

Pearson Originals Videos

Political Science

Episode	Description
Marijuana and Federalism: Who's in Charge?	With recreational and medicinal cannabis legal in certain states, marijuana businesses and users are caught between permissive state laws and federal statutes that criminalize all forms of cannabis use. As the Trump Justice Department moves to bring this issue to a head, we examine which jurisdiction is supreme, what outside forces might be at play and, most of all, how this issue perfectly illustrates federalism — the distribution of power between state and federal governments.
What Is the Electoral College And Is It still Relevant in Our Democracy?	Twice in the last four Presidential elections, the winner of the popular vote lost the race thanks to the Electoral College. We examine why the founders established this system, and debate its pros and cons.
Who Should Be Allowed to Call Themselves 'American'?	The immigration debate: blood ties or skills test? Western-style democracies differ on the criteria they use to determine whom they choose to legally admit into their country. Currently in the U.S., family ties to an already immigrated resident matter most, but the Trump Administration has proposed adopting a skills-based approach. What are the pros and cons to changing our system?
How Is a Rapidly Changing Media Affecting Democracy?	Nowadays, 67% of U.S adults access news from social media. Some believe that this way of accessing the news — through our social news feeds — strengthens political polarization, widening the gap between Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals. But is that really the case? And, are we — the public — being informed correctly through this method?
What Is the Emoluments Clause and Why Should I Care About It?	This video will discuss the Constitutional clause that states that national leaders must not accept payments or gifts from foreign governments. Donald Trump, the first President unwilling to fully disclose or divorce himself from extensive business holdings, is testing the checks and balances built into our founding document. Is he violating the Constitution?

When Is It Legal for the Police to Search and Seize My Property, or Me?

Often young people are profiled by law enforcement for search and seizure, especially in states and locales where drug laws are aggressively enforced. What are a citizen's rights regarding lawful and unlawful search and seizure? Where do those rights come from?

Can Totally Free Speech Lead to Less Inclusive Discussion?

The First Amendment guarantees every American the right to free speech. But in an increasingly diverse country with seemingly louder-than-ever fringe groups, some people are beginning to question if totally free speech is still serving us. This video explores the conflicts arising on college campuses around first amendment rights.

What Are 'Executive' Actions and Do They Give the President Too Much Power?

The American system of government is predicated on an intricate system of checks and balances between the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. But in times of a highly partisan or divided Congress, Presidents from both parties have used executive actions rather than seeking legislation passed by Congress, to shape public policy. This video will look at the history of the executive order and discuss its merits.

Why is Affirmative Action so Controversial and Do We Still Need It?

Affirmative action in college admission seems like an un-American idea. Why should one group or class of applicants be treated differently than others? Originally seen as a corrective to better balance historic prejudice against black applicants, affirmative action is considered "positive discrimination". But, this is a controversial take. What does affirmative action mean today, and do we still need it?

Is Discrimination Ever Legal?

The Civil Rights Act of 1964, enacted in response to the Civil Rights Movement, prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, race, religion, nationality, or color. Yet there are still ways in which people are legally discriminated against. People under 25 cannot rent cars, and some LGBT couples are refused wedding services because of vendors' religious beliefs. This video will examine the legal definition of discrimination, and discuss when exceptions are made and it is deemed legal to discriminate.

What's Next for Political Parties in America?

While the two-party system has proved durable since the middle of the 19th century, the core supporters of the two major parties have shifted — sometimes dramatically — over time. This video will look at the progress toward realignment of both the Republican and Democratic parties and trace the changes to their respective bases through history, as well as discuss third parties. How will each party define itself for the next generation?

What Is the Filibuster and How Is It Being Used?

This video looks at the history of the filibuster — a tool that allows for the instigation of a lengthy courtroom speech in order to halt progress on an issue or bill. We look at major examples of the filibuster in practice and discuss how the filibuster has forced compromise as well as consensus on a host of hot button issues.

What Is Gerrymandering and What Does It Mean for Me as a Voter?

Political party officials have vested interests in drawing congressional boundaries that produce “safe seats,” where one party seemingly holds a permanent grip on a majority of voters, or, gerrymandering districts. Does this phenomenon push the electorate to reward candidates representing their party’s ideological extremes?

What’s the Big Deal About Campaign Financing?

Campaign financing is a complicated but crucial facet of the election process. Citizens United, a 2010 Supreme Court decision, allowed political action committees to collect unlimited amounts of money to influence political campaigns. The decision fundamentally altered the campaigning and electioneering landscape. This video discusses what campaign financing looked like before and after Citizens United.

Why Is the Government in so Much Debt and Should I Be Worried?

The national debt is often described as the transfer of wealth from future generations to the present. What is the nature of federal debt when the government controls the power to print more money? This video will look at the implications of the national debt on public policy and consider various opinions about the danger of its existence.

Should We Consider the Constitution to Be 'Living' or 'Dead'?

Over the course of U.S. history, Supreme Court Justices have used — and continue to use — alternative judicial philosophies to interpret the immortalized words of the framers within the U.S. Constitution. Two judicial philosophies are "Originalism" and "Living Constitutionalism" which approach the Constitution as a "dead" or a "living" document, respectively. We look at these judicial philosophies and how Justices use them to determine the constitutionalism of the Second Amendment, the right to bear arms.