population. How do they get 60% of the seats? What is this last process called?”</p> | | <p>Process should elicit the word gerrymandering if students have read in their text or taken government class before. Teacher may need to explicitly say and define gerrymandering.</p> |
| <p>(8) “Why are we redrawing districts anyway?” Discussion points: (a) U.S. Constitution requires Census (b) Reapportionment happens after every Census</p> | | <p>Allow discussion about the process as required by the Constitution.</p> |
| <p>(9) Show maps of reapportionment showing the most recent changes (2000 to 2010).</p> | <p>Students should describe the spatial patterns seen.</p> | <p>See Census Bureau brief on reapportionment. Show PDF on interactive white board. Discuss the large geographic patterns (movement by region: to the South and West) seen in the reapportionment map. Discuss possible reapportionment patterns likely to occur in 2020. Look at the state data. Is our state part of a regional pattern of change?</p> |

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| <p>(10) Go back to the question of gerrymandering.</p> <p>“What are consequences of gerrymandering?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Partisan power (b) Lack of social cohesion (c) Advantages/disadvantages to individual candidates (d) Advantages/disadvantages to voting bloc (e) Minority-majority district (or opportunity districts, or ability-to-elect districts) (f) Lower voter participation (g) Judicial challenges (h) Preclearance | <p>Students should be encouraged to volunteer answers, while taking notes on the consequences.</p> | <p>Elaborate on each consequence using the 2015 Scoring Guidelines for APHG Question 1.</p> |
| <p>(11) “Here are some terms you need to know.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Territorial representation (b) Reapportionment: emphasis on within the US; states gain/lose numbers of representatives based on whether they gain/lose population (c) Redistricting: political process within each state to determine where the boundaries of each US Congressional voting district will be (d) Partisan | <p>Students should take notes.</p> | <p>The difference between reapportionment and redistricting is an important time to emphasize the difference between scale. One is a distribution among states, while the other is a distribution WITHIN each state.</p> |

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| <p>(12) “What does the Supreme Court prefer?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Compact and contiguous districts that follow existing lines such as county boundaries (b) Representational equality of racial and linguistic minorities | <p>Students should be encourage to volunteer answers. Students should take notes.</p> | |
| <p>(13) “What are splitting and majority-minority districts?”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Splitting: minorities are spread across districts; majority wins in all districts (b) Majority-minority districts: packed districts; <i>majority</i> is from the <i>minority</i> (c) Opportunity districts <i>“In minority opportunity districts, minorities have the opportunity to elect a representative of their choice. These are usually majority-minority districts, but in minority crossover districts, minority voters might comprise less than 50% of the district, and still elect their chosen representatives with support from some “crossover” white voters.” –Lentit</i> (d) Ability-to-elect districts | <p>Students should be encourage to volunteer answers. Students should take notes.</p> | |
| <p>(14) Points to mention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Process named after Governor Gerry of Massachusetts 1812 case (b) Spatial organization of districts is very geographical (c) Voting Rights Act amended in early 1980s | <p>Students should be encourage to volunteer answers. Students should take notes.</p> | |

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| (15) “When and why does redistricting become gerrymandering?” | Students should be encouraged to volunteer answers. | |
| (16) Examine maps of gerrymandering. | Students should be encouraged to discuss the spatial patterns shown on the maps. | <p>“America’s Most Gerrymandered Districts” has some maps useful for this purpose.</p> <p>A second source, which looks the nation as a whole, is the Gerrymander Index Scores map of the 113th Congress (See Ingraham May 15, 2014 article.)</p> |
| (17) “How can GIS help solve the problem of gerrymandering?” | Students should be encouraged to discuss answers to this question. | |
| (18) “What are some ties with current events?” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The Supreme Court has decided cases from Virginia and North Carolina. (b) Former President Obama and Attorney General Eric Holder are working together to eliminate gerrymandering (“break Republican grip on congressional map”). They have created the National Democratic Redistricting Committee. | | <p>See Epps article for overview of the two cases.</p> <p>Virginia case has been sent back to the lower courts. See Howe article. One point from this decision is “The court reasoned that that “ultimate objectives of the inquiry” is the legislature’s predominant motive for the design of the district as a whole.”</p> <p>The North Carolina case (<i>McCray v. Harris</i>) has not yet been decided.</p> <p>See Burns and Martin article for discussion of Obama/Holder collaboration on fighting gerrymandering.</p> |

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| <p>(19) “What do political geographers say about gerrymandering?” (a) Jonathan Leib (b) Both odd-shaped districts and compact districts can be gerrymandered (c) Must consider both the political and the spatial or geographical aspects of gerrymandering</p> | | |
| <p>(20) “How can GIS help solve gerrymandering?”</p> | <p>Students should discuss this question.</p> | <p>See “This Computer Programmer Solved Gerrymandering in His Spare Time” and/or the Klarreich article.</p> |
| <p>(21)</p> | | <p>Videos can be assigned for review, follow-up, or makeup for participation in this assignment. See both the Good Magazine and Greer references.</p> |
| <p>(22)</p> | | <p>Students may want to see how their state’s apportionment has changed over time. See the historical data table: Representatives Apportioned to Each State (1st to 23rd Census, 1790-2010).</p> |

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