

Jennifer Rogers

Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in the United States

Contact information: jennifermrogers@yahoo.com

December 20, 2016

Lesson Plan

Unit Topic: Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in the United States

Lesson: The current laws concerning sexual and reproductive health in the United States

Rationale for the Lesson: Sexual and reproductive health have been hotly debated topics for a long time in our nation's history; the discussions surrounding these topics are often emotionally charged and difficult to approach. *Roe v. Wade*, one of our country's most famous Supreme Court cases, was decided over 40 years ago. This case protected women's rights to undergo abortions and make their own personal decisions about their reproductive health without interference of the government. However, some advocates would argue that ever since the ruling was passed down, state and local governments have been chipping away at not only women's access to abortions, but also to birth control and other resources for reproductive health. Reproductive rights, according to many prominent organizations like Amnesty International and the United Nations, are basic human rights to which every person deserves access. This lesson will help students to understand the types of laws that have been passed and are currently in place in the United States which dictate access to reproductive and sexual health resources. The historic aspect of this lesson will arm students with concrete facts and statistics which will help them form their own arguments and be able to participate in discussions on these topics. Students will be challenged to think critically about the government's attempts to restrict access to sexual and reproductive health, despite these being widely regarded as human rights. Many students might believe that these kinds of topics do not concern them; but this lesson will hopefully inform them that sexual and reproductive rights affect, and therefore should be important to, all of us.

Standards:

- NJ Standards
 - 6.3 Active Citizenship in the 21st Century
- NCSS Standards
 - Thematic Standards: Power, Authority, and Governance
- Common Core Standards
 - RH 9-10.6: Compare the point of view of two or more authors for how they treat the same or similar topics, including which details they include and emphasize in their respective accounts.

Essential Question/Guiding Question:

-What are the current laws concerning women's sexual and reproductive rights? Why do they matter?

Objectives:

- **Students will be able to:**
 - Understand that reproductive and sexual rights are human rights, some of the past and present laws in the United States which concern sexual and reproductive health, and how these laws affect them and their communities.

Lesson Opener/Anticipatory Set/Lead-In/Do Now:

Do Now (5 minutes): Once students have settled in, and before beginning the lesson, pose the question “What do you think of when someone says ‘reproductive rights’?”. Remind them that there are no wrong answers, and ask them to raise their hand and share with the class.

Step-By-Step Procedures with Time Allocations:

1.(12 minutes: 2 minutes for explanation of human rights, 10 minutes for activity) After Do Now is complete, explain to students that the topic of today’s lesson will be sexual and reproductive rights. Make sure that students are aware that the classroom is a safe space where they should feel comfortable sharing their opinions. You should begin your lesson on sexual and reproductive rights by explaining to the students what those rights actually are (Amnesty International USA is a good resource).

-First Check In Question/Activity: It is currently popular for reproductive and sexual rights advocates to align themselves with the human rights movement. So, split students up into three groups. Give each group a definition of human rights from three different organizations. Have these already pre-printed on strips of paper to hand out. The groups will read and examine the definition, analyzing the cumulative impact of the word choices. The students will compare each definition aloud; What is different in each definition? What is the same in each definition? Do they all have the same impact? Prompt them to answer the question: “Why do you think activists, some politicians, and other people feel that sexual and reproductive rights are also human rights?”

First Definition: “Basic rights and freedoms that all people are entitled to regardless of nationality, sex, national or ethnic origin, race, religion, language, or other status. Human rights include civil and political rights, such as the right to life, liberty and freedom of expression; and social, cultural and economic rights including the right to participate in culture, the right to food, and the right to work and receive an education. Human rights are protected and upheld by international and national laws and treaties.” From Amnesty International USA

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/research/human-rights-basics>

Second Definition: “Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever our nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to our human rights without discrimination. These rights are all interrelated, interdependent and indivisible. Universal human rights are often expressed and guaranteed by law, in the forms of treaties, customary international law, general principles and other sources of international law. International human rights law lays down obligations of Governments to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain acts, in order to promote and protect human rights and fundamental freedoms of individuals or groups.” From UN Office of High Commissioner

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx>

Third Definition: “Human rights are based on the principle of respect for the individual. Their fundamental assumption is that each person is a moral and rational being who deserves to be treated with dignity. They are called human rights because they are universal. Whereas nations or specialized groups enjoy specific rights that apply only to them, human rights are the rights to which everyone is entitled—no matter who they are or where they live—simply because they are alive” From United for Human Rights

<http://www.humanrights.com/what-are-human-rights/>

2. (5 minutes) Give the students a foundational understanding which will help them to have a better grasp on current laws about sexual and reproductive rights by providing a brief introductory to the history of sexual and reproductive law in the United States. Topics to cover should include the criminalization of abortion beginning in the 1900s, the eugenics movement, the federal ban on birth control and the ban’s eventual lift, *Roe v. Wade* (1971), and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992).

3.(10 minutes: 2 minutes for explanation of TRAP laws, 2 minutes for clip, 6 minutes for discussion) One of the more current set of laws which concern the topic of this lesson are the so-called “TRAP Laws”. TRAP stands for “Targeted Regulation of Abortion Providers”. The term can be used to apply to any law which seems to restrict access to abortions through the regulation of abortion clinics. This makes these laws of particular interest to students, as there are some currently in effect throughout the United States. It is important for students to see that there are multiple sides to these kinds of debates, so a brief explanation of the motivations for those who support TRAP laws and those who do not support TRAP laws should be given. After that, it might be beneficial to show a clip and/or read some articles.

-Second Check In Question/Activity: A good documentary to take a clip or clips from which highlights the point of view of those who do not support TRAP laws would clip would be the documentary “Trapped”. The documentary was shown in 2016 on PBS as a part of their Independent Lens programming. The film is directed by Dawn Porter and produced by Marilyn Ness. The film follows the difficulties faced by abortion providers in two states, Alabama and Texas, when TRAP laws are put into place. The film is available on Netflix streaming. A suggested clip would be from **28:47-30:02**, which has two of the abortion providers discussing the laws and shows a protester in front of one of the clinics. After that, it might be beneficial to show a clip or read an article from a lawmaker who supports TRAP laws, especially ones in the states featured in “Trapped”. Afterwards, ask students to compare the arguments of each side. How are they supporting their viewpoint? What kinds of points are they highlighting? If stated, where are these people getting their information from? Are they using emotions, statistics, another tactic or some combination of those?

“Trapped” can be streamed on Netflix

A press release from the governor’s office on the Women’s Health and Safety Act, which was the law in Alabama covered in “Trapped”, gives insight into the supporters’ rationale for passing the law.

Link: <http://governor.alabama.gov/newsroom/2013/04/governor-bentley-signs-womens-health-and-safety-act/>

4.(8 minutes: 3 minutes for article, 5 minutes for discussion) It may be difficult for students to comprehend or identify with these kinds of issues. So, it is important to show students that these kinds of laws and policies exist and affects their own neighborhoods. Bring up on a projector or hand out hard copies of an article that outlines the most recent budget in New Jersey. A recommendation is “Christie vetoes \$17M in welfare, women’s health programs ‘to protect taxpayers’” by Susan Livio on nj.com. Read through the article with students, highlighting what the cuts are, Christie’s comments on the cuts which are quoted, and comments from supporters and opponents. Be prepared to answer some basic questions about how the political system in the state works.

Article Link:

www.nj.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/07/christie_vetoed_17m_in_welfare_womens_health_progr.html

-Third Check In Question/Activity: Ask students, “How do you think these kinds of budget cuts affect young adults? If you don’t think they affect young adults, why not?” Remind them that they only have to share what they are comfortable with sharing, and that there are no wrong answers. If students are struggling with answering this question, a good alternative might be “How do you think these kinds of budget cuts affect people in New Jersey?”.

6.(3 minutes) In response to students’ answers to the last check in question, some statistics should be presented. These statistics and statements should be about the types of services Planned Parenthood and other health clinics offer, emphasizing that these services include many others besides abortions, like STI testing. Discuss how many clinics may have closed or downsized due to the budget cuts, how the cuts affect other kinds of health clinics, the increase in rates of STIs in certain counties, and the number of women who need state funded contraception in NJ. Statistics or statements from multiple sources may be presented, in order to possibly prompt another discussion about bias. A good source suggestion would be Planned Parenthood of New Jersey (<http://ppactionnj.org/our-issues-old/womens-health-matters-in-nj/>), although you may bring in statistics from other sources if you are worried about bias. Some of the more pertinent statistics Planned Parenthood offers are: “More than 6 in 10 patients who receive care at a family planning center consider it their primary source of health care”, “The number of clinical breast exams performed at these providers dropped from 70,506 in 2009 to 48,441 in 2012-a 31% drop over three years”, “Family planning providers also performed far fewer STI tests in 2012. From 2009-2012, the number of gonorrhea tests declines by 24%, chlamydia by 28%, syphilis by 29%, and HIV by 18%.”, “434,950 women in New Jersey were in need of publicly supported contraceptive services and supplies in 2012”.

Link for Planned Parenthood Statistics: ppactionnj.org/our-issues/womens-health-matters-in-nj/

Lesson Closure:

(2 minutes) Have the students write down something new that they learned in class and one question they still have on a piece of notebook paper. If they would like a response, ask them to write down their email or offer to be available after class or after school. Have them hand this in to you before they leave.

Materials and Equipment Needed:

- Access to computer and projector
- Netflix subscription for TRAPPED documentary
- Print outs of articles to hand out to students for activities

Assignment: One of the underlying themes of this lesson was examining bias, how people might form their bias, and where they might get their information from in order to make their arguments. If you feel it would be beneficial, it might be interesting to prompt students to write a paragraph or so response examining their own bias, where they get their information from and what influences in their life that might impact their point of view.

Assessment: (how will I evaluate student learning?) If at the beginning of the class students struggled to give answers to the Do Now, the “What I learned today” slips, will help gauge some of the possible progress in understanding made during class.

Modifications for diverse learners (how does this lesson make accommodations?)

-The activities include both written and visual components to convey information, which means they will work for both audio and visual learners. Students will be writing down some responses which might help more tactile learners. There is closed captioning on the documentary offered on Netflix which will assist any students who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

Annotated Bibliography

Landsbaum, Claire. "Obama Introduces New Rule to Prevent States From Defunding Abortion Providers".

New York Magazine/The Cut

<http://nymag.com/thecut/2016/09/obama-proposes-new-rule-to-protect-planned-parenthood.html>

Accessed October 11 2016.

Landsbaum's article also concerns President Obama's new Title X funding rule. This is a secondary option if the instructor would prefer an article from a source besides *The Huffington Post*, this piece appeared in the online version of New York Magazine. There is a basic discussion of what Title X funding provides and why some politicians are opposing the use of this money at Planned Parenthoods. There are also mentions of the hidden camera scandal which involved Planned Parenthood and their apparent illegal sales of fetuses, which has been widely discredited by a government investigative committee.

Livio, Susan K.. "Christie vetoes \$17M in welfare, women's health programs 'to protect taxpayers'".

NJ.com

www.nj.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/07/christie_vetoed_17m_in_welfare_womens_health_progr.html

Accessed October 11 2016.

This article by Susan Livio on NJ.com brings larger, national reproductive rights fight to a local level. There is an outlining of New Jersey's Governor Chris Christie's vetoing, for the seventh time, increases in monthly welfare benefits and restorations of grants for women's healthcare clinics in the state. How these grants provide assistance to New Jersey residents, and the kinds of services Planned Parenthood provide are outlined. There are quotes from a number of pertinent individuals, including the Governor himself discussing the motivations behind the veto, politicians who support him, and politicians who

oppose Governor Christie's decision. Statistics concerning how these grants and benefits would affect the state's budget are also offered.

McBride, Dorothy E. *Abortion in the United States: A Reference Handbook*. Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-CLIO, 2008. Print.

While women's healthcare is a wide ranging topic that includes not only birth control and abortion but cancer screenings and gynecological care, abortion is often at the forefront of the conversation. Dorothy McBride's book focuses on the controversy and politics surrounding abortion in the United States. The first part of the book is concerned with the history of abortion, beginning by explaining the criminalization of abortion in the 19th century, and brings the narrative forward to the current pro-life and pro-choice debate. The second half of the book is dedicated to the controversies of the past and present of laws regulating abortion access, on both state and federal levels. What makes this book truly unique and helpful are the biographies of important figures (past and present) involved in abortion rights, brief descriptions of landmark Supreme Court cases, and outlines of United States' abortion laws. Alongside the biographies and law descriptions there are statistics and popularity polls. However, the book was published in 2008 so some independent investigation might be necessary to find updated numbers.

Solinger, Rickie. *Reproductive Rights: What Everyone Needs to Know*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2013

This book by Solinger, a historian specializing in reproductive rights, is a concise but comprehensive exploration of reproductive rights in the United States. The book is divided into sections such as "The Legal Context", "Public Policy and Reproductive Politics", and "Feminism and Reproductive Politics". These sections are then subdivided into questions one might have on these particular topics, which

makes this book an incredibly helpful research tool. Solinger uses a variety of historical and governmental sources to provide a solid base for the answers to the questions posed. There is even a recommended reading section at the back of the book, which is a great resource. The tone of the book is not too dense which means its content will be easily grasped, even by people who are not entirely familiar with these topics.

TRAPPED. Directed by Dawn Porter, Trilogy Films, 2016.

Trapped is a documentary by Dawn Porter that was aired on PBS as a part of their Independent Lens series. The film focuses on Targeted Regulations of Abortion Providers (TRAP) laws in the United States and how abortion providers are trying to fight against them. The film focuses specifically on clinics and providers in the South. However, outside of the South there are about 44 states that have some kind of TRAP law(s). These laws attempt to regulate and restrict clinics abilities to provide care, especially abortions, in a number of ways. Most notably, TRAP laws demand that clinics have admitting privileges at local hospitals or require certain expensive equipment. The story is told through interviews with the people who work and run these clinics, activists, and politicians. The interviews give insight into how these laws put increasing monetary strains on clinics, and are taking away women's rights to have safe and legal abortions.

"Women's Health Matters in NJ." *Planned Parenthood Action Fund of NJ*, Planned Parenthood Action Fund of NJ, Inc., ppactionnj.org/our-issues/womens-health-matters-in-nj/. Accessed 21 Oct. 2016.

In order to help students grasp the concrete effects of blocking Title X funding to Planned Parenthood, this short list of statistics from the Planned Parenthood Action Fund of New Jersey shows what has happened in NJ as a result of the lack of funding. If you follow the link "Learn more about the impact of

cuts in your neighborhood”, you will be brought to a county by county breakdown of what has occurred since the original budget cuts and funding losses of 2010.

