

The European Union

Instructor: Robert Quackenbush

Students: Middle School

Objectives:

1. Students will compare the structures and content of the United States Constitution against the draft of the European Union Constitution
2. Students will consider various perspectives on the formation of a constitution
3. Students will use the Internet to research the EU Constitution

Materials:

1. At least a dozen computers with reliable Internet access for at least two days of research.
2. Pens, paper, etc. for taking notes and organizing outlines

Introduction:

This lesson should be given near the end of a unit of the Constitution of the United States, perhaps immediately following the lessons covering the Constitutional Convention, etc. Students should already understand how different states' particular interests shaped the compromises that comprise the Constitution. The purpose of this lesson is to relate current events to a similar process that occurred in the United States over 200 years ago.

Student Groups:

Prior to entering the computer lab for the first day of this lesson, students will be assigned both an American state and a European nation whom the student will represent in a mock Constitution Convention. Students should receive a state and a nation with comparable size, power, and economies within the political unit. For example, a student could be assigned to NY and the United Kingdom, to Pennsylvania and Germany, to Virginia and France, to Rhode Island and Serbia, etc.

Procedures:

1. Before entering the computer lab on the first day of the lesson, students should construct a two-column chart. One side of the chart should be labeled with the American state and the other side with the European nation assigned to the student. The side for the American state should already have the information filled out before entering the computer lab. An example of the chart can be found here ([LINK](#)).
2. For about two days, students should work in a computer lab researching the views of their particular European nation and their interests in the formation of the EU constitution. Several useful websites are listed at the end of this lesson plan.
3. Students should fill in the information asked for in the graphic organizer, such as their state/nation's view on taxation, foreign policy, the executive branch, the

judicial branch, etc., and their importance to the formation of a constitution. These two days in the computer lab are to prepare them for two days of mock Constitutional Conventions.

4. After the research is completed, the first day back in the class will be a re-enactment/mock Constitutional Convention of 1787 with each student assuming the role of a representative from their state. The goal of the convention is for the students (and their states) to debate and come to a compromise on the issues listed on the graphic organizer. Hopefully, their compromises turn out to be similar to the actual Constitution of the United States.
5. The next class day will include a mock constitutional convention for the European Union with each student assuming the role of their European nation. There will be twice as many EU nations (25) as American states (13), so in order to keep the debate/convention under reasonable order, only 12 or 13 nations should participate in the debate of the constitution. Students (and their nations) need to come to a compromise of the issues listed on the graphic organizer. If an extra time period permits, then the nations could attempt to find the language for an actual draft of the Constitution of the European Union.

European Union sources needed for the research

What the EU Constitution says: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2950276.stm#sl>

Excerpts from EU Draft Constitution:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/2938272.stm

The European Convention: <http://european-convention.eu.int.bivenu.e.asp?lang=EN>

Is the Blueprint Democratic?: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3006156.stm>

EU Constitution Conference: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3006156.stm>

The Future of the European Union Debate: http://europa.eu.int/futurum/index_en.htm

Evaluation:

Students will be evaluated on their graphic organizers and their performance/competence in the mock conventions.