



Lesson Plan¹

Subject: U.S.-Cuba Relations

Unit(s): Social Sciences/History

Grade(s): 9-12

Learning Targets

- Discern central ideas and key themes from multiple forms of media/content
- Utilize critical thinking and reasoning skills in order to analyze, discuss, and make inferences from information gathered

Objectives

Students will...

- 1) identify and understand recent changes in U.S.-Cuba Relations
- 2) understand the historical significance of these changes
- 3) engage in informed, constructive discussion of what these changes mean for everyday Americans/Cubans

Relevance/Rationale

- 1) Encourage informed citizenry amongst students through engagement with media coverage of unfolding changes to U.S. policy and analysis of materials that chronicle history of U.S.-Cuba relations
- 2) Strengthen core relational and communications skills through constructive dialogue around complex issues

Assessment Criteria

Instructor may assess student work...

- by collecting presentation materials and/or notes created by each group.
- on the basis of participation in the panel activity and synthesis discussion.

Instructor might also monitor/evaluate student engagement in group work as a component of formative assessment.

Activities/Tasks – U.S.-Cuba Relations Panelists’ Forum

Explain to students that, through this class or series of classes, they will have the chance to learn more about Cuba and its relationship with the United States. Tell students that they will be divided into three working groups. Each working group will assume responsibility for a particular aspect of research. Members of each working group should try their best to become “experts” on their subject matter as each working group will be tasked with providing an overview of (and answering questions about) their particular subtopic.

Group 1 – History

This group will be charged with exploring the resources provided (and additional resources, if applicable) in order to give a historical overview of Cuba’s development and its relationship with the United States. Instructor may suggest to this group that they work together to develop a handmade timeline of major events that have taken place over the last century. It may make most

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sense for this group to present to their peers first, since it will provide a historical backdrop that will enrich discussion around more recent political and economic developments.

Group 2 – Politics

This group will be charged with exploring the resources provided (and additional resources, if applicable) in order to educate their peers about political aspects of U.S.-Cuba Relations. Instructor may suggest to this group that they give some historical context of the relationship between the two countries, but primarily focus on recent developments (i.e. release of political prisoners, potential ramifications of reinstating diplomatic efforts, etc.)

Group 3 – Economics

The group will be charged with exploring the resources provided (and additional resources, if applicable) in order to educate their peers about economic aspects of U.S.-Cuba relations. Instructor may suggest to this group that they give some context for understanding economic ties between the two countries, but primarily focus on recent developments (i.e. impacts of embargo relaxation on trade and/or travel between the two countries.)

- Students will read/explore materials, carry out additional research (if appropriate and time permits), and craft summaries/visual aids to help them in presenting to their peers. The groups concerned with politics and economics might find it useful to make “mind-maps” or similar forms of illustration to show how various changes or influences are attached to one another.

- Groups will then present to their peers. Depending on the time allotted for the project, the instructor might suggest that each group take 5-15 minutes to present and 5-10 minutes for Q&A.

Guiding Questions for Synthesizing Discussion

- Why is the relationship between the United States and Cuba important?
- Recent changes have provided Cubans with more access to the internet and alternate media sources. How do you think this will impact their lives?
- Do you think improvements in U.S.-Cuba relations will have an impact on relations between the U.S. and other Latin American countries? Why or why not?
- What else would you like to learn about this topic? Where might you learn it?

Supporting Resources

- 1) WAC-DC Webinar: Understanding the Changes in U.S.-Cuba Relations
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9YD0dT_U7k
- 2) “Cuba Frees 53 Political Prisoners as Part of Deal, U.S. Says”
<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2015/01/12/376709845/cuba-frees-53-political-prisoners-a-s-part-of-deal-with-u-s>
- 3) Major Shift in US-Cuba Relations – Trade, Diplomacy to Flow (Video)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DU59UNd4VK8>
- 4) “Raul Castro warns U.S. against meddling in Cuba’s affairs”
<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/01/28/us-cuba-usa-idUSKBN0L12EP20150128>



- 5) “The U.S. and Cuba: A Brief History of a Complicated Relationship”
<http://www.npr.org/blogs/parallels/2014/12/17/371405620/the-u-s-and-cuba-a-brief-history-of-a-tortured-relationship>
- 6) “A History of U.S.-Cuba Relations”
<http://www.uloop.com/news/view.php/149658/A-History-of-US--Cuba-Relations>
- 7) The Story of Cuba – National Geographic (Historical Documentary, 53 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6cRPbGZxN-Q>
- 8) Cuba – An Introduction (5 minute video clip; very basic, easy to follow introduction)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-F6PMR1BVY>
- 9) Interviews from Havana – Relations between Cubans in Cuba and abroad (13 minutes)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aptjG7e6eaQ>
- 10) On Cuba Magazine Website (Great resource for an array of information about Cuba – Culture, Economy, Politics, etc.)
<http://oncubamagazine.com/en/>
- 11) “The Economic Impact of Better US-Cuba Relations”
<http://www.investopedia.com/articles/investing/011515/economic-impact-better-uscuba-relations.asp>

Access, Equity, and Modifications

- Class could divide into pairs or (a different set) of small groups in order to answer the discussion questions in a format that is more conducive to dialogue. Instructors might also modify the discussion questions into writing prompts that could then be collected and factored into students’ grades.
- If a computer lab may be accessed, students may opt to use additional (credible) audio/video materials to supplement news articles/written sources.
- If time permits, instructors might modify this lesson to be a research project that spans the course of several classes. Instructors might also have groups perform research and synthesis outside of class and then present/discuss in-class.
- For larger classes, an instructor might create additional working groups. There could be multiple history groups, for example – one focused on history over the past century, the other with the colonization of Cuba and the events that led up to the 20th century. Another working group might research Cuban culture and make inferences as to what aspects of Cuban culture might change as a result of improved U.S.-Cuba relations.