

Unit 6 Social and Political Philosophy

Unit 6 Challenges and Opportunities for Learning

Social and political philosophy can be related to what is happening in the world, in terms of revolutions or elections, etc. Students also need to grasp the difference between political science and political philosophy. The discussion of science versus philosophy of science (SE pp. 318-320) may set the stage for this distinction. Students may enjoy playing liberation theme music while working on their own ideal state during the Utopia Project (e.g., “Redemption Song,” by Bob Marley; “Wavin’ Flag,” by K’naan, etc.). Some students may enjoy designing their own T-shirt with a political philosophy slogan that they create as a creative extension. Social and political philosophy also provides opportunities to make connections with protest art in Chapter 21 (SE pp. 531-534).

Unit 6 Culminating Activity (assessment of learning)

The Unit 6 culminating activity—Utopia Project—is a framework around which students develop their knowledge and understanding of social and political philosophy. Use the ideas that follow to help your students begin working towards completion of their portion of the group’s ideal state or utopia.

Description of Culminating Activity

The culminating activity for this unit is set out in Chapter Review question 9 on SE p. 467, in Chapter 18.

Learning Goals

Students will learn various theories on the ideal state or best form of government, and consider the rights and obligations of citizens as they explore civil liberties, civic duties, and civil disobedience.

Learning Skills

The development of learning skills and work habits is an integral part of a student’s learning, (*Growing Success*, p. 10). Specifically, teaching and assessment of these learning skills—responsibility, collaboration, independent work, organization, self-regulation, and initiative—will enhance students’ success in the culminating activity, entire course, and post-secondary life.

Use BLM E Learning Skills Tracking Sheet to track students’ learning skills for this unit and for the culminating activity.

Prior Learning Needed

It is helpful to have covered Unit 3: Ethics first, and possibly, but not necessarily, Unit 4: Epistemology, as students will then be familiar with many of the thinkers encountered in this unit.

Materials Needed for Culminating Activity

- Poster board or chart paper and colour markers
- PowerPoint software and LCD projector
- BLM 16.1 Unit 6 Culminating Activity: Utopia Project

Motivational Strategies for Engaging Students

Discussing some of the more pressing current events in the world will help to make this unit relevant to students' lives and to other subjects they may be studying, such as world issues, international business, politics, or history.

Accommodations

Working in a group may prove to be too difficult for some students, although the politics of arriving at consensus is part of the hidden curriculum in this activity. You can either encourage groups to allow minority reports, where dissent from the group is expressed, or to create splinter groups or work on individual projects. Individual projects may take the form of an essay rather than a manifesto, but the individual should be careful to focus his or her efforts on a narrow range of ideas instead of trying to design everything about the ideal state (i.e., describe an ideal education or health-care system; or handle the issues of retributive justice and the treatment of prisoners). For evaluation rubrics, consider using BLM F Writing Assessment Rubric, BLM H Presentation Assessment Rubric, or BLM I Project Assessment Rubric depending on which format students use to present their ideas.

Differentiated Instruction (alternative assessment opportunities)

Alternative assignments can take a variety of forms: students could make a piece of political art and explain how it illustrates or achieves the awakening of critical consciousness (SE p. 459); students could write an explanatory essay on a political philosopher of interest; a group of students could hold a parliamentary debate between conservative and liberal (and possibly libertarian and anarchist) elements of the class on a controversial issue like capital punishment or equitable distribution of goods in society.

Assessment Criteria

See BLM 16.1 Unit 6 Culminating Activity: Utopia Project for this unit's culminating activity evaluation criteria.