

Censorship or Cyber Sovereignty?
Exploring Controversial Issues Using Student-Produced Vlogs

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Essential/Central Question: To what degree should a country have cyber sovereignty?

Lesson Summary: In this lesson, students will research key issues related to Internet use and restrictions in China. They will present their findings in the form of vlogs and use the information from these vlogs to engage in critical discussion about the issue of cyber sovereignty.

Grade Levels and Courses: This lesson can be used in the following courses and grades: AP Human Geography — 9-12th grades; World History — 10th grade; American or AP Comparative Government — 12th grade; a relevant elective class — 9-12th grades. Elements may be adapted for a middle school classroom.

Duration: 4 days (60 minute class periods)

Teachers can shorten the duration by assigning some components for homework or eliminating one or more of the anticipatory sets.

Plan of Instruction:

Day One:

- 1. Anticipatory Set:** Have students answer the following questions by moving silently to different corners of the room labeled with the terms: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree
 - Expanded use of social media gives more freedom to individuals in a society.
 - Expanded use of social media gives more power to national governments.
 - Governments should be able to censor or restrict the social media posts of citizens or residents of a country.

- Children and teenagers should have less freedom online than adults.
- Celebrities or famous people should have less freedom online than ordinary people.
- At times, social media companies should be required to provide governments with information on their users.
- There should be no national or international restrictions on social media use.
- It is in the public's best interest to have government monitoring of social media use.

After the activity, give students a chance to discuss their choices with a partner or small group.

2. **Building prior knowledge:** Project or copy and distribute slide 9, "What Gets You Censored on the Chinese Internet" of David Wertime's presentation" from the 2016 1990 Institute Teacher's Workshop.
 - Break the students into groups of three and give each group a role from the role cards sheet. Have students use Wertime's flowchart to determine their fate. *[Supporting Documents] Handout 1: Role Cards.*
 - Play minutes 22-27 of Wertime's lecture at the 1990 Institute <http://teachers.1990institute.org/2016/09/china-remake-internet-image/>. This clip includes Wertime's explanation of his chart.
3. **Applying new knowledge:** Conduct an all-class or think-pair-share discussion around the following questions:
 - What seems to be seen as a threat to the Chinese government?
 - Why do you think the Chinese government has these rules?
 - How would these rules impact your posting and social media use?

Day 2:

1. **Anticipatory Set:** Project or distribute copies of a political cartoon from the China Daily Mail regarding the "Great Firewall" of China.
 - <https://chinadailymail.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/25-great-firewall-of-china.jpg>
 - Have students discuss the author's message and symbolism used in the cartoon.
2. **Building Prior Knowledge:** Play the first ten minutes of Michael Anti's TED Talk "Behind the Great Firewall of China." Alternatively, the transcript of the TED Talk can be printed out for the students to read and annotate. Note that there is a translated curse word at minute 12. For students who need more support, a note sheet is included with this lesson. *[Supporting Documents] Handout 2: Notesheet - Great Firewall of China*
3. **Project-Based Learning Activity:** Break the students into groups. Explain that they will be researching a topic related to Internet and social media use in China. After

conducting research, each group will produce a short vlog (video blog) entry that summarizes their findings in a clear and engaging way.

Sources have been provided for each topic (see “Readings/Websites/Documents/Attachments”). For classrooms without Internet access, articles can be printed ahead of time. To differentiate instruction, consider assigning topics 1 and 3 to students who would benefit from a more concrete topic. Topics 5 and 6 are more abstract and may be more appropriate for juniors and seniors or students in AP-level courses.

- Topic 1 WeChat: Who uses it and what can users do with it? Topic 1 can also be broken into two separate topics based on the two parts of the prompt to further scaffold the material for younger students or English-language learners.
- Topic 2 WeChat: How is WeChat monitored, censored and controlled in China?
- Topic 3 Sina Weibo: Who uses it and what can users do with it? Topic 3 can also be broken into two separate topics based on the two parts of the prompt to further scaffold the material for younger students or English-language learners.
- Topic 4 Sina Weibo: How is Sina Weibo monitored, censored, and controlled in China?
- Topic 5 “Cyber Sovereignty:” What is the Chinese government’s argument regarding blocking of foreign-based sites and censoring of content?
- Topic 6 “Great Firewall:” What are major criticisms of China’s blockage of foreign- based sites?
- Topic 7 Facebook and China: How does the Chinese government regulate Facebook and how has Zuckerberg tried to break into the Chinese market?

Day 3:

1. **Anticipatory Set:** To introduce the medium of vlogging as well as the Weibo platform, play minutes 12-24 of Jessica Beinecke’s presentation on Crazy Fresh Chinese from the 1990 Institute website.
<http://teachers.1990institute.org/2016/09/social-media-crazy-fresh-chinese/>
2. **Building Prior Knowledge:** Discuss the elements of Beinecke’s vlogs. Address the following questions:
 - What techniques does Beinecke use to capture and maintain her audience’s attention?
 - How does Beinecke present the theme of each vlog?
 - Where does she get her ideas?
3. **Project-Based Learning Activity:** Review the vlogging assignment and discuss the elements of a good vlog. Have students use their research notes to fill out their story maps and plan their vlogs. Students can record their vlogs on this day. Alternatively, filming can be assigned for homework.

[Supporting Documents] Handout 3: Vlog Directions & Graphic Organizer

Day 4:

1. Play student vlogs on a class projector or computer. Have students record important information in their notes.
2. To synthesize information from the vlogs, hold a Socratic seminar or class discussion focused on one or more of the following questions:
 - More Difficult: To what degree should a country have cyber sovereignty?
 - Easier: How and why does China control Internet use within its borders?

Summative Assessment:

Students will be graded on their vlogs per the vlog rubric.

[Supporting Documents] Handout 4: Vlog Rubric

Readings/Websites/Documents/Attachments:**Topic 1 WeChat:**

1990 Institute Presentation by David Wertime:

<http://teachers.1990institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2016-TW-Wertime-presentation.pdf> (slide 2)

Most Difficult: 1990 Institute Speaker Video by David Wertime

<http://teachers.1990institute.org/2016/09/china-remake-internet-image/>

More Difficult: The Economist, “WeChat’s World”

<http://www.economist.com/news/business/21703428-chinas-wechat-shows-way-social-medias-future-wechats-world>

Moderate Difficulty: Forbes: “WeChat is Quietly taking over Workplaces in China”

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/ywang/2016/08/19/tencents-super-app-wechat-is-quietly-taking-over-workplaces-in-china/#2cf13a2bc620>

Alternative Format: NY Times: How China is Changing Your Internet (video)

<http://www.nytimes.com/video/technology/100000004574648/china-internet-wechat.html>

Easiest Reading Level: Wikipedia: WeChat <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WeChat>

Topic 2 WeChat:

1990 Institute Presentation, “What Gets You Censored on the Chinese Internet” by David Wertime (slides 2 and 9)

<http://teachers.1990institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2016-TW-Wertime-presentation.pdf>

Most Difficult: 1990 Institute Speaker Video (David Wertime)

<http://teachers.1990institute.org/2016/09/china-remake-internet-image/>

Moderate Difficulty: Irish Times, “ WeChat Takes over China but can’t get over the Great Firewall” <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/world/asia-pacific/wechat-takes-over-china-but-can-t-get-over-the-great-firewall-1.2843982>

Alternative Format: NY Times: How China is Changing Your Internet (video) <http://www.nytimes.com/video/technology/100000004574648/china-internet-wechat.html>

Easiest Reading Level: Wikipedia: WeChat <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/WeChat>

Topic 3 Sina Weibo:

1990 Institute Presentation, by David Wertime:

<http://teachers.1990institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2016-TW-Wertime-presentation.pdf> (slide 2)

Most Difficult: 1990 Institute Speaker Video (David Wertime)

<http://teachers.1990institute.org/2016/09/china-remake-internet-image/>

Moderate Difficulty: English.news.cn: “China’s Weibo to help microbloggers to build their brands”

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-10/25/c_135780245.htm

Easiest Reading Level: What’s On Weibo: “A short introduction to SinaWeibo”

<http://www.whatsonweibo.com/sinaweibo/>

Easiest Reading Level: Wikipedia (easier reading level): SinaWeibo

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sina_Weibo

Topic 4 SinaWeibo:

1990 Institute Presentation, by David Wertime:

<http://teachers.1990institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/2016-TW-Wertime-presentation.pdf> (slide 2)

Most Difficult: 1990 Institute Speaker Video (David Wertime)

<http://teachers.1990institute.org/2016/09/china-remake-internet-image/>

Most Difficult: Committee to Protect Journalists: The business of censorship: Documents show how Weibo filters sensitive news in China

<https://www.cpj.org/blog/2016/03/the-business-of-censorship-documents-show-how-weib.php>

Moderate Difficulty: International Business Times: Which Words are Banned from Weibo on the 26th Anniversary of Tiananmen Square

<http://www.ibtimes.com/pulse/censorship-china-which-words-are-banned-weibo-26th-anniversary-tiananmen-square-1951733>

Easiest Reading Level: Wikipedia - SinaWeibo

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sina_Weibo

Topic 5 “Cyber Sovereignty:”

Most Difficult: Foreign Policy: “China’s Great Firewall is Rising”

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-35109453>

Moderate Difficulty: BBC News: Xi Jinping Calls for “Cyber Sovereignty”

<http://thediplomat.com/2016/05/securing-cyberspace-china-leading-the-way-in-cyber-sovereignty/>

Moderate Difficulty: The Diplomat: “Securing Cyberspace: China leading the way on Internet Sovereignty”

<http://thediplomat.com/2016/05/securing-cyberspace-china-leading-the-way-in-cyber-sovereignty/>

Moderate Difficulty: CNN: Xi Jinping: Hands off our Internet

<http://www.cnn.com/2015/12/15/asia/wuzhen-china-internet-xi-jinping/>

Topic 6 “Great Firewall:”

Most Difficult: Foreign Policy: “China’s Great Firewall is Rising” (difficult reading level)

<http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/03/china-great-firewall-is-rising-censorship-internet/>

Moderate Difficulty: Business Insider: “9 Incredibly Popular Websites that are Still Blocked in China”

<http://www.businessinsider.fr/us/websites-blocked-in-china-2015-7/>

Moderate Difficulty: BBC News: Xi Jinping Calls for “Cyber Sovereignty”

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-35109453>

Topic 7 Facebook and China:

Moderate Difficulty: Time: “A Brief History of Facebook’s Courtship of China”

<http://time.com/4265665/china-facebook-mark-zuckerberg-great-firewall/>

Moderate Difficulty: CNN: “Facebook makes an app that tries to bypass Chinese Censors”

<http://money.cnn.com/2016/01/20/technology/facebook-android-tor/index.html>

Moderate Difficulty: Economist: “The Art of Concealment”

<http://www.economist.com/news/special-report/21574631-chinese-screening-online-material-abroad-becoming-ever-more-sophisticated>

Moderate Difficulty: Bloomberg: “Does China Need Facebook?”

<https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2015-10-28/does-china-even-need-facebook->
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Common Core/State Standards:

Grades 11-12:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and

persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.5 Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7 Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.