**Lesson Plan – Joel Penning**

**Background**

The 1912 election saw three major candidates, ongoing changes in American attitudes toward the role of government, and early evolution in modern political campaigning. Putting students in the mindset of a 1912 voter will encourage them to think about civil political discourse in a context sufficiently distant from our own that the focus will be on issues rather than tribes. This is a lesson plan for a block period.

**Objectives**

1. Students will understand the major issues of American politics in the early twentieth century, including progressivism, the role of big businesses, foreign policy, gender, and tariffs.
2. Students will evaluate the impact of third party candidacies and personality in U.S. politics.
3. Students will gain practical experience examining an issue from multiple sides, seeing different perspectives, crafting arguments, and drawing on evidence.
4. Students will be introduced to civil debate in a political setting.

**Warmup (10 minutes)**

1. Students will be asked to review and summarize the key issues of the 1900, 1904, and 1908 elections
2. Instruct students on the basic background of the 1912 election, including the personalities of the three candidates and the reason for Roosevelt’s entry into the race

**Group Reading and Discussion (40 minutes)**

1. Students will divide into groups of three and receive a document packet handout, which includes a selection of primary sources on the 1912 election: political speeches, muckraking documents, statements of progressive philosophy, and statistical data.
2. Students will spend this time reading the primary sources aloud to each other and using a graphic organizer handout to unpack and list key issues for each presidential candidate
3. Using their graphic organizer handout, students will develop an argument in support of each presidential candidate, including rebuttals to potential counterarguments. Students should develop arguments in favor of each candidate.

**Speech Preparation (35 minutes)**

1. Rotate students so that each student is in a group with new members, then combine the groups until there are three groups in the class, ideally each of 6-9 members.
2. Randomly assign one of the candidates to each group.
3. The group members should compare notes and develop a five-minute speech explaining why a voter should consider their candidate as opposed to the other two. Groups may assign one of their members to be lead speechgiver, or rotate among speakers.

**Speeches (15 minutes)**

1. Each group presents its speech in favor of its candidate.

**Wrap-up (5 minutes)**

1. Discuss the strengths of the arguments made by each group.
2. For the first time in the class, encourage students to say which candidate they found most appealing or would have voted for.