

Bringing the Debate to the Classroom

**World on Trial:
French Headscarf Law**

Setting the Tone

- Serious issues deserve serious discussion...
- ...but they're still Middle and High School students!
- Discussion should be open and honest, not necessarily somber
- Encourage alternate points of view, playing "Devil's advocate"

Lesson Overview

- Introductory discussion
- Research
- Watch the episode
- In-depth discussion
- Vote!

Introductory Discussion

- You know your students
 - I hope!
- Some classes may have a lot of relevant background knowledge
- Some classes may have little knowledge or awareness of other cultures
 - Perhaps even hostility
- Guide discussion, no right or wrong answers
 - Point out even adult experts don't agree

Introductory Discussion (cont'd)

- Can use “Background” section of lesson plan
 - Author comes highly recommended!
- Use any or all suggested questions as appropriate for your class
- “Why do we have freedom of religion?”
 - What associated freedoms are required?
- “What is the difference between freedom *of* religion and freedom *from* religion?”
 - At what point does a religious activity transition from private to public?

Introductory Discussion (cont'd)

- “How much responsibility does the government have to protect citizens from oppression?”
 - Generally gets enthusiastic affirmative response, possibly tempered by privacy concerns
- “Can a person oppress herself?”
 - Who gets to decide whether an action is truly voluntary?
 - Is denying that action a different sort of oppression?

Introductory Discussion (cont'd)

- “Are there other cases in which school students are denied rights?”
 - Dress codes, inappropriate language, truancy, etc.
- “When is it justifiable to limit students rights?”
 - Safety, limit distractions, benefit society, etc.

Research

- Provides avenue for assessment
- Gives students more specific context
- Vocabulary
- Can also be adjusted based on student background
 - Even students familiar with subject can benefit from putting ideas into words

Articles

- Used with Research Guide
- “Why do Muslim Women Wear the Hijab?”
 - Offers religious perspective on issue
- “France Bans Headscarves in Schools”
 - Basic factual account of law’s passage
- “Q+A: Muslim Headscarves”
 - Combines justification and French ban

Viewing

- Watch “World on Trial”
- Exact timing depends on your schedule
- Closing arguments begin at 39 minutes

Reaction Discussion

- Give students opportunity to discuss, ask questions
- Can be a sensitive topic, keep the peace!
- Prompt as necessary:
 - Does the law specifically target Muslim girls?
 - If “Law of the Brothers” is a major concern, why regulate female behavior
 - Does the policy solve any specific problem?

Reaction Discussion (cont'd)

- Should the government also address headscarves outside of schools?
- The only jury in favor of the law was from a majority-Muslim country. Is that surprising?
 - Turkey (like France) has secularism written into constitution
- Encourage debate and discussion
- Students should do most of the talking!
- If appropriate for specific class, discussion can branch out to include other social/political regulation of male-female interaction

Vote!

- Allow students to vote at the “World on Trial” website
- Thank you!