

Assignment Discovery Online Curriculum THE BILL OF RIGHTS

Curriculum Focus

U.S. Government

Grade level

9-12

Duration

Two class periods

Objectives

Students will

- learn that the Internet offers extensive information about cases heard by the Supreme Court, and
- write a short activity about a Supreme Court case.

Materials

- Computer with Internet access
- Paper
- Pens, pencils

Procedures

1. Divide students into four groups and assign each group one of the following Supreme Court cases featured in the video: *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District* (1969); *Texas v. Johnson* (1989); *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966); *Board of Education of Westside Community Schools v. Mergens* (1990).
2. Review the cases with the class. Remind students that the Supreme Court can find state and other laws to be constitutional or in violation of the U.S. Bill of Rights, in which case it may overturn them.
 - **Tinker v. Des Moines** involved three public school students who were suspended from school for wearing black armbands to protest the government's policy in Vietnam.
 - **In Texas v. Johnson**, the Supreme Court held that Johnson's conviction for flag desecration was inconsistent with the First Amendment.
 - **Westside Community Schools v. Mergens** involved a student at Westside High School who sought permission to form a Christian club that would be able to meet after school at Westside like other student groups.
 - **Miranda v. Arizona** upheld safeguards that ensure that a person who has been taken into custody may not be deprived of the Fifth Amendment's privilege against self-incrimination.
3. Tell students that each group will read about one case and write a brief

summary. Direct students to the Web site www.law.cornell.edu/supct. When the Supreme Court Collection page comes up, direct them to click on "By party" in the left-hand menu column, and then scroll down and click on their case in the alphabetical case list. Once their case appears onscreen, they can read the "Syllabus" and click on icons to scroll through the document and read the court's majority and minority, or dissenting, opinions. (Note: Be prepared to assist students in understanding some of the more difficult legal writing and to help them scroll forward and backward to find majority and dissenting opinions.)

4. Ask each group to work together to write a two-paragraph summary of the Supreme Court's opinions in their case. Tell students that their summary must not reveal the court's decision.
5. Next, ask each group to write five or six multiple-choice questions about the issues behind the case. Then have each student in the group poll at least five students outside class by first having them read the two-paragraph summary of the case and then having them answer the questionnaire. Students should tabulate the results.
6. Conclude by asking each group to share with the class the summary of its Supreme Court case and the results of their poll about that case. Ask students in each group if they agreed with the court's decision. If time permits, ask the class how the Supreme Court's decision in each of these cases is relevant to their lives.

Evaluation

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

3 points: Students demonstrated a clear understanding of the Internet as a research tool; worked cooperatively to write a clear, concise summary of a Supreme Court case and multiple-choice questions; and actively participated in the class discussion on the Supreme Court's relevance to society today.

2 points: Students demonstrated some understanding of the Internet as a research tool; worked somewhat cooperatively to write a clear, concise summary of their Supreme Court case and multiple-choice questions; and took some part in the class discussion on the Supreme Court's relevancy to society today.

1 point: Students demonstrated little understanding of the Internet as a research tool; had trouble working cooperatively to write a clear, concise summary of their Supreme Court case and multiple-choice questions; participated little or not at all in the class discussion on the Supreme Court's relevance to society today.

Vocabulary

enclave

Definition: A distinct territorial, cultural, or social unit enclosed within or as if within foreign territory

Context: We often hear about an ethnic enclave, populated by people of an ethnic minority, within a country containing a different ethnic majority.

Establishment Clause

Definition: A portion of the First Amendment to the Bill of Rights that reads, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion...."

Context: The Establishment Clause of the First Amendment has been crucial in the debate over school prayer.

Miranda rights

Definition: The rights that a police officer must read to a person who is being arrested: "You have the right to remain silent and refuse to answer questions. Anything you do or say may be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to consult an attorney before speaking to the police and to have an attorney present during questioning now or in the future. If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be appointed for you before any questioning if you wish. If you decide to answer questions now without an attorney present, you will still have the right to stop answering at any time until you talk to an attorney."

Context: The Bill of Rights confers Miranda rights on everyone, even if it appears likely that a person has committed a crime.

Supreme Court

Definition: The highest judicial tribunal in a political unit, such as a nation or state

Context: The highest court in the United States, the Supreme Court has the power to decide whether laws made by federal, state, and local governments are constitutional.

totalitarianism

Definition: The political concept that the citizen should be totally subject to an absolute state authority

Context: The Supreme Court ruled that schools are not enclaves of totalitarianism.

Academic Standards

This lesson plan addresses the following standards from the National Council for the Social Studies:

- V: Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- VI: Power, Authority, and Governance

Credit

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