

Mississippi Freedom Summer Project June 2009

599/B Miami University/Western College

Lesson plan: Freedom Summer: Learning From the Past to Empower the Future.

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K.W. Semrad is a US History teacher in Cincinnati, Ohio. He has been teaching for over 9 years. Mr. Semrad is also interested in how human beings create collective and systemic change throughout the history of the world. The Mississippi Freedom Summer Project was instrumental in creating that positive change our world so desperately needs.

Walnut Hills High School

This lesson is to be incorporated into the 10<sup>th</sup> grade US History curriculum.

Background: What became known simply as the Movement began with two pro-active struggles for change-the Civil Rights movement and the Student Left Movement. Both were rooted in the postwar world of the 1950s. Each contained an expressive or prefigurative strain-an effort to build and enjoy new democratic social relationships-within an instrumental or political strain aimed at transforming American society. The electric combination of expressive and instrumental strains is one main reason for the enormous energy unleashed during the decade. The two groups most synonymous with youthful Sixties activism, SNCC and SDS, were acutely affected by the tensions between these two strains. Both expressed an instinctive mistrust of authoritarian rule and hierarchy, a need for loving connection with others, and an emphasis on individual creativity and integrity. The two seminal movements of the 1960s, civil rights and the student New Left expressed a vision of democracy rooted in but distinct from prevailing political values in modern America. At their core, both movements were grounded on four primary values:

- 1) Equality, or the full inclusion of society's dispossessed;
- 2) Personal empowerment, or the liberation of each person from psychological constraints as well as social oppression
- 3) Moral politics-grounded on belief in individual growth, compassion for one's fellow human beings-indeed for all life-and the intolerance of injustice;
- 4) The central importance of community as a locus for meaningful engagement in life and politics

(Edward P. Morgan, P. 8-9)

Objectives:

- 1) Students will be able to use the curriculum to study the Civil Rights Movement and learn about the history of the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project and Ohio's role in civil rights history.
- 2) Students will incorporate the Western College archives as primary source evidence as to the depth of Freedom Summer and gain a greater context for the past.

- 3) Students will be able to comprehend and understand the social needs, represented by the college youth and the disenfranchised African American population throughout the United States, to challenge the status quo and implement civil and social justice in Mississippi and throughout our society.
- 4) Students will be able to identify the need for egalitarian political rights-as described in the US Constitution-and that they do not exclude on the basis of color.
- 5) Students will be able to express their knowledge and comprehension of the materials by completing a three page reflective essay incorporating the Western College archives.

Materials:

- 1) American Republic Since 1865 or standard US History textbook
- 2) Primary Source documents located in the Western College MFSP Archives
- 3) The 1960's Experience: Hard Lessons about Modern America by Edward P. Morgan
- 4) Video: 10 Days that Unexpectedly Changed America
- 5) Access to the internet and the Western College website for Primary source documentation
- 6) Primary Source documents from the Western College Archives
- 7) Herbert Randall Photos at the University of Southern Mississippi Archives: McCain Library and Archives
- 8) <http://www.lib.usm.edu/~archives/m351ph1a.htm>  
Box 1 Folder 5  
Box 2 Folder 7 Miami Reflections  
Box 2 Folder 19 Jane Adams  
Box 2 Folder 2 Phyllis Hoyt Civil Rights Orientation Western Campus  
'Last Summer in Mississippi" by Alice Lake  
Box 2, Folder 13 - Personal letters from Western Alumni to President Young in June and July of 1964  
Box 3, Folder 6 - "Why I went to Mississippi" by Sandra Adickes  
Box 4, Folder 2 - Charred Hulk of Car Spurs Intense Search, New Haven Register, June 24, 1964.  
[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/story/09\\_summer.html](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/story/09_summer.html)  
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=81kkJDvrUQ>

Procedure:

The lesson is meant to be covered over a 5-6 day period. Students will have been studying the Civil Rights Movement up to 1964.

Day 1) Students will have read Chapter 26 and completed all section review questions prior to the beginning of this lesson. Teacher led discussion through lecture and question and answer introducing the Mississippi Freedom Summer.

Day 2) Continue introduction through lecture-discussion and the use of visual aids. Discussion to follow on the “why” do we need social justice and universal suffrage as a part of our democracy. Explain and explore the importance of equal rights among populations, explain the theory of majority rule with minority rights. Ask the students why they believe the students at Western College felt the need to go to Mississippi and help set up schools and voter registration knowing the dangers ahead of time in doing so.

Day 3) Introduce primary source documents from the Western College Archives including diary entries, schedules, photos, descriptions of goals, major contributors, expectations, reactions from Alumni, and the media. Examine all evidence and discuss the student’s reactions. Ask the student’s if they would be willing to risk their lives for such a project. At this point the discussion should be related to political and social apathy towards social movements within the youth culture both past and present.

Day 4) Video: “June 21, 1964” episode of *10 Days that Unexpectedly Changed America* History Channel, 2006 (45 minutes).

: The murder case of Goodman, Cheney, and Schwerner.

Day 5) Reactions to the film and the social conditions of Mississippi in 1964.

Day 6) Continue discussion on the film and student reactions. Summarize the MFSP and the systemic change it helped create throughout our country and explore the student’s feelings towards self empowerment and the willingness to create social change grounded in the four principles of the two movements. Introduce the essay writing assignment.

Essay Assignment: Students are to write a three to five page essay reflecting on the MSFP and the Civil rights Movement by answering the following questions.

- 1) Why is it important for citizens to be considered equal socially and politically?
- 2) Why do you think it is necessary for personal empowerment or the liberation of each person from psychological constraints as well as social oppression?
- 3) How important is the idea of moral politics-grounded in the belief in individual growth, compassion for one’s fellow human beings-indeed for all life-and intolerance of injustice in America?
- 4) Incorporating the Western College archives Box 2, Jane Adams’s diary entry; do you feel that small organizations-grass roots organizations-have the power to change the world? Give examples of Jane Adam’s statements as proof in the belief of changing the world.
- 5) Would you be willing to be apart of the MFSP knowing the dangers those students faced in order to create change in America? Why or why not?
- 6) Describe the importance of grass-root organizations in creating or attempting to create systemic change. Give a current example of an organization or activist group in your city or school.

- 7) Do you think that the MSFP was successful in creating a more egalitarian society? Did their work move US society in the right direction according to the values of the two movements?
- 8) Finally in conclusion, what are some contemporary social justice or civil rights issues facing the United States today? Why are they important to you or the individuals involved? What are some of the movements of today and how are they similar or dissimilar to the civil rights movement? What lessons can you incorporate into these issues having learned about the MSFP and the importance of primary source research?

Evaluation:

Rubrics can be created on an individual basis

Active participation in discussions and viewing of the film

Essay completion and the incorporation of primary source documentation or citations within the body of the essay

Active research notes and bibliography

### **Ohio State Standards for Social Studies:**

\* History 9-10, Benchmark F: Identify major historical patterns in the domestic affairs of the United States during the 20th century and explain their significance.

Indicator: Grade 10, GLI 14. Analyze the origins, major developments, controversies and consequences of the civil rights movement with emphasis on: b. Changes in goals and tactics of leading civil rights advocates and organizations.

\* People in Societies 9-10, Benchmark B: Analyze the consequences of oppression, discrimination and conflict between cultures.

Indicator: Grade 10, GLI 4. Analyze the struggle for racial and gender equality and its impact on the changing status of minorities since the late 19th century.

\* Citizenship Rights and Responsibilities 9-10, Benchmark A: Analyze ways people achieve governmental change, including political action, social protest and revolution.

Indicator: Grade 10, GLI 2. Explain how civil disobedience differs from other forms of dissent and evaluate its application and consequences including: b. Civil rights movement of the 1960s.