

Comparing the EU and US Constitutions

Student Level: Middle School

Subject: Social Studies; World History; American History

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

Procedures:

1. 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.
2. Before 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.
3. 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.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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.

Evaluation:

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