



Yale-New Haven  
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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute  
2016 Volume III: Citizenship, Identity, and Democracy

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## **Democracy and Citizenship: The Complex Case of Puerto Rico**

Guide for Curriculum Unit 16.03.03  
by Valbona Karanxha

The unit focuses on the struggles for self-identity and self-determination that continue to be problematic even a century after Puerto Rico's inclusion in the United States' territory. As a teacher of Spanish and Latin American culture, I find it very appealing that my Puerto Rican heritage students are aware of their roots and I have tried to bring that perception into the unit using a variety of lesson plans to help students understand the political status of Puerto Rico and their rights as citizens of the U.S. In this unit students will be exposed to various topics in the history of the Caribbean islands but with a focus on Puerto Rico. Students will be able to contrast the different historical epochs and their political implications. Finally, using the research as a guide, students will be able to evaluate how the outcome of the Spanish-American War changed Puerto Rico's political status from Spain's colony to a U.S. territory. After exploring what being a Commonwealth meant for the people of Puerto Rico, they will be able to explain Puerto Rico's "dual" citizenship and how it affects the Island's national identity and culture.

(Developed for Spanish 1A-1B, grades 7-8; recommended for Spanish, Social Studies, Latin American History and Culture, grades 7-12)

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