



Most of the activities here center on editorial cartoons even though the subtitle of this section is "The Op-Ed Page." Clearly, letters to the editor, opinion articles in magazines etc. are additional appropriate sources for class content. Combining TV news coverage of the same topic depicted in an editorial cartoon, letter to the editor, etc. is another method to be considered.

A discussion of "controversy" and the creation of an environment where students will feel comfortable in expressing their opinions on controversial issues is imperative. Any type of controversial issue can be used for these activities though some are more interesting cross-culturally than others. The students' ages, backgrounds, language abilities, etc. may limit the scope of topics which can be used.

The instructor may need to take a very active part in the selection of cartoons, articles, topics, etc. which students select for these activities. It may be difficult for some students to readily determine whether they have any knowledge about or interest in a particular topic.



Functions of this assignment:

- Practice reading strategies
- Understanding the nature of controversy
- Practice debating current controversial issues
- Practice listening to and responding to opposing ideas

Assessment:

- Ability to determine the "sides" of an argument
- Ability to work with other students in order to understand all sides of an issue
- Ability to compare US attitudes on this issue to those in other countries

Assignment: Discuss Controversy

Find an article on a controversial topic and prepare a vocabulary list and a question work sheet for the students. Have students read the article and answer the questions.

Students should then write a short summary of the article. The summaries and answers to the question work sheet can be shared in small groups.

As a whole class the issue in the article can be discussed and US attitudes can be compared to attitudes in the students' native countries.



Functions of this assignment:

- Practice refining a search topic
- Practice generating a list of search terms
- Become familiar with editorial cartoons and how they portray social and political controversy or commentary

Assessment:

- Ability to access information using the WWW
- Ability to produce an accurate fact sheet

Assignment: Do some research on editorial cartoons.

- Develop a list of key concepts and search terms you could use to find information about editorial cartoons.
- Put together a brief fact sheet containing the most important or interesting information you found on editorial cartoons. You might consider:

When did they first appear? In which country?

Who were the first important cartoonists in the USA?

What were their topics? Where did their cartoons appear?

Etc.



Functions of this assignment:

- Understand the importance of current events.
- Become familiar with the use of editorial cartoons to express opinions.
- Explore the visual representations commonly used in editorial cartoons

Assessment Criteria:

- Ability to pick out common objects in a variety of cartoons
- Ability to use library resources to complete assignment

Assignment: Become familiar with editorial cartoons

- Make a list of the major news events of the day/week/month
- With your classmates, choose one of these events and discuss what you know about it. Try to understand the different points of view that people have about the event.
- Select a particular point of view and brainstorm how you would draw this event and point of view in a cartoon.
- Make a class list of the kinds of objects etc. you would use in the cartoon.

Now that you have done some thinking, compare your ideas with those of professional editorial cartoonists.

- Look at the cartoons supplied by your teacher. Notice which objects appear frequently and make a list.
- Using the handout from your instructor which lists objects common to editorial cartooning, go to the library and look at at least 50 editorial cartoons. You may use newspapers, "Newsweek," or the WWW.
- Search for each item on the list. When you find each one, cite the cartoonist and the event and list the source.



Functions of this assignment:

- Practice generating a list of search terms
- Practice in refining a search topic
- Introduction to library resources
- Introduction to copyright laws and have a concept of plagiarism
- Introduction to basic documentation
- Practice synthesizing and organizing information

Assessment:

- Ability to summarize without plagiarizing and use correct documentation
- Ability to compose a clear, persuasive letter of personal opinion

Assignment:

Find an editorial cartoon on a topic of interest to you. Use a source you did not use in Activity #2. You might even want to use the BCC "Jibsheets."

What opinion does the cartoonist support? How do you know? What do you see in the cartoon that helps you understand his/her opinion?

Research several local newspapers and read the letters to the editor expressing readers' reactions to this issue. You may have to read several papers to find what you need.

In a short paragraph, summarize the readers' arguments in favor of your topic. In a second short paragraph, summarize the readers' arguments in opposition of your topic.

Write your own letter to the editor stating and supporting your opinion on this issue. You may need to do some additional research to get sufficient information to support your views. If you do, keep a list of your sources with the correct citations.

(The letters you have read may not contain enough facts that are accurate and relevant.)



Functions of this assignment:

- Practice making inferences
- Practice in detecting errors in logic or reasoning
- Practice in discovering bias, assumptions, and values
- Introduction to documentation
- Practice synthesizing and organizing information

Assessment Criteria:

- Ability to work as a group
- Accuracy of lists of relevant, logical support

Assignment: Identifying Issues and Points of View.

Find the op-ed page in last Sunday's *Seattle Times* and the op-ed page from a large newspaper in another large US city (Chicago, NY, Los Angeles, etc.) You must choose a city different from all others in your small group. Use EBSCOhost to find these.

Make a list for each paper of all of the issues (topics) mentioned in the main editorial and any opinion essays written by professional columnists on the op-ed page. (Do not use letters to the editor or editorial cartoons.)

In a second column, briefly state the point of view that the article supports.

Next, compare the two lists.

- Are the topics the same or different in the two papers? Why or why not?
- For the topics that are the same, are the opinions the same or different?

In your small group, report your findings. As a group, choose one topic that interests all of you and for which you have two articles of opposing viewpoints.

Research your topic further using the LMC to gather information. Your group must cite 3 different sources of information.

Together, make a list of the support that each journalist uses to promote his/her opinion.

Discuss these supports.

- Is the information accurate? Where could you check if you don't know?
- Is the information relevant? Does it just sound good or does it really support the writer's argument?
- Is the information presented in a logical way? Can you easily follow the writer's argument?
- What biases do you think the journalist has? How do you know?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the argument?

After your discussion, each of you should decide which journalist did the best job and write a one-page paper explaining why. (Everyone in the group need not choose the same journalist.)