Mrs. Rotenberg
US Government

Congress Project

Coming out of the 2020 election, the nation faces many obstacles, including political violence, a global pandemic, economic struggles, and racial strife. How can political leaders come together to address these problems in a way that protects and reinforces the principles and institutions of democracy?
Our class is going to simulate this process and show the way forward.

Each of you has been placed in a group based on issues that interest you.
You will each take on the role of a current U.S. senator and work with your team to come up with a policy solution (could be small) to a pressing problem.
The initial steps will be completed individually at home, but the remainder will be completed during class time with your groups.
Please read the following information outlining the project's steps.

Step #1 - Selecting a Senate Persona DUE:
- Each of you will "become" a U.S. Senator *who has been involved in your issue*.***** You may select any of the 100 U.S. senators, but each group MUST have at least one Democrat and one Republican. Consult with your group's members before making your selection.
  - *****Suggestion: Look at committees related to your issue and choose from those members. You can also look at their websites and see what issues they highlight.
- Each of you will complete a handout providing biographical information about your chosen senator. Submit the handout on google classrooms. The information will include the senator's:
  - Name, State, Party. (Look here for more information.)
  - Committee assignments. You can also look at their websites.
  - Brief biographical information
    - Where was the senator raised?
    - Does the senator practice a religion? If so, what religion?
    - Where did the senator go to college and/or graduate school?
    - What did the senator do before coming to the Senate?
    - Is the senator married? Have siblings? What are his/her family connections?
    - Other interesting facts?

Step #2 - Researching your issue and your senator's views on the issue DUE:

You should start following this senator in facebook, instagram, and/or twitter for updated information.

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- **Issue Research:** Find at least three **reliable sources** about your issue. These can be newspaper articles or websites. Answer the questions in the notes handout. Before you start researching, consider the following guiding questions:
    - What do you really truly know about this issue?
    - What kinds of things don't you actually know?
    - What kinds of things should you make sure to expose yourself to, in order to develop a further-informed opinion about this issue?

- **Senator Research**: What has your senator said about this issue? Have they introduced legislation? Have they issued press releases? Based on your research, what can you tell about your senator's values? Why is this issue important to the senator and why?
    - Fill out the notes handout.
    - Fill out an Identity Map for the persona to better understand the senator's values.

Step #3: Meeting with your group: Issue, values, areas of agreement, & solution
Class Time. Due:
- Senators meet in their working groups.
- Groups will:
    - Share basic research about the issue from the news sources
    - Use **listening practices handout** when you share with the group how your senator views the issue.
        - Listen for actions the senator might have done regarding this issue.
        - Listen for values the senator might have regarding this issue.
        - Listen for emotions the senator might have regarding this issue.
    - **Use dialogue questions handout** to discuss issues after all senators have shared. Each senator will take notes on the other senators' views.
    - Use the handouts (notes on the issues and senators' views on the issues) to develop a draft proposal on how best to address the issue. This draft will be based on areas of agreement (so it might only address one part of the issue). Use the handout for writing a basic draft.
        - Template will include: Title, Purpose (a bill to..), and bullet point summary of how it will carry its goal.
    - Map out how your proposed bill will be passed into law using this handout (use "how a bill becomes a law" handout for guidance).

Step #4: Presentations.
Group members will share the following information with the class (divide it up so all

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members are involved):
- Senators' views
- Challenges you faced in coming to an agreement
- How you were able to come to an agreement

Step #5: Individual Reflections. DUE:
Each group member will write a short reflection on the process. This should include information about what you learned about the issue, dialogue, and compromise. This should be in one paragraph.

REQUIREMENTS	110 POINTS
Senator Biographical Information 10 POINTS Your senator is of a different party than at least one other person in your group. You include the following information about your senator. ● Name ● State ● Party ● Committee assignment ● Where was the senator raised? ● Does the senator practice a religion? If so, what religion? ● Where did the senator go to college and/or graduate school? ● What did the senator do before coming to the Senate? ● Is the senator married? Have siblings? What are his/her family connections? ● Other interesting facts?	/10 POINTS

Issue Research:
● **Background questions answered 5 POINTS**
   ○ What do you really truly know about this issue?
   ○ What kinds of things don't you actually know?
   ○ What kinds of things should you make sure to expose yourself to, in order to develop a further-informed opinion about this issue?
● **Issue Research15 POINTS**
   ○ At least three reliable sources about your issue.
   ○ Completed the notes handout.
 	
Senator Research:
	/35 POINTS

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● **View 10 POINTS**
     ○ Completed the notes handout about the senator's views on the issue. Answers were comprehensive.
 ● **Values: 5 POINTS**
     ○ Completed the "Identity Map" for the persona to better understand the senator's values.	

Meetings and Bill Drafting 45 POINTS ● Senators share research about the topic and the senators' views on the issues. Members use listening skills to share information. 10 POINTS ● Draft draft of bill that includes creative and informative title, purpose of bill, and bullet point summary of what the bill will accomplish. 25 POINTS ● MAp out how the proposed bill will pass through Congress and get to the president's desk. 10 POINTS	/45 POINTS
Groups Presentation and Reflections ● Group members will briefly share their bill with the class, outlining the senators' views, challenges they faced in coming to an agreement, and how they were able to come to an agreement	
Individual Reflections 10 POINTS ● Students will write short reflections on the process. This should include information about what they learned about the issue, dialogue, and compromise.	/10 POINTS

HANDOUTS

- Senator biographical information
- Issue information and guiding questions
- Senator's views on the issue
- Identity Map
- Listening practices and graphic organizer
- Bill template