**Topic 2:**

**Power and decision-making at national and European level**

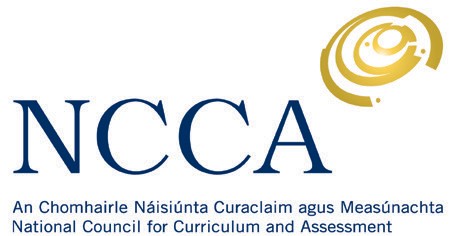
# Learning Outcomes

* 1. The making of national policy
  2. How the executive branch of government is selected
  3. Social class and gender as important social categories
  4. Arguments concerning representation
  5. Evidence about the effectiveness of representation
  6. Traditional and new media in democracy

See specification for full elaboration of the Learning Outcomes

Some big questions addressed in this topic are:

* How are decisions made at a national and European level?
* Are people effectively represented?
* Why is the separation of powers necessary?
* How does social class and gender effect people’s power and life chances?
* Is the media (including social media) a threat or a support to democratic society?
* Is regulation of the media needed or possible today?



**Possible Learning Activities**

## LO 2.1 The making of national policy

* Ask students to design a matching card game aimed at explaining different forms of government – democracy, theocracy, monarchy, dictatorship, etc.
* Ask students to come up with a definition or image that conveys their understanding of ‘democracy’.
* **Ranking activity** - Use or adapt the card game to get students to consider which ideas they agree with and why from a range of political perspectives
* Discuss what is meant by ‘national policy’ and name the national policies that are relevant to the lives of young people in Ireland today.
* Brainstorm all the different groups that have power and influence over decisions that affect young people in Ireland.
* Create a visual representation to show the role of different stakeholders in decision-making at national level.
* Choose a policy that affects the lives of young people and is currently under discussion and research how different groups have influence in the process of decision-making on this issue, e.g. the Gender Recognition Act, 2015 (Refer to bullets in LO 2.1)
* Take a case study approach to track how change happens and the role of different bodies in bringing about change, e.g. how did the Same Sex Marriage bill get passed.
* Organise a visit to Leinster house or invite a local TD into your class to discuss how national policies & laws are made

## LO 2.2 How the executive branch of the government is selected

* Set up a **Jigsaw learning activity** within the class whereby different groups work together to become expert on a topic and then peer teach each topic to each other. Topics to include:
  + How the Taoiseach and government are selected and their roles
  + How the N Ireland Executive is selected and the ministers’ roles
  + How the European Commission and the European Parliament are selected and how the Council of the Ministers is constituted and their respective roles
  + How the Executive branch of government is put in place in a non-democratic country, such as China, Saudi Arabia, Iran, etc.

Useful resources

[Democracy – a short introduction (TED Ed lesson 3 minutes)](https://ed.ted.com/featured/RgaIhs2w)

[Democracy and Dictatorships *C*ard ranking game prompts students to consider different perspectives on the role of government](https://www.tes.co.uk/teaching-resource/dictatorships-and-democracy-6342015)

[Houses of the Oireachtas education site](http://education.oireachtas.ie)

[*The Open Government Toolkit* (2015) provides information on how government and public decision-making work and how people can have a voice.](http://www.tasc.ie/opengovtoolkit/)

[*The Democracy Cookbook* has lots of learning activities related to the themes of politics and democracy. Here is one graphic showing a *Democracy Tree* which students might adapt to show the Irish political structures](http://cmsnew.pdst.ie/sites/default/files/Democracy%20Cookbook%20DEMOCRACY%20TREE_0.pdf)

[The process which led to the government passing the Gender Recognition Act is set out here.](http://www.teni.ie/page.aspx?contentid=586)

www.oireachtas.ie/en/visit-and-learn/teachers-and-students/

www.kildarestreet.com

Jigsaw methodology - *Building key skills through Politics and Society*

[*How the Houses of the Oireachtas work* – 2 minute video](http://education.oireachtas.ie/houses-of-the-oireachtas/how-the-houses-of-the-oireachtas-work/)

[Department of the Taoiseach website](http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Taoiseach_and_Government/The_Government)

[How the Oireachtas works](https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/visit-and-learn/how-parliament-works/)

[NI Executive](https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/topics/your-executive)

[How the EU works](https://europa.rs/images/publikacije/HTEUW_How_the_EU_Works.pdf)

[*The EU political systems explained* (11 min video)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5qeAP8VYNiw)

* Set students to work in groups to identify the strengths and weaknesses of these four approaches for selecting an executive.
* Use a **placemat learning activity** to facilitate students in considering reasons why the judiciary needs to be independent from government. (**Big idea**– separation of powers)
* Form research groups to examine how governments are put in place in a range of different countries – both democratic and non-democratic and then compare their findings.
* Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different systems for electing the executive branch of government
* Having considered decision making at a national and European level, discuss the role of *supranational bodies* (such as the EU) in promoting *internationalism* at a time of growing *nationalism*. (links to LO 7.6)
* Provide students with a reflection template to review how they developed their skills of listening and communicating (**LO 4.2**) and worked through differences ((**LO 4.3**) when working on this topic.

The template should also facilitate reflection on how they can further build on these skills in the future.

## LO 2.3 Social class and gender as important social categories

* Short videos can be used to introduce some of the key concepts to be discussed in this topic and to examine some of the stereotypes that exist in relation to social class and gender.
* Set up a simulation experience that demonstrates how social class and privilege operate through an activity such as those listed opposite
* Facilitate a problem based learning activity on the question of how people in Ireland fit into social class categories. Are these categories relevant in Ireland today? If so, how do we go about defining social classes? And what is the impact of this?
* Facilitate discussion (similar to above) on the influence of gender as a social category.

[A range of teaching resources about the EU](http://ec.europa.eu/ireland/education/education-resources/secondary_level/index1_en.htm)

[EU Teachers Corner](http://europa.eu/teachers-corner/index_en.htm)

[European Parliament TV](http://europarltv.europa.eu/en/home.aspx)

See tools for reflecting on learning in *Building key skills through Politics and Society*

Thinking about the Thinkers:

Compare Thomas Hobbs’s view on the role of government with that of John Locke, Jean Jacque Rousseau or Robert Nozick.

Use a simulation game to introduce the topic of social class, such as

[Baby egg activity (Simulation activity on ‘social classes’)](http://www.apa.org/pi/ses/resources/publications/social-class-exercises.aspx)

[Or adapt this activity](http://paulkivel.com/resource/examining-class-and-race/) on class and race

[Or this](http://www.boredpanda.com/lesson-about-privilege-awareness/) activity on privilege awareness

The Hunger Games can also be used to explore how social class functions – See related teaching and learning activities [here](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/28_04/28_04_marshall_rosati.shtml)

[CSO – summary of population in Ireland by social class](http://www.cso.ie/multiquicktables/quickTables.aspx?id=cna07)

[Through the looking glass – A guide to empowering young people to become advocates for gender equality](http://www.nwci.ie/index.php/learn/publication/through_the_looking_glass) (very classroom friendly resources)

* Conduct research and analysis into the way in which school text books are gendered. Interrogate the representation of girls and women in certain texts, such as history books.

Are women and their roles fairly represented?

Does the representation of women in history/literature/media reinforce or challenge patriarchy? Find evidence to support your views.

**Possible link to LO 7.1 - representations of national identity made available to young people**

* Examine the evidence of the relationship between gender and social class and voting preferences
* Set students the task of analysing the findings in the Executive summary report from the Irish Sports Council on sport and social disadvantage. Follow up by asking students to find additional data that provides further evidence on this question or research data which looks at the same question from a gender perspective.
* In pairs/small groups, discuss specific strategies and initiatives at local, national and global levels which aim to address gender or social class inequalities and their effectiveness. (e.g. gender quotas, third level access programmes, etc)
* Set up **peer teaching** groups on the following:
  + Karl Marx and Max Weber’s theories of social class and how they differ
  + Sylvia Walby’s or Kate Millet’s feminist theories
* Conduct a media watch for a week and gather examples of articles that could be classified as related to gender or social class. Then, in pairs, take a current news story and consider how it relates to social class theory and/or feminist theory. Decide: What are the questions a feminist perspective brings to bear when examining an issue/story? What are the questions a social class perspective brings to bear when examining an issue/story?
* Set up an **‘academic controversy’** on the question –Is modern Irish society a patriarchy? Ask students to investigate the question by considering the main social and cultural institutions: Sports, Politics, Business, Arts, Education, Religion
* Evaluate what is the greatest barrier to achieving power and equality – is it class or gender? Is it easier to achieve power if you are poor or a woman? Encourage students to collect and examine data and use it to support a judgement.

**Reflecting on the learning in this topic ask students to review how well they succeeded in seeking out and evaluating ideas and information from different sources – See LO 4.4 bullets**

**Possible link to LO 5.3 and 8.2**

[Irish Times poll which shows voting patterns according to gender and social class](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/poll)

[Irish Sports Council research on the link between sport and social disadvantage](https://www.irishsportscouncil.ie/Research/Sport_Social_Disadvantage_2007_/Fair_Play_Sport_Social_Disadvantage.pdf)

**Thinking about the Thinkers:**

Discuss the contribution of Kathleen Lynch to our understanding of how social class and/or gender differences help explain inequalities in society

**Peer teaching** - *Building key skills through Politics and Society*

[A brief introduction to Marx](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W0GFSUu5UzA) (video)

**Academic controversy methodology** - *Building key skills through Politics and Society*

[Health inequalities and social class facts](http://new.iph.ie/healthinequalities/healthinequalitiesontheislandstatistics)

[*The social class of school - a key factor in third level attendance*, Irish Times, 2014](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/social-class-of-school-a-key-factor-in-third-level-attendance-1.1894082)

*Written Out* [Research by Barnardos on educational outcomes for children living in disadvantaged areas](https://www.barnardos.ie/assets/files/campaigns/disadvantages/Written_Out_Written_Off.pdf)

[Powerpoint presentation by Kathleen Lynch UCD, on Women, Class and Gender](http://www.greavesschool.com/documents/Kathleen%20Lynch.ppt)

[Unicef: Gender Equality (classroom friendly)](https://teachunicef.org/teaching-materials/topic/gender-equality)

## LO 2.4 Arguments concerning representation

* Review arguments concerning the process of decision-making in schools (1.2 and 1.3) and discuss how these ideas might also apply in the context of wider society and government.
* Set students to work in groups to come up with evidence and examples to support different arguments using both the Irish context and wider world.

## LO 2.5 Evidence about the effectiveness of representation

* Conduct a **simulation exercise** in which some students get to vote on a decision that will affect them and others don’t or where some students get cards entering class allowing them to speak and others don’t. Discuss the impact of this from different perspectives.
* Examine the websites of political parties to see who are the representatives of the different parties, the percentages that are male/female, from different age groups, from different ethnic or religious backgrounds, lesbian/gay/transgender.
* Create a **problem tree** to depict the reasons why women are poorly represented in government.
* Research how many sitting TDs are male and how many female. Compare these figures with other countries.
* Examine the latest census figures to find out what % of the population are male, female, over 65, under 25, Traveller, etc. Then find out what number of TDs currently belong to each group and work out what number would reflect true representation.
* Discuss whether the Irish system of elections leads to effective representation. Why? Why not? Do politicians represent the will of the Irish people? What groups are less likely to have their views represented? Encourage students to back up their viewpoints with evidence?
* Prepare a debate which sets out the arguments for and against gender quotas.
* Work in groups to research and examine different policy options that might help ensure that the Irish system of government better represents the will of young people.

[Photo, name, political party of all TDs](https://www.kildarestreet.com/tds/)

[Seats held by women in national parliaments - EU statistics](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/sdg_05_50)

**Problem tree methodology** - *Building key skills through Politics and Society*

[Women for election (NGO working to get women into political office)](http://www.womenforelection.ie/)

[Irish Examiner article on women in politics](https://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/stats-show-ireland-has-a-long-way-to-go-to-address-under-representation-of-women-in-politics-466392.html), 29/1/2018

[*Why do we have so few women in politics?*, Irish Independent, 20/04/13](http://www.independent.ie/lifestyle/why-do-we-have-so-few-women-in-politics-29207128.html)

[*Society is rigged to reflect the perspective of men*, Irish Times, 11/11/15](http://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/kathy-sheridan-society-is-rigged-to-reflect-the-perspective-of-men-1.2424496)

[Jobs for the Boys (article on male dominated business in Ireland)](http://www.thejournal.ie/ireland-gender-diversity-companies-1791810-Nov2014/) 2014

[*It's still boardroom jobs for the boys, women tell survey*, Irish Independent,](http://www.independent.ie/business/irish/its-still-boardroom-jobs-for-the-boys-women-tell-survey-31245509.html) 2015

[DCYA (2011) Children and young people’s participation in decision-making](http://www.dcya.gov.ie/documents/publications/summary_childrenandyp_decisionmaking.pdf)

[Giving young people a voice (pp. 26-32 & 53-60 – PR activity)](http://www.studentcouncil.ie/sites/default/files/Giving%20Young%20People%20A%20Voice.pdf)

[Young people in politics](https://spunout.ie/opinion/article/energised-by-the-referendums-stay-involved-in-politics)

[Fianna Fáil proposal to boost youth involvement in politics](https://www.fiannafail.ie/ff-proposes-measures-to-boost-youth-engagement-in-public%20affairs/)

## LO 2.6 Traditional and new media in a democracy

* Display information regarding media use in Ireland on the board. In each case, ask students to work in pairs to note the different statistics included in the infographic and to decide on the facts they find most interesting or surprising. Take feedback, noting responses.
* In light of the range of news sources available today, what news can be trusted? What are the challenges for regulators of the media? Who is regulating the news we consume? How can they be held accountable? What’s the balance between freedom of the press and the social responsibilities of the press?
* Ask students to prepare arguments for or against the motion ‘Social media is good for democracy and human rights’.
* Divide the class into pairs. Distribute copies of the executive summary of the 2017 Reuters report on digital news in Ireland. Invite pairs to engage in a **read and explain** activity and to identify the key findings. Discuss, using questions such as:
* What are the key facts from the data?
* What are the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology? (note the Foreword)
* How might the data be useful for government in informing policy or practice?
* Pose the question – Does it matter who owns the media? Take initial responses and then circulate a copy of the article *Media ownership concentrated and under-regulated,* or similar, and organise **reciprocal reading**
* Investigate the use and role of social media through a case study of one of the following:
* a social justice movement
* a political election or referendum
* an environmental movement
* Brainstorm the dangers and opportunities of ‘citizen journalism’
* Organise **a placemat activity** on the question – Why is freedom of the press important today? Should there be limits? Who decides?

**Thinking about the Thinkers:**

Consider to what extent you agree with Noam Chomsky’s view that the media acts to ‘manufacture consent’ and filters out dissenting voices in the interests of those with power in society.

CSO [survey on young people and social media](http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/newsevents/documents/johnhooperresults2014/teensocialmedia.pdf)

[Survey on the use of social media](https://www.ipsos.com/en-ie/social-messaging-nov-17), 2017 and s[tats on social networking, 2017](https://www.ipsos.com/en-ie/social-networking-aug-2017)

[Students can compare media use in Ireland with other countries using this report *Media use in the European Union*](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb78/eb78_media_en.pdf) or by searching www.ipsos.com

[This Irish website offers a critical perspectives on media related issues](https://criticalmediareview.wordpress.com/)

[Irish Times article, ‘*How fake news is destroying transparency of the internet*’](http://www.irishtimes.com/business/technology/how-fake-news-is-destroying-transparency-on-the-internet-1.3083721)

[TED-ED talk: *How false news can spread*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cSKGa_7XJkg)

‘[Twiplomacy’ is a study of the use of Twitter by world leaders, conducted by a major public relations and communications firm](http://twiplomacy.com/blog/twiplomacy-study-2013/)

Read and explain methodology – *Developing Key Skills: Ideas for the Politics and Society classroom*

[Reuters Digital News Report for Ireland, 2017](http://fujomedia.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/BAI_FuJo_digital_news_2017_WEB.pdf) (see summary p.8 -10)

[Dr Roderic Flynn, DCU ‘*Media ownership concentrated and under-regulated’*](http://www.villagemagazine.ie/index.php/2013/05/media-ownership-concentrated-and-under-regulated/)

[RTE Report - Concentration of Ireland's media ownership 'high risk'](http://www.rte.ie/news/2016/0306/772989-ireland-media-ownership/)

[This](http://www.mediareform.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/ElephantintheroomFinalfinal.pdf) report on British media ownership can provide comparative data (Summary p.1)

[Or watch this short video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awRRPPE3V5Q) about US media ownership

Reciprocal reading – *Developing Key Skills:*

*Ideas for the Politics and Society classroom*

[Irish Times article on the role of social media in same sex referendum](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/same-sex-vote-the-moment-where-social-media-proved-its-mettle-1.2223792)

[Short video on ways that social media has power to change the world](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uppg_2nGo54&feature=youtu.be)

[Guardian newspaper, *Now anyone can be a journalist*](https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2008/jun/02/ireport)

**Placemat methodology** – *Developing Key Skills: Ideas for the Politics and Society classroom*

There are many short videos available where students can listen to Noam Chomsky, such as this one: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTBWfkE7BXU

# How will students show evidence of their learning?

What am I looking for? (Sample criteria for success)

### Examples of ongoing assessment related to Topic 2

Imagine you are presenting to an Oireachtas committee and must provide suggestions on how the Irish system of elections might be changed to make it more representative. Prepare a three minute presentation.

Or

Imagine you they are communicating with a political representative about the issues that concerns you arising from your learning in this topic. Set out your points of concern and be sure to back them up with evidence.

Present a comparative analysis of the processes of electing a government in Ireland and one other country, highlighting the advantages and disadvantages of each and commenting on the impact on the lives of young people.

Read section 1 of ‘*The Communist Manifesto*’ or ‘*A communist confession of faith’* by Karl Mark and imagine if Marx were to update his Manifesto or Confession today, what might he comment on?

[Free download of both documents here](https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Manifesto.pdf)

# Students may also find this newpaper article helpful

# [**Two centuries on, Karl Marx feels more revolutionary than ever**](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/may/05/karl-marx-200th-birthday-communist-manifesto-revolutionary) (Guardian Newspaper, May 5th 2018 )

Ask students to analyse unseen data related any of the issues studied under this topic

Consider

* What are the key messages and claims that are being presented?
* What evidence is used to support the main arguments or central claim(s)?
* How valid and reliable is the data?
* Ability to use the language of reasoning and to make points clearly and succinctly
* Ability to relate ideas from political theory and research evidence to the student’s personal experience
* Ability to recognise the role of emotion as well as logic in swaying people’s judgements
* Ability to come to a personal conclusion and back it up with evidence
* Ability to describe different systems, showing the similarities/ differences
* Ability to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of both
* Ability to relate the discussion to their own context/life
* Ability to identify the main ideas in a document and show an understanding of these ideas by summarizing them in clear and simple language
* Ability to relate ideas from political theory to the student’s contemporary experience/world.
* Ability to examine information in detail, in order to identify key messages and possible bias
* Ability to critique texts and judge the credibility of information/data
* Ability to recognise the stand-point of different sources of information along the left-wing - right-wing spectrum

# How will students show evidence of their learning?

Prepare a short presentation on a topic related to the media such as:

* The dangers and opportunities of citizen journalism for democracy and human rights
* Why freedom of the press needs to be balanced with social responsibility and accountability of the press
* Does social media serve to distract us from looking more deeply at important issues?

Working in small groups, imagine you are a media company employed by a political party to develop a communication strategy for the next election.

Draw up advice using these prompt questions;

* How would you communicate with the voters, through what means and media?
* What sort of messages would you want to communicate?
* Would you target particular segments of the population for particular messages?
* What images would you use to present your message?

Thinking about the key thinkers in Politics and Society, compare how two of the following people might approach the issue of *freedom of the press* if they were living today and commenting on the topic:

* Thomas Hobbes
* John Locke
* Robert Nozick

Sample criteria for success

* Ability to use the language of reasoning and to make points clearly and succinctly
* Ability to use research evidence to build an argument
* Ability to demonstrate an argument through examples from local and wider contexts
* Ability to come to a personal conclusion and backed up with evidence
* Ability to work together effectively towards achieving a collective goal (See LO 3.4)
* Ability to creatively apply the learning from this topic to solving a real-world problem
* Ability to come to recommendations backed up with solid reasons/evidence
* Ability to relate their learning in this topic to some of the ideas presented by key thinkers
* Ability to draw references and conclusions and justify them