

Environmental Issues Lesson Plan — Todd Sautters, MEd.

Environmental Policy

Instructional Lesson Plan			
Subject	American Government	Unit	Public Policy
Lesson Topic	Environmental Policy lessons from China	Date	2019
Creator	Todd Sautters	Grade	9-12
Student Outcome(s)	We will analyze Chinese policy responding to environmental issues in order to make recommendations to American policy-makers regarding the most effective way to enforce environmental laws in the United States.		
Context for Learning			
<p>This is a lesson plan allows students to analyze the environmental laws created and enforced by the Chinese government to draw conclusions regarding how those laws might translate to the United States. The United States and China have polar opposites regarding their systems of government -- China with an effectively unitary system government and the United States with a federalist form of government. With a strong discussion of a Green New Deal within the ranks of Washington D.C., this program would increase the role of the federal government to deal with environmental issues that faces the United States. Within the 21st century, China has created tougher environmental laws to deal with its own environmental laws. What can American policy-makers learn from China to better implement environmental laws in the United States?</p> <p>This lesson is not intended to introduce these systems of government, but to illustrate their differences in comparing two countries. This lesson can also be used to illustrate potential difficulties in creating effective environmental laws in the United States.</p>			

Standards:

Ohio American Government Standards	<p>The processes of persuasion, compromise, consensus building and negotiation contribute to the resolution of conflicts and differences.</p> <p>A variety of entities within the three branches of government, at all levels, address public policy issues which arise in domestic and international affairs.</p> <p>Individuals and organizations play a role within federal, state and local governments in helping to determine public (domestic and foreign) policy.</p>
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Instructional Delivery
Opening Activities/Motivation

Video -- What is the Green New Deal? (*The Washington Post*)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OMGQoXEVE0>

This video is intended to introduce the Green New Deal as a proposal to respond to environmental problems facing the United States and the rest of the world.

As students watch the video, they should answer the following question:

1. What are the goals of the Green New Deal? (Answer: A platform to tackle climate change while stimulating the economy)

Procedure

Part 1: Systems of Government Review

Review with students the key ideas regarding system of government including:

1. Unitary System
2. Federal System
3. Confederal System

Part 2: Close Reading

Students should conduct a close reading of the following article. This should take 15-20 minutes to read individually or with a partner:

Why China's Tougher Environmental Laws Are Likely to Fail (International Policy Digest)
<https://intpolicydigest.org/2016/11/03/china-s-tougher-environmental-laws-likely-fail/>

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- **Left Column Tasks**
 - In the reading
 - Circle the purpose of the tougher environmental laws.
 - Underline consequences businesses face if they do not comply.
- **Right Column Tasks**
 - Summarize down the following in your own words:
 - The goals of the new environmental policy in China.
 - Consequences businesses face if they do not comply

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- **Left Column Tasks**
 - In the reading
 - Underline reasons the enforcement and implementation are the environmental laws are weak.
- **Right Column Tasks**
 - Based on what you underlined, write down your top recommendations to American policy-makers to ensure the enforcement and implementation of laws in the United States are not weak.

Part 3: Group Task

Students should be divided into groups of 2-3. As students work together, they should compare the examples of recommendations American policy-makers should take based on the implementation of

environmental laws by the Chinese. Based on their discussion, they should create their 3 most important recommendations for American policy-makers.

- Student answers may include, but is not limited to: ensure policy is implemented by minimal parts of the federal bureaucracy, ensure it follows principles of the Constitution, give the federal government greater oversight over local / state governments, includes ways to prevent corruption in the use of federal funds, proper funds need to be provided to ensure the enforcement of the law.

After students groups make their own lists, students should be reminded that the Chinese follow a unitary form of government, and each group should answer the following question as a group:

To what extent does a federal system of government in the United States help or hurt the chances of your recommendations meet with success?

- Student answers may see that some recommendations are hindered due the complexities created by the federal system. Simply spending money may not solve the problem. There have to be solutions in place to ensure money is spent effectively. Some problems that the Chinese face may be duplicated in the United States -- local / state corruption.

After re-evaluating their recommendations, student groups should submit ONE recommendation that can work within the United States. Students will present their recommendations to the class and other student groups can provide constructive criticism.

Assessment/Evaluation

Assessment of student learning will occur as the teacher facilitates small group and full-class discussions regarding their understanding of the environmental policy they studied.

As students come together, students should review the ways that federalism will enhance or limit the ability of government to create effective policy.

The teacher can extend student learning by allowing students to consider other examples that some groups have missed or ask probing questions to extend thoughts.

Closure

As a way to finalize the lesson, students will submit their answer to the following question:

1. What can American policy-makers learn from Chinese environmental policy to create more effective environmental laws in the United States?
 - a. Student answers should address the questions, cite evidence from the lesson, and include an explanation regarding how the evidence supports their answer.