

Title: *First Amendment I: Freedom of Religion and Speech*

Instructor: Leila Leoncavallo

Students will examine the first two freedoms of the First Amendment: religion and speech. Students will be challenged to define and interpret these freedoms and consider instances when these freedoms should be restricted. They will study several landmark First Amendment cases and debate unresolved issues. Students will discuss the importance of these freedoms in a democracy as we compare the freedoms in the United States to those in other countries.

Week One

INTRODUCTION: The Constitution and the First Amendment

Students will learn about the Constitutional Convention: how, why, where, and when the Constitution was written and its provision for our three branches of government. We will discuss the later addition of the Bill of Rights. Students will learn about the federal court system and the Supreme Court. Students will learn the basics of what the First Amendment means and how it has been interpreted by the judicial branch.

Week Two

FREEDOM OF RELIGION: The Establishment Clause

Students will examine the first freedom of the First Amendment: freedom of religion and its. Students will learn about its precursor, the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom. We will discuss the Establishment Clause and how it has been interpreted by the Supreme Court, including the issue of school prayer.

Week Three

FREEDOM OF RELIGION: The Free Exercise Clause

Students will examine the second clause concerning freedom of religion, the Free Exercise Clause. We will discuss how this clause has been interpreted by the Supreme Court. Students will compare religious freedoms in the United States with those of other countries.

Week Four

FREEDOM OF SPEECH: What is Speech?

Students will ponder the preliminary question of free speech analysis: What is speech? Students will learn that speech is more than just words that are spoken as they discuss the concept of symbolic speech. Real Supreme Court cases will be discussed.

Week Five

FREEDOM OF SPEECH: Restrictions

Students will debate the exceptions to free speech and learn when speech is NOT protected. We will discuss court cases concerning fighting words, libel, slander, and sedition. Students will contrast the concept of freedom of speech in the U.S. to the more restrictive laws in other countries.

Week Six

FREEDOM OF SPEECH: In the News

Students will discuss recent cases and issues in the news that concern the freedom of speech. Students will examine and debate unresolved issues concerning free speech. .

Week Seven

REVIEW

Students will review facts and concepts from Weeks 1-6 in an interactive wrap-up class.