

# TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES ACROSS TENNESSEE

NEWSLETTER: SEPTEMBER 2012

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WELCOME!

Teaching with Primary Sources across Tennessee, administered by the Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University, engages learners of all ages in using primary sources to explore major issues and questions in many different disciplines.

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## NEWS— NEW LESSON PLANS & ACTIVITIES!

- [Defending from Enemy Attack: Tennessee's Civil War Structures](#)
- [Build Your Own Historic Structures Using Computer Aided Design \(CAD\)](#)
- [Preparing for Revolution](#)
- [Help Is on the Way: Civil War Women and Relief Work](#)
- [Technology Image Analysis](#) (activity)
- [Inventors and Innovations](#) (activity)

## "AWESOME" SOURCE OF THE MONTH:



[Great Republican Harrison and Morton, campaign ball, 1888](#)

Read about the "campaign ball" at [this blog](#).

## THEME: POLITICAL SCIENCE

**Feature Article by MARK BYRNES, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Professor of Political Science, MTSU**

When people first hear the term "political science," they are often confused. They know each of the two words but frequently don't understand how they fit together; "science" seems to make people think of Bunsen burners and dissecting frogs. In fact, having heard that I teach political science, a neighbor once asked me to help her son with his entry for an upcoming science fair.

Political science, of course, is not that kind of "hard" science. It is, rather, the systematic study of politics and government. Educating our schoolchildren on these topics is vital to the health of our democracy. Unfortunately, the current standardized testing regime in K-12 education, which stresses reading and math skills, means that the study of politics and government often gets short-changed.

Although political science as a formal academic discipline emerged only in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, people have been studying politics and government for centuries. Indeed, the Greek philosopher Aristotle, whose work *Politics* analyzed different forms of governments, is often called the first political scientist. (Continued on p. 2)

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

- **September 13**— "Presidential Elections and Primary Sources from the Library of Congress" Webcast from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Click [here](#) for viewing options.
- **September 15**— (Cookeville) "Building a National History Day Project Using the Library of Congress" Workshop from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. To register, email [Jennifer Core](mailto:Jennifer.Core@mtsu.edu).
- **September 20**— (Murfreesboro) "Addressing Common Core with Primary Sources and Inquiry" workshop for middle and high school teachers from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. To register, email [Kira Duke](mailto:Kira.Duke@mtsu.edu).
- **September 28**— (Knoxville) "Introduction to Teaching with Primary Sources and the Library of Congress" Workshop from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. EST. To register, email [Lisa Oakley](mailto:Lisa.Oakley@mtsu.edu).
- **September 29**— (Knoxville) "Incorporating Primary Sources Into Your Teaching" Workshop from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. EST. To register, email [Lisa Oakley](mailto:Lisa.Oakley@mtsu.edu).
- **October 2**—(Nashville) [Tennessee Council For History Education Conference](#). Session times TBA.

## FEATURE ARTICLE— POLITICAL SCIENCE &amp; PRIMARY SOURCES

Today, political science is organized into subfields, including American government, political theory and philosophy, comparative government, and international relations. Underlying all branches of the discipline, however, is one common concept: power—the ability to control the behavior of people and institutions. Political scientists believe that understanding power, and how it is acquired and used, is essential to understanding the world. Both politics (the process of deciding who gets what, when, and how) and government (the people, institutions, and procedures through which public policies are made and executed) are inextricably linked to power.

If people are to govern themselves, they must have some basic level of knowledge about how to do so. Not every citizen needs to be a junior political scientist, but responsible voting requires some familiarity with the structure and role of government and some awareness of the most pressing current issues. Without such background knowledge, voting decisions could degenerate into mere responses to the latest Internet rumor or 30-second television ad. Founding Father James Madison, perhaps the keenest thinker about American government, warned of this danger: “A popular Government without popular information or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy or perhaps both” ([James Madison to W. T. Barry, August 4, 1822](#)). He went on to assert that “a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power knowledge gives.” ([James Madison’s papers](#), with background essays and timeline, are available through American Memory.)

Our public education system has long recognized this, making considerable efforts to inculcate knowledge of and interest in government. Classroom instruction in courses in Civics, Government, and History has long been standard. Schools also conduct a range of relevant co-curricular and extra-curricular programming, such as student government, mock elections, studying the presidents, displays of our founding documents, and so on.

Despite these efforts, citizens’ knowledge about government remains anemic. In 2011, *Newsweek* asked 1,000 Americans questions drawn from the exam that is given to applicants for U.S. citizenship. While 62 percent managed to earn passing grades, some of the results are still dispiriting. Sixty-five percent of respondents could not say what happened at the [Constitutional Convention](#) (1787); 29 percent could not name the current vice president; and 6 percent could not even identify July 4th as [Independence Day](#). Plenty of other surveys assessing Americans’ civic knowledge have found similar or even worse results.

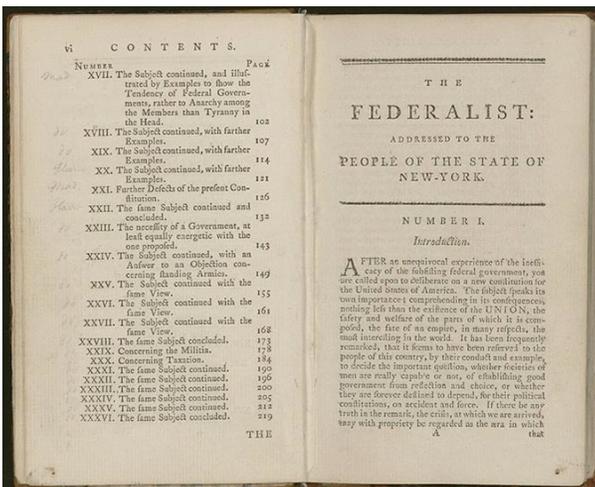
So what is the answer? Part of the solution must be a reimagined and reinvigorated approach to educating our students. Using primary sources has the potential to be an important part of that effort, and the [Library of Congress](#) offers a wealth of such sources online. Multimedia resources can be particularly effective with today’s visually-oriented youth. Seeing a [photograph](#) of an African American man drinking at a water fountain labeled “colored,” for example, can be a great supplement to a lecture on racial discrimination. Or a discussion of presidential elections can be supplemented by visiting the archived Web sites of past candidates. And students can learn about current bills and the legislative process with a visit to the [Thomas](#) home page.

Plenty of primary source documents about Tennessee’s state and local government are available online, as well. The Web site of the [Tennessee Secretary of State](#) is a portal to an abundance of information, including resources at the Tennessee State Library and Archives and an online version of the very helpful Tennessee [Blue Book](#). In addition, most local governments in the state also have Web sites, many with links to copious information (meeting agendas and budget documents, for example).

Public interest in politics usually peaks in presidential election years like this one. But, given its pervasive role in modern life, politics is a topic that deserves constant attention. Educators must face the challenge of preparing and inspiring students to give politics this attention, and using primary sources in the classroom can help us in that endeavor.

## IMPORTANT LINKS:

- [Browse by Topic: Government, Politics & Law](#)
- [Themed Resources: Civics and Government](#)
- [Timeline: American History As Seen in Congressional Documents, 1774-1873](#)
- [TPS-TN October 2010 newsletter: Elections](#)
- [Themed Resources: Elections](#)



[The Federalist: A Collection of Essays, Written in Favour of the New Constitution.](#) [1788] For transcriptions, click [here](#).

## LESSON IDEA— THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1920

The [presidential election of 1920](#) was the first to take place after the conclusion of World War I. Despite the fact that President Woodrow Wilson's health had been ruined by a stroke and President Theodore Roosevelt had died, the election revolved around Wilson's globalism versus Roosevelt's nationalism. The Republican ticket consisted of Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge, while the Democratic slate included James M. Cox and Franklin D. Roosevelt. This would be the last campaign before candidates would address the people directly via the radio; instead, politicians and other leaders recorded speeches on phonograph records. This would be the first presidential election in which women across the nation had the right to vote.

From the [American Leaders Speak: Recordings from World War I and the 1920 Election](#) collection, play the speeches of [Corinne Roosevelt Robinson](#), sister to Theodore and a prominent Republican, and [Franklin D. Roosevelt](#), distant cousin of Corinne and Theodore and the Democratic candidate for vice-president. As the recordings are playing, project the transcriptions of the speeches on a screen or provide students with copies of the transcriptions.

Work with your students to analyze the speeches. Regarding the speakers' delivery and elocution, ask: How would you characterize the speech? Do you have any advice for the speaker? Is public speaking as important today as it was then? Regarding content, ask: On which points do the speakers differ the most? How do the speeches reflect globalism or nationalism? How do the speakers portray WWI and war in general? If time, look at the [Speaker Portrait Gallery](#) and listen to other speeches.

This lesson can be adapted to meet state curriculum standards for High School U.S. Government (Standard 4: Governance and Civics), U.S. History (Era 7: Emergence of Modern America, 1890-1930), and Speech.



[Famous G.O.P women arrive \[Corinne Roosevelt Robinson in upper left hand corner\].](#) [c. 1921]

## LESSON IDEA— CONSTITUTIONAL POWERS



[Constitution of the United States](#)  
[1787]

Originally, our national government was guided by the [Articles of Confederation](#) which left much of the governing power in the new nation to the states. The Articles of Confederation created a national government that had no executive branch, no judiciary, and no taxing power. This created many problems for the new nation, which was struggling to pay off war debt. By 1787, a [Constitutional Convention](#) was called to revise the Articles of Confederation. Ignoring proposed amendments to the existing document, delegates instead elected to essentially start over and produced the [Constitution](#), which created a stronger national government made up of three branches: the executive, the legislative, and the judicial. Each branch was given specific powers and ways to check the abuse of power from other branches.

Begin by having your students review the Preamble to the [Constitution](#). As a class, discuss why the Constitution starts with this statement. How does our national government work to achieve the goals stated here? Why is it important for our national government to have these goals?

Next divide students up into three groups. Assign each group one of the first three articles of the Constitution. Each group should identify which branch of government its article pertains to and outline the powers and responsibilities for its respective branch of government. Have each group present its findings. How do the powers outlined for each branch of government help the national government meet the goals outlined in the Preamble? For more on the creation of the Constitution, please check out [Creating the United States](#) (especially the [Creating the Constitution interactive](#)) and the [American Memory Timeline: The United States Constitution](#).

This lesson can be adapted to meet curriculum standards for 8th grade Social Studies (Standard 4.0: Governance and Civics) and High School U.S. Government (Standard 4.0: Governance and Civics).

WHERE LAWS ARE MADE



[U.S. Capitol building, Washington D.C.](#) [between 1980 and 2006]

Have your students identify this building. What distinctive elements do they recognize? What branch of government resides in this building? Who makes up this branch of our government? What are the responsibilities of this branch of government?

VOTES FOR WOMEN



[The apotheosis of suffrage.](#) [1896]

This cartoon is based on [The Apotheosis of George Washington](#) (1865) in the U.S. Capitol. (“Apotheosis” means to raise someone or something to divine status.) Ask students to compare the drawing to the original painting. Also ask if they think that the cartoonist was for or against suffrage for women.

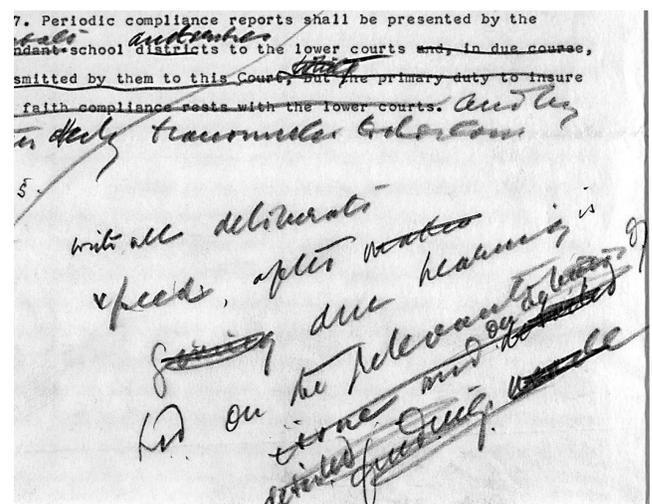
FIGHTING OVER FEDERAL POWERS



[The looking glass for 1787. A house divided against itself cannot stand. Mat. chap. 13th verse 26](#) [1787]

This early political cartoon outlines the tensions between the “Federalists” and “Antifederalists” in the newly formed U.S. Read the Summary on the bibliographic page for a description of what all is going on. Can you tell from the cartoon what each faction’s motives are? [Download the 10.3mb TIFF file to be able to zoom in closely enough to read the word balloons.]

JUDICIAL DECISION



[Felix Frankfurter's draft decree to enforce the Brown v. Board of Education decision, \[8 April 1955\].](#)

Supreme Court decisions can have far reaching implications and decisions must be implemented by lower courts and the legislative branch. From this document, how did Justice Frankfurter see *Brown v. Board* being implemented? How long did school districts have to implement the decision?