




Unit Title	Authoritarian Governments on the Rise: Could it Happen Here?
Unit Length	This unit will consist of five lessons that take place in 55-minute class periods.
Grade Level(s)/Subject(s)	Grade levels 9-12, World Geography
Unit Overview	<p>In this unit, students will analyze the differences between the authoritarian and representative democracy style of governments. They will explore reporting from Eastern European countries that were once part of the Eastern Bloc countries, and conduct their own research to compare and contrast actions by world leaders from those countries. They will also research and evaluate leadership traits of known leaders and label them as either authoritarian or democratic.</p> <p>After examining the work of investigative journalist Simon Ostrovsky about the growing numbers of authoritarian leaders and policies in Eastern Europe, students will evaluate to what degree these policies and leaders are gaining power in the United States. They will also examine the impact of authoritarian leadership on the rights of citizens.</p> <p>The unit will conclude with students analyzing the role of propaganda in furthering the policies and leadership of democratic and authoritarian leaders, and ultimately creating a propaganda poster that reflects their understanding of the unit content and themes.</p>
Objectives & Outcomes	<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify and describe elements of authoritarian and democratic governments. ● Analyze how policies and practices by authoritarian and a democratic governments impact the lives of individuals. ● Compare and contrast different government leadership styles. ● Make distinctions between an underreported and overreported news story. ● Reflect on human rights, the connection between government structures and human rights, and what rights they may be taking for granted or feel are being challenged. ● Analyze and consider what an individual can do to guarantee their universal rights are met. ● Utilize visual and textual techniques to convey messages by creating propaganda posters.
Standards	<p>ILLINOIS SOCIAL SCIENCE STANDARDS</p> <p>SS.CV.1.9-12. Distinguish the rights, roles, powers, and responsibilities of individuals and institutions in the political system.</p>

	<p>SS.CV.2.9-12. Evaluate the opportunities and limitations of participation in elections, voting, and the electoral process.</p> <p>SS.CV.3.9-12. Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, and agreements on the maintenance of order, justice, equality, and liberty.</p> <p>SS.CV.5.9-12. Analyze the impact of personal interest and diverse perspectives on the application of civic dispositions, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.</p> <p>SS.CV.6.9-12: Describe how political parties, the media, and public interest groups both influence and reflect social and political interests.</p> <p>SS.G.10.9-12. Explain how and why culture shapes worldview.</p> <p>SS.Soc.6.9-12 Analyze the impact of stratification and inequality on groups and the individuals within them</p>
<p>Unit Resources</p>	<p>Videos:</p> <p>Pride, patriotism and how Putin helped redefine what it means to be a 'true Russian' by Nick Schifrin and Zach Fannin for PBS <i>Newshour</i></p> <p>Why Fighting Between Armenia, Azerbaijan Has Regional Implications by Simon Ostrovsky for PBS <i>Newshour</i></p> <p>Dissidents Are Fleeing Belarus After Lukashenko's Crackdown On Protesters by Simon Ostrovsky for PBS <i>Newshour</i></p> <p>'Anti-LGBT Ideology Zones' Are Being Enacted In Polish Towns by Simon Ostrovsky for PBS <i>Newshour</i></p> <p>"Inside Russia" by Nick Schifrin and Zach Fannin for PBS <i>Newshour</i></p> <p> What are Under-Reported Stories? video from the Pulitzer Center Webinar On-Demand: Authoritarianism and Misinformation in Eastern Europe from the Pulitzer Center</p> <p> What is Propaganda? An Introduction to Propaganda Techniques from <i>HelpTeaching</i></p> <p>Texts:</p> <p>Journalist Simon Ostrovsky Bio Pulitzer Center</p> <p>Teaching Materials:</p> <p>Slideshow: Authoritarianism vs. Democracy [.pptx]</p> <p>Unit Warm up Questions: (page 1) [.pdf] [.docx]</p> <p>Worksheet: Countries from the former Eastern Bloc in the Modern Era [.pdf] [.docx]</p> <p>Exit Slip: Day 2 [.pdf] [.docx]</p> <p>3-Set-Venn-Diagram-A4-Portrait.pdf</p> <p>Venn Diagram Discussion Questions [.pdf] [.docx]</p> <p>Propaganda Presentation [.pptx]</p> <p>Propaganda Poster Rubric [.pdf] [.doc]</p>

Performance Task(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. After viewing a variety of propaganda posters, students will discuss the components that the posters have in common as part of a “think- pair-share.”2. Students will identify a modern-day (social, political, personal, etc.) issue/theme/slogan that relates to the Russian and Eurasian Republic Unit, or other content/themes from this unit, to use as inspiration for their posters.3. Students will create a propaganda poster for their community that reflects their understanding regarding this region of the world and their feelings about how the rise of authoritarian leadership impacts the world.4. Posters will be shared with the class and students will provide reflective responses to at least three other classmates' creations.
Assessment/Evaluation	Propaganda poster rubric [.pdf] [.docx]



Daily Lesson Plans

Day 1: Defining and Comparing Authoritarian and Democratic Governments

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
<p>What are the responsibilities of a government? What are the similarities and differences between an authoritarian and a democratic government? Why might citizens prefer one style of government over another? What might life look like in both of these styles of government?</p>
Lesson Materials & Resources
<p>Texts:  Pride, patriotism and how Putin helped redefine what it means to be a 'true Russian' by Nick Schifrin and Zach Fannin for PBS <i>Newshour</i></p> <p>Teaching Materials: Slideshow: Authoritarianism vs. Democracy [.pptx] Unit Warm up Questions: (page 1) [.pdf] [.docx] Worksheet: Countries from the former Eastern Bloc in the Modern Era [.pdf] [.docx]</p>
Lesson Activities
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Students reflect on the following questions and then discuss their responses:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. What is the responsibility of the government?b. What are the similarities and differences between an authoritarian and a democratic government?c. What is the role of a leader in each of these styles of government?d. Why might citizens prefer one style of government over another?e. What might life look like in both of these styles of government?2. Students then work in groups, or on their own, to review the GoogleSlide Presentation: Authoritarianism vs. Democracy. The presentation outlines potential advantages and disadvantages of both governments and introduces students to maps of regions in the world that will be explored in the unit. Students examine how borders in Eastern Europe have changed as a result of the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), and how that has led to countries with authoritarian and democratic governments sharing borders. Students then explore data about how people in Russia ,and people outside, of Russia view President Vladimir Putin. This reflection leads to students review clips from Pride, patriotism and how Putin helped redefine what it means to be a 'true Russian' by Nick Schifrin and Zach Fannin for PBS <i>Newshour</i> for PBS <i>Newshour</i>. Students conclude their exploration by reflecting on the following questions, and then preparing to discuss their responses with the class:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Do you consider Vladimir Putin a democratic or authoritarian leader?

- b. What evidence suggests the style you chose?
 - c. Why do you think authoritarian governments are gaining popularity in Russia and the Eurasian Republics?
 - d. How might life under this type of government look for the general population?
 - e. How would you feel about living under this kind of government?
3. After reviewing the slideshow, students review the content from the slides, and discuss the questions above.
4. Next, they will be given the Countries from the former Eastern Bloc in the Modern Era worksheet and assigned a country to research using notes from a previous unit and their Chromebooks. Before beginning their research, students review the following terms ([click here](#) for examples of definitions written by students in Illinois who participated in this unit in 2022):
 - a. [Eastern Bloc](#)
 - b. Rule of Law
 - c. Separation of Powers
 - d. Junta
 - e. Mandate
5. Once students have completed the table for one country, they then connect with a small group to continue filling out the table. Their goal is to fill out the table with examples from at least three additional countries in regions that were once part of the Eastern Bloc.
6. Review students' responses and utilize their responses in a discussion about the differences between authoritarian and democratic governments.
7. Share with students that the next lesson will focus on three countries that were formerly part of the Eastern Bloc: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Poland. These countries have seen both Authoritarian and democratic governments, and resources that students will explore analyze how the decisions being made by the current leaders in those countries are impacting the daily lives of individuals in those countries.

Day 2: Evaluating the difference between underreported and overreported news stories using reporting from Eastern Europe

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
Students will be able to evaluate the differences between underreported and overreported news stories.
Lesson Materials & Resources
<p>Videos:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are Under-Reported Stories? video from the Pulitzer CenterWhy Fighting Between Armenia, Azerbaijan Has Regional Implications by Simon Ostrovsky for PBS NewshourDissidents Are Fleeing Belarus After Lukashenko's Crackdown On Protesters by Simon Ostrovsky for PBS Newshour'Anti-LGBT Ideology Zones' Are Being Enacted In Polish Towns by Simon Ostrovsky for PBS Newshour <p>Teaching materials:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Unit Warm up Questions: (page 2) [.pdf] [.docx]Worksheet: Countries from the former Eastern Bloc in the Modern Era [.pdf] [.docx]Exit Slip: Day 2 [.pdf] [.docx] <p>Additional resource</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">How to find and analyze underreported stories: Critical thinking, text analysis and writing lesson plan from the Pulitzer Center
Lesson Activities
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Begin by having a discussion with students about how they consume news using the following questions:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. What ways do you get most of your news? I.e. newspaper, TV, Internetb. What stories do you see the most in the news?c. How often do you hear stories about governments in the news? What kinds?d. What stories have you heard in the news about authoritarian governments?e. What have you heard about democratic stories?2. Next, screen the video  What are Under-Reported Stories? from the Pulitzer Center and engage students in a discussion using the following questions:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. According to the speakers in the video, what is an underreported story?b. How are underreported news stories different from other news stories? How might you define over-reported stories? Reference examples from the video in your description.c. How can you find underreported stories, in the news and in your own communities?3. Working in small groups, students will then use their responses from the Countries from the former

Eastern Bloc in the Modern Era worksheets to discuss if the resources/evidence they used in their research are from underreported or over-reported stories.

4. Next, the class will examine the work of investigative journalist Simon Ostrovsky, who has reported in several Eastern Bloc countries. As students review the following stories from Ostrovsky, students will reflect in their journals about whether or not they feel that these are underreported or over-reported stories.
 - a. [Why Fighting Between Armenia, Azerbaijan Has Regional Implications](#) by Simon Ostrovsky for *PBS Newshour*
 - b. [Dissidents Are Fleeing Belarus After Lukashenko's Crackdown On Protesters](#) by Simon Ostrovsky for *PBS Newshour*
 - c. ['Anti-LGBT Ideology Zones' Are Being Enacted In Polish Towns](#) by Simon Ostrovsky for *PBS Newshour*
5. Finally, students will come back together in the large group to share their findings. They will also reflect on how the individuals profiled in Ostrovsky's reporting were impacted by policies and actions by the leaders of their countries, and whether the stories reflected that the subjects were living in countries with authoritarian or democratic government structures.
6. To demonstrate understanding students will answer the following questions as an Exit Slip.
 - a. What kind of governments are in power in these regions? How do you know?
 - b. What do you learn about the impact of government policies and practices on individuals in these countries?
 - c. Would these stories qualify as underreported or overreported, and how?

Day 3: Comparing the Leadership Styles, Policies, and Focuses for a U.S. president and leaders in two Eastern European Countries

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
Students will use a venn diagram to compare and contrast the leadership styles of government officials from Eastern European countries with a 21st Century American President.
Lesson Materials & Resources
<p>Texts: Journalist Simon Ostrovsky Bio Pulitzer Center</p> <p>Teaching Resources Worksheet: Countries from the former Eastern Bloc in the Modern Era [.pdf] [.docx] 3-Set-Venn-Diagram-A4-Portrait.pdf Venn Diagram Discussion Questions [.pdf] [.docx]</p>
Lesson Activities
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Students will choose two leaders from countries that they learned about in the Countries from the former Eastern Bloc in the Modern Era lesson, or from the PBS <i>Newshour</i> stories reviewed in lesson two, and one 21st Century American President. They will then compare and contrast the three leaders using the Venn diagram. Students will be instructed to consider policies, leadership styles and focuses of each leader when completing their diagrams.2. Once they complete their venn diagrams, they will reflect on their diagrams using the following questions:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Which two leaders from former Eastern Bloc countries did you choose to compare with an American President on your venn diagram? List which countries they lead.b. What is the form of government in these two countries? How do you know?c. What are the leadership styles for each of these leaders, and what are some of their focuses and policies?d. How do the policies, leadership styles, and/or focuses of these leaders compare to the U.S. president you chose?e. Would you want to live in either of these former Eastern Bloc countries that you listed? Give at least three reasons why you either would or would not want to live in these countries.f. Do you feel as if either of the countries that you listed on your venn diagram deny rights to their citizens? Explain your answer.g. In the stories we explored from investigative journalist Simon Ostrovsky, what rights did you see people lose that are protected in the United States?h. Do you think that the United States could ever become an authoritarian government? Explain why or why not.3. Students write three questions that they would like to ask Simon Ostrovsky, a journalist who has

reported on the impacts of different government structures on communities throughout the world, if given the opportunity to speak with him. For more information, review [Ostrovsky's bio on the Pulitzer Center website](#).

Day 4: Evaluating the Impacts of Authoritarian and Democratic Governments on Individuals by Connecting with a Journalist

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)

Students will be able to ask questions, and evaluate responses, about the impact of authoritarian governments on the lives of individuals as part of an interview with journalist Simon Ostrovsky, or another journalist who has reported on governments in Eastern Europe.



Lesson Materials & Resources

[Journalist Simon Ostrovsky Bio | Pulitzer Center](#)
[Journalist Visits to Classrooms | Pulitzer Center](#)
[Webinar On-Demand: Authoritarianism and Misinformation in Eastern Europe from the Pulitzer Center](#)

Lesson Activities

1. Students will use the questions that they prepared in lesson 3 to interview journalist Simon Ostrovsky, or another journalist who has reported from countries in Eastern Europe. [Click here to request a virtual journalist with Ostrovsky, or another Pulitzer Center-supported journalist](#)
 - a. If a journalist is unavailable to meet with the class, students could also review the [Webinar On-Demand: Authoritarianism and Misinformation in Eastern Europe from the Pulitzer Center](#). The webinar features Ostrovsky in conversation with Marlene Laruelle, director of the Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies at George Washington University.
2. Students should record the responses to their questions, and questions asked by at least three of their classmates.
 - a. If students are watching the recorded webinar, they could document if their questions are answered and note which of their questions weren't answered. They could then share those questions with the Pulitzer Center education team by emailing them to education@pulitzercenter.org.
3. As an exit ticket students will answer the question, "Why would an individual either support or reject the authoritarian government policies and structures presented by the guest speaker?"

Days 5-7: Evaluating and Creating Propaganda Posters to Reflect Unit Themes/Content

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)
Students will design their own propaganda posters based on conclusions they have made from the unit, "Authoritarian Governments on the Rise: Could it Happen Here?"
Lesson Materials & Resources
<p> What is Propaganda? An Introduction to Propaganda Techniques from <i>HelpTeaching</i> Propaganda Presentation [.pptx] Propaganda Poster Rubric [pdf] [doc]</p>
Lesson Activities
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Students review the term "propaganda" by sharing what they have previously learned about propaganda and comparing their own definitions with the definition presented in the video  What is Propaganda? An Introduction to Propaganda Techniques from <i>HelpTeaching</i>.2. Students then review examples of propaganda posters from the slideshow Propaganda Presentation and discuss components that the posters have in common as part of a "think-pair-share."3. Students use the following questions, which are also on the last slide of the propaganda presentation to help guide their analysis:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. What common theme(s) do you see in the posters presented throughout the Propaganda Presentation?b. Is propaganda good or bad? Why?c. What might make a person or group more susceptible to propagandas messages?d. How do governments use propaganda to support their actions? Can you give an example from one of the governments explored in this unit?e. Do you notice any differences in how authoritarian and democratic governments use propaganda to reinforce their agendas? Give examples for each type of government.f. Do you notice any differences in how authoritarian and democratic governments use propaganda to reinforce their agenda? Give examples for each type of government.g. Do you think that Social Media Platforms such as Instagram and Tik Tok are your generation's "Propaganda"? Explain your response.4. Present students with the final performance task and rubric: Students will identify a modern-day (social, political, personal, etc.) issue/theme/slogan to use as inspiration for their poster. The poster themes should reflect students' knowledge of the region of study (Russia and the Eurasian Republics). Students will design their own propaganda poster based on conclusions they have made from the unit, "Authoritarian Governments on the Rise: Could it Happen Here?" Posters should reflect a clear

point of view and a clear audience.

5. Students will share their posters with the class. They will also use the rubric to provide a reflective response to at least three other classmates' creations. *Follow up/extra credit idea: For a modern twist, have students create Tik Toks or YouTube Videos that demonstrate their Propaganda Poster Theme.*