

Focus: Understanding Economics in Civics and Government

Table of Contents with lesson descriptions and correlations to Arkansas Secondary Economics Course Frameworks

Lesson 1 - How Do Constitutions Shape Economic Systems?

EF.2.E.2 **EF.2.E.3**
MA.9.E.1

In the first part of the lesson, the students examine the characteristics of a market economy and the economic provisions of the U.S. Constitution. Then they complete a grid which shows how the U.S. Constitution establishes and supports those characteristics. In the second part of the lesson, the students consider a question: Why would North Korea and South Korea - two nations with much in common - experience very different economic outcomes? To answer this question, the students read excerpts from the constitutions of North Korea and South Korea and examine the differences between them.

Lesson 2 - The Relationship Between Economic Freedom and Political Freedom

EF.1.E.4
EF.3.E.1
MA.9.E.1

To begin the lesson, students brainstorm examples of political and economic freedom. Then they examine several quotations describing the theoretical relationship between the two kinds of freedom, and they are asked if they believe such a relationship exists. In order to answer this question, the students examine the relationship by reference to evidence from two indices: the Freedom House Freedom in the World survey and the Wall Street Journal/Heritage Foundation Index of Economic Freedom. After a brief discussion of information from the indices, the students plot and analyze data for 30 randomly selected countries to determine whether a relationship between the two types of freedom exists.

Lesson 3 - Voters and Elections

EF.1.E.1 **EF.1.E.2**
MA.9.E.1

Students identify costs associated with voting. Then they make predictions about who might be more likely to vote based on their understanding of opportunity costs.

Lesson 4 - What Are the Economic Functions of Government?

MA.9.E.1

MA.10.E.5

MA.10.E.6

MA.10.E.7

MA.10.E.8

The teacher introduces six economic functions of government in a brief lecture. In a guided practice activity, the students classify newspaper headlines according to the six functions. A brief reading introduces "liberal" and "conservative" views of the proper scope of government economic activity. The lesson concludes with students working in groups to develop liberal and conservative arguments about one of the newspaper headlines.

Lesson 5 - Government Spending

MA.8.E.1

MA.9.E.1

MA.10.E.7

MA.10.E.8

MA.10.E.9

Through cooperative learning, the students identify patterns and trends in spending by government at the federal, state, and local levels. They analyze potential problems posed by the growth in federal mandatory spending.

Lesson 6 - Can Election Futures Markets Be More Accurate Than Polls?

EF.1.E.4

EF.3.E.1

The students examine results from opinion polls conducted near the end of the 2004 presidential campaign. They compare results from several national polls to those of the Iowa Electronic Markets (hereafter, the IEM), an online futures market, to predict the outcome of the 2004 race. They read and discuss a handout which allows them to compare the performance of opinion polls and the IEM in predicting election outcomes. Finally, the students learn how well the IEM performed in the presidential campaign of 2008.

Lesson 7 - Taxes Change Behavior

EF.1.E.4

MA.9.E.1

MA.10.E.8

MA.10.E.9

The students review the economic functions of government, noting that taxes are necessary to pay for government activities. Then they consider how the government can influence behavior through taxation, by taxing sources of pollution to reduce emissions, for example, or by decreasing tax rates to encourage people to spend more. Looking at other examples, the students identify ways in which various taxes may

change the behavior of those to whom they apply. They learn that taxes create incentives, and that people's responses to these incentives may have unexpected results.

Lesson 8 - Economic Misery and Presidential Elections

MA.8.E.1 MA.8.E.2 MA.8.E.3

The students examine economic data in order to predict the results of presidential elections.

Lesson 9 - The Market Goes to Court: Key Economic Cases and the United States Supreme Court

**MI.6.E.1
MA.9.E.1**

The students participate in a reader's theater activity. This activity conveys information about the role of the Supreme Court, and it introduces four types of economic cases heard by the Court. Then the students read four case studies (one of each type) and work in small groups to complete a data chart summarizing the four types of economic cases. This lesson can serve as a review/extension activity for a unit on the U.S. Supreme Court.

Lesson 10 - An Economic Analysis of Health Care Policy

**EF.1.E.1
MI.4.3.2
MA.9.E.1**

The students discuss the strengths and weaknesses of health care in the United States. As "members" of the Surgeon General's Task Force on the Economics of Health Care Policies, they consider how the laws of supply and demand can be used to analyze and shape health care policy. They study four criteria for judging health care policies; then they apply these criteria in an examination of three general plans: Pay or Play, Tax Credits, and National Health Insurance. They draw conclusions, determining which plans accomplish which goals.

Lesson 11 - How Should Governments Structure the Tax System?

MA.10.E.7 MA.10.E.8 MA.10.E.9

In a group activity, the students decide on a method of taxation for a hypothetical country. After they have developed a tax system, they discuss their reasons for designing the system they have created. They learn whether their system is progressive, regressive, or proportional.

Lesson 12 – Federalism

EF.1.E.4

Using a role-play activity about NCLB, students investigate the concept of federalism and the use of incentives by Congress to get states to follow national government priorities.

Lesson 13 - Government Failure: Using Public Choice Theory to Analyze Political Decisions

MA.9.E.1

The students are introduced to the basics of public choice analysis by reference to two examples of government failure. They participate in mock elections and analyze the impact of special interest groups on legislators. They examine the costs of voting and assess those costs as disincentives that might discourage people from obtaining information before voting, or from voting at all. Finally, they examine the concept of log-rolling by roleplaying U.S. senators who are considering whether or not to support a particular bill.

Lesson 14 - Economic Sanctions and U.S. Foreign Policy

EF.3.E.1

EF.3.E.2

EF.3.E.4

The students analyze cases in which the United States has imposed economic sanctions on other countries. They examine the characteristics of successful economic sanctions and apply their knowledge to predict the likelihood of the success of U.S. economic sanctions in three countries.

Lesson 15 - The Judiciary and Eminent Domain: the Case of Kelo v. City of New London

EF.1.E.4

EF.3.E.1

MA.9.E.1

MA.10.E.3

The students learn about the importance of private property rights and the enforcement of those rights. They are introduced to the concept of eminent domain and its grounding in the Fifth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. To explore issues of property rights, the students play roles in a simulated U.S. Supreme Court press conference attended by Justice Stevens and Justice O'Connor.

Lesson 16 - Economic Freedom in China and India

EF.2.E.2

MA.9.E.1

MA.10.3.3

The students examine a table and two graphs to identify trends in political freedom worldwide, particularly in China and India. They are introduced to the concept of economic freedom, and they

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discuss examples of the concept. They discuss a graph that shows the positive relationship between high levels of economic freedom and high levels of per capita income. They work in groups to predict which economies might have higher levels of economic freedom and per capita income.

Lesson 17 - Making Trade-Offs in Policy Decisions: The Patriot Act

EF.1.E.1 EF.1.E.2

MA.9.E.1

Using a case study approach, the students weigh certain trade-offs associated with the Patriot Act. The class decides whether the trade-off of civil liberties for improved security is a good one. In addition, students consider how incentives might affect the behavior of government officials under the provisions of the Patriot Act.

Lesson 18 - Economic Indicators for Informed Citizens

MA.8.E.1 MA.8.E.2

MA.9.E.1

This lesson introduces students to three basic economic indicators: real GDP, the inflation rate, and the unemployment rate. The students work in small groups to develop an economic forecast, using the three basic economic indicators. They participate in a simulation activity involving a fictional economic forecasting firm. The firm has taken on a client who wishes to start a new business and wants to know whether this is a good idea, given the current economic climate. To advise the client, the students produce a report based on research they conduct about the state of the economy, according to the three economic indicators.

Lesson 19 – Immigration

EF.1.E.4

MI.4.E.3

The students analyze legal and illegal immigration, creating concept maps to identify the incentives and disincentives that may influence prospective immigrants as they make their decisions.

Lesson 20 - Economic Freedom and Rights

EF.2.E.2 EF.2.E.3

MA.9.E.1

To get started, the students take note of the economic freedoms and rights they enjoy in the United States today. Then they examine how political and personal rights established by the Constitution may either reinforce or conflict with economic rights and freedoms. Finally, the students examine Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Economic Bill of Rights, presented in his State of the Union address in 1944.