Sample Unit Outline

I. **Course Title:** *PoliSci 141: Introduction to American Politics and Government*

II. **Unit Connection to Larger Course:** *This unit is the second of three in our course. The first is about foundations of politics/government (e.g., rights/liberties), the second is about democratic politics (e.g., media), and the third is about governing institutions (e.g., Congress).*

III. **Unit Purpose:** *The purpose of this unit is to introduce students to the key organizations, processes, and institutions related to the "people" part of politics; that is, the parts that involve citizens. We will study things like political parties, voting, and elections, with an emphasis on the knowledge necessary to participate in and engage with our political process. This includes a variety of goals ranging from interpreting political data (e.g., media polls) to identifying one's own political orientation (e.g., partisanship, ideology).*

IV. **Unit Objectives:** *"In this unit, students will…*
  - i.   *Interpret public opinion polling information to accurately infer what data are saying*
  - ii. *Recognize the ideological tone of messages presented by political actors*
  - iii. *Explain how the media influence the way people think about politics*

V. **Draft Learning Activities:** *Students will engage with a variety of learning materials in this unit, including voiceover Power Points, watching supplementary videos, reading popular press articles, and data analysis/interpretation. For example, students will watch a debate about media bias between Jon Stewart and Bill O'Reilly. For another, students will participate in what I call "Data Discussion" activities.*

VI. **Draft Assessment:** Data Discussion: Making Sense of Taxes! *Background: Students complete a survey at the beginning of the term that generates a dataset from which I draw the rest of the term. The data in this assignment will come from the class itself. Students practice their interpretation and analysis skills in this graded activity. Here are the instructions:*

a. Student instructions: *Your task in this assignment is to compare and contrast Democratic and Republican students in terms of political attitudes towards taxation. Consider the data below. Each bar represents the average "fair tax rate" selected by you, the students, broken down by partisan affiliation. First, compare Democrats and Republicans in terms of their views on taxes. How would you characterize the difference between the parties on this issue? Second, think about these data in terms of political ideology. Do the data below make sense in terms of party ideology? Why or why not?*

b. *The data for this assignment are on the right*

What is a Fair Tax Rate: Democrats vs. Republicans
Fall 2016-Summer 2017