

Dear **Civics/Participation in Government** Teachers,

For over two decades, [Project Look Sharp](#), a mission-driven not-for-profit **media literacy** organization at Ithaca College, has been collaborating with educators to provide free, inquiry-based, standards-aligned **media analysis lessons** that integrate core subject area content and skills with [habits of critical questioning](#).

Below you will find an overview of our **high school civics lessons** followed by an introduction to the purpose and pedagogy of [our approach](#), ending with information about our free professional development resources for [Constructivist Media Decoding](#).

## **THE LESSONS:**

We currently have nearly [400 lessons](#) for incorporating [question-based media analysis](#) into the teaching of **government and current events**. All of our lessons – including the lesson plans, media materials, and other handouts – are grant-funded so we can make them available **FREE for educators** through the [Project Look Sharp](#) website. All you need to do is set up a [free account](#) as an educator.

Below are just some our **newest lessons** for teaching **civics**. Click on any title below to get a brief description and to download all the teaching materials.

### **Lessons on the 2020 Election, the Insurrection and Political Polarization:**

[Two Views of an Insurrection: January 6, 2021](#)

[Presidential Photo-Op and Political Protest: Who's Telling the Story?](#)

[Confirmation Bias, Coronavirus and the 2020 Presidential Campaign](#)

[Storming the Capitol: Front Page Constructions](#)

[Presidents and Propaganda?](#)

[Confrontation in the Streets: What Do You know?](#)

### **Lessons on Government:**

[Who's in Power in Congress: How Do You Know?](#)

[The Public Trust Doctrine - Government's Role in Protecting Natural Resources](#)

[Media, Politics and the Supreme Court](#)

What is the Role of the Federal Government in Protecting the Environment?

Should the Government Support Gun Research?

International Climate Agreements: How the Decisions of Government Officials Can Potentially Impact Climate Change

Lessons on **Race and Racism:**

Polling on Structural Racism: What Do Different People Believe?

Covering Black Lives Matter: Front Page Constructions

Black Lives Matter and Climate Change: What's the Connection?

Teaching the Enslavement of African People in the Americas

Anti-Semitism: Then and Now

Migrants Wait in Mexico – Whose Problems Do We See?

Race and Perspective: Contrasting the Police Response to the Capitol Insurrection and Black Lives Matter Protests in TV and Print

Lessons related to **COVID 19:**

Conspiracy Theories About COVID-19: Who's Selling? Who's Buying?

Social Media Goes Viral: Fact Checking Messages About COVID-19

Trusting Web Videos on COVID-19 (Or Not)

Misinformation About COVID-19: How to Figure It out

Vaccine Nationalism and Global Equity: Who Gets the Shots When?

Vaccinations – What Role Does Social Media Play in Informing the Public?

COVID-19 and the Economy: Conflicting Priorities

Lessons on **Media and Credibility:**

How False Statistics Spread in the Digital World

Social Media and Elections: What's the Connection?

Twitter and Lies: How They Snowball

Seeing Body Image Through Instagram Filters

Rating Media Credibility – Who's Behind the Curtain?

Tracking Lies: Determining the Credibility of Internet Information

Lesson on **Climate and the Environment:**

Teaching About Climate Change: Why Does the Source Matter?

Geoengineering: Can Techno Fixes Save Us From Climate Change?

Environmental Justice – For Whom, How and Why?

Youth, Hip Hop & Climate Change

Rising Sea Refugees

Climate Disaster: Young People Act

Carbon Trading: Arguments for and Against

Meat or Veggies? The Impact of Diet on Climate

Food Waste: What's the Problem? What's the Solution?

Corporate Greenwashing? Exxon and Greenpeace

Lessons on **Other Current Topics:**

Family Planning: Why it Matters

Fighting Back Against Religious Intolerance

Youth Activism

Slavery in the 21st Century: What Can We Do?

Mass Shootings: Tracking the Numbers

[Gender & Fear: “It’s a Scary Time “ but for Whom?](#)

[Standing Rock Dakota Pipeline Controversy](#)

[The Death of Kobe Bryant: How Viral Media Spreads Misinformation](#)

[Representations of Asian People in the Media](#)

## **CONSTRUCTIVIST MEDIA DECODING:**

Our [constructivist approach](#) is particularly effective for leading civil and reflective document-based analysis about **potentially polarizing issues**. Our lessons and methodology help students learn to habitually ask key questions; assess truth, credibility, and accuracy in media messages; and become **metacognitive** about their own thinking.

We believe that the critical analysis of all media messages - from books to blogs, paintings to *Pinterest* - must become habitual for all our students. Students need **continual practice** in asking [critical thinking questions](#) such as:

- *Who produced this for what purpose?*
- *Is the source and information credible?*
- *What are the biases in this message?*
- *How does my own identity influence how I see this?*

For this kind of self-reflective critical analysis to become ingrained, we need to have students practice this questioning, in age-appropriate ways, from kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and in diverse subject areas. And we need effective and **efficient methodologies and free materials** to support the integration of media analysis into the core curriculum – helping us to teach what we already teach in ways that **engage more students** more effectively.

Project Look Sharp has published over [500 media analysis lessons](#) on our website and over [70 professional development resources](#) for this purpose. All of our lessons – including the lesson plans, media materials, and student handouts – are grant-funded so we can make them available **FREE for educators** through the [Project Look Sharp](#) website. All educators need to do is set up an [account](#).

## **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES:**

Project Look Sharp also has short, annotated [video demonstrations](#) of in-person and online classroom media decoding for different levels and subjects including:

- *The Great Global Warming Swindle*
- *Examining Credibility and Bias in a (white Supremacist) Web Site*
- *Hydrofracking, Media and Credibility*

Our extensive [free PD materials](#) about **curriculum driven media decoding** include:

- [Key Questions to Ask When Analyzing Media Messages](#) and other handouts and posters
- [Articles and webinars](#) about Constructivist Media Decoding
- A [DIY Guide](#) for creating your own lessons

Please consider signing up for a [free account](#) to fully view our lessons and get added to our [email list](#) so that you will get periodic notices about new lessons and resources. And please pass on the word about [Project Look Sharp](#). Together we can build a more civil, reflective and just society for all.

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***It fosters independent thinking, which, after all, should be the chief objective of a good education.***

Howard Zinn, historian/educator writing about Project Look Sharp's kit: [Media Construction of War](#)

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### **Project Look Sharp**

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