



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2001 Volume I: Medicine, Ethics, and Law

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## **The Connection Between Medicine, Ethics, and Law: The Right To Die**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 01.01.03  
by Jacqueline Porter

This unit was designed with 7th and 8th grade students in mind. Currently, I teach a unit on the U.S. Constitution concentrating on the Bill of Rights. The students research five basic questions. What is the Constitution? What is the Bill of Rights? What is an amendment? What is a law? Who writes the law and who enforce the law? The final product is a paper and an oral presentation.

The concept of a person's "right to die" has become very visible and a widespread social concern. Advanced medicine and its capabilities have grown endless in recent years. People are able to live longer with the assistance of medical discoveries. Once upon a time, nature alone determined when life would end. Now, the combination of medicine, doctors, families and sometimes the court makes this important decision. How long a person lives and how they live has been a question that many disagree on, for many reasons. The quality of a person's life is very major. The major problem is not only the right to die, but who has the right to decide?

With this unit I will continue this project focusing on medicine, ethics and law, as it deals with the "right to die" issue. I used the information covered in the seminar to create a packet with a variety of specific issues to introduce to the class. We will review the facts of each issue, while leaving out my personal opinions. This will give the students the opportunity to develop their own views and voice their opinions. The students will choose a specific issue that they will research. They will be required to bring out all the aspects of the issue that relate to medicine, ethics and law. They will choose a case from a list that represents their chosen issue.

(Recommended for Social Studies and Science, grades 6-8.)

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