

“We Don’t”—Why Americans should think about Canada!

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Description:

Comedian Jon Stewart (“The Daily Show”) has sometimes told a story in which a Canadian woman urged him to level with her about what Americans *really* think about Canadians. What was Stewart’s response? “We don’t”. Too often, Americans don’t think about Canada, despite the fact that our countries share the longest undefended border and most lucrative trade relationship in the world. This lesson is principally designed to get students to think about Canada and the diverse relationship it shares with the United States.

Grade Level:

Suitable for Grades 7-12 (the lesson addresses drug policy, so use your best judgment)

Subjects:

Social Studies/Current Issues

Duration:

Two or three 55-minute sessions

Goal:

The goal is for students to understand that a country’s laws and policies affect neighboring countries.

Objectives:

Students will:

- briefly describe Canadian policy regarding marijuana and the policy’s potential impact on the United States
- identify and briefly describe several actions taken by governments in the United States or Canada that have an impact on the other country
- appreciate the importance of the United States/Canada relationship

Standards:

This lesson meets the following Wash St. Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALR):

- Economics: 2.2—Explain how different economic systems produce, distribute and exchange goods and services
- Civics: 3.1—Understand how the world is organized politically and how nations interact
- Geography: 3.3—Examine cultural characteristics, transmission, diffusion and interaction

Background Information:

This lesson is primarily intended for a Current World Issues-type course. Prior to the lesson, students will have discussed basic issues related to culture, globalization and the interdependency of many countries. Students should have a basic understanding and appreciation that decisions made in one country will make an impact on other parts of the world.

Materials:

- chalk board or white board
- chalk or white board pens
- handout copies of Seattle Post-Intelligencer article (as many as needed)

Procedures:

1. Teacher should begin class discussion by writing the word CANADA up on the front board. “What comes to mind when we think about Canada?” Students will offer many examples (some of them will be humorous); teacher should write these examples up on the board. Student examples may offer the opportunity to discuss national stereotypes, as well as interconnectedness.
2. Prior experience has proven that students (especially at the high school level) will mention drugs during the discussion. If not, the teacher should introduce the topic of Canadian marijuana policies and their possible impact on the United States. Students should be given a reasonable amount of time to read the Seattle Post-Intelligencer article entitled “Legalized Pot Seems Likely Up North”; class discussion should follow.
3. What other laws and/or policies affect the relationship between neighboring countries? Working in groups of 3-4, students will identify a policy in either Canada or the United States and explain how that policy might have an impact on the other country. Teachers may allow students to select their own research topics or may assign a topic to each group (assigned topics might be a better choice for younger or less-engaged students). Give student groups time in class to discuss and research their topics, as well as some time between class sessions.
4. The next class session (or the one after), student groups will briefly present their topic and thoughts to the class. It is up to the teacher’s discretion whether or not to require anything in writing from the students. Teacher should allow time for discussion and questions after each presentation. The student presentations will hopefully provide a spring board for further discussion about Canada, globalization or other current events topics.

Possible Topics:

Topics for the student assignment may include:

- Environmental policies (pollution regulations, energy usage)
- Social policies (drug legalization, immigration, military draft)
- Economic policies (agricultural subsidies, product labeling)