

Political and Economic Spectrums – Teacher Notes

This digital resource was designed to meet Social Studies outcomes at the Grade 12 level. It consists of grids and spectrums that demonstrate the interrelationship between political and economic systems.

Links to the Alberta Social Studies Program of Studies

Alberta Social Studies 30 / 33 (Revised 2000)

Social 30 Topic A

THEME I: POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS IN THEORY

Ideologies contain beliefs and ideas about human nature and are used to explain and justify political and economic systems.

Social 33 Topic A

THEME I: POLITICAL SYSTEMS

Political systems are organized for the exercise of power by individuals and/or groups based on their ideology.

THEME II: ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

Economic systems are organized in different ways to deal with basic economic questions that arise from the problem of scarcity.

Alberta Social Studies 30-1 / 30-2 (December 2005 Validation Draft)

30-1 Students will explore the relationship between identity and ideology.

1.5 examine expressions of individual and collective ideology (I, C, PADM)

30-2 Students will assess the relationship between identity and ideology.

1.5 examine individualism as a key value of ideology (values of liberalism: individual rights and freedoms, self-interest, equality of opportunity, rule of law, private property) (PADM, ER, C)

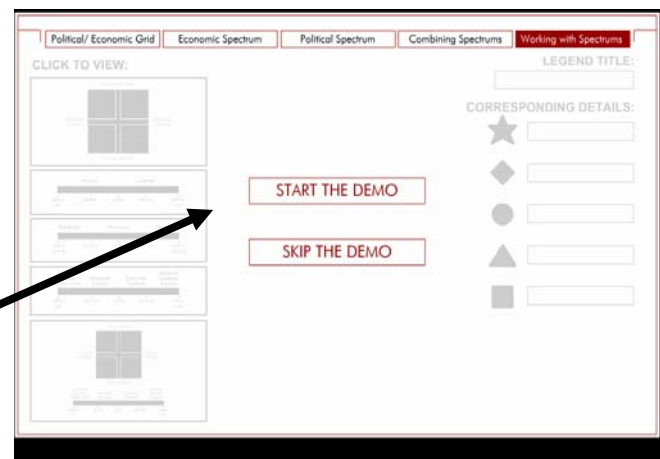
Student Requirements

If this resource is used independently by a student, a general awareness of political economic spectrums and ideologies is needed.

Notable Feature

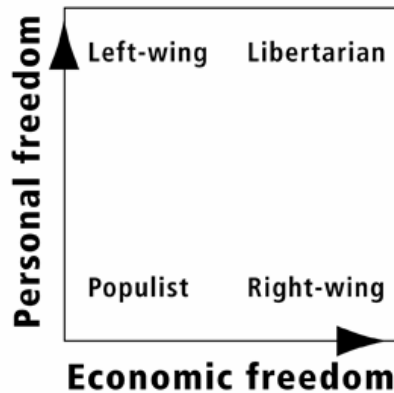
The **“Working with Spectrums”** feature is meant to be a flexible tool for use by teachers and students. Five draggable icons can be labelled and then placed on one of the grids or spectrums.

The resource contains a demonstration of how to use this feature.



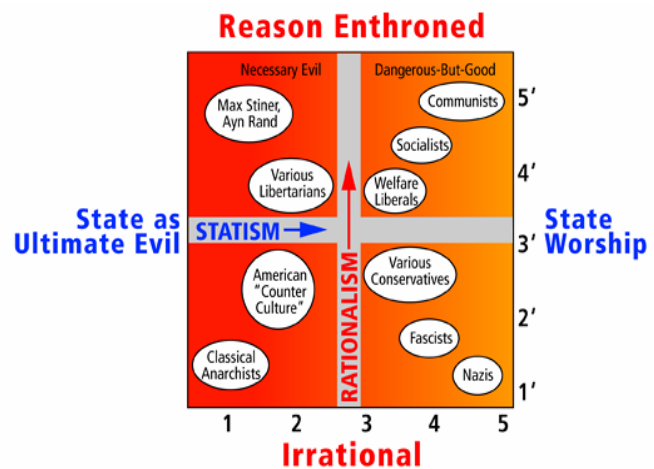
Representations of Political and Economic Thought

While the left-right spectrum is the most commonly used representation of political and economic ideologies, it does have its limitations. Alternatives to the left-right spectrum have been developed and merit exploration to further student understanding. Two such representations are presented below:



← The *Nolan Chart* measures personal freedom versus economic freedom.

The *Pournelle Chart* measures how much government involvement is desired in the lives of the citizens. The y-axis measures individual responses to the effectiveness of each system.



Exploring Multiple Perspectives in Relation to Economic and Political Beliefs

- Environmentalism, or “green” ideology, is based on the desire to ensure quality of life for all living things by promoting a better-balanced relationship between human beings and their environment.
- Many aboriginal groups share a collective view. Individuals see themselves holistically as members of the community. When dealing with others or establishing rules for the community, what is good for the community is inherently good for the individual. In decision-making there is a sense of consensus and community. While it is true that Elders are sought out for guidance and answers, it is impossible for one person to know everything. There is patience for common agreement instead of a rush for an answer from one expert.

- Contemporary Western world political and economic spectrums do not generally reflect religious views. A deliberate absence of a prescribed religious view from political and economic thought is very common. This is not typical of all societies and spectrums. Political and economic decisions can reflect strongly the religious values and beliefs of a particular society.
- An ideology that is growing in popularity, especially in Latin America, is anarchism. In a sense, anarchism is the purest form of direct, so-called “grass roots” democracy. Anarchists desire the most amount of human liberty possible. This is considered possible through a reduction of government involvement to the level of the community or village. Cooperation is necessary in order to accomplish tasks.
- Illiberalism is the idea that there are occasions when restrictions on freedom are necessary and perhaps even in the public interest. This can apply to countries that practice democratic principles like free and transparent voting and the concept of majority rules but where circumstances may require limitations on freedoms.

Suggested Classroom Uses/Strategies

- Allow students to use the spectrums to communicate or demonstrate understandings of political platforms and governmental decisions. Analyze how government policies respond to issues in relation to the spectrum.
- Name key events and issues in history and use the spectrums as a tool to facilitate the understanding of the ideologies behind them.
- Investigate the spectrums from the perspective of individualism and collectivism. At which point is individualism most highly emphasized and at which point is collectivism dominant?
- Explore how a point on a spectrum or ideology is a reflection of the role and responsibility of the citizen. Which point or ideology has a more/less defined role for the citizen? How are people viewed across the spectrum? Which ideologies view people as citizens? As consumers? As workers? As individuals with choices?
- Suggest that students explore how much a nation’s place on a spectrum is a reflection of a government’s and a nation’s identity.
- Using the **“Working with Spectrums”** feature, discuss where political parties, leaders, key events, key legislation and government policies, etc. would lie along different spectrums. Offer students a chance to compare and contrast differing ideologies and policy changes over time. Place different perspectives of an event or issue on one spectrum and justify choices. Use the grid and the spectrum side by side to explore different representations of thoughts, beliefs, values and decision-making of political parties and issues.