Unit 3: International Issues

Content Area: **Social Studies**
Course(s):
Time Period: **Marking Period 2**
Length: **6.5 weeks**
Status: **Published**

Summary

Current Issues is a dynamic, interactive course that examines the pressing political, social, economic, and environmental challenges shaping both domestic and global communities today. The course emphasizes civil discourse, collaboration, and problem-solving, helping students develop a deeper understanding of the complexities of modern society. To do so, students analyze and discuss contemporary events from multiple perspectives, fostering critical thinking, informed decision-making, and media literacy. By engaging with current events and trends, students build their awareness of local and global issues, preparing them to be active, informed citizens in an ever-changing world.

This unit engages students in the study of current international issues impacting the modern world. Through the lens of global citizenship, students will explore how different nations and international organizations respond to conflicts, climate change, economic inequality, human rights concerns, and international relations. Students will build skills in evaluating global news, examining issues from multiple perspectives, and developing informed opinions. This unit incorporates tools like The Juice, World A-Z, and Ethics Bowl-style scenarios to drive daily discussion and deeper inquiry. Students will apply media literacy skills and engage in civil discourse through research, debate, and collaborative projects.

The ability to make informed and reasoned decisions as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an increasingly globalized world is essential to students' post-secondary success. The skills and content of this unit and the curriculum as a whole encourage students to think critically about important issues, engage in the processes of problem solving, and develop civic competence as part of preparation for college, career, and/or civic life.

Revision Date: August 2025

Standards

- 6.3.12.CivicsPD.1: Use a variety of sources to analyze current public policies and propose and defend a position.
- 6.3.12.CivicsPI.1: Evaluate the effectiveness of major political institutions and processes.
- 6.3.12.HistoryUP.6: Use diverse sources to analyze the impact of media and propaganda.
- 9.4.12.IML.2: Evaluate digital sources for accuracy, perspective, credibility, relevance, and bias.
- 9.4.12.CI.1: Demonstrate the ability to reflect, analyze, and use creative skills and ideas.
- 9.4.12.CT.2: Explain the potential benefits of collaborating to enhance critical thinking and problem solving.
- RH.11–12.7, 8, 9 – Integrate and evaluate multiple sources in diverse formats, and assess claims,

reasoning, and evidence
- RI.PP.11–12.5 – Analyze an author's purpose and rhetoric, including how style and content convey information and advance a point of view
- RI.MF.11–12.6 / RL.MF.11–12.6 – Synthesize complex information across multiple sources and formats to develop interpretations or resolve conflicts
- RI.AA.11–12.7 – Describe and evaluate reasoning in seminal U.S. and global texts, including premises, purposes, and arguments
- RI.CT.11–12.8 / RL.CT.11–12.8 – Analyze and reflect on documents of historical or scientific significance for themes, purposes, and rhetorical features
- W.AW.11–12.1 – Write arguments on substantive topics or texts using valid reasoning and evidence (including precise claims, counterclaims, logical sequencing, tone, and coh
- W.IW.11–12.2 – Write informative/explanatory texts on complex ideas—organizing and analyzing content effectively

This unit further reflects the goals of the Holocaust Education mandate where students are able to identify and analyze applicable theories concerning human nature and behavior; understand that genocide is a consequence of prejudice and discrimination; understand that issues of moral dilemma and conscience have a profound impact on life; and understand the personal responsibility that each citizen bears to fight racism and hatred whenever and wherever it happens.

In accordance with New Jersey's Chapter 32 Diversity and Inclusion Law, this unit includes instructional materials that highlight and promote diversity, including: economic diversity, equity, inclusion, tolerance, and belonging in connection with gender and sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, disabilities, and religious tolerance.

The standards in this unit reflect a developmental progression across grade levels and make interdisciplinary connections across content areas including the humanities, technology, career readiness, cultural awareness, and global citizenship.

Essential Questions

Essential Questions:

- How do international issues impact individuals and nations around the world?
- Why is it important to consider multiple perspectives when evaluating global conflicts?
- To what extent should countries intervene in global human rights, environmental, or economic crises?
- How can young people influence international discourse?

Enduring Understandings:

- International issues are complex and interconnected, requiring global cooperation and critical evaluation.
- Understanding global perspectives promotes empathy, informed citizenship, and effective problem-solving.

Objectives

Students will know:

- The scope of current international issues (ex: conflict, poverty, migration, global health, climate change).
- The role of the UN, NGOs, and international coalitions in addressing these issues.
- How global perspectives differ and why.
- The major global issues currently affecting international communities (e.g., climate change, global health crises, migration, human rights, food insecurity, international conflict).
- The interdependence of nations in a globalized world and how actions in one region can have ripple effects worldwide.
- The influence of political, economic, and cultural factors on how countries respond to global issues.
- The impact of global challenges on marginalized or vulnerable populations across different regions.
- The role of international cooperation and conflict in shaping global responses to pressing issues.
- The ways media coverage of global events varies across regions and how this affects public understanding.
- The historical roots of certain global challenges and how they inform present-day conditions.

Students will be skilled at:

- Investigating international topics using diverse, credible sources.
- Identifying bias and point of view in international media.
- Participating in respectful debate and global discussions.
- Proposing solutions and taking action on global concerns.

- Comparing global responses to similar challenges and evaluating the effectiveness of different approaches.
- Developing and supporting claims with evidence from international sources, data sets, and case studies.
- Engaging in structured dialogue and debate on global issues with an emphasis on empathy and open-mindedness.
- Asking informed, critical questions that explore the complexity of global challenges.
- Creating presentations, infographics, or reports that communicate findings about global topics to a wider audience.
- Making connections between global issues and their local impact or relevance to students' own communities.
- Reflecting on their role as global citizens and considering ethical implications of individual and collective action.
- Collaborating across groups to examine global issues through cross-disciplinary lenses (e.g., environmental, economic, political, cultural).

Learning Plan

This unit empowers students to explore pressing global challenges such as war, climate change, humanitarian crises, global inequality, and international diplomacy. Students will evaluate international news stories from diverse cultural perspectives, examine the roles of global institutions, and consider how international events are interconnected. Through inquiry, debate, and project-based learning, students will refine their global awareness and develop the tools to engage in cross-cultural dialogue and ethical analysis.

"Around the World with The Juice" Global Current Events Briefing

Each day, students select a globally focused article from The Juice and complete a "Global Lens" briefing form that includes:

- Country/Region focus
- Summary of issue
- Stakeholders involved
- Global impact

- Cultural or political context
  Every few days, students lead mini-presentations with maps and visuals to teach their peers about developing stories. These briefs help students connect issues across continents and track global trends over time.

"World A-Z Country Profiles & Case Studies" Inquiry Activity

Students are assigned or select a country to research using World A-Z and other reputable sources. They will create a profile including government type, key issues, major allies/conflicts, and recent news. Then, students choose a specific international issue impacting that country (ex: refugee crisis in Lebanon, deforestation in Brazil, political unrest in Myanmar) and present a short case study to the class. This activity sets the stage for understanding regional challenges and national perspectives.

"Whose Perspective?" Global Viewpoint Simulation

Students are assigned international roles (ex: diplomat, journalist, NGO worker, student, citizen) tied to a specific international issue such as climate change, food insecurity, or territorial conflict. After researching their role's perspective, they participate in a roundtable discussion where they must express their stakeholder's views and propose solutions. This simulation emphasizes empathy, diplomacy, and understanding of international complexities.

"Fact, Frame, or False?" International Media Literacy Lab

Students examine how three different international news sources (ex: BBC, Al Jazeera, Reuters, RT) report on the same issue. They compare tone, vocabulary, images, source types, and headlines using a guided chart. Afterward, students write a reflection: "What did I learn about media framing across cultures?" This reinforces critical thinking about global bias and the importance of consuming diverse news sources.

"Ethics Bowl: Global Dilemmas Edition" Case Collaborations

In small teams, students analyze international Ethics Bowl-style cases such as:

- Should wealthy nations be obligated to take in refugees?

- Is it ethical for nations to prioritize economic growth over environmental concerns?

- Should humanitarian aid ever be tied to political conditions?

Each group prepares a presentation outlining their ethical analysis and proposed course of action, then responds to other groups' critiques. Teachers facilitate to ensure civil dialogue and reasoning.

"Mock UN Global Solutions Summit"

Students are grouped into small "delegations" representing different countries or global organizations (ex: UNICEF, WTO). Each team receives an international issue (ex: global water access, climate migration, nuclear proliferation) and must:

- Research their country/organization's position
- Collaborate with allies
- Draft a joint policy proposal
- Present and debate proposals at the Summit
  The simulation includes opening speeches, moderated caucuses, and voting. Students are evaluated on collaboration, preparedness, and diplomacy.

"The Global Problem Web" Visual Mapping Project

As a class, students select one global issue (ex: fast fashion, global food waste, arms trade) and create a large-scale visual web that shows all the interconnected factors—economic, environmental, political, social, technological. Each student contributes a "node" to the web that includes their research and visual representation. The final product is presented in a gallery-style walk and used to guide a reflection discussion on global complexity.

"How Did We Get Here?" Historical Root Analysis

To understand the background behind modern international issues, students conduct brief investigations into historical causes and legacies (ex: colonialism and modern borders, Cold War alliances, imperialism in Africa, Partition of India). They write a short report titled: "Why This Still Matters," connecting past decisions to current global events. These can be compiled into a class "Global History Zine."

“Global Citizenship Journal” Reflection Portfolio

Throughout the unit, students complete journal entries responding to prompts such as:

- “What surprised me most about another country’s approach to an issue?”
- “What role should I play in solving global problems?”
- “How do I define global citizenship?”
  Students reflect on how their worldview is changing and what it means to act ethically in a global society. Their final entry is titled “The World I Want to Live In” and ties together lessons from the unit.

“Final Project: Voices Across Borders” Creative or Analytical Product

As a culminating assessment, students create an in-depth project that communicates their understanding of an international issue. Options include:

- Digital documentary or podcast
- Opinion editorial or argumentative essay
- Illustrated infographic campaign
- Children’s book explaining the issue to a younger audience

Visual poem or spoken word performance
Projects must include multiple perspectives, historical context, current data, and a proposed solution or action. Students present their work during a “Voices Across Borders” showcase.

Assessment

When taking a Social Studies course, students demonstrate differentiated proficiency according to their ability to answer the essential questions through formative and summative assessments. Many of the performance tasks below can be implemented as formative and/or summative assessments. As teachers strive for students to demonstrate proficiency, they will need to create additional or alternative assessments based on demonstration

or absence of skill.

Formative Assessments:

- Daily Juice discussions
- World A-Z country reports
- Ethics Bowl scenario responses
- Source analysis check-ins

Summative Assessments:

- Position paper or speech on international issue
- Group project: Global Issue Web or Digital StoryMap
- Structured debate or Model UN simulation

Alternative Assessments:

- Podcast episode or PSA
- “United Nations of Youth” mock summit
- Graphic novel or video docuseries explaining issue

Materials

The design of this course allows for the integration of a variety of instructional, supplemental, and intervention materials that support student learners at all levels in the school and home environments. Associated web content and media sources are infused into the unit as applicable and available In addition to the materials below, the following link connects to district approved textbooks and resources utilized in this course: Core Book List.

The following are approved resources that teachers can include to further unit related objectives:

- The Juice Learning
- World A-Z
- Ethics Bowl
- UN.org, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International

- News media (BBC, Reuters, Al Jazeera, PBS)
- Video content (ex: Crash Course World, UN webcasts)

Any additional resources that are not included in this list will be presented to and reviewed by the supervisor before being included in lesson plans. This ensures resources are reviewed and vetted for relevance and appropriateness prior to implementation.

Integrated Accommodation and Modifications

This link includes content specific accommodations and modifications for all populations:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Pp6EJOCsFz5o4-opzsXpQDQoa6aClW-bkRGPDRHXVrk/edit?usp=sharing

These additional strategies are helpful when learning Social Studies content and skills:

- Sentence stems and graphic organizers for debate prep
- Visual timelines and infographics for key topics
- Multi-modal content (audio, visual, tactile)
- Scaffolded research templates
- Tiered reading materials on global issues
- Translation tools or bilingual supports for ELLs