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Making Meaning of May 4 **K-12 Teaching Plan**

Name of Educator: Megan Berry

Educator's Teaching Plan Number & Title: Project 21, "Kent State May 4 Unit"

Level of Students for Educator's Teaching Plan: 11-12 grade

Subject Area for Educator's Teaching Plan: American Government

Educator's State: Kansas

Description of Educator's Teaching Plan: As part of a human rights unit, students consider parallels between My Lai and May 4 (and possibly hear of the connection to later genocide in Cambodia). Unit concepts incl. *choices have consequences*. Students ease into study through costumed role playing and protest songs. Unit includes the pivotal Kent State Black student walkout November 1968.

This educational teaching plan was developed during Kent State University's Summer 2021 workshop titled Making Meaning of May 4: The 1970 Kent State Shootings in US History. The workshop was supported by Kent State and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant program titled *Landmarks of American History and Culture: Workshops for School Teachers*.

This teaching plan is shared to promote understanding of the Kent State shootings on May 4, 1970; enhance humanities education across the disciplines; and illustrate the meaning of May 4 for today.

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Kent State May 4 Unit Overview

Subject: American Government

To help my students make meaning of May 4, and additionally view it in the bigger context, it is my intent to fit this into my existing human rights unit that I use to conclude each year. That being said, as I write this plan I'm struggling with the many other directions I could take the content regarding the shootings, and I think all angles would be equally useful, engaging, and memorable for students. One of many things I've learned throughout the week is how connected and universal the topics tied to May 4 really are.

Currently in my Human Rights unit I start off with an introduction to human rights abuses with the precursor that this is much more than just the Holocaust. Time and time again we see these violations of basic rights throughout history. Unfortunately it's an issue humanity struggles with mightily. One of the main topics I cover is the Cambodian genocide, and the last few years have tried to go back further in explaining the anti-American sentiment Cambodians had as well as why Americans had such Southeast Asia fatigue. To accomplish this I've done a mini lesson on My Lai and the tragic events that transpired as well as how the news was received in the states.

It is after this lesson that I now plan to include content about May 4. Not only are there some parallel issues militarily between My Lai and Kent State, but May 4 is a critical event to then connect to what takes place in Cambodia in subsequent years.

Kansas - History, Government, and Social Studies Standards

1. Choices have consequences.
2. Individuals have rights and responsibilities.
5. Relationships among people, places, ideas, and environments are dynamic.

Benchmark Goals

- 1.1 The student will recognize and evaluate significant choices made by individuals, communities, states, and nations that have impacted our lives and futures.
- 1.2 The student will analyze the context under which choices are made and draw conclusions about the motivations and goals of the decision-makers.
- 1.3 The student will investigate examples of causes and consequences of particular choices and connect those choices with contemporary issues.
- 2.3 The student will investigate specific rights and responsibilities of individuals and connect those rights and responsibilities with contemporary issues.
- 5.1 The student will recognize and evaluate dynamic relationships that impact lives in communities, states, and nations.

Day 1 - This is my planned time to hook students, have some fun getting them engaged in the time period, and set the stage for the heavier content that will follow. I envision having 3 student volunteers that would be good sports to put on some “costumes” or clothing that represents the time period and groups we will be focusing on through the unit. At the end of the year, my seniors would get a real kick out of some of their peers walking back in the room dressed in bellbottoms or fatigues.

At this stage I plan to have a volunteer representative for the following groups: STUDENTS, MILITARY (both National Guard and those deployed to Vietnam), and GOVERNMENT/ LEADERSHIP. Once we get to research and looking at primary sources, the rest of the class will join these volunteers to create small groups.

While the volunteers are getting dressed, in the classroom will be playing some popular protest songs from the 60s. Students in the class will do some quick research on a list of events that had taken place in the years leading up to 1970. In all likelihood I would provide a short list of topics for students.

Once we have reconvened as a group, students will share their knowledge and we will cover some basic background leading to May 4.

Day 2

Watch the documentary *Fire in the Heartland* (or other documentary if this is not yet available). While watching, students will keep in mind the perspective of the groups they are representing.

Day 3

Day 3 will involve a discussion and debrief of student reactions to the documentary. Then each group will spend some time reading through their respective documents and preparing a summary for the rest of the class. After sharing, students will watch the Alan Canfora May 4th site tour.

(Each group will receive a set of Maps)

Government/Leadership Documents

Source 1: [Nixon Cambodia Incursion Address](#)

Source 2: Emergency Proclamation by Mayor Satrom
<https://omeka.library.kent.edu/special-collections/files/pdfs/3335.pdf>

Source 3: Letter to the Citizens of Kent by Mayor Satrom
<https://omeka.library.kent.edu/special-collections/files/pdfs/3336.pdf>

Source 4: NYT Article about Governor Rhodes

<https://www.nytimes.com/1970/05/05/archives/rhodes-urges-law-and-order-says-taft-is-soft-on-violence.html>

Not sure this is the best available source for the Rhodes comments but I wasn't finding much else within our time constraints

Military Documents

Source 1: "National Guard personnel with rifles, bayonets fixed," Kent State University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives, accessed June 23, 2021, <https://omeka.library.kent.edu/special-collections/items/show/1419>.

Source 2: "J. Ronald Snyder Oral History," Kent State University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives, accessed June 23, 2021, <https://omeka.library.kent.edu/special-collections/items/show/1582>.
<https://omeka.library.kent.edu/special-collections/items/show/1582>

Source 3:
https://www.dailyitem.com/news/snyder_county/valley-veterans-on-active-duty-confused-in-disbelief-over-kent-state-shooting/article_29a1df70-6655-538e-94e8-d35d4722cca2.html

Looking for a source here that talks about a Vietnam vet's perspective on May 4. This article works for now, but not sure it's the best one available.

Student Documents

Source 1: Commission on Kent State Violence Statements by Students
<https://omeka.library.kent.edu/special-collections/files/pdfs/6525.pdf>

Source 2: "Black Student Walkout: "You People" by Jerry M. Lewis," Kent State University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives, accessed June 23, 2021, <https://omeka.library.kent.edu/special-collections/items/show/3124>.
<https://omeka.library.kent.edu/special-collections/files/pdfs/3124.pdf>

Day 4

This class period will involve discussion that asks students to compare and contrast what happened at MyLai and Kent State. Particular focus will be placed on themes such as communication (or lack thereof), being in situations not fully understood, military training, and following orders. Additionally, the misconceptions and myths that came from the aftermath of each incident pose some interesting points of discussion.

Assessment: Using Canva (<https://www.canva.com/graphs/graphic-organizers/>), students will create a graphic organizer that visually and textually compares and contrasts the events at MyLai and Kent State.

Day 5

The last class period of this unit will tie up some of the loose ends involving the shootings at Kent State. Students will be provided information on the court cases, updates on the students who were involved, and finally spend some time going over the Scranton Commission report.

Source: Special Report The Kent State Tragedy: The President's Commission on Campus Unrest
October 1970

<https://omeka.library.kent.edu/special-collections/files/pdfs/3419.pdf>

Though the Scranton commission report seemed to place blame in a lot of places and never hold anyone fully responsible, the text is clear and easy to read, and manageable for a high school senior to analyze. I like using things students are readily able to grasp, and in particular I'd like to use the phrase from the report that claims the incident and deaths were "unnecessary, unwarranted, and inexcusable".

Assessment: To wrap up the content, students will be asked to do a small research project, where THEY are part of a Commission investigating an event. Their project is to find another event in history, or in current times, that is "**unnecessary, unwarranted, and inexcusable.**" They should approach this through a human rights lens, building off of the content we have already covered.

In addition to explaining why the event is those three characteristics and why, the expectation is to make comparisons to the shootings on May 4 as well. Format of the project is open to student preference as long as requirements are met. Rubric would be created in the future.