



**TEACHERS:** André Oliveira Bonifácio, Elaine Rodrigues Martins, Daniel Fagundes Martins, Esther Oliveira Bonifácio Librelon, Giselle Ruffato Ribeiro, Priscila da Silva Caetano, Simone Seixas Thomaz Nogueira e Wiliana Barbosa Silva.

### Activity 2 – November 9<sup>th</sup>

## Elections Brazil X USA

Hey, you guys! How are you doing? This week we're going to try to understand the elections in the USA and compare it with Brazil.

### Democracy in Two Nations: Comparing Elections in Brazil and the U.S.

From Italy and its party-list representation and Parliamentary system to France's semi-presidential system with [run-off](#) elections, the underlying structures of how citizens go to the polls and elect their representatives vary greatly in form and in effect. In this time of political [gridlock](#) and [daunting](#) challenges, [ranging](#) from addressing climate change and extremism to reducing the income inequality and poverty gaps, we shouldn't ignore the importance of the structures that influence our political systems.

Now in November 2020, we have been following on the news the presidential elections in the USA and the local elections in the cities of Brazil. The United States and Brazil are large democracies. Observing each election will be interesting enough. A comparison of the two, however, offers fascinating insights.

Let's start with Brazil. The South American giant's political rules are unique, these two Brazilian [idiosyncrasies](#): mandatory voting for all legally eligible citizens (regardless of whether they live abroad, as one of the [authors](#) of this article can confirm first hand) and free airtime for political candidates.

Voting in Brazil is more than a legal right; it is a legal obligation. The high voting [turnout](#) that results from mandatory voting can be appealing on a systemic level. When there's an election, Brazilians will either be at the polls, or will have to justify to the government why they did not vote. (Those failing to vote also risk incurring a fee, losing their voting registration, and facing restrictions on government services such as renewing passports or attending a public university).

During election season in Brazil, if you turn on the television or radio, there is a good chance you will be faced with "electoral time," or horário eleitoral. Candidates even get free [airtime](#) on Brazilian TV whether they are joke candidates or not, and there are a lot of them.

The pros and cons of such a system can be heavily debated. It does offer some interesting points: all candidates have at least some exposure to voters, with the amount of time given to a candidate varying by their political party's power in Congress; there is an increase in opportunity for citizens to be engaged in the political discourse; and it seeks to [decouple](#) outside money from electoral politics by eliminating the need for candidates to purchase airtime. Whether these points together make Brazilians more engaged and Brazilian democracy more effective is another question.

Brazil's presidential election is determined by an absolute majority with [run-off](#), which allows for an election in which more than two parties can offer serious [contenders](#) to the highest executive office.

# Língua e Cultura Inglesa

## Módulo II (Avançado)



By contrast, elections in the United States are mostly based on a “first past the post” system — that is to say whoever receives a simple plurality of votes is the victor. The notable exception is the way the Electoral College casts votes for the president and vice president based on state-by-state tallies and matched in number to each state’s congressional delegation.

The “first past the post” system, while simple to administer, leaves the obvious concern that candidates can be elected without mustering even a simple majority of public support. In fact, President Obama is the first president to win at least 51% of the popular vote twice in more than five decades. And the inability of candidates to garner more than half of the votes cast is not a new phenomenon — Abraham Lincoln won the presidency in 1860 with a scant 40% of the popular vote. Even though it is ultimately the Electoral College votes that matter, the perception that a president can obtain office with the majority of the country not supporting him or her often automatically puts a new administration on the defensive.

There are many other factors that, while different from Brazil, have a concrete impact on the candidates who actually run for office. As the United States prepares for an election in which all House of Representatives seats are on the ballot, many advocacy and media groups are concerned that congressional and legislative districts are drawn specifically to favor one party or another. Moreover, it is no secret that direct campaign fundraising, and dark money from political action committees (PACs) and now Super PACs play a growing role in the ad wars that dominate elections in the United States.

Finally, in the United States, voting is not mandatory. And while turnout rates have been trending upwards in recent years, only a presidential contest on the ballot has any real impact. Turnout in 2012 was 54%, but turnout in the last midterm election in 2010 was a dismal 37% — meaning just over a third of voting-age Americans are participating and having their voices heard.

Beyond these election outcomes, these and other democracies would benefit if governments learned from one another. That means acknowledging what works — and what doesn’t — and continually improving the democratic process, at the ballot boxes and beyond. Democracy is an evolving process, and it’s sometimes necessary to make adjustments so that it truly represents a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

<https://www.aspeninstitute.org/blog-posts/democracy-two-nations-comparing-elections-brazil-and-us/> (Adapted)

**P.S:** By the time this activity was sent the vote counting in the Presidential election in the USA wasn't finished, but it was announced that 2020 turnout is on pace to break century-old records.

- Watch the videos to try to understand the US election system, believe it or not you may have to watch and search more to understand it!

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9H3gvnN468&ab\\_channel=TED-Ed](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9H3gvnN468&ab_channel=TED-Ed)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRu\\_JcarCDY&ab\\_channel=UKParliament](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRu_JcarCDY&ab_channel=UKParliament)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PrvcITGpRI&ab\\_channel=IllustratetoEducate](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PrvcITGpRI&ab_channel=IllustratetoEducate)

- Now, go to our Padlet to give your impressions about what you know and have learned about US elections:

<https://pt-br.padlet.com/inglescemear/jz0jxmbt9kwudgvz>

**P.S:** Along the text above there are some underlined words suggested for you to look up just click on it and improve your vocabulary!