



# Using Design Thinking to Explore the Universality of Human Rights

A lesson plan designed by *Dr. David Bosso*



Estimated  
class periods

Various historical and current events reflect issues of freedom, equality, and social justice. In this activity, students will use the design thinking method to explore human rights through laws, historical precedents, and current events. After critically evaluating these resources, they will discuss the following questions: Are human rights universal? In what ways can innovation and technology improve people's lives?

## Directions:

### CLASS 1

#### Step 1: Identify opportunities by reviewing the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- Read the Preamble, and identify and define familiar phrases.
- Select five articles to explore.
- Interpret and define these articles in your own words.
- Draw a picture to represent these issues.
- Provide examples of violations of these issues.

#### Step 2: Identify opportunities by reviewing the UN Sustainable Development Goals

##### Individually:

- Go through the chart and identify why each initiative was included. What is the issue at hand?

##### With a group:

- Select five Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to discuss.
- Share and discuss the problems students identified individually around these SDGs.
- Select one of the five SDGs to focus on.

### CLASS 2

#### Step 3: Emphasize and define

##### With a group, and with final SDG selected, ask:

- Who would be affected by this issue? Individuals? Groups?
- What do they need in order for this issue to no longer affect them?
- Why is it important that this issue is addressed?
- Conclude this step by formulating one Problem Statement: [Who] need(s) [what] in order to [why/solution].

## ABOUT THE TEACHER

Dr. David Bosso is the 2012 Connecticut Teacher of the Year, the 2012 National Secondary Social Studies Teacher of the Year, and currently a teacher at Berlin High School in Berlin, CT. In this lesson plan, he uses the design thinking method to teach his history class about human rights.

## MATERIALS

- The UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights [un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights](http://un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights)
- UN Sustainable Development Goals [un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals](http://un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals)
- **Prototype materials:** paper, tape, cardboard, scissors, and markers.

## STANDARDS

While this can apply to Common Core Standards, Dr. Bosso believes this lesson plan could address these National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) C3 Frameworks:

**D2.Civ.10.9-12.** Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and human rights.

**D2.Eco.13.9-12.** Explain why human capital, advancements in technology and investments in capital goods increase economic growth and standards of living.

**D2.His.12.9-12.** Use questions generated about multiple historical sources to pursue further inquiry and investigate additional sources.



## Directions:

### CLASS 2 CONT.

#### Step 4: Ideate

Now that students have their problem statement defined, brainstorm potential solutions to your chosen SDG. What are some ways we could solve the issue at hand?

Expand the problem statement:

This [tool, device, app, etc.] will [reflect back to goal].

What is the general solution to this issue?

How will the solution improve their circumstances?

#### Step 5: Prototype

Based on the solutions you brainstormed, collaboratively design a prototype of a product or tool that would solve the issue identified in your problem statement.

Create a sketch of your product.

### CLASS 3

#### Step 6: Evolve

- Present sketch to class and receive constructive feedback from classmates.
- Compile a proposal based on feedback for how best to evolve that prototype.

### STANDARDS CONT.

**D4.6.9-12.** Use interdisciplinary and disciplinary lenses to understand the characteristics and causes of local, regional, and global problems; instances of such problems in multiple contexts; and challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address these problems over time and place.

**D4.7.9 -12.** Assess options for collective and individual action to address local, regional, and global problems by engaging in complex causal reasoning, self-reflection, and strategy identification.

#### **Not a social studies teacher? No problem.**

While Dr. Bosso focuses on a six-step outline, design thinking can be simplified into three main parts that can easily be used in any classroom—no matter what subject you teach:

#### **Inspiration**

Have students conduct research, engage in hands-on fieldwork, attend site visits, and interview experts.

#### **Ideation**

Encourage a no-judgement zone where students can share all of their ideas—no matter how far-fetched. Let them lead their own brainstorm session.

#### **Implementation**

Give students a range of materials to build their prototype. Then, have other students test it and record their experiences, so the original group can make improvements.

#### **TAKE IT A STEP FARTHER.**

Experience the design thinking process at an EF Global Leadership Summit, where you and your students can use design thinking to propose solutions to a global challenge.