

University of Virginia Center for Politics



Democracy Corps Lesson Plan 5: Contemporary Issues in the News-Part Two

Purpose: This lesson is a part of YLI's Democracy Corps service learning program. Students continue to build their civic knowledge as they brainstorm solutions to current problems and identify issues of personal interest.

Materials:

- Article(s) for deliberation that focus on current issues. Recommended sites include the following.
 - www.csun.edu/~hcedu013/cevents.html - a site with a variety of links to current events for kids.
 - www.constitutioncenter.org - Constitution Newswire with headlines and access to current articles related to the Patriot Act and other civil liberties.
 - www.nytimes.com/learning/index.html - current and archived articles with discussion questions.
- Student Guide 1: Contemporary Issues in the News - Part Two
- Student Guide 2: Presentation of Contemporary Issue
- Teacher Rubric: Presentation of Contemporary Issue
- Computer Lab
- Note cards

Central Question:

What contemporary issue would I like to learn more about?

Procedure:

1. Warm Up
Ask students to review five random headlines and screen for political bias
Discuss why it is important to be aware of liberal or conservative perspectives before reading an article.
2. Ask students to identify any issues missing from the list generated during Lesson Plan 4, and teachers and students may reference the YLI e-Congress site at www.youthleadership.net to review a list of national issues.
3. Distribute note cards and ask students to review the list of issues and write down the three that interest them the most. Collect the note cards.
4. Select one article (websites are recommended on Lesson Plan page) that is intriguing, informative and related to a current local issue. Distribute a copy of the article along with the Student Guide 1: Contemporary Issues in the News - Part Two and direct students to read both.
5. While students read the article, review the note cards and arrange groups based on areas of interest. (Students will be divided into teams during Step 6) Place 4-5 students

into each group. Write the topic (issue) for each group in the blank space on Student Guide 2: Presentation of Contemporary Issue.

6. Once students finish reading the article, facilitate a class deliberation.
7. In small groups, ask students to discuss the article they read during class. Use questions listed on Student Guide: Contemporary Issues in the News - Part Two to facilitate the discussion.
8. Distribute Student Guide 2: Presentation of Contemporary Issue. Review directions on the assignment sheet and the grading rubric in order to clarify expectations.
9. Inform students of the due date for their class presentation.



Lesson Plan 5
Student Guide 1

Contemporary Issues in the News-Part Two

Step One

Consider these questions as you read an article related to a current issue.

1. What is the title of the article? What is the author's purpose?

2. Why is this issue on the policy agenda? Is it clear how this issue became a priority?

3. What potential solutions are given to solve this issue/problem?

4. How would you recommend solving this issue if you could talk with a legislator?

5. What part of the population may see this as a critical issue?

6. In your opinion, is this the most important issue that is facing our community/state/nation? If not, what is?

Lesson Plan 5

Student Guide 2

Presentation of Contemporary Issue

_____ is an issue of interest identified by members of your team. Your goal, as a group, is to research this issue and explain why it is important through a class presentation. Following the presentation, your team will share a current article related to the issue and facilitate a class discussion.

Step One

Explain the relevance of your issue through a 3 - 5 minute presentation that outlines its history and importance.

Exceptional presentations will include the following information.

- Brief history of the issue.
- An explanation about why this issue is a priority.
- Details about the relevance of this issue in your community.
- Identification of one contemporary person who impacted the issue and a discussion about how he/she made a difference.

Step Two

Complete the following steps in order to prepare for the class deliberation on your issue.

- Select one current article of interest that is related to your issue.
- Ask teacher to approve article selected.
- Make copies of article for each student in your class.
- Write three to four questions related to your article that can be used to initiate conversation during class deliberation. (Avoid questions that have yes or no answers.)
- Facilitate deliberation after peers read article.

Presentation of Contemporary Issue

Teacher Rubric

Use this rubric to evaluate student presentations and student-facilitated deliberations.

Criteria	20 Points	15 Points	10 Points	5 Points	Score
Research	Students used research time wisely and persevered to find informative articles that related to their issue.	Students worked during the research time, but were not successful in finding informative data to help with the presentation.	Students did not use research time well, and found weak information to support their issue.	Students did not use research time wisely and did not find informative details related to their issue.	
Effective Presentation	Students provided historical context, explained how the issue related to their community and featured a community activist. They were prepared, informed and articulate.	Students provided background information, but the delivery of the information lacked planning and organization.	Students provided minimal background information and the delivery of their remarks lacked planning and organization.	Students did not provide background information and were not prepared for the oral presentation.	
Selected article	Students selected an article that was informative and related to their issue.	Students selected an article that related to their issue, but it was not current.	Students selected an article that was tangentially related to their issue.	Students did not find an article related to their issue.	
Question related to article	Students designed 3-4 questions that helped their peers understand the importance of the issue and identify the complexities surrounding it.	Students designed 3-4 questions, but they were basic and did not help readers understand the article or the relevance of the issue.	Students wrote 3-4 questions, but they were weak and unrelated to the article.	Students did not design sufficient questions.	
Organization	Structure of work was clearly developed.	Structure was developed reasonably well, but clarity could be improved.	Some attempt to structure work was made, but it was poorly developed.	The team's work lacked structure.	
Comments					Total



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