



# Click! The Ongoing Feminist Revolution

## A Woman President in 1964?

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**View Online:** [www.cliohistory.org/click/classroom/politics-social/woman-president-1964](http://www.cliohistory.org/click/classroom/politics-social/woman-president-1964)

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**Grade Level:** Grades 6-12

**Estimated Time:** One or two class periods

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### Introduction

This lesson introduces students to the pioneering woman politician Senator Margaret Chase Smith, who sought to become the first woman President of the United States in 1964. She and other women in the U.S. Congress served as ambassadors for expanding women's roles in American society in the 1960s and 1970s.

### Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to demonstrate a broad understanding of women's entrance into electoral and partisan politics.
- Students will be able to understand how women's political progress is connected to the ideas people have about gender roles.

### Essential Questions

- What does women's political advancement teach us about how democracy works?
- How have ideas about gender influenced politics?

### Materials

- Technology Needs: Computer with Speakers and Internet Access
- [Background on Margaret Chase Smith](#) (PDF)
- Primary Document: [Smith's Declaration of Conscience](#) (PDF)
- Primary Document: [McCarthy's Wheeling Speech](#) (PDF)
- [Document Analysis Worksheet](#) (PDF)

### Warm Up Activity: Brainstorming and Film Viewing

1. Show the students an image of Hillary Rodham Clinton in her white pantsuit.
  - a. Ask them if they have seen the image before and if they know why she is wearing white.
  - b. Explain how women suffragists wore white to symbolize their unity with other women. Ask the students to give other examples of how politicians employ political symbols.

- c. Ask the students if they know of other women who have run for president. Explain to the students that they are going to be learning about Senator Margaret Chase Smith of Maine.
2. Show a clip from the film [The Life of Senator Margaret Chase Smith](#) (5:52 min.)
3. Discuss the film clip or continue with Main Activity.

### **Main Activity: Timeline, Document Analysis, Discussion**

1. Divide the class into four groups. Hand out a Document Analysis Worksheet (PDF) to each student.
2. Have students read “Background on Margaret Chase Smith” (PDF).
  - a. If there is time, have the students read the *Click* section “[Women in Politics: A Very Short History](#).”
3. Have the students go to [Click](#) and guide them to the chapter on [Politics & Social Movements](#). Direct their attention to the Timeline.
  - a. Tell them to find the entry for “1964: Margaret Chase Smith.” Have them click on the link to the Smith Library website.
  - b. When they are at the Smith Library website, have them look at the Smith Library Timeline.
4. Have each group examine the chronological list of events in the Smith Library Timeline.
5. Have the students return to the *Click* Timeline to search for other entries about Smith.
  - a. They will find “1950: Declaration of Conscience.”
  - b. Explain that Smith’s speech is considered one of the most remarkable political speeches of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Bernard Baruch said that if a man had delivered it “he would have been the next President of the United States.
6. Have students read (or read together) and complete the Document Analysis Worksheet (PDF) on the Declaration of Conscience (PDF) speech.
  - a. Alternatively, have students write a summary of the speech.
7. Discuss the speech. Guiding questions include:
  - a. What does Smith define as the “basic principles of Americanism”?
  - b. What does Smith think is dividing the country?
  - c. What solution does she propose to create unity?
  - d. Why did the press cover this speech?
  - e. What was the result of this speech for Smith’s career?
  - f. What do you think being a woman meant to Smith’s political career? Did it help or hurt her advancement?

## Extension Activity 1: Primary Document Comparison

Have the students compare Margaret Chase's Smith's "Declaration of Conscience" (PDF) to Senator Joseph McCarthy's Wheeling Speech (PDF). McCarthy's speech was a catalyst for Smith's speech.

## Extension Activity 2: Timeline Creation

Have students create a timeline of women in Congress and/or women who ran for president since 1920. Information can be found on Wikipedia. Images can be found on Google. A good timeline tool can be found at <https://timeline.knightlab.com/>.

## Common Core Anchor Standards

### Reading

*Key Ideas and Details:*

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1](#)

Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

*Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:*

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7](#)

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

### Writing

*Research to Build and Present Knowledge:*

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.8](#)

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.