



FOREIGN INTERFERENCE IN ELECTIONS

LEARNING GOALS

- To understand how governments throughout the world - including the United States - meddle in elections of other countries.
- To think critically about the impact of foreign interference in U.S. elections, including state and county elections in Hawaii.
- To practice drawing connections between global issues and their impact on local communities.

ASSIGNMENT

Estimated Time: ~21 min

- Watch: "[The history of Russia's 2016 election meddling in 4 minutes](#)" (3:55)
- Read: "[Russia, China and Iran seeking to influence US ahead of elections, top intelligence official says](#)" (~8 min.)
- Read: "[The U.S. is no stranger to interfering in the elections of other countries](#)" (~6 min.)
- Read: "[Lawmakers Want To Keep Foreign Interference Out Of Elections](#)" (~3 min.)
 - Note: [HB 2728](#) did not pass in the 2020 legislative session in Hawaii.

TERMINOLOGY

- **Foreign interference in elections** - refers to attempts by foreign governments to overtly or covertly influence elections in another country.

KAHOOT QUIZ

- Go to [Kahoot.it](#) or use the Kahoot mobile app and enter the pin 09534043
- Or, use [this link](#)

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- In what ways did Russia interfere in the 2016 election and why does it matter?
- What did the U.S. government do in response to the allegations against Russia, in 2016 and beyond? What are the differences in the response to Russia under the Obama versus Trump administrations?
- One result of foreign interference in elections can be the creation of voter distrust in the government and electoral system. How might Russia's interference in the 2016 election have impacted voters' views on the legitimacy of our government?

This lesson was created by Megan Tagami.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (continued)

- What distinctions did U.S. intelligence officials make between Russia versus China's potential to interfere in the 2020 presidential election?
- What recent developments have made intelligence officials think that China and Iran may interfere in the 2020 election? Which country poses the greatest electoral threat and why?
- Why do you think that the statement from the Republican and Democratic leaders of the Senate Intelligence Committee asked their colleagues to refrain from politicizing the statement on the threat of Russian, Chinese, and Iranian meddling in US elections? Do you think the issue of foreign interference in elections has become a politically polarizing issue? Why or why not?
- According to the L.A. Times article, the United States interfered in other countries' elections in the second half of the 20th century. Do you think countries should be allowed to interfere in the elections of another country for any reason (e.g. to stop communism, avoid human rights violations, etc.)? Why or why not?
- What were some of the common methods the United States used to influence other countries' elections in the 20th century? How are some of these methods similar to the methods that China, Russia, and Iran are projected to use in the 2020 U.S. elections?
- Why was [House Bill 2728](#) proposed? Do you think this measure would be effective in making sure that local elections are reflective of the interests of Hawaii residents? Do you, as a future or current voter, think that foreign interests can become a serious threat to the legitimacy of local elections in Hawaii?
- One testimony in response to [House Bill 2728](#) argued that the bill should also prevent out-of-state campaign expenditures in Hawaii. Do you agree with this proposal? Why or why not?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [U.S. Warns Russia, China and Iran Are Trying to Interfere in the Election. Democrats Say It's Far Worse.](#) A New York Times article explaining the potential interference of Russia, China, and Iran in the 2020 election, as well as the political tensions over foreign interference in 2016 and 2020. Sign in to read as one of your free monthly articles.
- [The US Has a Long History of Election Meddling](#) An article by The Atlantic outlining U.S. interference in foreign elections during the Cold War. The article also explains some scholars' argument that the U.S.' past interference in elections is different and more acceptable than Russia's interference in 2016. Sign in to read as one of your free monthly articles.
- [As 2020 Election Approaches, Media Literacy Is More Important Than Ever](#) An article from Truthout explaining students' struggles in discerning credible online information and reflecting on how biases in reporting can impact election results.
- [With An Election On The Horizon, Older Adults Get Help Spotting Fake News](#) An article and podcast from NPR on new programs being implemented to help adults over 65 identify fake news online, in the hopes of helping these voters make better informed decisions in the 2020 election.
- [Fake News: How to Spot Misinformation](#) A podcast and article and from NPR with five tips on how to identify and combat misinformation online.



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES (continued)

- [Social Media Usage Is At An All-Time High. That Could Mean a Nightmare for Democracy](#)
An article on how Americans' use of social media has increased during the pandemic, and how this trend could lead to a greater spread of political misinformation, impacting the 2020 election.

IDEAS FOR ACTION

Easier:

- As discussed above, foreign interference can not only influence electoral results, but can also degrade voters' confidence in the electoral and political system. Conduct a poll amongst your classmates, teachers, and parents on their confidence on the integrity and security of our electoral system. Discuss your results.
- The LA Times article mentions several foreign elections in which the U.S. interfered. Choose one example or find one of your own, and research it more in-depth. Compare and contrast the United States' methods of election meddling with those of Russia in 2016, and present your findings to your class.

Medium:

- One way that Russia meddled in the 2016 U.S. election was by creating social media campaigns favoring Donald Trump and spreading false information about Hillary Clinton online. Research and practice good media literacy skills, and inform others (teachers, peers, family, etc.) about the importance of media literacy and how to spot fake news, especially online and on social media.
 - Resources on media literacy include [News Literacy Project](#) and [Media Literacy Resources for Classrooms](#) from Common Sense Education
- The [League of Women Voters of Hawaii](#) and [Common Cause Hawaii](#) are two nonprofits which aim to strengthen campaign transparency and increase citizen engagement and participation in elections. Attend one of their events on voter education to learn more keep informed as a current or future voter.
- Hold a debate on:
 - the merits of [House Bill 2738](#). To prepare, [read the bill's text](#), go through and research the influence of foreign interests in local politics. Also see the [testimony](#) for House Bill 2738 for additional arguments in support for and against the bill.
 - how the U.S. should respond to foreign interference in elections. Use this concise [Model Diplomacy brief on Election Security](#) to guide your debate.

Difficult:

- Testify on bills like [HB 2738](#) that address the integrity of elections in Hawaii.

HAWAII CORE STANDARDS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES (HCSSS) LINKS

- Content Standard [SS.WH.7.18.4](#), [SS.WH.8.7.2](#)
- Content Standard [SS.US.9.17.2](#), [SS.US.12.8.1](#), [SS.US.12.16.2](#)
- Content Standard [SS.PID.3.7.2](#), [SS.PID.4.7.1](#), [SS.PID.4.16.3](#)
- Action Projects link to [SS.PID.5.7.1](#)