

Instruction and Assessment Units





UNIT 2: SOCIAL JUSTICE BELIEFS AND VALUES

Overview

Part of the process of moving toward a socially just world is understanding how beliefs and values affect attitudes and actions. This unit provides opportunities for students to examine their own belief systems in the context of social justice.

Prescribed Learning Outcomes

This unit can be used to help students achieve the following prescribed learning outcomes in whole or in part:

Defining Social Justice

A5 assess how belief systems can affect perspectives and decisions in relation to social justice issues

A6 conduct a self-assessment of their own attitudes and behaviours related to social justice

Perceptions

Ask students to identify reasons why they decided to take Social Justice 12. Record the reasons. Introduce the concept of self-awareness and conduct a classroom discussion about

- the value of knowing who we are
- what we believe, why we believe it, how our beliefs affect ourselves and others
- to what extent what we believe can change over time and for what reasons.

Provide students with a variety of images from newspapers, magazines, textbooks, the Internet, etc., that show people, situations, and events.

Have students work individually to construct what they believe to be the background information or “story” behind the image. Ask students to provide as much detail as they can and to provide evidence for their ideas. Their stories or scenarios should be plausible and thoughtful.

Conduct a class discussion about the similarities and differences among student

responses. Encourage all students to respond in an attempt to reveal the many differences in beliefs and perceptions about human nature.

Students write a one-paragraph response to the question, “What impact do my beliefs have on others, locally and globally?”

Encourage students to consider the impact on other people as well as on animals and the environment.

As a class, brainstorm a list of items that answers the question, “Where do our values and beliefs come from?” Record all responses. In groups, ask students to categorize the responses. Possible categories might include family, peers, cultural expectations, society, institutions, employers, other individuals, and so on.

Conduct group discussions about the differences among the categories. Ask students to rank the original list of items from greatest to least influence on their current beliefs. Repeat, asking them to rank them according to which they think will be the greatest and least influence on them ten years in the future.





Conduct a class discussion about the differences in influence on individuals and the impact of time. Have students complete a one-paragraph response to the question, “To what extent do I have control over my own beliefs?”

Investigating Personal Beliefs

The purpose of this whole-class activity is to raise awareness about how we react to what others believe. Given the controversial and inflammatory nature of the statements, there is the potential for conflict in this activity. For that reason, it is important to take “ownership” of the statements away from students. Emphasize with students that it is not the statements being made that are important; rather, what is crucial is how one responds to what is being said. Ask students to pay special attention to their own feelings, interpretations, biases, physical and emotional reactions, and perceptions.

Provide students with prepared statements such as the following:

- The death penalty must be brought back because murderers should not be allowed to live. Many prisoners live better lives in prison than they did as free individuals.
- It’s okay to practise your own culture within reason, but when you come to Canada you should be prepared to act Canadian.
- Giving homosexuals the same legal rights as heterosexuals is special treatment. Why should abnormal behaviour be rewarded?
- Our society doesn’t give enough respect to the elderly.
- Life is so much easier when you have money.
- Of course we shouldn’t mistreat animals, but if it comes to a choice, humans’ rights are always more important than animals’ rights.
- I guess some people on welfare have a

good excuse, but most could get a job if they just tried.

- Just because he’s only 14 doesn’t mean he should be treated any differently by the legal system than an adult. If you’re old enough to do the crime, you’re old enough to do the time.
- I believe in “an eye for an eye” and nothing will ever change that.
- Of course more men’s sports have greater prominence in the media than women’s sports. Men’s sports are just more popular.
- I don’t care what gay people do in their own homes, I just don’t want to see it flaunted.
- I don’t think there’s anything wrong with buying items made by people in poor conditions in underdeveloped countries. At least they have a job.
- I think it’s rude for people who speak other languages not to speak English when you are with them.
- A corporation’s greatest responsibility is to maximize profit for its shareholders.
- Sometimes war is the only option.
- If someone doesn’t like my opinion, that’s too bad.

Alternatively, have students submit their own statements anonymously.

Have student take turns reading their assigned statement out loud to the class. Pause after each, allowing time for students to privately record their reactions (emotional and intellectual) after hearing the statements being made. Emphasize to students that they are not commenting on whether or not they agree or disagree with the statement; only on how they respond to hearing it (or saying it). To assist students, provide the following stems:

- I felt angry when I heard her statement about ...
- When I read that statement, I was embarrassed ...
- I hope he doesn’t really believe that ...





- When I read that, I couldn't help but feel ...
- The statement made me think about how dangerous bias can be ...
- It was hard to hear that because I know it's true...

Have students review their responses to each of the statements. Ask them to select one and write a 250-word response. In their response, students should:

- identify the statement they are referring to
- comment on the nature of their response (physical response—quicken pulse, raised eyebrow, laughter, scowl, etc.; emotional response—sadness, pity, empathy, rage, etc.; intellectual response—connections made to other situations or experiences, rationalizing or justifying, etc.)
- comment on how their response made them feel—surprised, aware, bigoted, justified, etc.
- indicate the likelihood of the same response in a non-experimental situation
- indicate the possible reasons why their reaction might or might not change over time given new perspectives and understandings.

Assess using the criteria outlined in the assessment instrument provided at the end of this unit (**Written Paragraph Response: Personal Beliefs**).

How Personal Choices Affect Others

The purpose of this activity is to investigate and to become aware of how personal choices impact others (both locally and on a global scale). Students will think about many aspects of life, including society, the environment, and the economy. They will be required to think about how one choice or decision to act or not act impacts other areas of life.

Divide students into small groups. Provide each group with a slip of paper that has three

or four of the following words (stakeholders) written on it:

- family members
- friends
- peer group
- our community
- the environment (including animals)
- people in other parts of BC
- people in other parts of Canada
- people in other countries
- the local economy
- the global economy
- the global society.

Instruct students to think of a topic related to this course. Once the topic has been selected, ask them to come up with hypothetical or real situations that demonstrate the ways in which personal choices impact the stakeholders written on their cue card. For example, someone might say: "Our stakeholders are family members, friends, the local economy, and the global economy. I know someone who tied herself to a giant red cedar on Vancouver Island. This choice impacted our stakeholders by ..."

Ask each group to record their ideas using some form of graphic organizer (e.g., diagram, chart, drawing, graph). Remind students that

- all ideas need to be considered and that making connections between and among ideas is desirable
- it is important to try to clarify cause and effect relationships as much as possible
- identifying spin-off effects to other stakeholders not indicated on the cue card is also encouraged.

Ask groups to present their ideas to the class. Conduct a whole class discussion about the impact personal choices have.

Have students write a one-paragraph response to the question, "How do personal choices impact others?"





Structured Self-Assessment

Provide students with questions such as the following to examine their own attitudes, behaviours, values, and beliefs:

- What are my biases? How do they affect the way I see the world?
- Where do my beliefs come from? (e.g., family, peers, school, religious teachings, media, experiences). To what degree are they unique to me?
- How do my personal experiences and circumstances (e.g., age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, family, socioeconomic status) affect my perceptions?
- What roles do culture and language play in my perceptions, understandings, values, and beliefs?
- How do my ancestry and nationality affect my perceptions?
- Am I privileged and entitled? In what ways? To what extent does this colour the way I relate to the world?
- Am I oppressed or marginalized? In what ways?
- How do I perpetuate or challenge the status quo?
- What are my assumptions about how our society functions/should function? (e.g., competitive, collective)
- How do I respond when someone disagrees with me? How do I treat others with beliefs and values different from my own?
- To what extent do I understand the concept of social justice? What do I do to promote social justice ideals?
- How willing am I to take personal risks in sharing my views about and advocating for social justice issues?

Have students complete a written report (e.g., 1000 words) that answers the self-assessment questions. The rubric provided at the end of this unit (**Self-Assessment of Beliefs**) outlines sample criteria for assessing students' work in relation to this assignment.





Assessment Instrument

Written Paragraph Response: Personal Beliefs

Name: _____ Date: _____

Rating (0-3)	Criteria — To what extent does the student
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the statement to which they are referring
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comment on the nature of their response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comment on how their response made them feel
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • indicate the likelihood of the same response in a non-experimental situation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • indicate the possible reasons why their reaction might or might not change over time given new perspectives and understandings
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide detailed support (e.g., examples, quotes, analogy)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • show evidence of critical analysis in their response (e.g., inferring, predicting, comparing, using analogies)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use clear, concise, and grammatically correct language
<p>Comments:</p>	

Key: **3**–excellent, **2**–satisfactory, **1**–needs improvement, **0**–not evident





Assessment Instrument

Self-Assessment of Beliefs

Knowledge and Understanding of the Concepts

Suggested weight for grading: x3

5	• The response demonstrates a very high level of knowledge and understanding (e.g., meaning, application, conceptualization) of all the concepts being examined (e.g., the response shows that the student clearly understands the meaning of “bias” or “privileged” or “beliefs.”)
4	• The response demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of all the concepts.
3	• The response demonstrates good knowledge and understanding of most of the concepts.
2	• The response demonstrates knowledge and understanding of some of the concepts.
1	• The response demonstrates a misunderstanding of many of the concepts or little knowledge of the concepts.

Level of Inquiry

Suggested weight for grading: x2

5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response demonstrates a very high level of personal inquiry, thoroughly exploring issues related to the concept. • The breadth of the response demonstrates an excellent awareness of related concepts. • The depth of the response demonstrates an excellent awareness of the complexity of the concept.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response demonstrates good level of inquiry, exploring most issues thoroughly. • The breadth of the response demonstrates a good awareness of related concepts. • The depth of the response demonstrates a good awareness of the complexity of the concept.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response demonstrates some inquiry and some issues are explored more deeply. • The breadth of the response demonstrates a satisfactory awareness of related concepts. • The depth of the response demonstrates a satisfactory awareness of the complexity of the concept.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response demonstrates very little inquiry beyond stating ideas. • The breadth of the response demonstrates poor awareness of related concepts. • The depth of the response demonstrates a poor awareness of the complexity of the concept.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response demonstrates no degree of inquiry. • The breadth of the response demonstrates little or no awareness of related concepts. • The depth of the response demonstrates little or no awareness of the complexity of the concept.





Presentation

Suggested weight for grading: x2

5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response is very well organized. • The student's thoughts and feelings are very well presented. • The language is accurate, clear, precise and concise.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response is well organized. • The student's thoughts and feelings are often well presented. • The language is accurate, usually clear and precise. • Supporting examples are usually integrated into the body of the work.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the response is well organized. • The student's thoughts and feelings are sometimes well presented. • The language is sometimes accurate, clear and precise. Errors do not interfere with the communication of main ideas. • Some supporting examples are used.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much of the response is not well organized. • The student's thoughts and feelings are not always well presented. • The language used sometimes interferes with the communication of ideas. • Few examples are used to support ideas.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The response is not well organized. • The student's thoughts are not well presented. • The language used often interferes with the meaning. • There are no examples used to support ideas.

Completeness

Suggested weight for grading: x2

5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student answers all questions. • The student follows all of the directions precisely.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student answers almost all of the questions. • The student follows almost all of the directions.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student answers five or six of the questions. • The student follows some of the directions.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student only answers three or four of the questions. • The student follows a few of the directions.
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The student answers only one or two questions. • The student does not follow the directions.

