



Yale-New Haven
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Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1996 Volume I: Multiculturalism and the Law

The Impact of Culture on U.S. Law

Guide for Curriculum Unit 96.01.08
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Since the formation of this country, we have been faced with “growing pains” that result from our great diversity. In this unit, I expand on the concept of multiculturalism and the law. In previous YNHTI seminars, I explored Supreme Court cases that dealt specifically with racial prejudice such as Plessy v. Ferguson, Korematsu v. United States and Dred Scott.

This unit shows recent immigrants in direct conflict with the U.S. legal system because of cultural and/or religious practices. Emphasis is placed on practices of the Hmong of Southeast Asia, Samoans, Japanese, Cuban, African and Vietnamese immigrants. Many of these practices encourage claims of cruelty to animals, child abuse, and premeditated murder.

Through the use of mock trials, role-play and various activities, students will develop higher level thinking skills, such as synthesis and evaluation. Students will use various modalities: music, art, creative writing, etc. to explore and express their feelings concerning these cultural/legal conflicts.

While written for my seventh grade TAG students, this unit may be adapted to meet the needs of students grades 8-12.

(Recommended for Mock Trials, grades 8-12)

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