


Learning by Hearings:

An Experiential Learning Curriculum



"Learning by Hearings" is a series of high-school curriculum and teacher training modules created by Sarah Beth V. Kitch, Ph.D., and published by the Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy. All materials are the property of Wayne State University. For more information, contact levincenter@wayne.edu.



LEARNING BY HEARINGS: AN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING APPROACH

New Role-Based U.S. History Cases for High School Classrooms

High school students respond to learning experiences that connect them to U.S. History as a living story.¹ Need a simple way to introduce key moments in history? The Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy invites you to explore new cases that present U.S. History through guided role-play we call “Learning by Hearings.”² Reconstruction, the Cold War, and the Watergate scandal were crucial turning points in the American story. Our easy-to-implement cases guide teachers and students through carefully tailored materials that enable students to engage with history and each other as they examine evidence and enact the roles of figures who participated in congressional investigations that changed American history.

Background

In exercising its power to conduct oversight, Congress gathers and evaluates evidence that sheds light on important issues and serves as the basis for making the nation’s laws. This places Congress at the center of key moments in U.S. history. At the Levin Center, we work with lawmakers to improve the practice of oversight and educate the public about the importance of oversight to our democratic system. Our curriculum makes students the key actors in a congressional oversight inquiry into pivotal moments in American history. Each case is designed for 2 to 3 class periods. Our signature oversight cases include:


1. Congress Investigates the KKK in Reconstruction-Era America
2. The McCarthy Hearings
3. The Watergate Hearings

Easy-to-Implement Curriculum

Learning by Hearings is a way for students to investigate key moments in history through experiential learning. Matched to C3 Standards, our streamlined lesson plans present the central questions of actual oversight hearings. Complete with a teacher’s guide, character cards, guided notes, and quiz questions, our curriculum immerses students in American history. Our cases capture pivotal moments, turning complex history into an easy-to-follow plot. Need to bring history to life? Use one case as a stand-alone experience or drop all three cases into your existing framework to engage and inspire students.

¹ Practical Ways to Engage United States History Students, by Karen Riddle, Wake Forest University, 2005, <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED492773.pdf#page=89>.

² The Carl Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy is located at Wayne State University Law School in Detroit, MI with an office in Washington, D.C. All materials are copywritten property of Wayne State University.



Portraits in Oversight

Learning by Hearings draws on the Levin Center's [Portraits in Oversight](#), a series of illustrated historical vignettes about congressional investigations that shaped our understanding of the American story. Beginning with the first congressional investigation in 1792 into a failed military campaign, the Portraits present easily accessible summaries of congressional investigations that changed American history, including inquiries into the conduct of the Civil War, the Teapot Dome scandal, the 1929 stock market crash, World War II profiteering, 1950s communism fears, Iran-Contra, 9/11 terrorist attack, and much more.

About the Carl Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy

Inspired by the life and service of the late U.S. Senator Carl Levin, the Levin Center works to support bipartisan, fact-based legislative oversight, advance good governance, and promote civic discourse through training, research, scholarship, and public education. To learn more, visit our website.

