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

Name of Educator: Chris Elliott

Educator's Teaching Plan Number & Title: Project 24, "Kent State University May 4, 1970"

Level of Students for Educator's Teaching Plan: 9th and 11th grades

Subject Area for Educator's Teaching Plan: Social Studies

Educator's State: Indiana

Description of Educator's Teaching Plan: Includes overview of May 4, the resulting national student strike, and memorialization. Preparation for a mock trial has students review larger protest movement; KSU protests May 1–3, 1970; decisions to deploy Guard to Kent and to fire on students; testimonies from those on site May 4.

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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Elliott, Chris, Project 24, "Kent State University May 4, 1970," Making Meaning of May 4. Kent State University, accessed [add date], www.kent.edu/ehhs/making-meaning-may-4/sample-teaching-plans.

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[Two photos - Guard advancing across Commons, and Ohio Historical Marker that reads "Kent State University: May 4, 1970"]

Kent State University May 4, 1970

April 30, 1970

[Photo - Nixon announces US invasion of Cambodia]

- April 30, 1970 – Nixon announced US troops had invaded **Cambodia** to clear out **Vietcong**

[Photo - Nixon announces US invasion of Cambodia]

- Nixon claimed his actions were in defense of Cambodia against the Vietcong
 - Cost Nixon political support – Congress angry that he did not consult them → repealed the Tonkin Resolution, Nixon no longer in charge of Vietnam policies
-
- May 1970 - due to the My Lai Massacre and the invasion of Cambodia, college students across the nation burst out in protest → **1.5M** students on over **1,200** campuses

May 1, 1970

[Photo - Demonstration featuring symbolic burial of the US Constitution]

May 2, 1970

[Two photos - ROTC building burning and destroyed]

[Photo - Panoramic view of student sit-in protest following the shootings on May 4, 1970]

May 3, 1970

[Two photos - Governor James Rhodes at microphone, and guardsmen assembling on the Commons prior to advancing toward students]

“We’re going to eradicate the problem” – Ohio Governor Jim Rhodes

[Photo - Walkout of Kent State Black students on November 18, 1968, in protest against university reprisals for sit-in against the Oakland Police recruiting on campus]

[Three photos - Jim Russell accosted by guardsmen at May 3, 1970, sit-in and disturbance downtown evening of May 1, 1970]

May 4, 1970

[Three photos - Noon rally at the Victory Bell and Alan Canfora waving black flag prior to the shootings on May 4, 1970]

[Photo - Ohio National Guard advances toward rally on May 4, 1970]

[Photo - Students on the hill on the parking lot side of Taylor Hall; one throws back a tear gas canister, May 4, 1970]

[Photo - Guardsmen in formation begin to leave the football practice field prior to the shootings,
May 4, 1970]

[Photo - Guardsmen have turned at the Pagoda and begun firing, May 4, 1970]

[Graphic - Map of the May 4 site featuring the Guard's movements and positions of casualties]

[Three photos - During and after the shootings, students dive for cover; Joe Lewis in mid-ground gestures at the Guard; and students provide aid to John Cleary]

[Iconic photo - Jeffrey Miller after being killed by a guardsman on May 4, 1970]



**“Tin soldiers and Nixon’s coming
We’re finally on our own
This summer I hear the drumming
Four dead in O-hi-o....”**

Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young





Ask students to close eyes, imagine life in danger.

Play audio of shots fired for 13 seconds

[Photo - Guardsmen have turned at the Pagoda and begun firing, May 4, 1970]

[Image - National student strike poster from Oberlin College]

Mock US Senate Trial— determine Kent State responsibility

[Photo - A populated legislative or hearing chamber]

Students asked to dissect primary source documents provided by teacher to answer essential questions:

- Explain the causes of nationwide protests that began on the evening of April 30, 1970
- Analyze rising tensions on Kent State during early May 1970
- Evaluate Governor Rhodes decision to deploy the National Guard to Kent State on May 3, 1970
- Analyze the series of events on May 4, 1970 culminating with the National Guard's decision to open fire on Kent State students that killed four and injured nine.
- Compare and contrast testimony from protestors, National Guard soldiers, witnesses and political leaders to determine causality



www.library.kent.edu/May4

Called to testify:

Protestors, National Guardsmen, witnesses,
political leaders

[Photo - An unoccupied legislative or hearing chamber]

Explain procedures for determining which students play what roles:

Senators, Guard, protestors, eyewitnesses, elected officials, etc.

[Photo - A small group, in-person meeting]

Testimony questions:

What experiences and training does this witness have that proves whether or not they are a credible witness?

What motivation does the witness have to tell the truth ?

Describe any problems you observe with this person's testimony

A close-up photograph of a wooden gavel resting on a stack of books. The gavel is positioned diagonally across the frame, with its head in the foreground and its handle extending towards the background. The books are stacked in the background, and the entire scene is set against a warm, golden-brown background. The text "Five Senators render final decision to class" is overlaid in a white, serif font, centered over the image. A thin white horizontal line is positioned below the text.

Five Senators render
final decision to class



Who is guilty and why?

All students elaborate in two paragraph
reflective essay

Five Day Unit:

Day 1: May4 background, discuss procedures, begin research

Day 2: Research, trial prep

Day 3: Research, trial prep

Day 4: Mock trial

Day 5: Complete Mock trial, write reflection



Indiana Academic Standards:

USH.7.9 Analyze the foreign and domestic consequences of U.S. involvement in Vietnam.

USH.10.1 Cultivate historical thinking, including the ability to evaluate competing explanations for historical change

USH.10.2 Locate and analyze primary sources and secondary sources related to an event or issue of the past; discover possible limitations in various kinds of historical evidence and differing secondary opinions.

USH.10.3 Analyze multiple, unexpected, and complex causes and effects of events in the past.

USH.10.4 Assess competing historical interpretations of a particular historical moment, historical event, or historical change.

USH.10.5 Develop arguments, defended with historical evidence, which explain historical change