

Both Sides of the Issue

Tariffs Revisited

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Objectives

Students will be able to:

- summarize the main arguments each speaker makes for or against tariffs.
- distinguish between economic claims and rhetorical claims in both videos.
- critique the strengths and weaknesses of each speaker's reasoning about tariffs.
- construct a defensible position on tariffs that incorporates evidence from both perspectives.

Concepts & Key Terms

The following terms appear across both videos in this pairing. Understanding them will help students follow the arguments and engage in discussion.

Consumer: a person or business that purchases goods or services for personal or operational use rather than for resale.

Free and Fair Trade: international exchange of goods and services that is open between nations and operates under rules considered just (fair) by all parties involved.

Free Trade: international exchange of goods and services without tariffs, quotas, or other government-imposed barriers by either party.

Manufacturing: the production of goods using machinery, labor, and raw materials, typically in factories.

Negotiating Tool: a tactic, threat, or concession used to influence the terms of an agreement between parties.

Protectionism: a government's use of tariffs, quotas, or subsidies to shield domestic industries from foreign competition.

Recession: a significant decline in economic activity that lasts for several months and affects employment, income, and production.

Reciprocal Tariff: a tax on imported goods set in response to and often matching the tariff levels imposed by another country.

Reshoring: the practice of moving manufacturing operations back to a company's home country from overseas locations.

Retaliatory Tariff: a tariff imposed by one country in response to tariffs placed on its own exports by another country.

Tariff: a tax or duty imposed by a government on imported goods.

Trade War: a situation in which countries impose escalating tariffs or trade restrictions on one another's goods, often in retaliation for earlier measures.

Discussion Questions

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video. Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

1. What are the opposing ideas in these two videos?
2. What is a tariff?
3. Rep. Tony Wied used the term "free and fair trade." What did he mean by this?
4. Daniel Hannan said, "Tariffs are always popular because they're intuitive." What did he mean by this?
5. Rep. Wied said that President Trump was transparent about his tariff plan while campaigning for the presidency, and voters elected him. Is that enough to justify Trump's tariffs? Why/Why not?
6. Daniel Hannan said there are three common arguments for tariffs. What were those arguments?
7. Rep. Wied said that the plan is to bring more jobs and manufacturing to the United States. How would tariffs do that?
8. Daniel Hannan said that if tariffs are bringing in revenue, they're not creating jobs. Why is that?
9. Rep. Wied said we should focus on "America first." What did he mean by this? Should we be focused on "America first"? Why/Why not?
10. Daniel Hannan said that if tariffs are creating jobs, they're not bringing in revenue. Why is that?
11. Rep. Wied used the term "reciprocal tariffs." What is a reciprocal tariff?
12. Daniel Hannan said tariffs aren't a tax on foreigners. Who did he say they are a tax on?
13. When asked about the responses from foreign leaders, Rep. Wied asked: "Why are the tariffs so high for us?" If other countries put tariffs on America, does that justify America enacting tariffs on them? Is it good for America? Why/Why not?
14. Daniel Hannan said that the 2018 tariffs were intended to be a negotiating tool, but they only led to more tariffs from foreign nations. If that's the case,

why do you think U.S. politicians still insist that tariffs are a good negotiating tool?

15. Rep. Wied said America has been “taken advantage of for a long time.” What did he mean by this? Do you agree? Why/Why not?
16. Daniel Hannan said: “[T]ariffs, fundamentally, are like a suicide bomb.” What did he mean by this?
17. Did these two videos share any common ground? Were there any points on which they agreed? If so, what were they?
18. Should one of the arguments we heard carry more weight than the other? If so, which one? Why?
19. Did you have an opinion on this topic before watching these videos? If so, what was it? Has your opinion changed? If so, how? What did you learn from these videos that affects your views on this topic?
20. What else would you like to learn about this topic?
21. For more on this topic, see:
 - Both Sides of the Issue: “The Impact of Tariffs”
<https://stosselintheclassroom.org/both-sides-the-impact-of-tariffs/>
 - Both Sides of the Issue: “Are the Trump Tariffs Good for America?”
<https://stosselintheclassroom.org/both-sides-are-the-trump-tariffs-good-for-america/>

Activities

Activity 1: Timeline of the Debate

Tariffs have been a flashpoint in American politics for almost two centuries. This activity asks students to construct a timeline of major U.S. tariff decisions and connect each speaker’s argument to the historical evidence each draws upon. Daniel Hannan invokes the 2018 tariffs and the retaliatory tariffs still in place in the EU, Turkey, India, and China; Rep. Wied invokes early-1900s tariffs and President Reagan’s record. A timeline lets students see the full pattern.

Teacher Instructions:

Divide students into small groups of three or four. Provide chart paper or have students build the timeline digitally. Allow approximately 30 minutes for research and construction, plus 10 minutes for group presentations.

Student Directions:

- Construct a timeline that includes, at minimum, the following events: the Tariff of Abominations (1828), the McKinley Tariff (1890), the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act (1930), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (1947), President Reagan’s 1985 radio address against protectionism, the 2018 Trump tariffs, and the 2025 reciprocal tariffs referenced by Rep. Wied.

- For each event, note the stated goal at the time, the actual economic outcome, and which speaker's position (Wied's or Hannan's) the historical record supports or challenges.
- Identify one period that most strongly supports Rep. Wied's argument and one period that most strongly supports Daniel Hannan's argument.
- Present a one-minute summary to the class. Be prepared to defend why your group selected the events you did.

Class debrief: do the historical patterns favor one argument over the other, or do they provide ammunition for both sides?

Activity 2: Fact vs. Opinion Sort

This activity sharpens students' ability to distinguish verifiable economic claims from rhetorical or value-based statements — a critical skill when evaluating any policy debate. Both speakers mix facts with assertions; the goal is for students to tell them apart.

Teacher Instructions:

Photocopy the statement set below or read each statement aloud one at a time. (Or display on your smartboard or other device.) Students sort each statement into one of three categories: Verifiable Fact (can be checked against evidence), Opinion or Value Judgment (reflects a viewpoint, not a verifiable claim), or Mixed (contains elements of both). Students must justify each classification in writing.

Statements to classify (drawn from both videos):

1. "President Trump was hired by the American people."
2. Tariffs raise prices for consumers.
3. The 2018 tariffs led to retaliatory tariffs from the EU, Turkey, India, and China that remain in place.
4. "We've been de-industrialized as a country."
5. "Tariffs are always popular because they're intuitive."
6. Other countries have placed tariffs on American goods for years.
7. "Free trade always makes everybody richer."
8. An auto repair shop in Glendale, Wisconsin would need to raise parts prices by at least 25 percent.
9. Tariffs are "a tool to negotiate free and fair trade."
10. "[T]ariffs, fundamentally, are like a suicide bomb."
11. President Reagan gave a speech against tariffs in the 1980s.
12. "Other countries have been taking advantage of us."

Class debrief:

- Which statements were hardest to classify, and why?

- How does mixing fact and opinion affect a viewer's ability to evaluate an argument?
- Did one speaker rely on opinion-style claims more than the other? What evidence supports your conclusion?

Answers to Activity 2: Fact vs. Opinion Sort

These statements are sorted by the kind of claim each makes, not by whether the claim is accurate. A verifiable fact can be checked against evidence, even one that turns out to be wrong; an opinion or value judgment reflects a viewpoint; a mixed statement wraps a checkable fact inside an interpretation.

1. "President Trump was hired by the American people." — Mixed. Trump did win the 2024 election (verifiable), but "hired" recasts that win as an employment relationship with a mandate, which is an interpretive framing rather than a checkable fact.

2. Tariffs raise prices for consumers. — Verifiable Fact. This is an empirical claim that can be tested against price data; the evidence broadly supports it, though the size of the effect is debated.

3. The 2018 tariffs led to retaliatory tariffs from the EU, Turkey, India, and China that remain in place. — Verifiable Fact. Every part of this can be checked against trade records.

Teacher's note: The EU, Turkey, India, and China all did retaliate, but India announced its tariffs in 2018 and did not implement them until 2019, and several of the 2018 retaliatory measures have since been suspended or folded into later agreements. "Remain in place" is therefore the part most likely to be out of date, which is a useful thing for students to discover when they check the claim.

4. "We've been de-industrialized as a country." — Mixed. U.S. manufacturing employment has fallen as a share of the workforce (verifiable), but "de-industrialized" is a loaded characterization the data only partly supports, since U.S. manufacturing output remains high.

5. "Tariffs are always popular because they're intuitive." — Opinion or Value Judgment. "Always popular" is a sweeping generalization, and "because they're intuitive" is a causal interpretation evidence cannot cleanly settle.

6. Other countries have placed tariffs on American goods for years. — Verifiable Fact. This is a checkable claim about trade history.

7. "Free trade always makes everybody richer." — Opinion or Value Judgment. The universal terms "always" and "everybody" make it an overgeneralization rather than a testable claim, and the evidence shows trade produces both winners and losers.

8. An auto repair shop in Glendale, Wisconsin would need to raise parts prices by at least 25 percent. — Mixed. It points to a specific, checkable business and a real tariff rate, but “would need to” is a forward-looking estimate, not a present fact.

9. Tariffs are “a tool to negotiate free and fair trade.” — Opinion or Value Judgment. It asserts a purpose for tariffs and leans on the value-laden phrase “free and fair,” neither of which evidence can settle.

10. “[T]ariffs, fundamentally, are like a suicide bomb.” — Opinion or Value Judgment. This is a rhetorical metaphor, not a claim that can be checked.

11. President Reagan gave a speech against tariffs in the 1980s. — Verifiable Fact. Whether he did is a matter of record.

Teacher’s note: Reagan’s record on trade was mixed — he delivered strong anti-protectionism addresses but also imposed targeted tariffs, such as on Japanese semiconductors and imported motorcycles — which is why one speaker can invoke “Reagan’s record” in support of tariffs while the other invokes Reagan against them.

12. “Other countries have been taking advantage of us.” — Mixed. There is a checkable kernel — other countries do impose tariffs and trade barriers on U.S. goods — but “taking advantage of us” is a value-laden interpretation of those facts.

Most likely to spark debate, and good for the class debrief: #1 (mixed or pure opinion?), #5 (opinion or mixed?), and #8 (mixed or verifiable fact?). Statement #3’s classification is settled, but its accuracy is what shifts when students check it.

Activity 3: Venn Diagram Plus

Despite their opposing conclusions, the two speakers may share assumptions or concerns. This activity asks students to map agreement, disagreement, and gaps in coverage — surfacing both genuine common ground and questions that neither video addresses. A blank Venn Diagram Plus structure is provided in the worksheet that follows this activity.

Teacher Instructions:

Distribute the Venn Diagram Plus worksheet on the page that follows. Students work individually for 15 minutes, then pair up to compare diagrams for 10 minutes. Close with a class discussion that surfaces the most-frequently identified points of agreement and the most-frequently identified gaps.

Student Directions:

- On the worksheet provided, fill in each region of the diagram using specific points from the two videos.

- Left circle (Wied Only): claims, examples, or proposals unique to Rep. Wied's argument, such as reciprocal tariffs, \$3 trillion in planned investments, or short-term pain for long-term gain.
- Right circle (Hannan Only): claims, examples, or proposals unique to Daniel Hannan's argument, such as the "three contradictory arguments" critique or the suicide-bomb metaphor.
- Overlap (Both Agree): points where the two speakers actually agree. Look closely — agreement may be buried inside criticism. Both, for example, acknowledge that other countries impose tariffs on the United States.
- Outside the diagram (Neither Addressed): important questions about tariffs that NEITHER video discusses, such as effects on supply chains, currency manipulation, agricultural exports, or impacts on developing nations.
- After completing the diagram, write a paragraph identifying which region surprised you most and why.

Name _____

Date _____

Class _____ Period _____

Teacher _____

Venn Diagram Plus: Tariffs Revisited

Video 1 (Weid)	BOTH agree	Video 2 (Hannan)

What considerations did neither video address? _____

Activity 4: Policy Proposal

This activity moves students from analysis to constructive policymaking, requiring them to draw on BOTH perspectives. Designing a coherent trade policy that takes seriously the concerns of both speakers forces students to confront real trade-offs.

Teacher Instructions:

Form groups of three or four. Allow 25 minutes for drafting and 3 minutes per group for the policy pitch. Reserve the remaining time for class voting and debrief.

Student Directions:

- Design a brief U.S. trade policy that responds to the concerns raised by both speakers. Your proposal must include each of the following:
- At least one element drawn from Rep. Wied's argument, such as protecting specific industries, reshoring jobs, or addressing other countries' tariffs on American goods.
- At least one element drawn from Daniel Hannan's argument, such as preserving consumer purchasing power, avoiding retaliation, or recognizing the costs of protectionism.
- A clear explanation of the trade-offs your policy accepts. Who pays the cost? Who benefits? What does your policy give up?
- Write a one-page proposal and present it to the class in a three-minute "policy pitch."
- Classmates serve as the "voting public" and rate each proposal on whether it fairly addresses both perspectives, on a 1–5 scale, with brief written feedback.

Activity 5: Exit Ticket Reflection

A structured short-write that asks students to integrate both perspectives into a personal takeaway. This activity can be used at the end of the lesson or as homework.

Teacher Instructions:

Distribute a half-sheet with the four prompts below, or have students respond in their notebooks. Allow 10 to 15 minutes. Collect the reflections to gauge student engagement with both perspectives.

Student Prompts:

1. Which single argument from Rep. Wied did you find most compelling, and why?
2. Which single argument from Daniel Hannan did you find most compelling, and why?
3. What is one piece of evidence you would need to research before forming a final opinion on tariffs?

4. If you had to vote tomorrow on whether to keep or remove the current tariffs, which way would you lean — and what concerns from the OTHER side would still trouble you?

References

The following sources support the statements classified as verifiable facts in Activity 2. Teachers can use them to confirm a classification or to help students check a claim against the evidence.

Tariffs raise prices for consumers (Statement #2)

Amiti, Mary, Stephen J. Redding, and David E. Weinstein. "The Impact of the 2018 Tariffs on Prices and Welfare." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 33, no. 4 (Fall 2019): 187–210. <https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jep.33.4.187>

Retaliatory tariffs from the EU, Turkey, India, and China (Statement #3)

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. "Retaliatory Tariffs Reduced U.S. States' Exports of Agricultural Commodities." *Amber Waves*, March 7, 2022. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2022/march/retaliatory-tariffs-reduced-u-s-states-exports-of-agricultural-commodities>

U.S. Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration. "Foreign Retaliations Timeline." <https://www.trade.gov/feature-article/foreign-retaliations-timeline>

Other countries have placed tariffs on American goods for years (Statement #6)

World Trade Organization, International Trade Centre, and UN Conference on Trade and Development. *World Tariff Profiles 2025*. Geneva: WTO, 2025. https://www.wto.org/english/res_e/publications_e/world_tariff_profiles25_e.htm

President Reagan gave a speech against tariffs in the 1980s (Statement #11)

Reagan, Ronald. "Radio Address to the Nation on Free and Fair Trade." September 7, 1985. Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum. <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/radio-address-nation-free-and-fair-trade>