

Lesson Plan Machine Politics Between the Wars: Kansas City as a Case Study

Teacher Name: Diane R. Elliott
Course: U.S. History 102

Grade level(s):12

Describe the classroom or homework activity to be performed (individual assignment, cooperative learning, cross curricular, technology based, using artifacts and/or primary sources, etc.)

- Students will research the internet for information on machine politics in the 1920's and '30's making note of common characteristics. They will prepare a Venn diagram illustrating these. They will then read passages from primary and secondary sources relating to the Pendergast Machine in Kansas City. Working with a partner, the students will prepare charts listing the positive and negative aspects of the Pendergast Machine (example: stimulating the local economy through liquor distribution vs. the ties to organized crime that this produced). Since Harry S. Truman's political career was launched by the Pendergasts, students will read primary and secondary accounts of this relationship and determine the extent of the Pendergast influence on him.

Rationale (why are you doing this?)

- It is important to study history in terms of time and place, cause and effect, action and reaction. The era of Prohibition and the Great Depression spawned many "non-traditional" economic systems to arise and students need to be aware of these influences.
- In today's political world, corruption is commonplace. Students need to learn to evaluate the evidence and draw conclusions about what is happening in the world.

Required time frame: 5 class periods

Where in the teacher conference did you get the idea for this activity or assignment (speaker, document, photograph, activity, audio recording, other)?

Background reading in preparation for the conference and Prof. Kirkendall's presentation.

Lesson objectives – the student will:

- Use the internet and print resources to acquire information regarding machine politics.
- Do a critical analysis of materials read and draw conclusions.
- Construct a convincing argument presenting conclusions.

District, state, or national performance and knowledge standards/goals/skills met (be specific when referencing). The learner will be able to...

- Analyze historic events and evaluate their importance in American history. (SS2: 1.9)
- Use primary resources to help make historic judgments. (SS2: 1.7)
- Distinguish between primary and secondary sources, determine reliability and use and interpret other tools of social science inquiry such as maps, charts, and graphs. (SS7: 1.2, 1.8)
- Be able to evaluate historical events in terms of their causes and effects. (SS6: 1.6)
- Be able to critically evaluate historical events and personalities as they impacted their time and subsequent history. (SS6,: 1.6)

Secondary sources:

- *Tom's Town* by William Reddig.
- *Conflict and Crisis* by Robert J. Donovan
- *Man of the People: A Life of Harry S. Truman* by Alonzo Hamby
- "Harry S. Truman and Pendergast Politics" by Willard B. Blanton in *Gateway Heritage* (11)
- "Kansas City Blacks, Harry Truman and the Pendergast Machine" by Larry Grothaus in *Missouri Historical Review* (69)
- "Surprise Victory" in Truman Biography (about 1940 Senate election), www.trumanlibrary.org
- *Truman and Pendergast* by Robert Ferrell.

Primary sources (document, photograph, artifact, diary or letter, audio or visual recording, etc.) needed – cite detailed information:

- (document) "Memorandum Regarding Relations with Pendergast Machine" by Harry S. Truman, Jan. 10, 1953 at www.teachingamericanhistory.org/library
- Photographs of Tom Pendergast and of Truman as county judge at shs.umsystem.edu/famousmissourians
- The "Dear Bess" letters, online at www.trumanlibrary.org or in book form, edited by Robert Ferrell.

Fully describe the activity or assignment in detail. What will both you and the students do?

- The students will take notes over a lecture on local politics of the 1920's and '30's, the effects of the Great Depression on politics, and an overview of Kansas City politics and economics in the 1920's and '30's.
- They will do research in the computer lab, and construct their Venn diagrams using the computer.
- Following another day of research and reading, they will prepare their comparative charts and share them with the rest of the class.
- Students will be given different materials to read and then engage in class discussion of what they have learned.
- The final activity will be reading about Harry Truman's involvement with the Pendergasts, paying particular attention to the memo of January 1953 by Truman.

Assessment: fully explain your assessment method in detail or create and attach your scoring guide:

- Notes from lectures and first session of research will be worth 20 points.
- Venn diagram will be worth 10 points (5 for correct information; 5 for setting it up correctly)
- Charts will be worth 10 points each.
- Class discussion will be worth 25 points. The points awarded will be based upon valid arguments presented on either side.