

Core Democratic Values Supplemental Review and Questions

Grade Levels: 9-12

Core Democratic Values: **Justice**

The class will do a comparative study of three historical events which involve racial injustice and the constitutional process of redress. These are: Indian removal, slavery, and Japanese-American internment. The class will research the historical context, constitutional issues, and documentation of legal redress in each case. Then the class will be divided into debate groups to define and argue key issues that cut across all three cases. The ultimate question to be determined is whether justice was finally meted out to all three oppressed groups. The groups must compare and contrast the constitutional, economic, legislative, and legal redress in each historical case. A good closure activity would be a position paper defending a position on the nature of justice and legal redress involving minorities in American democracy.

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Core Democratic Values: **Common Good**

Discuss the concept of "common good" as a basic tenet of civic responsibility alongside the concept of individualism. The class should then be presented with a question: "How should a society of individuals dedicated to the notion of pursuing its own happiness also meet its commitments to work together for the greater benefit of others?"

The class will brainstorm the question by working in small groups to fill out a dichotomy sheet listing individual, contemporary, and historical examples of individualism on the one side and common good on the other. Then, each group will select and research one example of a situation in which the needs of both the individual and the common good were met at the same time.

Library time should be provided. The groups will creatively demonstrate their findings

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Core Democratic Values: **Equality**

Break the class into several study groups. Assign each one of the following fairness and equity laws: The Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Public Law 88-352), The Civil Rights Act of 1965 (Public Law 89-110), Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, and The Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) written by Alice Paul in 1921.

After researching the assignment, the groups should report to the class orally. The report should outline the conditions that led to the legislation and the specific ways that the legislation was designed to remediate an inequity. The presentations might include a creative component: a skit, a debate, a comic book, a poster, or a series of role playing interviews.

A follow up activity would assign the same groups the task of researching a current social inequity that might be addressed by new legislation. After more research and planning, the groups would write a proposal for new laws that would remedy the inequity. Each proposal must show either constitutional precedent or demonstrate the need for a constitutional amendment. A formal written proposal should be submitted by each group.

Some good web sites are:

The Southern Poverty Law Center - [http://www.splcenter.org/teaching tolerance/tt-index.html](http://www.splcenter.org/teaching%20tolerance/tt-index.html)

Other organizations are:

Anti-Defamation League - <http://www.adl.org>

NAACP - <http://www.naacp.org>

National Organization for Women - <http://www.now.org>

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Core Democratic Values: **Diversity**

After studying the Declaration of Independence, in particular the second paragraph regarding the precepts of equality that it presents, the class will look at documents from 3 or 4 subsequent historical situations that call into question the idea that "all men are created equal" in our society. The teacher may select these situations from such examples as: Indian removal, Asian exclusion, anti immigrant nativism, gender exclusion, the Jim Crow era, integration and civil rights, etc.

The class will be divided up into 3-4 teams to study the historical context of their assigned topic and packets (or online) documents pertaining to their topic. Each group will create a one act play or series of dramatic vignettes that will be presented to the rest of the class. Each presentation must show how subsequent history resolved their situation.

A follow up debriefing should address the following questions. Was justice achieved? Has America always lived up to its ideal of equality? Is America a more diverse society today? Why has diversity in our population caused so many problems? Are the concepts of equality and diversity compatible? How has the constitution grown to make America more diverse since 1787? What does population growth and increasing diversity mean for America's future?

The debriefing could take the form of a panel discussion, a debate, or a written response.

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Core Democratic Values: **Truth**

A unit on consumerism might prove effective in studying the relationship between truth and the government. Ralph Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed*, Upton Sinclair's muckraking classic - *The Jungle* - , or a recent 20/20 expose might kick off the unit. The teacher might prepare a packet of cases involving government action based on social research (e.g. The Triangle Shirtwaist fire, fire retardant child sleep-wear, the DDT ban, the tobacco litigation and settlement).

Students would then work in investigating teams researching recent legislation, the history of research behind the law, and current enforcement. The teams will present a brief on their finding to the class. The teacher should prepare an initial list of possible topics for the project. An option would include video taped "news magazine" presentations. Students should provide a list of sources used in their research.

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Core Democratic Values: **Popular Sovereignty**

Voting patterns could be studied by criteria such as: age, race, education and gender. A good historical case is the Lincoln -Douglas debate regarding the extension of slavery. A related issue is the problem of redistricting congressional boundaries along more equitable lines for minorities. A statistical comparison of voting in redistricted areas might provoke good discussion and debate about the impact of popular sovereignty in local areas. Another vital aspect of popular sovereignty is the constitutional recourse available to citizens when their wishes are violated by elected officials. Cases of initiative, referendum, and recall might be studied (especially those available on the local level). Discussion, debate, and writing activities should follow.

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Core Democratic Values: **Patriotism**

The class will respond to the question "My Country, Right or Wrong?" in a debate/discussion of whether patriotism and love of one's country is always blind and unconditional. To prepare for the debate, the class should consider a series of historical cases in which the actions of the American government might be questioned on moral or ethical grounds. Examples might include: Indian Removal, The Spanish American War, the My Lai massacre, use of Agent Orange, the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, the Alien and Sedition Acts, conscientious objectors, Thoreau's night in jail, etc.

The purpose of the debate is to **provoke higher level thinking about patriotism** and its connection to moral and ethical values. For example, is it possible to be both a dissenter and a patriot? What separates a patriot from a zealot? How do our traditions of individualism and free speech interface with our value for patriotism and love of country?

The activity could involve cluster groups which nominate representatives to the class debate. The debate could involve role playing of historical figures from the cases studied. Class moderators and questioners would supervise the debate. The teacher would conduct a debriefing. An essay assignment on the question would follow as a closure activity.

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Core Democratic Values: **Rule of Law**

Depending upon whether the group is a history class or a government class, several cases might prove stimulating in reaching a deep understanding of the rule of law in our constitutional system. The Watergate story with an emphasis on the documentation of President Nixon's violation of law is a classic study of how elected officials are not above the constitution. Another approach might be to look at the evolution of the rights of the accused in the Brown/ Miranda/ Gideon cases. Also, a study of the conditions of women and African Americans before and after "protective" laws might prove useful. In addition, government classes might do comparative studies of constitutions (current and historic) from other countries. The emphasis should be on close study of primary documents. Small group discussion should be followed by large group debriefing. A writing activity on a critical question might provide closure.

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Core Democratic Values: **Separation of Powers**

The class should read and review Articles I, II, and III of The Constitution. Then using the Legal Information Institute web site (<http://supct.law.cornell.edu/supct/cases/historic.htm>), students should study briefs of the Marbury v Madison (1803) and McCullough v Maryland (1819) cases to fully understand the concepts of judicial review and broad congressional authority "within the scope of the constitution." Now, the class might do an in depth study of one or more cases involving questions of the separation of power between the three branches.

Suggested cases are: President Jackson's war against The Bank of The United States(1832-36), President Roosevelt's handling of The Northern Securities Trust(1902), Plessy v Ferguson (1896) and The War Powers Act (1973). The class could be divided into four research/study groups, each taking one of the cases. The groups would prepare a brief tracing the history of the case and the constitutional issues at stake. Their presentation should also identify the resolution of the case and link the resolution to issues of separation of power.

Some key discussion topics: How might these cases be resolved today? Does the balance of power among the three branches shift over time? How do politics and social change affect the balance? Is there equilibrium among the branches or does power shift over time? What are some issues today that reveal the shifting balance? Can we trace the history of the shifting balance of power? Which of the three branches seems to be in ascendance today?

A good closure activity might be an impromptu position paper or take home essay based on some of the issues raised by the presentations and discussion.

<http://supct.law.cornell.edu/supct/cases/historic.htm>

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Core Democratic Values: **Freedom of Religion**

A good debate-discussion topic might be to address the relationship between religion and politics in American life. In what ways has religious belief shaped the political and social views of millions of American citizens? The class might undertake a comparative study of the history of recent American elections (say going back to the 1960's) to see how religious affiliation has influenced the outcome. Voting statistics indicating party loyalty, religious affiliation, financial contributions, economic status, educational level, and ethnicity could be researched. The teacher might provide a packet with historical perspective from Machiavelli to William Jennings Bryan to Madeline Murray O'Hare to the South Carolina primary race between John McCain and George W. Bush.

Class activities include a debate, small group consideration of the documents packets, and an essay taking a position on the relationship between politics and religion in America.

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Core Democratic Values: **Federalism**

After consideration of the documents, the class should be divided into two groups (Federalists vs Anti Federalists). Each group will prepare for a symposium-debate on the question of Federalism and the sharing of political power in a democracy. Students will play historical roles based on the major historical figures representing the evolution of their group's position and philosophy. Representatives from both groups will meet with the teacher to determine the 3-5 key questions that will be the focus of the symposium. Each student in both groups must prepare a role and stay in that role for the duration of the debate. The discussion will stay focused on the pre-selected questions. Each student will submit a position paper (with historical examples) representing his character's hypothetical position on the selected questions. Extensive research required

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Core Democratic Values: **Civilian Control of the Military**

After reviewing Article II, section 2 of The Constitution, the class will consider President Eisenhower's remarks in 1960 concerning the "undue influence of the military-industrial complex." The teacher should prepare a packet which includes Eisenhower's speech, remarks by military leaders like General Curtis LeMay, and other documents concerning the control and use of nuclear weapons. The focus of these documents will prepare discussion of the issue of "The Constitution in a Nuclear Age". After consideration of the documents, the class will be divided into two groups: one representing support for civilian control, the other representing the military point of view. After preparing several discussion points provided by the teacher, the class will engage in a round table discussion defending their

assigned point of view. As a supplemental case, the teacher could provide a documents packet on the 1945 decision to use atomic weapons by President Truman and the various options facing him and the military perspective at the time.

This activity may be an extended term project and could involve additional research and writing. A shorter activity would involve group discussion of the packet and questions.