

Lesson Plan¹

Subject: Comparative Current Affairs

Units: Government & History

Audience: Grades 9-12

Learning Targets

Build comprehension skills through engagement with various forms of content/media from multiple news sources

Strengthen critical thinking skills through activities that promote analysis and reflection

Improve written and verbal communication skills

Objectives

Students will be able to...

- 1) Work cooperatively in teams to review multiple sources of information/data relevant to current events and international affairs
- 2) Work cooperatively in teams to brainstorm solutions to pressing problems faced by countries around the world
- 3) Reflect on the group process and its impact on learning in (and to some extent beyond) the classroom

Relevance

Promote intellectual growth and civic engagement through tasks/activities that expand/strengthen student knowledge of current affairs and global history.

Assessment Criteria

Instructor may evaluate students on the basis of participation (and its quality). Instructor may also collect and grade written responses. If instructor opts to assign the suggested homework (see **Access, Equity, and Accommodations**), he/she may also collect and assess the quality of the work done outside of the classroom.

Activities/Tasks

Opener (appx. five minutes)

Begin session by asking students to answer one or more of the following prompts in the form of a written reflection:

- 1) In what ways do you expect the Scholars to Leaders symposium to enhance your existing understanding of comparative government/politics and current issues?
- 2) How might a strong understanding of history help you to better understand international affairs and/or current issues?

¹ Lesson plan created/compiled by WAC-DC Spring 2015 Global Education Graduate Associate, Tony Harris. Neither the author nor WAC-DC claim ownership over materials cited from non WAC-DC external sources. This resource has been made publicly available explicitly for noncommercial educational purposes only.

- 3) Write about a topic or story you have heard about in the news during the last month. What do you know about this issue? What questions do you still have? From your perspective, why is this topic/issue worthy of news coverage?

If time permits, allow students to share their reflections with a partner or small group.

Main Activity (appx. thirty minutes)

Divide students into six small groups. Each group will function as a task force concerned with a particular issue in one of six countries (China, Great Britain, Iran, Mexico, Nigeria, or Russia). Give each group the materials relevant to their respective issue (see below). Each task force will be responsible for reviewing their information and answering a series of questions/prompts that promote analysis of the issue and challenge students to develop solutions. If time permits, allow each group a few moments to present their issue and their responses to the class.

Closing Activity (appx. 5 minutes)

Option #1 - If groups did not have time to present their work to the class, ask students to find a partner from a different group and take turns summarizing their issue to one another.

Option #2 - Task students with crafting written responses relevant to the process and content of the activity. An instructor may find it appropriate to have students identify which group they were in. Some guiding questions/prompts might include...

- Was it challenging to conduct an analysis as a group? Why or why not?
- Do you think working with your peers enriched your understanding of the issue you explored? Why do (or why don't) you think this was the case? In what ways were they helpful (or a hindrance)?
- Do you think the strategies/solutions that you developed were realistic? Why or why not?
- Do you think that the issue/topic you explored is a problem in other countries as well? Why or why not?

Resources

- 1) Issue specific material packages
- 2) Worksheets for group analysis and solution-building

Access, Equity, and Accommodations

Suggested homework: An instructor might task students with individually reviewing/analyzing a second issue package (with accompanying worksheets) as homework. This would enable students to learn about another current event/issue. This would also help illustrate the pros and cons of individual vs. group analysis.

Alternative/additional materials, such as video and audio clips, could be added to the issue packages to cater to different learning styles (some examples below)

An instructor might modify opening and/or closing activities to encourage more creative forms of expression. For example, if the class begin with a writing activity, the instructor might close the session with an artistic activity or an open-ended discussion that elicits reflection on the group process.

China

Air Pollution and Climate Change

“China’s War on Air Pollution May Cause More Global Warming” (3/2/15)

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/china-s-war-on-air-pollution-may-cause-more-global-warming/>

“Don’t Get Caught Up in the Air Pollution Hype” (3/4/15)

<http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/04/china-pollution-emissions-india-climate-change/>

Great Britain

Poverty and Social Mobility

“UK sliding into ‘permanently divided nation’ with too many social mobility cold spots”

(2/28/15)

<http://marketbusinessnews.com/uk-sliding-into-permanently-divided-nation-with-too-many-social-mobility-cold-spots/50325>

“Britain’s social mobility ‘cold spots’” (2/28/15)

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/11440948/Britains-social-mobility-cold-spots.html>

“Women in the richest areas enjoy two decades more of healthy life than their poorer sisters.

Welcome to unequal England.” (3/7/15)

<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/mar/08/poverty-leads-to-poor-health-life-expectancy>

BBCNews: UK social mobility dropping - thanks to politicians (10/20/14; appx. 4 minute video)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMX7LSwGStQ>

Iran

Human Rights Violations

“Executions top long U.N. list of human rights concerns in Iran” (3/3/15)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/03/03/us-iran-rights-idUSKBN0LZ19V20150303>

“Islamic Republic and women’s rights in Iran” (3/9/15)

http://www.americanthinker.com/blog/2015/03/islamic_republic_and_womens_rights_in_iran.html

Mexico

Drug Trafficking

“Top capos fall in Mexico, but drugs keep flowing and crimes shift as gangs splinter or regroup” (2/28/15)

<http://www.usnews.com/news/world/articles/2015/02/28/mexico-drug-lord-captures-change-but-dont-lower-trafficking>

“Mexico arrests Zetas cartel leader Omar Trevino Morales” (3/4/15)

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-latin-america-31731842>

Nigeria

Fuel Dependency and Scarcity

“Fuel Shortages Hit Nigeria” (3/3/15)

<http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-fuel-shortages-hit-nigeria-as-currency-woes-hurt-importers/2665857.html>

“2015 Budget and the Need to Diversify the Economy” (2/14/15)

<http://www.nigerianobservernews.com/2015/02/14/2015-budget-need-diversify-economy/#sthash.7qEryKX6.dpbs>

Russia

Surveillance, Privacy, and Cyber Security

“Russia’s Surveillance State” (3/2/15)

<http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2015/03/02/russias-surveillance-state>

“Russian researchers expose breakthrough U.S. spying program” (2/16/15)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/02/16/us-usa-cyberspying-idUSKBN0LK1QV20150216>