

Politics and Environmentalism

Lucas A. Sprouse

Dr. Lisa Brady

Environmental History & Boise State University

“Politics and Environmentalism” encourages students to better understand the perceived polarization of the environmental movement. This unit specifically looks at how modern presidents have impacted environmentalism, what impact Earth Day celebrations have had on the environmental movement, and the hesitancy of conservatives to embrace the environmental movement. These lessons were created to benefit university educators from multiple disciplines, and they can be utilized individually or as a unit. Each lesson plan contains analytical questions for class discussion and two activities. While the activities were created for groups, many of them can be made into individual projects or assignments. As a whole, these lessons encourage students to analyze the evolution and perceived polarization of the environmental movement.

Lesson Plans:

- “An Overview of Environmental History” is a good introduction to the environmental movement in the United States.
- “The Impact of Modern Presidential Elections on Environmentalism” compares Republicans and Democrats through analyzing the impact of modern Presidents on the environmental movement.
- “The Significance and Legacy of Earth Day” examines the relationship between liberal politics and environmental actions.
- “Conservatives and Environmentalism: A Complicated Relationship” examines the relationship between conservative politics and environmental actions.

Articles:

- Jenny Price. *Remaking American Environmentalism: On the Banks of the L.A. River.*
- Robert Gottlieb. *The Next Environmentalism: How Movements Respond to the Changes that Elections Bring-From Nixon to Obama.*
- Adam Rome. *The Genius of Earth Day*
- Brian Allen Drake. *The Skeptical Environmentalist: Senator Barry Goldwater and the Environmental Management State.*

Primary Sources:

- Richard Nixon’s “Radio Address About the State of the Union Message on Natural Resources and the Environment”
- Ronald Reagan’s “Statement on United Nations World Environment Day”

- An Introduction to Jimmy Carter's "The Environment Message to the Congress"
- Barack Obama's "Proclamation 8364 - Earth Day, 2009"
- Richard Nixon's "Letter to Governors Urging Citizen Participation in Environmental Programs During Earth Week"
- Barack Obama's "Remarks on the 40th Anniversary of Earth Day"