

WELCOME

Welcome to the TEACHER EDITION of our High School Curriculum on the Death Penalty site.

The death penalty in the United States has always been a controversial issue and recent developments concerning the death penalty have once again made an appearance in the public sphere. The purpose of this curriculum is to encourage civic participation, critical thinking and the development of research skills among students utilizing a topic of current interest. This Web site and its accompanying materials are designed to assist both teachers and students in an exploration of capital punishment, arguments for and against its use, as well as issues of ethics and justice that surround it.

Teachers will find detailed lesson plans for two possible two-week units. However, teachers are encouraged to take a look at the rationales of the units and explore strategies of their own. Supplementary research materials and Internet links to a wide array of other resources are provided. The curriculum is designed for upper middle and high school students in such courses as social studies, history, civics, US Government, ethics, public speaking, and current events.

Students will find an innovative and interactive Web site that is ideally suited for classroom use involving group work, class discussions, and independent reflection. However, students doing independent projects may also use the site. The STUDENT SITE is located at deathpenaltycurriculum.org. It has the same structure and contents as this TEACHER EDITION, except the student site omits teacher overviews and unit plans.

The curriculum encourages on-line student involvement in activities that closely resemble the experiences of ordinary citizens encountering this issue. The simulations are designed so students can actively participate in democratic decision-making. For example, they can take part in a mock legislative hearing, do research using the site, and then engage in a role play offering testimony on the death penalty from multiple points of view. They also will have the opportunity to serve on a jury to decide between a life sentence and the death penalty in scenarios based on actual cases. Both units provided on the site also contain a heavy emphasis on persuasive writing and speech.

The authors of the curriculum have made every effort to ensure that the educational approach is balanced, respecting the views of all sides in this often-spirited debate. The site was principally designed by the Michigan State Communication Technology Laboratory, which has prepared a number of award-winning educational sites on other topics. Teacher educators in conjunction with practicing teachers, in the fields of social studies, history and religion, worked together to develop the curriculum. Factual content was provided by the Death Penalty Information Center, a non-profit organization that conducts research on issues related to capital punishment. The Center utilized a broad spectrum of case decisions, news accounts, books, and scholarly journals in assembling the content. Funding for the project was provided by grants from the Soros Foundation and the Columbia Foundation.

We hope you will give us your feedback after using this curriculum and/or the Web site. It will be updated periodically to reflect both developments in the death penalty and suggestions for

better ways of engaging students in this exploration. Also, our interest is to have the Web site content be as accurate and current as possible. If, in reviewing the materials, you come across errors or out-of-date information, please call them to our attention.

Teacher Guides

We have provided two sample units plans to maximize the use of the site. Each of the units involves an extensive amount of group work, simulations, persuasive and individual essay writing, and class participation. These units have also been designed with the current NCSS (National Council for the Social Studies) Standards in mind. They are designed to be comprehensive two-week units, but elements of either unit may be used in your current plans. Alternative units, or suggestions and comments on the existing units, are encouraged.

Plugins Needed

Two sections of the Web site require the Macromedia Flash plugin: Stages in a Capital Case and Interactive U.S. Maps. The Flash plugin is built in to many browsers and can be downloaded for free from <http://www.macromedia.com/software/downloads/>

In addition to the Web site, we have created files optimized for you to print and hand out in the classroom. Click on the PRINT button to open a "PDF" file to print. There is one PDF file for each section. Opening PDF files requires the Adobe Acrobat Reader, downloadable for free from <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>

Awards and Recognition

The Death Penalty Information high school curriculum site has received numerous awards and recognitions, for educational value, high quality content, and high quality site design.

Web Design Awards include Surfer's Choice, Cool Site of the Day, and Web Author's Choice:

The site was reviewed and selected as a member of the GEM Gateway Consortium of Internet-based educational materials, received a 5 star rating from Pacific Bell's Blue Web'n Library of Educational Resources, as well as a Lightspan StudyWeb award, and Awesome Library Editor's Choice recognition as being among the top 5% of educational sites on the web, and a Busy Educator Award.

The site was selected by the American Bar Association Division for Public Education to use as the core curriculum for their 2001 annual National Online Summit for 50 participating high schools.

You can reference this site for use in a research paper as follows:

* Death Penalty Curricula for High School. 1 Nov 2001. Michigan State University Comm Tech Lab and Death Penalty Information Center. Date accessed <<http://deathpenaltycurriculum.org/student/index.html>>.

Date accessed is the date on which you viewed the site.

Contacting Us

The creators of this site can be contacted via email at curriculum@deathpenaltyinfo.org.