Introducing Political Philosophy into the High School Curriculum: A Module Approach

Undergraduate Research Day
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With Brian Eberhard
And
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Objectives

 The participants will…

 Understand the need for higher level thinking in the high school classroom

 Be exposed to lessons that incorporate concepts of political philosophy

 Evaluate the effectiveness of these module-based lessons

A glimpse into the high school classroom today

- Student and Teacher Accountability
- Data Tracking promotes low level thinking
  - "teach to the test"
- Decline of critical thinking skills
- Students do not get to explore abstract concepts
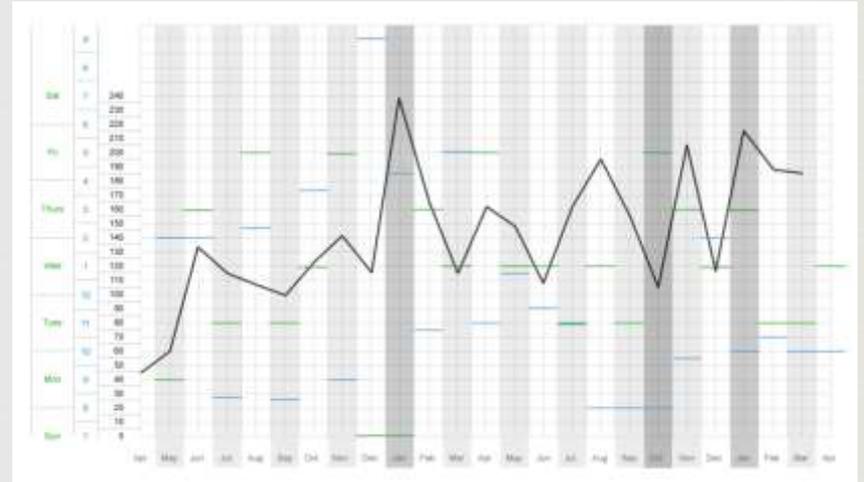
A small step forward

- My project contains 6 lessons, each exploring a different political concept
- Module-based lessons
  - Meaningful, hands on activities
  - Backed up by primary texts of famous political philosophers
- Worked in conjunction with…
  - Dr. Teena Gabrielson (Department of Political Science)
  - Brian Eberhard (Grad Student, College of Education)

Why Political Philosophy?

ଓ Interesting and engaging topics that still affect the world today

ଓ Designed for US Government, but can be worked into all social studies sources

ଓ Engaging because students get to interact with these concepts

ଓ Scaffolding knowledge

Distributive Justice

Utopia

Factions

Negative/Positive Liberty

General Will v. Will of All

Ideal Citizen v. Free Rider

Lesson 1
What is Justice?

 Essential Questions:
   What is the relationship between fairness and justice? Are they universal?
   How do we create a governmental system that enforces justice?
 Activity:
   M&M Distribution
 Goal:
   Different conceptions of justice effect the way people live their every day lives.
 Primary Source:
   Plato's Republic

Lesson 2
What is Utopia?

ೞ Essential Questions:
- ೞ What is the connection between justice and utopia?
- ೞ Which form of government is the most just?

ೞ Activity:
- ೞ Create a utopian school

ೞ Goal:
- ೞ Our conceptions of justice effect ideas about good government

ೞ Primary Source:
- ೞ Sir Thomas More's Utopia

Lesson 3
Factions

 Essential Questions:
 Should people be discouraged from the formation of associations?
 Activity:
 Students will be forced to break up into factions to experience a tyrannical majority
 Goal:
 The existence of factions causes minority groups to be ignored in the political process
 Primary Source:
 James Madison, Federalist 10
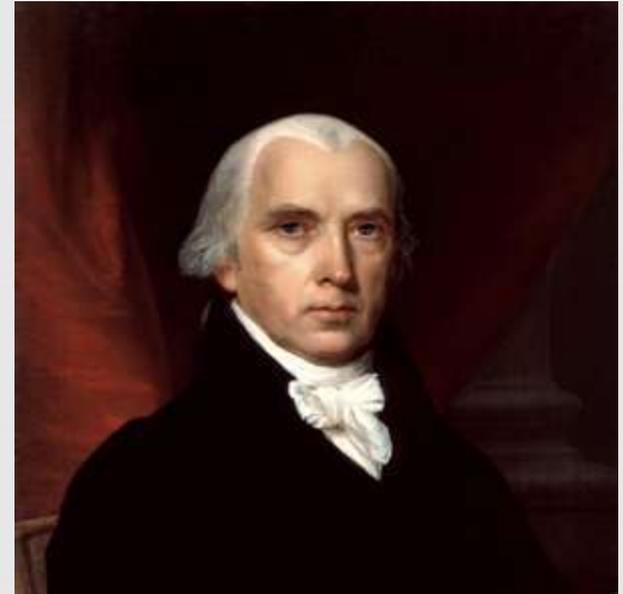
Lesson 4
Negative and Positive Liberties

- Essential Question:
  - Does the role of liberty enhance individual autonomy or does it protect citizens from governmental interference?

- Activity:
  - Analyze the development of liberty through a series of Supreme Court Case rulings

- Goal:
  - The perspective we have on liberty affects ideas concerning good government and citizenship

- Primary Source: Supreme Court Cases
  - Privacy Rights (negative liberties)
    - Griswold v. Connecticut
    - Roe v. Wade
    - Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey
  - Symbolic Speech (positive liberties)
    - US v. O'Brien
    - Tinker v. Des Moines
    - Texas v. Johnson

Lesson 5
General Will v. Will of All

- Essential Questions:
  - How accurate do representatives reflect societal views?
  - What problems emerge when populations become more diverse?
- Activity:
  - "Mock Government" to create class curriculum
- Goal:
  - As a population becomes more diverse, the general will and will of all become more difficult to align
- Primary Source:
  - Rousseau, On the Social Contract

Lesson 6
Ideal Citizen v. Free Rider

- Essential Questions:
  - Why do we have free riders and how do we minimize their negative affects?
  - How do we, as Americans, perceive ideal citizenship?
- Activity:
  - Create a class identity
- Goal:
  - Currently, in a democracy, our level of citizenship does not equate with the effort we put in, thus encouraging lazy citizens
- Primary Source:
  - Rousseau, On the Social Contract

Findings

- Tested 3 of the 6 lessons
- Teaching and lessons can ALWAYS be improved
- Engaged students "more effectively than usual"
- Activities backed with primary sources was extremely effective
- There must be a conscious effort to promote critical thinking and analytical skills in the classroom!

"I liked this lesson because we did a fun activity and then you connected it to what we are studying."

- IB Student, Junior

Closure

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- ॐ Data tracking and student/teacher accountability has led to the need to increase critical thinking skills
- ॐ The six lessons were designed to engage students and encourage high level discussions
- ॐ By providing resources that embolden critical thinking skills, students will gain invaluable life skills