

History and Citizenship 1: Birth Control Rights

Course

History and Citizenship Cycle 1

Unit/Social Phenomenon/Theme

A Social Phenomenon of the Present

Lesson and Focus

Birth control in the context of exploring Rights and Freedoms

Trigger Warning

Gendered discrimination and violence

Aim/Rationale

The purpose of this lesson is to apply knowledge acquired in the unit “Winning of Civil Rights and Freedoms” in a new context in a unit on social change. Students will examine the controversial history of birth control in Canada through multiple perspectives. Students will gain an understanding of a socio-cultural aspect of sexuality as it relates to women’s rights and the debate over birth control.

Competencies

1) Examines social phenomena from a historical perspective:

- Denial of rights, struggle, winning of rights (recognition of civil rights and freedoms)
- Birth control in the context of exploring Rights and Freedoms

2) Interprets social phenomena using the historical method:

- The impact on societies of the winning of civil rights and freedoms
- Opinions and perspectives surrounding the topic of birth control

3) Constructs their consciousness of citizenship through the study of history:

- The responsibilities of individuals in the struggle for and recognition of civil rights and freedoms
- The evolution of debates surrounding birth control including cultural, political, and environmental contexts on a local, national, and international scale.

Materials

- Computer
- Projector and speakers

Central Concepts

Freedom, Censorship, Democratization, Discrimination, Equality, Repression, Rights, Segregation, Society, Change, Continuity, Democracy, Diversity, Stakes, Territory

Hook

- Write the term “birth control” on the board and initiate a class discussion.
- Ask students why this might be a sensitive issue that is uncomfortable to discuss (as a group, with parents, with friends, with partners etc.).
- Have students come up with a working definition and describe their feelings about its use.

Development/Teaching Methods

1. Research:

- Show students “The birth control pill turns 25”:
 - <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/the-birth-control-pill-turns-25>
- Students will then read additional information from either:
 - <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/the-pill-40-years-later>
 - <http://www.cbc.ca/news/birth-control-pill-turns-50-1.908892>
 - <http://www.cpha.ca/en/programs/history/achievements/04-fp/history.aspx>
 - <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/health/reproductive-issues/> (the clips can be found under CBC digital archives-Categories-Health-Reproductive Issues - The Birth Control Pill)
- Students can then research the political climate at the time (the party in power, the party’s ideology/beliefs about women’s rights, etc.) and discuss the kind of impact political culture may have had on the introduction of the birth control pill in Canada

2. Create a factsheet:

- Working in pairs, students will create a 20-point fact sheet about the history of birth control in Canada based on their research.
- They will divide their fact sheet into 4 sections with 5 facts listed under each section.
- As well as a timeline, the fact sheet should also include some key issues around sexual/reproductive health and rights.
- Suggested (not exclusive) headings:
 - Sensitive social issues
 - Key figures in the debate
 - The Criminal Code
 - Reproductive health and rights today
- As a class, students may volunteer to share their findings, discuss the most significant/surprising pieces of information, and expand their fact sheets with all of the contributions for collection at the end of the class.

Culmination

- Return to the class definition of the term “birth control” and ask students how they would improve or expand the original definition
- Apply any changes and have students submit their evolution of the definition at the end of the class.

Performance Objectives

By the end of this lesson:

- Students will have a deeper understanding of the controversy surrounding the issue of birth control in Canadian history.
- Students will be able to define what birth control means with concrete examples to demonstrate understanding.
- Students will have practiced critical thinking skills by examining this issue from a multitude of perspectives.
- Students will understand how previous material in the course applies to further study and how it is relevant to their lives as debate surrounding birth control is prevalent.
- Examining and interpreting this social phenomenon from a historical perspective using the historical method will be addressed especially in respect to understanding an issue from many angles, questioning context, forming new interpretations, and reasoning with and defending facts with valid arguments.
- Consciousness of citizenship is developed through reflection and by understanding a historical continuum through the history of birth control and the equity/inequity that persists today.

Assessment Ideas:

Students will hand in their definitions and means of birth control as well as their factsheet at the end of the class to ensure that students positively engaged with the material and that any misconceptions can be addressed in following lessons.



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