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An activity of the Centre for European Studies, Carleton University
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European, Canadian, and Russian Policy in the Arctic



Photo credit (clockwise from top left): Russian icebreaker NS Yamal, National Science Foundation
<http://www.oocities.org/~mnpowers/howicebr.html>; CCGS Amundsen, Canadian Coast Guard website, http://www.ccg-gcc.gc.ca/Fleet/Vessel?vessel_id=3; Prirazlomnaya, the world's first Arctic-class ice-resistant oil platform, Gazprom, http://www.gazprom.com/f/posts/63/407714/avd49654_1.jpg; 9th Ministerial Meeting of the Arctic Council in Iqaluit, Nunavut, April 2015, U.S. Department of State, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/statephotos/17257543631>.

SUGGESTED COURSES:

Canadian and World Politics (CPW4U)
Analysing Current Economic Issues (CIA4U)
Canadian and World Issues: A Geographic Analysis (CGW4U)
Canadian and International Law (CLN4U)

TIME REQUIREMENTS:

75 minutes (one class period)

DESCRIPTION:

The Arctic environment is changing rapidly. As the impacts of climate change begin to be felt, sea ice in the Arctic is melting at record levels. As the ice retreats, the region is becoming more accessible; economic and military activity is expected to increase as a result. How the Arctic nations adapt to the changing environment is critical to ensure that the region remain an area of cooperation. This lesson plan has been created to help students understand the importance of the Arctic and to provide basic information about the policies of the major Arctic players.

OBJECTIVES:

The primary objective of this lesson plan is to allow students to reflect on the importance of the Arctic as a policy area. A secondary objective is to compare and contrast the Arctic interests and policies of Canada, Russia, and the European Union. Feel free to pick and choose topics from the handouts you feel fit your class more than others.

The following themes will be addressed:

- The Arctic policies of Canada, Russia, and the European Union;
- Regional fora, such as the Arctic Council, that work to promote cooperation;
- The impacts of climate change;
- Economic development in the Arctic;
- Boundary disputes and international law;
- Growing military activity and the possibility of heightened tensions

MATERIALS: (5 documents total)

- Teacher's Guide
- Teacher's Attachment and Bibliography
- Student handouts (**Note:** feel free to pick and choose which material from the handouts you would like to use, and which material would be used for your reference only)
 - Handout A: Arctic sea ice and climate change
 - Handout B: Arctic policy: 3 approaches
 - Handout C: The Arctic Council

TEACHER'S GUIDE

The following guidelines may assist you in delivering the material in this lesson plan. They are meant to have a certain amount of flexibility to account for the amount of time available in the class as well as to offer the option of a more classroom or homework-focused approach. Feel free to adapt the plan in accordance with the time you have available. The amount of time included in brackets is only approximate; you may wish to spend more or less time on some sections, depending upon your own syllabus and inclination.

Lesson Plan (75 minutes)

1. **Begin by discussing the impacts of climate change on the Arctic.** Distribute Handout A to the students. Apart from the impact that climate change will have on the Arctic's environment and biodiversity, the region is more accessible. Discuss with the students the challenges and opportunities this presents to both Arctic nations and outside actors. *(15 minutes)*
2. **Provide an overview of each actor's Arctic policy.** Distribute Handout B and the "Maritime jurisdiction and boundaries in the Arctic region" map (found in the attached bibliography) to the students. *(45 minutes)*
Some topics to highlight when discussing each policy include:
 - a. The interests of each actor. Consider the potential economic benefits of increased activity in the Arctic and their track records on development in the region;
 - b. The military capabilities and foreign policy of each actor;
 - c. The competing maritime claims of each state, particularly Canada, Russia, and Denmark. Consider the 2008 Ilulissat Declaration. Could these disputes lead to increased tensions, as is the case in the South China Sea? Why or why not? What are some possible solutions to the overlapping claims?
 - d. The broader international context. How does each actor view the others? What impact would that have on their Arctic policies?
3. **Introduce the Arctic Council.** Distribute Handout C to students. Discuss the role of the Arctic Council as a cooperative forum. Highlight some of the Council's achievements, such as the 2011 Arctic Search and Rescue Agreement and 2013 Marine Oil Pollution Response Agreement. Discuss with students whether it is an effective intergovernmental institution. *(15 minutes)*
4. **If time allows, or in a following session,** conduct an in-class simulation/debate of an Arctic policy area. Debate topics to consider include, but are not limited to:
 - a. A meeting of the Arctic Council to determine whether the European Union should be granted observer status. Why would Council members vote for or against this decision? What interests must they consider?
 - b. Suppose a summit of Arctic nations was convened to settle the remaining boundary disputes in the Arctic Ocean. What would a negotiated agreement look like? What are the claims of each state, and what arguments could each advance to make their case?