

LESSON 19

First Amendment Freedoms

LESSON ASSIGNMENTS

Pay very close attention when watching the video program. Review the video objectives and be prepared to record possible answers, in abbreviated form, as you view the video. The titles and numbers of the textbook chapters may differ from the video program. Keep in mind that the video program examines contemporary examples to illustrate your government in action. An attempt is made to show how you can participate in the political arena and bring about changes in the political process.

Video:

“First Amendment Freedoms,” from the series, *Voices in Democracy: United States Government*.

Activities:

One or more activities may be assigned to this lesson. Refer to your syllabus.

OVERVIEW

This lesson deals with the key civil liberties provided in the Constitution. In examining the religious freedoms, freedom of speech, assembly and press, and the right to privacy, this lesson describes the way in which the Supreme Court has tried to balance constitutionally protected freedoms with society’s concern for order and the welfare of the nation. You will be able to trace the development of the Supreme Court’s interpretation of these freedoms and evaluate whether the Supreme Court has done a good job in balancing these competing values throughout history. Today, the courts and the Supreme Court in particular, are challenged by the new electronic communications as they attempt to protect freedom of expression and balance rights of the individual including privacy.

LESSON GOAL

Describe the value of the First Amendment freedoms for democracy and explain the impact of advancing technology on the lives of today’s citizens.

VIDEO OBJECTIVES

The following objectives are designed to assist you in identifying the most significant aspects of the video segment of this lesson. You should take succinct notes while viewing the video.

1. Describe the value of the First Amendment freedoms for democracy, focusing on freedom of the press and free speech.
2. Discuss freedom of speech and press in relation to new electronic technology.
3. Examine the impact of modern technology on the right to privacy.
4. Explain the impact of advancing technology on the lives of today’s citizens.

WEB ACTIVITIES

These activities are not required unless your teacher assigns them. They are offered as suggestions to help you learn more about the material presented in this lesson.

Visit the Oyez Project *Texas vs. Johnson* site at http://oyez.nwu.edu/cases/cases.cgi?command=show&case_id=379&page=docket. The case *Texas vs. Johnson* addressed the question: Is the desecration of an American flag, by burning or otherwise, a form of speech that is protected under the First Amendment?

Access the links to the “Abstract” and “Find Law Written Opinions of the Court.”

After you read the preceding references, respond to the following:

Summarize the First Amendment.

What did the Supreme Court decision, *Texas vs. Johnson*, conclude about flag burning and First Amendment rights?

Do you agree or disagree with the Supreme Court decision? Why or why not?

Does your state have a law concerning burning the U.S. flag and/or your state flag?

Access the following site (or a site of your choice) which contains information on “flag etiquette,” <http://www.icss.com/usflag/flag.etiquette.html>, and answer the following questions:

What is the proper way to dispose of the flag?

Is it proper to use the flag as part of an athletic uniform?

Is it proper to print flags on paper napkins and plates on the Fourth of July?

What are the rules about flying the flag in the rain?

Can the flag be used in advertising?

PRACTICE TEST

After watching the video and reviewing the objectives, you should be able to complete the following Practice Test. When you have completed the Practice Test, turn to the Answer Key to score your answers.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE

Select the single best answer.

1. The bedrock of personal liberty in the United States is found in the...
 - A. Declaration of Independence
 - B. Articles of Confederation
 - C. First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution
 - D. Emancipation Proclamation
2. Limitations on free speech generally have to do with speech which...
 - A. poses an immediate threat to public order
 - B. presents a constitutional question
 - C. is untrue
 - D. defames a politician's character
3. In 1996, Congress passed legislation making it a criminal offense to knowingly transmit an obscene or indecent message to a minor; this legislation is called...
 - A. Americans with Disabilities Act
 - B. Privacy Act
 - C. Child Obscenity Act
 - D. Communications Decency Act
4. By a unanimous vote, the Supreme Court declared the Communications Decency Act of 1996 as...
 - A. an abomination to human decency
 - B. the most advanced legislation in the 1990s
 - C. an abridgment of the First Amendment
 - D. aberration of justice
5. Cyberspace does not conform to traditional notions of national sovereignty, and its citizens, nicknamed _____, often perceive the Internet as a kind of country of its own.
 - A. "nimbys"
 - B. "pandas"
 - C. "netizens"
 - D. "cybizens"
6. While many are using the Internet to escape the restrictions of public space, governments and private organizations are using the same technological advances to...
 - A. collect information
 - B. restrict surveillance
 - C. recruit employees
 - D. research population growth
7. According to many analysts, advancing computer technology is revolutionizing...
 - A. the way we learn
 - B. the way we communicate
 - C. the way we think
 - D. all of the above

ESSAY/PROBLEM QUESTIONS

8. How would you define “free speech” and “free press”? Do you think your definitions fall within the parameters of the Supreme Court’s interpretation? Why and why not?
9. Do you use the Internet? What restrictions, if any, do you think should be imposed on its use? Explain using the principles of free expression and privacy as explained in this lesson.
10. Explain how modern technology has invaded our personal lives. Do you think the government and corporations should be allowed to pry into our personal lives? Why or why not?

ANSWER KEY

The following provides the answers and references for the practice test questions. Objectives are referenced using the following abbreviations: V=Video Objectives.

1. C Ref: V 1 (Video)
2. A Ref: V 1 (Video)
3. D Ref: V 2 (Video)
4. C Ref: V 2 (Video)
5. C Ref: V 2 (Video)
6. A Ref: V 3 (Video)
7. D Ref: V 4 (Video)
8. Ref: V 1 (Video)
9. Ref: V 2 (Video)
10. Ref: V 3 (Video)