

Political Leanings Activity

International Politics
Loyola College in Maryland

The primary purpose of the political leanings activity is to have you think about where you are in relation to others in terms of your political ideology. If you answer the questions accurately, the results will be accurate. You may be surprised where you are in the political spectrum.

Take the political leanings test located at <http://www.politicalcompass.org/>. This should take about fifteen minutes to do thoughtfully. The more time you spend thinking about the questions and your views, the closer the results will be to your true political leanings.

After getting the results, click on the “Show graph on separate page for printing” link and print out two copies of the graph. Date both copies. One copy is for you to keep in your notebook to refer to at later points in this class. The second copy is to be handed in. (Make sure you staple it to the back of your answers to the following questions.) Also on your copy of the results only, copy down the books and authors the website suggests for your particular leanings.

Now, read (and think about) the following pages on the Political Leanings site: your analysis page, US Election 2004, UK Parties 2008, US Primaries 2008, and the FAQ.

Lastly, answer the following questions, using proper style and formatting.

Make sure your first line is the following statement. Make sure you sign this statement: “I understand and will uphold the ideals of academic honesty as stated in the Honor Code.”

Discussion

1. What do the two dimensions on the political leanings graph represent?
2. Why is there no “Do Not Know” option?
3. Do you agree or disagree with the test results? Why? In your answer, reflect on what it means to be ‘conservative’ or ‘liberal’ in the United States and what it may mean in other countries.
4. On your attached graph, label where the following US parties would be placed: Democrats, Republicans, Libertarians, and Greens. There are right and wrong answers to this, so make sure you do a little research as to what each of the parties represents in the United States.
5. Can one be libertarian *and* socialist? If so, what would such a person believe? If not, what is contradictory about the two?
6. Candidates for president tend to score very close to one another on this test. As an example, look where George W. Bush and John Kerry placed relative to each other (and to you). Also, look how closely Barack Obama and John McCain score. Does this similarity of the positions of the candidates reduce our real choice of elected officials, or is it a result of our nation being very homogeneous?

7. How does the movement of the Labour Party to the right affect the fortunes of the Liberal Democrats? Think about why people vote for one party over another before you answer. Make sure you use the Median Voter Theory (Wikipedia should be helpful here).

In Political Science, 'cooption' means that a party (or person) begins to take on the views of some of its opponents simply to gain their support. An example would be the Democratic Party vocally taking some of the Green party positions regarding the environment in the 2000 and 2004 elections simply to get more of the Green vote.

8. In what way does the graph of the locations of the British parties suggest a certain level of cooption may be taking place in British politics? Do not just write out some random fact, show how that fact supports your contention that cooption may be taking place.
9. Besides the example given previously, give a specific example of cooption in American politics from this election cycle.