

# First Amendment Media Project

The world today is very different than 1787 when the framers of the Constitution of the United States gathered in Philadelphia to decide upon the rules we would use to govern ourselves. The authors didn't agree back then, and many don't agree now, about the powers given to our government and rights reserved to individuals. The meaning of the words in the Constitution has also continued to evolve in the 200+ years since those delegates (all men, by the way) decided to compromise over difficult issues put their names to this hallowed document.

The First Amendment is the cornerstone of the rights guaranteed to individuals in our country. During the First Amendment Media Project (FAMP) you'll be thinking critically about whether our Constitution in general and the First Amendment in particular is up to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Or whether, as has happened in the past, our governing principles need, to use an Animas High term, "refinement." During the next 5 weeks we will be studying the U.S. Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the Supreme Court cases that have decided how those rights are interpreted.

Essential Question: Which of the rights guaranteed in the First Amendment will be most contested in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and why?

Goal: To have students apply their knowledge of the constitution to world of today and tomorrow

Outcomes: The unit will increase the student's....

- ...ability to analyze the operation of the constitution in current events, especially locally and especially as it applies to high school and college students
- ...appreciation for how rights are interconnected and sometimes conflict
- ...appreciation of how the interpretation of the constitution continues to evolve
- ...ability to forecast the most important constitutional questions for the 21<sup>st</sup> century
- ...ability to articulate a coherent political philosophy

## Why the First Amendment?

With just 45 words, two commas, and a semicolon, the framers established the freedoms of religion, press, speech, assembly, and right to petition the government to redress grievances. Unpacking these rights and the jurisprudence that supports them is vital to understanding how our society works, to participate as an informed citizen, and to practice your faith, publish your ideas, and express your opinions each and every day.

## Why Media?

Social media and media technology is the most important thing to happen to the First Amendment since our country's founding. It has revolutionized the way we interact,

gather, speak out, and influence others. During this project you will become masters of exercising your First Amendment rights through technology and social media – it is the new battleground for rights and protections.

Norms: Just because you have the right to say or do something doesn't mean you always should. Keep the following guidelines in mind:

- Be respectful – take the moral high ground in everything you do.
- Use facts and evidence – Reach beyond your own experience to support your positions
- Be opinionated, not rigid. If you can't see both sides, you probably need to do more research.

### Project Requirements: The First Amendment Portfolio

1. **The Google Doc:** I will set up a Google doc, so you can use it as a forum to express your rights, opinions, thoughts, facts, rants, and complaints about the material you'll be reviewing. We will write frequently in class. These entries will be a great place to practice analysis and synthesis and should be a nice complement to the learning journal entries you will do. I will grade your entries on completion, not content.

- Honors students will choose one 1st Amendment issue/area of focus and use your entries to provide additional insights, consider multiple arguments, and address additional points of view.

2. **The Analysis:** Pick your ten best entries and write an in-depth analysis of the First Amendment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. You will need to use evidence from the material we review in class and do some outside research. Length: 600-1,000 words. Note: Please discuss with me alternatives to a written paper if you have a specific idea that you'd like to pursue. You will need to include the same core elements that others are grappling with in their paper if you choose a non-essay option.

- Honors: 1,000-1,500 words. Expect extra scrutiny in the application of the writing rubric.

3. **The Video:** You will work in groups to produce and post a 2-5 minute video following the guidelines of Youtube's First Amendment Video Competition (1 For All). There will be no Honors differentiation for the video.

4. **Exhibition:** The final showcase for this project will be an online exhibition. We will develop a web site and poster for this purpose, and we will push our final project to the community between October 16 and October 18.

Your DP: Your DP will have to contain your full First Amendment Portfolio - doc entries, analysis, and video.