

UW Madison
Political Science 900, Summer 2004
International Cooperation in the 21st Century

Denise Anderson
K-8 ESL Teacher
Oregon School District
Oregon, WI 53575

Curriculum Unit for 8th Grade Social Studies

A Tale of Two Constitutions: A Comparative Study of the US Constitution and the draft European Constitution

Rationale

Students in 8th grade study US history and briefly look at the major documents of the USA, including the US Constitution. For some, this seems to be seen in a vacuum: either they lack background knowledge in US history to understand the significance of events, or else they lack any different perspective from which to view them. I think a comparative study of the 2 constitutions could serve a useful purpose in two ways: by looking at the draft EU constitution, a contemporary work still in progress, students can see the complexities implicit in creating something to satisfy so many constituencies; and also they can gain more understanding of a large and influential region of the world, with many different traditions, histories and stages of economic and social development.

Goals

Students will become familiar with the articles of both Constitutions, the history of their development, key similarities and differences. They will be able to suggest reasons for those similarities and differences, and present their findings to the class.

At the end of this unit, students will have an appreciation for the difficulties of producing a written constitution which is acceptable to the signatory parties. They should understand that the US Constitution was the first of its kind, but has become a model. They should have an awareness of some of the factors which determine a constitution, such as history, present political, economic and security needs, and future vision, and that these can be similar or different for different states.

State standards addressed:

Social studies

A 8.7

A 8.11

B 8.1-10 and B 8.12

C 8 1-4 and C 8.9

D 8.1, 2 and 5

Language arts

A 8.1, A 8.3-4

B 8.1-3

C 8.1-3

D 8.1-2

E 8.1, 8.3, 8.5

F 8.1

Reference Materials needed:

American Journey textbook

EU Constitution booklets

Websites:

<http://www.library.wisc.edu/guides/EU/index.html>

<http://www.library.wisc.edu/guides/euopenow/index/html>

http://www.archives.gov/national_archives_experience/constitution.html

http://www.us.gov/Topics/Reference_Shelf.shtml#laws

Classroom materials:

KWL sheets

Maps of past/present US and Europe

Constitution table (large class copy and individual copies)

Research checklist

Assessment rubric

Examples of former students' work

Student KWL Worksheet

K = What the students **knows** **W** = **What** questions come to mind

L = What the student has **learned** based on the questions

Student Name:

Class/Hour:

Date:

Topic: US Constitution and EU Constitution

What I know	What I want to know
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
What I have learned (write here at the <u>end</u> of the unit)	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

	US Constitution	EU Constitution
When was it written?	1787	2001-2003
Who wrote it?	Constitutional Convention (39 people)	European Convention (105 people)
Why?	Set of laws for a new country And to improve Articles of Confederation	To answer questions on the future of the EU, simplify treaties, better guarantee of democracy, transparency, effectiveness of EU.
Contents	Preamble 7 Articles Amendments (Bill of Rights)	Fundamental provisions Charter of Fundamental Rights Policies Procedures for adopting and revising Constitution
Executive power	President Cabinet	President Foreign Affairs Minister European Council European Commission?
Legislative power	Congress (Senate, House)	Council of Ministers European Parliament European Commission?
Judicial power	Supreme Court	Court of Justice
Statement of citizens' rights?	Bill of Rights	Charter of Fundamental Rights
Other items		European Central Bank Court of Auditors Committee of the Regions Economic and Social Committee

Similarities – US and EU Constitutions	Differences – US and EU Constitutions
Both were written.	EU made up of different countries, US made up of colonies, later states, of one country
Both were devised by a convention.	US was shorter, but added to later. EU was very long.
Both took a long time.	EU already had many established laws and governments. US was creating a new system of government.
Both had to make compromises to keep the parties happy.	US was only in English. EU has to be in many languages.
	EU says countries can join and leave (or get ejected) US says states cannot leave
Both can be interpreted in different ways	EU has some provisions for minorities, women, protection for smaller countries US has protection for smaller states?

Student Research Process Checklist
Topic – The US and EU Constitutions - 8th grade

Student Name:

Class/Hour:

Date:

We will research the EU Constitution, compare it with the US Constitution and share our findings with our classmates in a presentation.

The focus of our research will cover the following topics:

History – timeline of Constitutions

Authors and process – who wrote it and how?

Why?

Articles

Individual Rights

Similarities and differences

The process of doing research and communicating findings

Preparatory Questions:

What do I already know ? KWL sheet

Table of main points (similar and different) for the 2 Constitutions. We will be writing some of this in class, and some on your own. This will be the basic information for your presentation.

What **main question** can I think of that will direct my research? (We will go over sample questions in class. You can use the topics listed above as ideas.)

What other questions can I think of that connect with my main question?

Identify relevant information from books and the computer. Minimum of **3 sources**.

Write a bibliography entry for each source. Place in **alphabetical** order in your presentation.

Arrange the notes from your research according to your topics and research questions.

Code the notes and quotations so they refer to your bibliography. Enclose the **first word** in your bibliography and the **page number** in **parentheses** after your note. For example: (Smith - 53). If the picture or text is from the **Internet** , place only the **first word** in the bibliography in **parentheses**.

Bring your notes and bibliography to class and prepare a presentation to share your research with your classmates.

The presentation can be in the form of a slide show, typed handout to share with the class, overhead transparencies, or freestanding display.

You will be given a **grading checklist ahead of time** so you can prepare an excellent presentation.

Practice your presentation to show you are well rehearsed and prepared.

Your grade for this project will be based on the following:

1. Research process - 50 points

Table of Information – US and EU Constitution

Table of comparisons

Quality of questions

Quality of answers/information

Bibliography – in correct format

Citations – in parentheses (Smith – 54)

Kept deadlines

2. Presentation – 50 points

Speaking clearly, logical order, everyone can hear, can answer questions

Spelling, grammar, punctuation correct

Creative, illustrations, variety of materials used

Time of 5-10 minutes

Timeline

Day 1 - Receive assignment, learn about research question process.

Days 2 and 3 Class reading, discussions – complete Table of Information (first half of class)

Locate information in library/lab, take notes and code them properly.

Day 4 – Work in computer lab. Complete Table of Comparisons

Day 5 – Work in computer lab

Day 6 – Check in with teacher for questions/progress

Day 7 - Continue working on presentation.

Day 8-10 - Begin class presentations.

Unit Vocabulary

United States of America (USA, US)

European Union (EU, UE)

Constitution

Convention

Articles

Amendments

Charter

Commission

Council

Parliament

Executive

Legislative

Judicial

Adaptations and Extensions

For ESL students and other students who may have difficulty reading some information, this unit has many visual components; maps, charts, and tables. Information can be “scaffolded” in the form of cloze exercises, partner and group work, such as jigsaw exercises. This unit can be used as a background/review on the US Constitution, which most students will know something about, but some may not.

The presentation at the end of the unit can be done to suit different learning styles and can include more or less written work and verbal presentation.

There are many areas for extending this unit for more advanced learners, such as the history of the EU, individual countries, looking at one EU agency in detail. There is also a lot of multi-lingual information available for ESL and bilingual students, and the multi-cultural aspect of the EU can offer many areas of research.

Questions to think about

1. Why did countries in Europe decide to join together to form the EU?
2. Do you think the EU can keep getting bigger and bigger? Why or why not?
3. How does the EU conduct business in so many different languages?
4. Will the EU become one country, like the USA, one day?
5. Why do some countries in Europe not want to join the EU?
6. The EU Constitution allows countries to leave the EU, and new countries to join. What happened when some states wanted to leave the USA? Do you think the same thing could happen in Europe?
7. Can you find other countries that have a written constitution? Countries that do not have one?

Assessment Rubric for 8th Grade Project – US and EU Constitutions

Excellent 90-100 points	Good 60-90 points	Fair 30-60 points	Poor Less than 30 points
<p>Research Complete both tables, find 6 or more differences and similarities, give 3 or more reasons, write KWL chart with 12 items or more 23 to 25 points</p>	<p>Research Complete both tables, find 4 or more differences and similarities, give 2 reasons, write KWL chart with 9 items or more 15-22 points</p>	<p>Research Complete part of both tables, find 2 or more differences and similarities, give 1 reason, write KWL chart with 6 items or more 8-15 points</p>	<p>Research Tables not both written, 1 difference and similarity, no reasons, KWL chart with fewer than 6 items 0-7 points</p>
<p>Research Complete bibliography, Correct spelling, punctuation, grammar, kept deadlines, asked for assistance 23 to 25 points</p>	<p>Research Bibliography attempted or partial 1-3 errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, kept deadlines or asked for assistance 15-22 points</p>	<p>Research Bibliography attempted, 3-8 errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, asked for extension to deadline, worked with assistance 8-15 points</p>	<p>Research No bibliography, more than 8 errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, missed deadlines and did not ask for assistance/extension 0-7 points</p>
<p>Presentation Knows information, can answer questions, creative, interesting, variety of materials 21 to 25 points</p>	<p>Presentation Knows most of information, can answer most questions, interesting or creative, more than one material 15-22 points</p>	<p>Presentation Knows some information, can answer one or two questions, some interest or creativity 8-15 points</p>	<p>Presentation Not familiar with information, unable to answer questions, little interest or creativity in presentation 0-7 points</p>
<p>Presentation Speaks clearly, loud enough so class can hear, good eye contact, 5-10 minutes 21 to 25 points</p>	<p>Presentation Speaks so everyone can hear, some eye contact, 5-10 minutes 15-22 points</p>	<p>Presentation Most of talk can be heard or understood, some eye contact, time close to 5-10 minutes 8-15 points</p>	<p>Presentation Difficult to hear, little eye contact, time too long or short 0-7 points</p>

CURRENT EVENTS

Here are some websites to look at for news and different perspectives of the news:

USA:

www.Msnbc.com/news

www.Cnn.com

[www.Voice of America.gov](http://www.VoiceofAmerica.gov) (gov)

www.Bignewsnetwork.com

CANADA:

www.Nwity.com

www.cbc.com

United Kingdom:

www.News.bbc.co.uk

Australia:

www.Abc.net.au

[www.Australian news.net](http://www.Australiannews.net)

India:

[India news.net](http://India.news.net)

Africa:

www.AllAfrica.com

[www.Kenya news.net](http://www.Kenya.news.net)

Middle East:

[www.Middle East online](http://www.MiddleEastonline)

www.Haaretz.com

(Israel)

Russia:

www.Russianews.net

www.Pravda.ru

International:

www.Reuters.com

Current Events

When you read a story in the papers, on the Web, or hear it on TV, ask some questions to get a better understanding.

1. What do I know about the background to this story? Location, history, what came before, etc. Does this fit in with what I already know?
2. Who is reporting it? (government, "vested interest", neutral source). Is it from a reliable source? Is it factual, or opinion?
3. Are there 2 sides to the story? What's the other perspective?
4. Is there more to this than meets the eye? (Remember, news stories on TV last a couple of minutes – look for more details somewhere else).

- * Don't believe everything you read, see or hear. Test it for accuracy, consistency, bias, and "hidden agenda".
- * Everyone has a "bias" (ie a point of view) if they think at all! "What we see depends upon where we are standing". Recognize the bias in yourself and others.
- * Usually the more information you can find about a subject, the better informed you are. Look for different considered opinions, look for factual information, look for reasoned argument, backed up with examples.
- * Most current events are not simple: there are often no easy solutions, no one answer and as many views as there are people. The more people know, the less likely they are to have quick answers.