

Contemporary World History Project: Negotiating Unresolved World Problems (CWHP)

The lives of today's students will be deeply affected by the way that citizens, policy makers and diplomats work together to address a wide range of world problems. Thus, students have a critically important stake in how such problems are resolved or, if they cannot be resolved, how they can be managed. This has led California schools and districts to make the study of "unresolved world problems" a core element in the course of instruction for Grade 9 or 10 Modern World History and Geography. The Contemporary World History Project: Negotiating Unresolved World Problems (CWHP) strengthens instruction in Modern World History courses by giving increased attention in the curriculum to resolving or managing world problems.

Students sometimes see history as a series of events that have little to do with them personally. The CWHP provides a framework for involving students in analyzing major issues that do touch their lives and in trying to understand how they are impacted by these issues. In the CWHP, students acquire the understanding and skills needed to engage the issues actively and, in so doing, to help shape civil society.

The CWHP is a year-long program for California high school students taking Modern World History. In part one of the program, during the fall semester and part of the spring, students focus on the historical background of specific world problems within larger issue areas such as human rights, environment, international security, and international economics.

In addition to expanding their knowledge of history and world issues during this period, students develop skills for working in teams and small groups. Students research issue areas and nation-states in the international system, and use computer technology such as electronic mail to enhance their study of history.

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The second part of the project is a culminating activity, conducted in the spring semester in which participating classes resolve key world problems through communication and negotiation. In this culminating exercise, each class represents the government of a different nation-state as "diplomats." The diplomats send electronic mail messages to one another in an attempt to negotiate the resolution of global problems. Students also have a period of simultaneous online negotiating conferences. Eventually, all diplomats come together for a Global Forum - a one-day, face-to-face negotiating session on a university campus.

Participating classes use the specialized curriculum materials a "World Problems Scenario," which develops students' knowledge of world problems while enhancing skills relating to working together in problem-based study teams. This scenario sets a framework for the simulated exercise. It describes current conditions in the world, highlights the nation-states participating in the exercise, and introduces students to the world problems that have been selected for negotiation.

California International Studies Project (CISP)

The CWHP is a project of the California International Studies Project (CISP), a network of seven regional staff development sites throughout California that exists to strengthen international studies teaching and learning in elementary and secondary schools in their geographic region. CWHP is administered by the statewide CISP office.

CISP sites focus their attention on historical and contemporary affairs related to other cultures, world regions, and world issues. Located primarily in colleges and universities, CISP centers offer staff development experiences to K-12 teachers through institutes, workshops, seminars and through supportive professional communities and networks. The School of International Studies, University of the Pacific, is the institutional manager of CISP. CISP is itself part of the California Subject Matter Projects, a broader group of networks serving the subject area professional development needs of teachers, schools and districts throughout the state.

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International Communication and Negotiation Simulation (ICONS)

The CWHP culminating activity, the computer-supported negotiation exercise, has its origins in a project called ICONS (International Communication and Negotiation Simulation), which is housed at the University of Maryland. Developed originally for college students and later adapted for high school students, ICONS focuses on interdisciplinary problem solving and integrates computer technology into the social sciences. Each year, ICONS conducts several negotiation exercises for college and high school students throughout the United States, and includes participation from students in some other countries as well. Through its software program and computer server located at the University of Maryland, ICONS also provides consulting assistance and support for similar negotiation exercises, such as CWHP, that operate within different regions of the United States.