



Paradox of Tolerance: Lesson Plan

Topic	
The paradox of tolerance is summarized by the seemingly counterintuitive idea that “in order to maintain a tolerant society, the society must be intolerant of intolerance.” Essentially, if a so-called tolerant society permits the existence of intolerant philosophies, it is no longer tolerant.	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
Government, Politics, Civics, Philosophy	30-45 minutes
Video link:	
https://academy4sc.org/video/paradox-of-tolerance-to-tolerate-or-not-to-tolerate/	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
Students will be able to...	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain the paradox of tolerance.• Identify the dilemmas the paradox of tolerance poses for society.	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
Freedom of speech, hate speech, The First Amendment	
Materials Needed	
Worksheet, Copies of the First Amendment text	
Before you watch	
Turn & Talk: The First Amendment guarantees the right to freedom of speech. Are there any situations in which a person should <i>not</i> be afforded this right? What are they? Why should a person not be afforded freedom of speech in that instance?	
While you watch	

Complete the Worksheet

After you watch/discussion questions

1. Should we tolerate intolerance on the basis of freedom of speech?
2. Are there certain contexts in which restricting freedom of speech is beneficial? Give specific examples.
3. Should the authority to limit intolerance be given to the government or the people? Why?

Activity Ideas

- Read the [First Amendment to the US Constitution](#). Write a clause that addresses intolerant speech and how it affects (or does not affect) Constitutional rights under the First Amendment. Defend your added clause in a paragraph or two.
- Split the class into two groups for a debate. One side argues that we must tolerate intolerance because of freedom of speech. The other side argues that the government should impose restrictions on intolerant speech.

Sources/places to learn more

1. Molloy, P. (2016, March 12). *Deconstructing the tolerance paradox: Why Conservatives' go-to line is garbage*. Medium. <https://medium.com/@parkermolloy/deconstructing-the-tolerance-paradox-why-conservatives-go-to-line-is-garbage-666a1bf04a65>.
2. Philosophy, in, March 29th, P. |, & Comments, 2019 12. (n.d.). Does democracy demand the tolerance of the intolerant? Karl popper's paradox. *Open Culture*. Retrieved August 21, 2020, from <http://www.openculture.com/2019/03/does-democracy-demand-the-tolerance-of-the-intolerant-karl-poppers-paradox.html>.
3. Popper, K. R. (1945). *The open society and its enemies*. Princeton University Press.
4. Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Harvard university press.
5. Rosenfeld, M. (1987). Extremist Speech and the paradox of tolerance.