



Yale-New Haven
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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2003 Volume I: Geography through Film and Literature

How Fear Threatens Freedom, A Thematic Approach: From the Inquisition to the McCarthy Era

Guide for Curriculum Unit 03.01.10
by James P. Brochin

This unit evaluates the effects of fear on civil liberties: fear of heretics, witches, anarchists, and even of our fellow citizens. We will study the Medieval Inquisition and its persecution of heretics, the English Libertarians, the Salem Witch Trials, the Cold War, and the McCarthy Era. Our constitutional protections have been endangered numerous times since the Bill of Rights was passed. The McCarthy Era presented a dangerous, and perhaps unique, challenge to American liberty. It was becoming risky to have political opinions if these opinions varied from the strict anti-Communist line. We will study the blacklists, the House Un-American Activities Committee, the Army-McCarthy hearings, and the courage of many. The students will evaluate the effects of the events of September 11 and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq on Americans' views on civil liberties, particularly the civil liberties of non-citizens. We will make extensive use of primary source documents, literature, documentary, and feature films. Some of the films will be *The Crucible*, *The Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *Point of Order*, and *Saint Joan*.

(Recommended for History, grades 10-11.)

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