



Lesson Plan: Political Campaigns in Japan

OVERVIEW

This lesson plan is designed to be used with the film, *Campaign*, a peek into political campaigning in Japan as experienced by a man running for a critical seat on a suburban city council. Classrooms can use this lesson to examine what Japanese campaign strategies are restricted and permitted by law, and then discuss how these activities could affect the strength of its democracy. Note: This film is in Japanese with English subtitles.

P.O.V. documentaries can be recorded off-the-air and used for educational purposes for up to one year from the initial broadcast. In addition, P.O.V. offers a lending library of DVD's and VHS tapes that you can borrow anytime during the school year — FOR FREE!

Please visit our Film Library at http://www.amdoc.org/outreach_filmlibrary.php to find other films suitable for classroom use or to make this film a part of your school's permanent collection.

OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will:

- Work in groups to identify Japanese campaign restrictions and their consequences.
- Use viewing skills to understand and interpret video clips.
- Discuss how Japanese campaigns affect the strength of the country's democracy.

GRADE LEVELS

6-12

SUBJECTS

Global Education, Geography, World History, Civics

MATERIALS NEEDED

- A world map that shows the location of Japan
- Large sheets of paper for group work, with markers
- Computers with access to the Internet
- Method (varies by school) of showing the entire class online video clips

ESTIMATED TIME OF COMPLETION

One 50-minute class

SUGGESTED CLIPS

Clip 1: Japanese Campaign Strategies (length 4:34)

The clip begins at 19:43 with Yamauchi getting in a van and ends at 24:17 with a shot of the line of campaign workers introducing the candidate.

Clip 2: Political Endorsement (length: 7:00)

The clip begins at 36:00 with street scenes and a sign that says, "Koizumi is Coming!" and ends at 43:00 with a shot of Yamauchi shaking hands with people at night.

BACKGROUND

Japan adopted a democratic government for the first time in 1947, as required by allied nations at the end of World War II. The country is now governed by the two houses of parliament, known as the Diet, with a prime minister elected by the majority party. The two houses of the Diet are the House of Councillors, or Sangi-in, which has 242 members; and the House of Representatives, or Shugi-in, with 480 members. In the past, Japanese voters cast their ballots for specific candidates, but since 1982 voters select a party, which then receives proportional representation in the legislature.

Japan's main political parties are the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ). Several smaller parties also maintain a presence in the legislature. The LDP, generally considered the more conservative of the two major parties, held power from 1955 until 1993. Since 1994, the LDP has governed by forming a coalition government.

Kawasaki, where Kazuhiko Yamauchi is seen in the film campaigning on the LDP ticket for a city council seat in 2005, is sandwiched between Tokyo and Yokohama. Kawasaki is home to about 1.4 million people. The city is governed by a mayor and a council with 63 members. Yamauchi sold stamps and coins before the LDP recruited him to be their candidate. A political amateur, Yamauchi paid close attention as his LDP handlers directed his campaign and taught him typical Japanese campaign strategies, which students will see in the film excerpts. A Japanese campaign lasts for 12 days.

ACTIVITY

1. Show students where Japan is on a world map. Explain that Japan is a democratic country with the world's second-largest economy. Provide a brief overview of the Japanese political system, drawing information from the Background and Resources sections of this lesson plan.
2. Remind or tell the class that an important characteristic of a democracy is having a system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections. Explain that students will be taking a closer look at what Japanese campaign strategies are restricted and permitted by law, and then discussing how these activities could affect the strength of its democracy.
3. Divide the class into six groups and assign group members the roles of Reporter (to the class), Reader (to the group), Recorder (of group responses), and Summarizers (of key points, which the Recorder then writes down). Assign each group one of the sections below from the [book excerpt](#) (PDF) on the P.O.V. Web site from Gerald Curtis's *Election Campaigning Japanese Style*. Each group should read its section and summarize the main points on a large sheet of paper.

Group 1: General restrictions

Begin on p. 214, 2nd paragraph, "Certain campaign practices..."

End on p. 215, after 2nd paragraph, "...headquarters must be removed."

Group 2: Restrictions on written materials

Begin on p. 215, 3rd paragraph, "The Election Law..."
End on p. 216 after the 1st paragraph, "...purpose of campaigning or not"

Group 3: Restrictions on speeches

Begin on p. 216, "The speech-making activities..."

End on p. 217 after 2nd paragraph, "...help private speech meetings."

Group 4: Use of the media

Begin on p. 217, last paragraph, "The advent of television..."

End on p. 218 after first paragraph, "...are nonexistent in Japan."

Group 5: Campaign finances

Begin on p. 218, "Over and above these..."

End on p. 219 after first paragraph, "...approximately 7,200 dollars."

Group 6: Purpose and consequences of restrictions

Begin on p. 219, "The purpose of the restrictions..."

End on p. 220, part way through the 2nd paragraph, "...should be a major function of election campaigns."

4. Have each group present its summary of main points from the reading. Ask students what their reactions are to the Japanese regulations for political campaigns. Would any of these restrictions discourage you from running for office? If so, which ones and why?

5. Tell the class that they are going to watch two video clips that show the types of campaign strategies that **are** permitted in Japan. They will be watching candidate Kazuhiko Yamauchi, a first-time politician running for a seat on a suburban city council. As they watch the clips, ask students to think about how the campaign strategies shown contribute or detract from the election process.

6. After watching the clips, discuss what advantages and disadvantages students see in this particular system. How well do students think Japanese campaign strategies contribute to free and fair elections and a strong democracy? For homework, have each student write a one-page position paper that addresses that question.

ASSESSMENT SUGGESTIONS

Students can be assessed on:

- Participation in group work.
- Knowledge of Japanese political structure and campaign characteristics.
- Format and content of the one-page position paper.

EXTENSIONS & ADAPTATIONS

- Have students read information on the [P.O.V. Web site](#) about what has happened in Yamauchi's political career since his election to the Kawasaki city council in 2005. Then, write newspaper articles that summarize the latest details.
- Have students repeat the main activity of this lesson, only with a focus on campaign restrictions and practices in the United States. The Federal Election Commission provides a detailed compilation of [Federal Elections Campaign Laws](#) (<http://www.fec.gov/law/feca/feca.pdf>) (PDF file). What do campaigns tell

the class about the strength of U.S. democracy? What can the U.S. and Japan learn from each other to improve how well they provide their citizens with “free and fair elections?”

- Extend your class’s understanding of Japanese culture and politics with other P.O.V. films like *Kokoyakyu* (Japanese Baseball), *Election Day* and *Bill’s Run*. Each film has companion Web site resources and educator activities to support their use in the classroom.
- Help students understand how, in Japanese culture, one’s relation to the group is more important than individual concerns, as illustrated in the Japanese proverb, “The nail that sticks up gets pounded down.” The Ohio State University’s Institute for Japanese Studies provides an excellent lesson plan (http://japan.osu.edu/p-12/lessons/4_DecisionMakinginJapan/groups.pdf) (PDF file) to introduce this concept. Ask students how the importance of the group in Japanese culture might influence how a politician from a specific political party would make decisions. What did students observe in *Campaign* that supports their ideas? What might happen if politicians act in conflict with party wishes? Have student teams write and present a scene for a play that portrays such a situation and its outcome.
- Compare the U.S. Constitution (<http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/constitution.html>) with the Constitution of Japan (<http://www.sangiin.go.jp/eng/law/index.htm>), which was created during the allied occupation of Japan at the end of World War II. Use Venn diagrams to visually organize the similarities and differences between the two governments. Discuss how these similarities and differences might affect how American and Japanese citizens experience democracy, namely being able to choose and replace the government through free and fair elections, to participate in politics and civic life, to protect the human rights of all citizens, and to have laws that apply equally to everyone.
- Contact and submit questions about Japanese politics to a Japanese school. You can find a class willing to communicate with yours by using the free service, ePals.com.

RESOURCES

Basic Information on the Japanese Government

<http://www.japan-guide.com/e/e2136.html>

Japan-guide.com provides a brief overview of Japanese politics and provides a list of links to Japanese government-related Web sites with information in English.

CIA World Factbook: Japan

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/ja.html>

This overview of Japan includes information on geography, government, the people, etc.

STANDARDS

These standards are drawn from "Content Knowledge," a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McRel (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning) at <http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>.

Civics

Standard 7: Understands alternative forms of representation and how they serve the purposes of constitutional government.

Geography

Standard 10: Understands the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.

Language Arts

Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Cari Ladd, M.Ed., is an educational writer with a background in secondary education and media development. Previously, she served as PBS Interactive's Director of Education, overseeing the development of curricular resources tied to PBS programs, the PBS TeacherSource Web site (now PBS Teachers), and online teacher professional development services. She has also taught in Maryland and Northern Virginia.

Background Sources

"A Comparison with the United States," Asia for Educators, Project on Asia in the Core Curriculum, Columbia University, <http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/japan/japanworkbook/govpol/elections.html>; "Country Profiles: Japan," British Broadcasting Corporation, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/country_profiles/1258586.stm.