

1. Title and Author of Lesson Plan

Title of Lesson: The Role of Borders in the American Empire

Author Information:

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2. Subject Area: High School United States History

Keywords: united states, borders, hegemony, empire, foreign policy, history, high school,

3. Grade Level: 11-12; Time Required: 1 week (5 45-minute periods or 2-3 90-minute block periods.)

4. Instructional Objectives and Student Learning

Source: *College, Career & Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards*

Inquiry Standard: Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses (D4.1.9-12).

Content Standard: Explain how the perspectives of people in the present shape interpretations of the past (D2.His.8.9-12)

Content Standard: Analyze change and continuity in historical eras (D2.His.2.9-12).

Instructional Outcomes

Lesson 1: Given a graphic organizer, a text set, time in class, and direct instruction, eleventh and twelfth grade U.S. History students will summarize the development of the United States foreign policy towards Latin America over time and the development of the United States as an empire utilizing a continuity/change framework.

Lesson 2: Given graphic organizers, access to online resources, time in class, collaborative groups, and direct instruction, eleventh and twelfth grade U.S. History students will construct an argument about the creation and maintenance of borders in perpetuating the American empire in an in-class discussion.

5. Guiding Questions

- How has United States foreign policy towards Latin America developed over time, and whose interest does that foreign policy serve?
- How do international borders aid and inhibit the maintenance of an empire?
- Who does contemporary American foreign policy towards Latin America benefit, and who does it hurt?

6. Materials and Resources

LINKS IN DROPBOX FOLDER—10 FILES TOTAL

Please display the links as a list, followed by the following bullet points:

- Pen/pencil
- Internet access (if not possible, instructor can print out online resources and eliminate videos)
- Computer with projector

7. Introduction

The United States role in the world has changed dramatically since the country's inception. Today, the United States is unquestionably one of the great world powers and its policies and actions impact many nations and peoples around the globe.

Historians have viewed the idea of the United States as an *empire* differently over time. In discussing the historiography of American empire, the historian Paul K MacDonal writes: “the issues raised by studies of the American Empire are incredibly important. What is the nature of American power? How does American power function? Does American power enhance global stability and well-being?”

This lesson seeks to engage with MacDonal's questions through an examination of US foreign policy towards Latin America and the way that national, economic, and intellectual/cultural borders play a role in the development and maintenance of the American Empire.

8. Instructional and Lesson Activities

- Lesson 1: The Development of the American Empire (90 minutes require)

In this lesson, students will engage with the development of the American Empire by engaging with sources that discuss the turning points in American foreign policy. First, the teacher introduces the idea of the United States as an empire. Then, students engage with informational readings and primary sources that explain turning points in American foreign policy with a group.

After students have mastered their assigned foreign policy turning point, they form a jigsaw group to engage with their classmates on different parts of American foreign policy. Finally, students analyze the ways in which American foreign policy changed over time and the ways in which it stayed the same.

- Lesson 2: Perspectives on Empire (90-120 minutes required)

In this lesson, which builds on lesson 1, student adopt a perspective of people impacted by the American Empire. They use online resources and a provided map to establish their perspective's opinions on the roles of migration, economic, and intellectual/cultural

borders in the Americas. Each group will identify which borders they support and which borders they oppose, utilizing evidence from the textual resources.

Each group will prepare an opening statement in the form of a persuasive paragraph or speech in response to a discussion prompt, using evidence from the resources to support their claim. The other groups will then question the presenting group, who will respond to the questions as necessary.

9. Extend/Elaborate: Additional Learning

- To more deeply engage with the idea of the American Empire, students could view the film [*Harvest of Empire*](#) (2012). This film takes a narrative approach to explaining the root causes of Latin American migration to the United States, grounded in American policies towards Latin America.
- Students value opportunities to express their own opinions. After conducting the discussion using the assigned perspectives, students could engage in a discussion about the role of borders in the Americas based in their own opinion. Possible discussion questions could include:
 - To whom is American foreign policy geared—the people of the United States or the people of the world?
 - Should the United States feel responsible for the well-being of citizens of other nations?
 - If you believe that American foreign policy has been unjust, what would a just American foreign policy look like?
- To further develop the important historical skills of comparison and contrast, students could investigate American Cold War policy in the Middle East and explain how it is similar to American policy towards Latin America and how it differs.

10. Evaluate: Assessment

- Students should complete the Graphic Organizer on American Foreign Policy from Lesson 1. There is a teacher copy with possible responses included in the materials section of this lesson.
- Students should compose and present an effective persuasive statement that represents their assigned perspective's opinion on borders. Refer to the criteria and sample statement in "Lesson 2—Persuasive Speech Protocol".
- After the conclusion of the lesson, students can reflect on how their personal perspective changed due to the discussion.

11. Accommodations and Modifications

- If working with English Learners or students with reading challenges, the following accommodations may be appropriate:
 - Limit resources
 - Modify text
 - Pre-teach vocabulary

- Chunk readings into smaller sections
- Provide sentence starters for persuasive statement
- Develop study guides or more structured graphic organizers
- Create a word wall for important terms from the activities
- Break tasks into smaller subtasks

12. Additional Resources

The following resources support teaching and learning about the American Empire:

- Babones, Salvatore. “American Hegemony Is Here to Stay.” *The National Interest*, The Center for the National Interest, 10 June 2015, nationalinterest.org/feature/american-hegemony-here-stay-13089?page=0%2C1.
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- Immerwahr, Daniel. “How the US Has Hidden Its Empire.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 15 Feb. 2019, www.theguardian.com/news/2019/feb/15/the-us-hidden-empire-overseas-territories-united-states-guam-puerto-rico-american-samoa.
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14. Reflection

My two week experience at the NEH Summer Institute at UTEP greatly informed my development and planning of this lesson. Prior to this experience, I thought of borders as primarily international boundaries that were set in stone. My experience at UTEP helped me to develop my understanding of borders in a more complex way. My hope is that this lesson allows teachers to discuss the role of migratory, economic, and cultural borders in the Americas with their students in a way that addresses and acknowledges the complexity of borders and the question of who has agency to define and determine borders.

At a time when our national discourse is so focused on the border, I hope that these lessons help students to see that borders have real impacts on people's lives and their lived experiences.