



Fundamental Principles of the Bill of Rights

Lesson plan by Kali Cohn

Grade and Subject Area

9th through 12th grade social studies

Description

Students will discuss overall themes and principles present in the Bill of Rights, identify how these principles might conflict, and discuss the conflict in the context of the 1990's Chicago controversy Operation Clean Sweep.

Required Materials

Attached supplementary materials.

Time Allotted

One class period

Objectives

Students will be able to identify major conflicts in Bill of Rights principles and be able to discuss how these intersect with their lives.

Introduction/Anticipatory Set

Students will watch Star Trek Captain Kirk clip about the Constitution (Minute 0:00 to 1:35) available at URL: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3b56e0u0EgQ&feature=related>.

Activities

Teacher will lead a discussion about the fundamental rights present in the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

1. Ask students what sort of things they think of when they think about rights. Record the responses on the board in a list format.
2. Pass out copies of the Bill of Rights:
http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/bill_of_rights_transcript.html
3. Compare the rights listed to the students' list on the board.
4. Broader discussion and prompt questions:
 - a. What categories do these rights fit into?
 - b. What sort of themes connect to these ideas?
 - c. How do these themes conflict?

Through discussion, teacher should encourage students to understand major constitutional rights and themes by connecting to them to students' lives. Such themes include, but are not limited to:

- a. Privacy

- b. Security
 - c. Importance of individual rights over governmental tyranny
 - d. Trial/Due Process/Legal Procedure
 - e. Freedom of speech/press
 - f. Freedom of religion
5. Teacher should foster discussion about one of these conflicts through a current example. In an established classroom, this should be done as guided practice with students in break-out groups answering questions. With a guest lecturer, this should be done in lecture style.
- a. Possible conflicts:
 - i. Privacy v. security
 - ii. Freedom of speech/press v. security
 - iii. Importance of individual rights v. security (suspension of rights in wartime)
 - iv. Freedom of speech v. freedom of religion
 - v. Other relevant conflicts
 - b. In a Chicago classroom, Operation Clean Sweep is a relevant example for students to illustrate the privacy versus security conflict. Operation Clean Sweep was a city-wide initiative in the late 1980's-1990's to reduce gang violence by allowing warrantless police sweeps of housing projects for firearms. The initiative, which was very controversial and supported by some residents, was ruled unconstitutional by the Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division District Court in the case *Pratt v. CHA* (1994) 155 F.R.D. 177.
 - i. Explain Operation Clean Sweep through brief lecture or break students into groups and provide relevant articles (see below).
 - ii. Have students identify the major conflict. If students have broken into groups, teacher should regroup the classroom and get each group's input about the major conflict.
 - iii. Facilitate discussion about student's feelings about the conflict.
 - Which right is more important?
 - If this were happening today, which right would they hope to prevail?

Closure

Teacher should review the major principles in the Bill of Rights and the major conflicts by rewriting them on the board. Teacher should then explain that conflict between these rights is common. In daily life, students should be careful to watch when their rights are infringed upon and identify if this is because of a conflict in the rights or because of a governmental usurpation of power.

Suggested materials for Operation Clean Sweep

Clinton, William J. Statement on the District Court Decision on Chicago's Operation Clean Sweep. 7 April 1994. John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, The American Presidency Project [online]. Santa Barbara, CA: University of California (hosted), Gerhard Peters (database).
<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=49923>.

Johnson, Dirk. "Target: Gangs that Plague Housing." New York Times 20 May 1989, New York Edition: Section 1, Page 9. <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/05/20/us/target-gangs-that-plague-housing.html>.

Prud'homme, Alex. "Firearms: Chicago's Uphill Battle." Time Magazine 24 June 2001.
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,157262,00.html>.

Sileo, Chi Chi. "Gun sweeps brush off civil rights - Chicago, Illinois police raid of homes in housing projects." Insight on the News 23 May 1994.
http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1571/is_n21_v10/ai_15277311/.