



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
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Questions of War and Peace: Using Case Studies to Teach the History of American Foreign Policy

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Academic Setting and Background

The setting for this unit is an honors level class in United States History II (The Reconstruction Era to the present). The students are primarily eleventh graders, many who will hopefully take Advanced Placement United States History in their senior year. This is a half-year course that meets every day in a ninety-minute block. The block scheduling allows significant time each day to conduct in-depth simulations and discussion of important issues and events in the history of American foreign and diplomatic policy.

It is my experience that students do have significant interest in and strong opinions on controversial issues in American History. Nevertheless, many students complain that such issues are too often presented as a boring series of historical facts and events. Even recent seminal events such as the Vietnam War are sometimes dismissed as “ancient history” by students who were born more than a decade after America’s withdrawal from the conflict.

For the most part, textbooks have served as the primary means for studying history and world affairs at the high school level. Students read historical texts, documents, or analytical writings devoted to historical or current events. Next, they may engage in a teacher led discussion of that material, followed by a written assignment. On occasion, some type of audio-visual device, such as a film, may complement the learning experience. While this process works well for many students, particularly for those who are more academically inclined, it can also seem overly teacher-centered and dismissive of diverse learning styles.

In my experience, students want to engage in learning activities that allow them to feel that they are active participants. The teacher must therefore devise strategies that bring historical events to life in ways that students can physically and emotionally experience them. Experiential exercises such as case studies and simulations are proven strategies for engaging students because they invite active inquiry and decision-making.¹

The proposed unit will use a case-study simulation approach to examine three controversial issues in which American foreign policy makers had to make important decisions regarding questions of war and peace: the decision whether to use atomic weapons to end the Second World War against Japan; the decision whether to

commit American forces in Vietnam; the decision whether to deploy American troops to support humanitarian relief efforts in the African nation of Somalia.

This unit could stand alone in an American History course organized thematically. Alternatively, in a chronologically organized course, the individual case studies and their accompanying lessons could be used to supplement the study of the corresponding postwar time periods.

I. Unit Objectives

The overall learning objectives for this unit are three-fold:

The students will analyze the variables involved in the complex process of American foreign policy decision-making.

The students will conduct group discussions and will evaluate the specific decisions reached by American policy-makers in each case.

The students will synthesize their knowledge of each case by formulating a 3-5 page typed-written position paper.

Hopefully these objectives will help the class to begin fleshing out answers to the following guiding questions that I will pose in the unit:

How did American policy-makers define the country's vital strategic interests during the time periods encompassed by each case?

To what extent did the policy decisions reached in each case effectively support America's broader strategic interests during the time periods in question?

How did American policy-makers seek to balance the requirements of domestic politics against international strategic interests of the United States?

How did specific concerns about sustaining American causalities affect the policy decisions undertaken in each case?

What criteria would the students use for defining vital American interests?

II. Teaching Strategies

The teaching strategies employed in this unit will entail three distinct activities for each case covered by the class. First, the students will begin their examination of a particular case by reading a set of background materials that will introduce them to issues and potentially controversial questions that they need to evaluate. Student readings will be discussed in more detail below. It suffices to say, however, that the student readings should provide a general description of the historical context of each case. Moreover, the readings should provide some analysis of the actions undertaken by American policy-makers. The readings should also help students to formulate and support their own independent judgments regarding the efficacy of policy actions undertaken in each case.

Second, students utilize the contextual knowledge from the readings in discussion groups. Before dividing into their groups, students can either choose or be assigned roles in which they will approach each case from the perspective of an individual decision-maker. Roles can include: a U.S. State Department official who brings a set of diplomatic concerns to the case in question; a Pentagon official who will advocate the interests of the U.S. military; a member of the President's White House staff who will pay careful attention to the domestic political impact of potentially controversial foreign policy decisions.

Discussion groups are charged with reviewing all the information at their disposal in order to formulate a set of policy recommendations that they believe the United States should pursue. For example, in the atomic bomb case, one group might advocate against using nuclear weapons on Japan in favor an alternative strategy. Another group might conclude that using atomic weapons is after all the best course of action. Another group might advocate a demonstration of the destructive power of atomic weapons for Japanese officials. The groups can formulate their positions independently or the teacher can assign groups to devise arguments in support of particular policy position.

Discussion groups will formally present their policy proposal to the class in a format that can be tailored by the teacher. I generally utilize a parliamentary debate-style format in which teams of two to three students will debate a specific resolution that is placed before the class. A specific resolution might take the following form: *"The United States should use atomic weapons against a Japanese target to end the Pacific War."* The members of each group would have a set time limit, usually two to three minutes, for presenting their arguments for or against the resolution in alternating fashion. At the conclusion of the debate, time can be allotted for a question and answer session if so desired.

Following the discussion and debate exercises, students are required to formulate a three to five page typed-written paper that supports their own particular policy position. Each student is expected to use both the reading material supplied for the case study as well as arguments developed during class discussion/debate. The papers will be evaluated by a rubric that incorporates modified performance standards developed for the interdisciplinary segment of the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) and the Advanced Placement examination in United States History.

A CAPT/AP type rubric serves two purposes. First, the State Department of Education has indicated that all Connecticut high school students in the near future will have to meet some type of minimum CAPT performance standard as a statewide graduation requirement. Although this unit is being designed for an advanced eleventh grade class, the simple reality of urban education is that a number of my students are likely to have not met the CAPT performance standard in their tenth grade year. This unit will therefore

provide ample opportunity students to practice their CAPT skills. Second, even those students who have already met the minimum requirement need to continually practice their critical thinking and analytical writing skills. This is especially true for those students in my class that hope to move on to Advanced Placement United States History.

A sample position paper evaluation rubric is presented below:

(figure available in print form)

The Utility of Historical Cases for Simulations

Why have students revisit foreign policy decisions about which the outcomes are widely known and for which numerous post-mortems have already been done? Will students simply conclude that that the courses of action undertaken by policy-makers in the past were either correct or incorrect based upon prevailing conventional wisdom? My experience is that high school students tend to be highly critical and are quite willing to second-guess historical decisions.

III. Choosing Cases for Investigation

The proposed cases for this unit were chosen precisely because the policy decisions undertaken were controversial at the time and have remained the subject of lively historical debate ever since. Ample materials, many of them accessible to high school students, are available and provide historical context for and analysis of the actions undertaken by the United States. I will discuss the sources used in creating the unit in more detail in the next section. For the moment, however, it may be useful to briefly discuss the reasons for choosing the particular cases:

The American decision to use atomic weapons against Japan.

The decision to commit the United States to military involvement in Vietnam.

The decision to deploy American troops to support humanitarian relief efforts in Somalia.

All three proposed cases provide a snapshot of decisions taken during three distinct periods of American history in the twentieth century. The Atomic Bombings case captures policy decision-making at the moment the United States is emerging as a global superpower. The decision to escalate the conflict in Vietnam falls squarely within the postwar context of the bipolar international system marked by superpower rivalry between the United States and The Soviet Union. American military support for humanitarian relief efforts in Somalia in 1992-93 illustrates the complexities and dangers of foreign policy decision-making in the early phases of the so-called "New World Order" in international politics.

The Atomic Bombings of Japan

The decision to use atomic weapons against Japan has long raised serious moral and historical questions. In my own history classes, students routinely ask why the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were targeted? They view these cities as primarily civilian targets and often wonder why American planners did not choose more conventional military targets to avoid massive civilian casualties? In *The Decision To Use The Atomic Bomb*, Gar Alperovitz addresses this issue by providing evidence that the military significance of potential targets was of secondary importance to American planners. Indeed, the recommendations of the Target Committee concluded, “that psychological factors in the target selection were of great importance.” Two important aspects of this stated goal were, “obtaining the greatest psychological effect against Japan and making the initial use sufficiently spectacular for the importance of the weapon to be internationally recognized.”²

Demonstrating the political and military impact of atomic weapons highlights the American desire to send a clear political message to the Soviet Union and other potential adversaries that the United States possessed a new weapon that might prove the decisive factor in determining the relative balance of power in the postwar international system. Barton Bernstein’s article, *The Atomic Bombings Reconsidered*, points out that if all went as planned the bomb would serve the dual purpose of ending the war quickly and intimidating the Soviet Union.³

Issues such as targeting cities for maximum psychological effect and political signaling bring students squarely back to the moral questions surrounding the atomic bombing of Japan. Did the benefits of ending the war quickly, in terms of both American military lives saved and securing postwar strategic interests, outweigh the horrific costs of using atomic weapons against tens of thousands of non-combatants?

American Involvement in Vietnam

American involvement in Vietnam is perhaps the most complicated and the most controversial of the questions of war and peace in this unit plan. The complexity of the root causes of America’s involvement in Vietnam should not deter one from having students investigate this seminal event in our postwar history. Many of the better United States History textbooks do an excellent job of establishing the context for Vietnam through their treatment of the origins of the Cold War, containment doctrine, and the domino theory.⁴

The issues raised by our involvement in Vietnam are vitally important considering that it cost 58,000 American lives and over \$150 billion. The Vietnam War tore at the very fabric of American society and influenced the political and social attitudes of an entire generation. In *The Vietnam War: Opposing Viewpoints*, David Bender contends that as the war in Vietnam dragged on and the prospects for victory faded, Americans were forced to “question the credibility of the factors motivating their government’s involvement.”⁵ The ultimate failure of U.S. military efforts in Vietnam certainly compelled many Americans to reconsider the assumption that containment could be sustained. Alvin Bernstein of the Strategy Department at the U.S. Naval War College goes as far to proclaim that, “Vietnam not only invalidated the U.S. strategy of containment but destroyed any consensus about what sorts of military operations are legitimate.”⁶ This skepticism about the limits of U.S. power would play a key role in shaping American foreign policy throughout the decades of the 1970s and 1980s.

In the final analysis, the decision to escalate American involvement in the Vietnam conflict is worth investigating because it enables students to address the questions posed at the beginning of the unit plan such as how American policy-makers seek to balance domestic politics and strategic interests or what criteria should be used for defining vital American interests? Moreover, as Bernstein points out, the legacy of Vietnam shaped all subsequent U.S. military endeavors, not only in terms of doctrine but also in moral terms as well.

American Involvement in Somalia

The legacy of Vietnam is important for the final case presented in this unit plan, Somalia. American involvement in aiding humanitarian relief efforts in Somalia in 1992-93 was part of a major United Nations effort to stabilize that Africa nation. By 1992, inter-clan power rivalries had deteriorated into full-scale civil war. The anarchy became so pronounced that millions of Somalis were starving. Scott Peterson describes in *Me Against My Brother* how clan warlords used control of food as a political weapon against their rivals. Armed clan militias constantly harassed United Nations aid workers and international food shipments meant for starving refugees of the civil war were routinely looted.⁷

Graphic television news images brought the chaos and starvation in Somalia directly into American homes throughout 1992. These images eventually helped convince the first Bush administration, in its waning days in office, that the deployment of U.S. military forces was warranted to protect international aid workers and to ensure that food shipments reached the starving. As Mark Bowden observes in *Black Hawk Down, 1991-92* marked, “a brief heady period of post-Cold War innocence, when America and its allies felt they could sweep venal dictators and vicious tribal violence from the planet as easily and relatively bloodlessly as Saddam Hussein had been swept from Kuwait.”⁸ Bowden’s assessment is somewhat overblown, however it is true that success in the Persian Gulf War did leave many Americans, both in and out of government, with the feeling that the ghosts of Vietnam had at last been exorcised.

Unfortunately, the American experience in Somalia would demonstrate the pitfalls of involvement in complex nation-building missions in far-flung corners of the globe. The dangers and uncertainties of Somalia turned out to be as daunting those faced in Vietnam. The mission to protect food shipments quickly morphed into a wider nation-building exercise. The United Nations efforts to rebuild a political and civil infrastructure in Somalia threatened the power of the local warlords. One prominent warlord, Mohamed Farah Aidid, recognized this threat to his ambitions for uniting Somalia under his control. Aidid eventually turned against United Nations efforts in Somalia, leading to a deadly clash between his militia and U.N. forces from Pakistan. When the U.N. requested United States assistance in breaking Aidid’s power, American military forces found themselves, in Peterson’s estimation, crossing the line between humanitarian missions and choosing sides in a local battle. At that point, Peterson contends American forces “became Somalia’s chief warlord”.⁹

The results of the changing mission in Somalia were tragic for both the United States and Somalia. The ongoing mission to capture Aidid and break his power ended in the most intense firefight involving American forces since Vietnam on Sunday, October 3, 1993 in the Somali capital of Mogadishu. When the battle ended, eighteen American were dead and more than seventy badly injured. Conservative estimates put the Somali dead at least five hundred. Within one week of the battle in Mogadishu, President Clinton decided to withdrawal all U.S. forces at the earliest possible date.¹⁰ The shock of events in Somalia quickly aborted the feelings of post-Cold War optimism, described by Bowden, regarding the ability of American military power to impose a “New World Order.” One could also argue that failure in Somalia contributed directly to America’s muddled and drawn-out response to genocide in the former Yugoslavia as well as its complete inaction to genocide in Rwanda.

IV. An Overview of Sources

The criteria for selecting sources to support the unit were as follows: First they had to be accessible to high school students both in terms of readability and holding student interest. Advanced level eleventh and twelfth graders should be able to handle all of the sources I will discuss, although Alperovitz's *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb* will definitely pose a challenge to many. Teachers can opt to selectively assign specific portions of the sources, depending on time constraints and the prevailing skill levels of the class. The second criterion for selection was that each source supported my unit objectives. Specifically, I tried to choose sources that would help students to answer the guiding questions for the unit presented in section one.

The Decision to Use Atomic Weapons Against Japan

For this case I have selected three sources:

- The Atomic Bomb: A Historical Reader, NextText Series (Evanston, IL: McDougal Littell, 2000)
- Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision To Use The Atomic Bomb* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) * Revised and updated edition.
- Barton J. Bernstein, "The Atomic Bombings Reconsidered," *Foreign Affairs* , Vol. 41, No. 1 (1995)

The Atomic Bomb: A Historical Reader is a compilation of twenty five source documents and numerous photographs that offer various perspectives on the United States' development and use of the atomic bomb. It is well organized into five distinct topical sections:

- Part I: Development of the Bomb
- Part II: The Decision to Use the Bomb
- Part III: Hiroshima and Nagasaki
- Part IV: The Historical Debate
- Part V: The Response to the Bomb (poetry & essays)

Part II on the decision to use the bomb is particularly useful because it presents two primary source readings written in the summer of 1945. Harry Truman's *Diary at Potsdam, July 25, 1945* reflects upon war developments that include the prospect of using the atomic bomb against Japan. The diary entry illustrates Truman's thoughts about ending the Pacific War quickly with a minimum loss of American lives as well as his concerns about the Soviet Union and forging a postwar order that was conducive to American strategic

interests. This section also includes an post-facto article by Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson in which he explains the various reasons behind his recommendation to Truman to use the bomb. The aforementioned readings should prove useful for students to begin assessing some of the units guiding questions such as how did American policy-makers define our vital strategic interests at that time? To what extent did the policy decisions reached in each case effectively support America’s broader strategic interests during the period in question?

The Decision To Drop The Atomic Bomb by Gar Alperovitz illuminates the historical viewpoint that the United States could have ended the Pacific War in 1945 without dropping the bomb and without the need to invade the Japanese main islands at a claimed cost of 500,000 American casualties. Alperovitz presents extensive research in formulating his thesis that Truman and his confidants misrepresented what they knew about Japan’s willingness to continue the war in 1945 in order to use the bomb as bargaining chip against the Soviet Union in the immediate postwar period. Alperovitz cites a wealth of primary data to support the conclusions of revisionist historians “that clear alternatives to the bomb existed and that Truman and his advisers knew it.”¹¹

Barton Bernstein’s *The Atomic Bombings Reconsidered* synthesizes the issues and outstanding questions surrounding the decision to use the bomb in a relatively short and balanced article that presents many of the central questions that students should consider when formulating opinions about this case: Would the bomb have been used on Germany? Why were cities targeted so that large numbers of civilians would be killed? Were there alternative ways to end the war speedily and to avoid a scheduled invasion of Japan’s southernmost main island of Kyushu scheduled for November 1945?¹²

The teacher can supplement the readings for this case with good videos. The first is a Japanese film entitled *Hiroshima*. The film is essentially a docu-drama that weaves historical film footage of the effects of the bomb with a dramatic portrayal of the lives of an ordinary Japanese family from Hiroshima. The film is in Japanese with English sub-titles. The second video resource is an ABC News production entitled *Hiroshima-Why the Bomb Was Dropped* . Hosted by Peter Jennings, it presents a straightforward examination of American calculations in the decision to use the Atomic Bomb.

The Decision to Escalate American Military Involvement in Vietnam

This case will rely primarily upon two sources for students:

The Vietnam War: A Historical Reader, NextText Series (Evanston, IL: McDougal Littell, 2000)
David Bender & William Dudley, editors, *The Vietnam War: Opposing Viewpoints* (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1990)

Both sources are edited compilations of reading materials. *A Historical Reader* follows the same format as its series companion on the atomic bomb.

Part I: A War Ends, A War Begins
Part II: U.S. Soldiers At War

- Part III. The Vietnamese At War
- Part IV: Dissent At Home
- Part V: The Tet Offensive and American Withdrawal
- Part VI: The End of the War

Part I is useful for setting the context for American involvement. The first article, *Settlement at Geneva*, is an account by journalist Bernard Fall of the Geneva Conference that ended French colonial rule and divided Vietnam into two separate states. Students should also read the second piece by renowned journalist and scholar of the Vietnam War, Stanley Karnow. In *Diem Defeats His Own Best Troops*, Karnow describes how the corrupt dictatorship of South Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem had little if any support among the populace. Karnow points out that the United States realized that if the country were unified through fair elections, Diem would surely lose power to Ho Chi Minh. The United States only supported Diem because it feared the communist alternative.

The reading that follow Karnow, presents the 1962 report by Homer Bigart of the New York Times on the role and activities of U.S. military advisors to the South Vietnamese government. The article provides students with a picture of how American involvement began with training the South Vietnamese army in counter-insurgency tactics and gradually escalated into American forces conducting ground missions such as reconnaissance, troop transport and eventually full-scale combat by 1964. These readings should provide students with a sense of the United States starting down the proverbial 'slippery slope' as American foreign policy decision-makers struggle with the questions of defining U.S. vital interests in Vietnam.

The Vietnam War: Opposing Viewpoints frames the unit's guiding questions by presenting articles on opposite sides of the issues surrounding the Vietnam War. Each chapter consists of articles that address a central question for consideration.

- Chapter 1: Why Did the U.S. Become Involved in Vietnam?
- Chapter 2: Why Did U.S. Policy Fail in Vietnam?
- Chapter 3: What Are the Legacies of Vietnam?
- Chapter 4: How Has the Vietnam War Affected Veterans?
- Chapter 5: What Should U.S. Policy Toward Indochina Be Now?
- A Chronology of U.S. Involvement in Vietnam

Among the article sets I propose to have students read are:

Chapter 1

The U.S. Must Maintain its Commitments (1965) in which Senator Thomas J. Dodd argues that America must maintain its long-standing policy of aiding people who are trying to defend their liberty.

The U.S. Has No Binding Commitments (1965) in which Don R. Larson, Director of the United States Information Agency contends that the U.S. is not bound by any obligations to, and should not, defend South Vietnam.

Chapter 2

Underestimating the Enemy Caused Defeat. In this article John Mueller of the University of Rochester contends that U.S. policy in Vietnam was well conceived but that American policy-makers simply underestimated the military skill and political determination of the North Vietnamese.

Poorly Planned Strategy Caused Defeat . Norman Hannah, a former foreign service officer serving in Southeast Asia, argues that U.S. leaders were unable to decide how to conduct the war. This led to ineffective strategies in the field and to our ultimate defeat.

Each article presented in this volume begins with a set of questions to guide students reading. These questions could be used to structure class discussion or they could be assigned as written work.

Video resources for the Vietnam War are wide and varied. I would suggest the ten-part PBS video entitled *Vietnam: A Television History* . Teachers can use any section that suits their needs and the students will see excellent first-hand television news video shot by cameramen from all the major U.S. networks that covered the war.

American Involvement in Somalia

Any examination of the decision to commit American forces to protect humanitarian relief efforts in Somalia must begin by describing the conditions that existed in this African nation in the early 1990s. Scott Peterson's *Me Against My Brother* provides a vivid first-hand account of the conditions that precipitated Somalia's slide into anarchy and bloodshed. As an African correspondent for London's *Daily Telegraph* , Peterson reported on the politics and culture of Somalia both before and after the arrival of American forces. Peterson's analysis of the complex history and culture of the Somali people provides clues as to why this nation became a failed state. He also presents a chilling picture of the violence; famine, and human suffering that ultimately convinced many Americans that our nation had a moral obligation to help the people of Somalia.

Peterson is also careful to fully explain the close working relationship between the United States and the

United Nations in Somalia. The humanitarian mission was fully approved by the United Nations and American military involvement was simply intended to compliment this humanitarian mission by providing physical protection for U.N. and other international aid workers. Perhaps the most useful part of Peterson's analysis comes in chapters four and five as he describes how the United Nations and the United States were both sucked into the Somali civil war against the clan of the warlord Mohamed Farah Aidid. These chapters would be helpful for a class discussion of how U.S. forces became embroiled in clan based civil unrest. American forces were authorized to use military power in order to protect food shipments and aid workers. American forces were not however initially supposed to take sides in Somalia civil war. Teachers might want to ask students if they have opinions regarding any possible mistakes that the United Nations and American commanders made in Somalia. What might they have done differently?

Students can use Peterson's account of the conditions in Somalia to begin forming judgments as to whether events there had any connection to vital American interests. The students can also use Peterson to consider how American foreign policy-decision-makers were influenced by public opinion as the images of starving Somali children were broadcast into American homes on a nightly basis. Footage from the excellent PBS Frontline video *Ambush in Mogadishu* can supplement the reading in order to provide students with a sense of the suffering that the American public witnessed throughout 1992.

Mark Bowden in *Black Hawk Down* provides a further explication of the difficulty in determining American strategic interests in Somalia. The majority of this book is devoted to telling the stories of American soldiers who participated in the deadly firefight in Mogadishu on October 3, 1993. Bowden however does provide a good post-mortem of the Somalia action in the final two sections of the book: Epilogue and Afterword. Bowden's account of the politics behind the American decision to withdraw from Somalia after the October 3rd debacle is instructive. Students can use this account to judge how the domestic outrage over American casualties drove Somalia policy. Did the high-profile death of eighteen elite U.S. soldiers warrant a complete cessation of American support for the international relief effort?

V. Classroom Activities Sample

This section of the unit overview will present a set of specific sample lessons that will accompany the Somalia case discussed above. The lesson formats and thematic sequence used for Somalia are essentially the same for the other two cases presented in this unit plan. I have simply chosen to model only the Somalia case for the purposes of brevity.

Each case study is divided into separate classroom lessons that could be taught in single week. One week may be sufficient since I plan to teach this unit during a ninety-minute block period each day. However, it might be advisable to divide some of the lessons into multiple days. The lesson plans are divided so that students begin with broader concepts and gradually work their way towards more specific knowledge of the Somalia case.

Lesson 1. America and the New World Order

Overview and Learning Objectives

This lesson is designed to get students thinking about America's role in the world in the twenty-first century. In order to structure and clarify this topic, the teacher will begin with a class discussion that helps students to define what America's role in the world is and what many people believe that it should be in the future. The goals for this lesson are as follows:

The students will discuss and define concepts such as the "New World Order" and nation building.

The students will formulate a list of American national interests.

The students will analyze American national interests in writing.

Procedure

Prior to this lesson, the class will receive an introductory reading assignment taken from the June 29th, 2002 issue of *The Economist*, "Present at the Creation: A survey of America's world role." The reading assignment serves as the basis for a class discussion. The teacher begins by leading a class discussion in which the students are required to develop a working definition of the following key terms: "new world order"; "nation-building" and "national interests". Agreed upon definitions should be written on the board for students to copy. Next, the class should work together to formulate a list of what the students feel are America's most important national interests. Answers may be quite wide-ranging so the teacher might want to focus the discussion by specifically asking the class to focus on global issues via guiding questions such as "does the United States have an interest in promoting democracy around the world?" or "is free-trade in America's national interest?"

The class discussion should seek to generate a list of national interests that students feel are important. The students should be encouraged to discuss/explain the choices that they make. The homework assignment based on the lesson is for each student to formulate their own list of what they believe to be America's three most important national interests. The students must explain their choices in writing.

Resources

Chalk/white board

Copies of, "Present at the Creation; A survey of America's world role", by Bill Emmott, *The Economist*, June 29th, 2002. Copies can be obtained at www.economist.com

Lesson 2: Somalia, a country study

Overview and Learning Objectives

This lesson is designed to introduce students to the political and social situation that existed in Somalia during the early 1990s. The lesson will be taught over two days. The specific goals for this lesson are as follows:

The students will conduct on-line research about the nation of Somalia

The students will analyze data/information about Somalia

The students will synthesize the information gathered on a worksheet that will facilitate cooperative learning group activities.

Procedure

As part of this lesson, the class will receive a series of reading assignments taken from Scott Peterson's *Me Against My Brother*. Specifically, the students will read the following sections devoted to Somalia: "Laws of War", pp.3-17; "City of The Insane", pp.19-35.

On day one, the students will work on-line in the computer lab gathering additional information on Somalia. They will be required to use one of the following resources: "Country Background Notes" on Somalia from the U.S. Department of State homepage. www.state.gov. Have students proceed to "Countries and Regions" link. Next, students choose "Country Background Notes-Somalia". Students can also go to www.cia.gov. From the homepage proceed to the "World Factbook" link and choose Somalia.

Each website provides a wealth of relevant, fairly up-to-date political, social, and economic information on most nations. The students will use data/information on Somalia to address a set of questions that will focus their cooperative learning group discussions in which they will play the role of American government officials who must decide what actions the United States should take in Somalia. A sample copy of the proposed worksheet appears on the following page.

Resources

Computer lab

Somalia situation briefing worksheet (copy presented on next page)

Copies of readings on Somalia from *Me Against My Brother*

Country Situation Briefing Sheet: **SOMALIA**

Author:

Date:

Geography

Location:

Land Area or Size (in square km.):

People

Population:

Major Nationalities or Ethnic Groups:

Religions:

Government & Politics

Type of Government:

Chief of State:

Briefly describe some of the important history or background of the country (one paragraph)

Page 2

Country Situation Briefing Sheet: **SOMALIA**

Do you believe that the United States has any vital interests in Somalia? Please use data/information from your research to explain why or why not. (Use this page for your answer)

Lesson 3: Understanding the Mission in Somalia

Overview and Learning Objectives

The purpose of this lesson is to ensure that students have a clear understanding of the scope, purpose and procedures that constituted the United Nations humanitarian relief mission in Somalia.

Specific learning goals of the lesson:

The students will identify the key institutional and individual actors in the Somalia relief efforts.

The students will formulate a time-line of important events in the Somalia relief efforts.

The students will analyze the events and actions undertaken by the United Nations and the United States in Somalia.

Procedure

The class begins with a discussion of the readings from Peterson, "Camp or Murderers", pp. 71-92; "Bloody Monday", pp.117-135.

Based upon this discussion, the class will work together to formulate a timeline of events and to identify the important individual and institutional players. These will be posted on the board. Using this information as background, the teacher will lead a discussion that analyzes the policies implemented by the United Nations in Somalia. Important questions to consider might be: What was the specific mandate of the U.N. military forces in Somalia? How well did they carry out their mandate? What was the specific mission of American forces? What was the nature and level of cooperation between the United Nations and the United States government in Somalia? What was the reaction of the Somali people to the U.N. relief mission? Why were certain Somali leaders opposed to the U.N. relief efforts?

Resources

Chalk/whiteboard

Assigned student readings

Lesson 4: Group Discussion and Role Play

Overview and Learning Objectives

This lesson requires students to divide into groups to discuss potential policy options that the United States might undertake in Somalia. The question that each must answer is “should the United States commit American military forces to the United Nation’s approved humanitarian relief effort in Somalia?” In addition to this fundamental question, each group may make additional recommendations that would guide the conduct and scope of American involvement. For example, the groups may want to consider whether or not it would be advisable for American forces to become involved in the U.N. “nation-building” activities that were discussed in Lesson One. Alternatively, the groups could use their previous research on the situation in Somalia to suggest specific rules of engagement or other limitations on the involvement of American forces in Somalia. One group might even be assigned to play the role of United Nations personnel who are charged with presenting American policy-makers with a list of tasks and/or procedures that the U.N. would want the United States to undertake in Somalia.

Specific learning goals for the lesson:

The students will discuss and debate policy alternatives for the United States in Somalia.

The students will work in cooperative groups to analyze American interests in Somalia.

The students will work in cooperative groups to formulate a policy recommendation for action in Somalia.

Procedure

Begin the class by dividing the students into manageable working groups (3-6 people). Each group will be responsible for formulating an American response to the humanitarian crisis in Somalia. The teacher can let each group formulate a policy independently or the students can receive more structure. More structure could entail assigning each group to analyze a specific pre-determined policy alternative. The group would then be responsible for devising a set of arguments in support of that alternative. All members of the working groups should be responsible for taking notes that will be used in the following class debate. Following their discussions, each group will present their recommendations to the teacher. The groups will also consult with the teacher to determine which members will participate in the class debate presentation.

Resources

Student assigned readings

Somalia situation briefing sheet

Lesson 5: Class Presentations and Debate

Overview and Learning Objectives

This lesson will enable students to hone their presentation and debate skills. Each group will present their policy recommendations to the class and will then discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the various recommendations.

Procedure

Each group will have between ten-twelve minutes to present their policy recommendation. I would suggest that each group be encouraged to participate in the presentation. Students may use overhead transparencies, PowerPoint slides, or other visual aides. A suggested procedure would be to have one member of each group present a two-three minute overview of the groups policy recommendation. Other group members who might discuss specific points could follow the first student. Once the group has presented its recommendation, there would be a timed question and answer session. The other groups would follow in a similar fashion.

After all the groups have made their presentations, the teacher can begin the debate process. I suggest arranging student seating in a circular fashion or square pattern. A podium is placed at the head of the seating arrangement. Students will have a timed window of two-three minutes to approach to be recognized to approach the podium and comment on the strengths and weaknesses of any of the various policy recommendations. Other students would then be able to respond to these comments. Alternatively, students could make comments from their seats while the teacher stands inside the circle to moderate the debate.

All students are expected to participate in the debate in order to help them prepare to write their position paper on this issue. The students should also be encouraged to take notes that will aid them in writing their paper.

Resources

Overhead projector and/or computer projector unit
Screen
Podium or some type of presentation dais
Video: *Ambush in Mogadishu* . From PBS "Frontline" series.
Readings from *Black Hawk Down* , pp. 331-356

Culminating Activity

Each case study presented in this unit plan ends with a culminating position paper. As discussed on pages three and four, students are required to formulate a three to five page typed-written paper that supports their own particular policy position. Students must use both the reading material supplied for the case study as well as arguments developed during class discussion/debate. The papers will be evaluated based upon rubric that incorporates modified performance standards developed for the interdisciplinary segment of the Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) and the Advanced Placement examination in United States History (See sample rubric on page 4).

In the Somalia case, the question for consideration would be “should the United States work with the United Nations to send troops in order provide protection for relief efforts and aid workers in Somalia?” Students are expected to use relevant supporting information from at least three of the cases sources to support their position. In addition students should use their class discussion notes as a resource for analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of other positions presented. As a part of the culminating activity, I plan to take one final class period to show the PBS video *Ambush in Mogadishu* . The documentary video incorporates interviews with both American and Somalis who participated in the October 3, 1993 battle. It also analyzes the mistakes and problems associated with the mission from the viewpoints of American diplomats, military leaders and United Nations personnel.

NOTES

1 Teachers’ Curriculum Institute has developed an extensive set of experiential learning strategies in K-12 history and social studies for their “History Alive” activity series. Teachers can access a sampling of “History Alive” activities on the Institute’s website. <http://www.teachcti.com/methods/community.asp>

2 Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision To Use The Atomic Bomb* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), p. 524

3 Barton J. Bernstein, “The Atomic Bombings Reconsidered,” *Foreign Affairs* , Vol. 74, No. 1 (January/February 1995), p. 143

4 Examples of textbooks cited above include, John Mack Faragher, et al., *Out of Many: A History of the American People* , 3rd ed., Combined ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2000); Mary Beth Norton, et al., *A People and a Nation: A History of the United States* , 5th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998)

5 David L. Bender, ed., “Introduction: Why Did the U.S. Become Involved in Vietnam?” *The Vietnam War: Opposing Viewpoints* (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 1990), p. 14

6 Alvin J. Bernstein, “The War Weakened U.S. Military Power,” *The Vietnam War: Opposing Viewpoints* , p. 199

7 Scott Peterson, *Me Against My Brother: At War in Somalia, Sudan, and Rwanda* (New York: Routledge, 2001), pp. 37-50. The process by which food aid for the starving was constantly threatened is described by Peterson in Chapter 3, entitled “A Land Forgotten By God.”

8 Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 334

9 Scott Peterson, *Me Against My Brother* , p. xix

10 Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down* , p. 331

11 Gar Alperovitz, *The Decision To Use The Atomic Bomb* , citing a quote from J. Samuel Walker, chief historian of the U.S. Nuclear regulatory Commission, p. 7

12 Barton J. Bernstein, *The Atomic Bombings Reconsidered* , p. 135

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Resources for Classroom Use

Film:

A Bright Shining Lie . Directed by Terry George. HBO Productions. 1998.

Black Hawk Down. Directed by Ridley Scott. Columbia Tri-Star. 2001.

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