

Children's Rights in the United States

Recommended Use: Designed for a lower-level human rights-based course; does not require prior exposure to human rights course work. Could be used in an introductory-level course given the student-driven discussion nature of the lesson, especially if used to introduce the topic of children's rights in the United States.

Keywords: child welfare, children's rights, social work, United States

Objectives: Students will be able to identify children's rights in the context of a domestic human rights issue in the United States.

Reading(s)/ Material(s):

Chiarelli-Helminiak, C. M. (2013). Children's rights versus what is good for children. In M. C. Hokenstad, L. M. Healy, & U. A. Segal (Eds.). *Teaching human rights: Curriculum resources for social work educators, a resource manual* (pp 197). Alexandria, VA: CSWE Press.

Libal, K., Mapp, S. C., Ihrig, E., & Ron, A. (2011). The United Nations convention on the rights of the child: Children can wait no longer for their rights. *Social Work, 56*(4), 367-370.

Mapp, S. C. (2011). *Global child welfare and well-being*. New York: Oxford University.

Mason, M. A. (2005). The U.S. and the international children's rights crusade: Leader or laggard. *Journal of Social History, 955-963*.

United Nations. (1989). *Convention on the rights of the child*. Retrieved from <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

Synopsis:

Children's rights are often framed as an international issue, *not a domestic issue*. This lesson is designed to help students understand how children's rights can be reframed as a human rights issue in the U.S.

Recommended Background Information:

By the end of 2005, 192 countries became State Parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). More than any other human rights treaty in history. Currently, only three countries, Somalia, South Sudan, and the United States, have not ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Discussion Questions/Activity:

Below are several possible resources and activities that could be used in class to facilitate a discussion related to children's rights in the United States:

UNICEF has a series of short clips available on the UNICEF YouTube channel for each CRC article for use in lectures.

Have students develop education and awareness campaigns to lobby the US Congress to ratify the CRC.

Schedule 30 minute classroom debates on topics such as:

- Are international norms compatible with US norms
- Is it a universal norm that children should be protected
- Are children a protected "class"
- Do children have "group rights"

Have students critique the CRC for example from the perspective of a non-Western nation.

Assign books, such as *Amazing Grace* by Jonathan Kozol, and discuss it from a human rights perspective.

Assign readings focused on the CRC, such as ones from the special issue of *Child Welfare Journal*, 89(5).

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