

History of Communism

Social Studies Grades 9-12

Table of Contents

Module I: Communism Theory and Reality	7
Lesson I.1: Real World Examples	7
Summary.....	7
Introduction.....	7
Personal Stories	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Primary Sources and Data	9
Activities	13
From Past to Present	13
Lesson I.2: Communist Theory, Capitalist Reality.....	15
Summary.....	15
Introduction.....	15
Personal Stories	17
Primary Sources and Data	18
Activities	18
From Past to Present	18
Lesson I.3: From Liberty to Totalitarianism.....	20
Summary.....	20
Introduction.....	20
Personal accounts	23
Primary Sources and Data	23
Activities	28
From Past to Present	28
Module II: Communism in the 20 th Century	29
Lesson II.1: The Russian Revolution	29
Summary.....	29
Introduction.....	29
Personal accounts	31
Primary Sources and Data	31

Activities	31
From Past to Present	31
Lesson II.2: Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union	33
Summary.....	33
Introduction.....	33
Personal accounts	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Primary Sources and Data	35
Activities	35
From Past to Present	35
Lesson II.3: Maoism	37
Summary.....	37
Introduction.....	37
Personal accounts	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Primary Sources and Data	39
Activities	40
From Past to Present	40
Lesson II.4: Communism Across Asia	42
Summary.....	42
Introduction.....	42
Personal accounts	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Primary Sources and Data	46
Activities	46
From Past to Present	46
Lesson II.5: The Cuban Revolution	48
Summary.....	48
Introduction.....	48
Personal accounts	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Primary Sources and Data	49
Activities	50

From Past to Present	50
Lesson II.6: The Enemies Within	51
Summary.....	51
Introduction.....	51
Personal accounts	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Primary Sources and Data	52
Activities	53
From Past to Present	53
Module III: Communism Today.....	54
Lesson III.1: Cuba.....	54
Summary.....	54
Introduction.....	54
Personal accounts	55
Primary Sources and Data	55
Activities	55
From Past to Present	55
Lesson III.2: North Korea	57
Summary.....	57
Introduction.....	57
Personal accounts	57
Primary Sources and Data	57
Activities	58
From Past to Present	58
Lesson III.3: Venezuela.....	60
Summary.....	60
Introduction.....	60
Personal accounts	61
Primary Sources and Data	61
Activities	61

From Past to Present	61
Lesson III.4: China	62
Summary.....	62
Introduction.....	62
Personal accounts	63
Primary Sources and Data	63
Activities	63
From Past to Present	63
Lesson III.5: Communism by Other Means	65
Summary.....	65
Introduction.....	65
Personal accounts	66
Primary Sources and Data	66
Activities	66
From Past to Present	66
Module IV: Safeguarding America	68
Lesson IV.1: The New Front.....	68
Summary.....	68
Introduction.....	68
Personal accounts	69
Primary Sources and Data	69
Activities	70
From Past to Present	70
Lesson IV.2: Enemy Intelligence	71
Summary.....	71
Introduction.....	71
Personal accounts	72
Primary Sources and Data	72
Activities	73

From Past to Present	73
Lesson IV.3: The Fight for the Future	75
Summary.....	75
Introduction.....	75
Personal accounts	75
Primary Sources and Data	75
Activities	76
From Past to Present	76

Module I: Communism Theory and Reality

Students today are largely unaware of the dangerous reality of Communism. Module I provides them with the basic information to understand the inherent danger of economic theories aimed at the ending of private property.

Lesson I.1: Empires of Evil

Summary

In this lesson, students examine data on the impact of Communism to understand the realities of life in communist nations. Students are introduced to the Ten Stages of Genocide as a framework for understanding communist totalitarianism.

Introduction

*In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor...has vanished; after labor has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: **From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!***

- Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program*, 1875.

In the 20th century, up to 30% -- nearly 1/3 -- of the earth's surface was ruled by **Communist** governments. Communism is a political and economic system based on the ideas of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Marx believed that all of human history was a struggle between two classes, one small group with power, and one large group that lacked power. But he thought that the Industrial Revolution would disrupt this pattern, and lead the world's factory workers to rise up against the factory owners. As Engels describes it, the global working class then "seizes political power and turns the means of production into State property." [1] According to the theory, this then immediately leads to a **utopian** world where everyone has plenty of everything they might want or need, and all suffering ends along with the existence of social class, governments, and individual nation states.

The reality of communism proved to be quite different. The first "communist revolution" occurred in Russia. Vladimir Lenin took advantage of the chaos caused by World War I to seize control of a general uprising against the Russian czar, and forced it to adopt his communist ideology. But communism is a theory based on many false promises and faulty

assumptions, and the flaws became apparent almost immediately. As Marx described his communist dream, once the workers rose up, all goods would be provided "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs" [2] without the need for any government or state at all. But reality is very different. In reality, to get something done, someone has to work. If no one wants to work, nothing gets done. Lenin's revolution soon faced massive shortages. And Lenin's "solution" to those shortages was to target "counter-revolutionaries," crack down on opponents, and ship tens of thousands to concentration camps. All told, perhaps as many as five million people died from Lenin's policies.

And Lenin is one of the least deadly of the world's communist leaders. His successor, Stalin, centralized control of the entire economy and expanded the crackdowns. As a result, Stalin's "utopian" Communist reforms killed perhaps as many as 20 million people, although exact numbers are unknown due to widespread falsification of public information under communist rule. In China, Mao Zedong implemented a communist regime in 1949. His regime was so deadly, we may never know the full extent, but some estimates are that more than 65 million people died as a result of his attempt to make a workers' paradise. Official records of Ho Chi Minh's communist takeover in Vietnam acknowledge that his violent land reform killed 172,000 people, but independent historians estimate it may have been many more. In Cuba, the Castro regime directly killed up to 11,000 people in "extrajudicial" killings, meaning murders conducted by government forces. In addition, human rights violations and living conditions were so bad, hundreds of thousands of people try to escape the island, with over 70,000 thought to have died. Pol Pot's four-year rule in Cambodia directly killed as much as 25% of the population in the infamous "Killing Fields." In North Korea, where the Kim family has held power through a Communist regime for three generations, over 3.5 million people are thought to have died from political killings, harsh labor camps, and policies that divert resources to military development even as the general population starves. And in Venezuela, the socialist regime of Hugo Chávez encouraged rampant corruption and promoted the looting of businesses and homes, leading to the deaths of more than 100,000 people during his rule, and many more when the collapse of society accelerated under his successor.

How bad is life under Communism? A woman named Margarete Buber knows all too well. She, like many, was a believer in the ideas of Communism before World War II. She was German, but left Germany when Hitler took power and moved to Moscow. However, in 1938, she was arrested and sent to a Russian labor camp, where she was held for two years. In 1940, she was handed over to Germany to be held in a concentration camp. She survived, and after the war she wrote a book, *Under Two Dictators: Prisoner of Stalin and Hitler*. In the book, she writes about being asked the most important question of her

experiences, was Stalin any better than Hitler? She answered, "Between the misdeeds of Hitler and those of Stalin, in my opinion, there exists only a quantitative difference. [3]

These patterns of starvation, harsh crackdowns, scapegoating, and forced labor were common to every communist regime of the 20th century. It's not a coincidence. Victor Kravchenko was a high-ranking Soviet official under Stalin. He was so well-trusted by the Soviet regime that he was assigned to a Soviet office in Washington, D.C. On April 4, 1944, he left work and asked the United States for asylum. He later explained that in Soviet Russia, "I saw people dying of hunger on the most fertile soil in the world... I saw that the regime could not endure without terror, forced labor, and constant deception. I chose freedom because I could no longer live as a cog in a machine built on human destruction."

[4] The brutality of life in Russia under Stalin wasn't a coincidence, or a result of a particularly power-hungry, unethical leader. It was a direct result of the system designed by Marx and put in place by Lenin.

This is the invariable reality of communism. The utopian vision of Marx and Engels can seem enticing, but it is a lie. Communism does not create plenty, and it does not bring about a worker's paradise. It does not end state control or political violence. On the contrary, it creates famine, poverty and forced labor. The theory of communism creates a reality of social and economic collapse, and the government, rather than fading to nothing, assumes complete control of every facet of life. To enforce its totalitarian control, the government creates a police state and propaganda machine designed to create the illusion of success, and anyone who even hints at the truth is harshly punished, or simply disappears.

[1] Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*. 1880.

[2] Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, 1875.

[3] Margarete Buber-Neumann, *Under Two Dictators*. The Literary Estate of Margarete Buber-Neumann, 2008. p. 117

[4] Victor Kravchenko, *I chose Freedom: The Personal and Political Life of a Soviet Official*, 1946.

Primary Sources and Data

- Death tolls from totalitarian governments

Leader & Regime	Estimated Total Deaths	Key Contributing Factors & Historical Context
Mao Zedong (China, 1949–1976)	40 million to 65+ million	* The Great Leap Forward (1958–1962): The vast majority of deaths (~30 to 45+ million) resulted from the catastrophic man-made famine caused by forced agricultural collectivization and economic mismanagement. * The Cultural Revolution (1966–1976): Political purges, street violence, and executions resulted in an estimated 500,000 to 2 million deaths. * Early Campaigns (1949–1950s): Land reform executions and the <i>Laogai</i> prison camp system.
Josef Stalin (Soviet Union, 1924–1953)	9 million to 20 million <i>Note: Significant numbers were never recorded, or underreported</i>	* The Holodomor & Soviet Famines (1932–1933): Engineered starvation, primarily in Ukraine and Kazakhstan, resulting from forced collectivization (~3.5 to 7 million deaths). * The Great Purge / Terror (1936–1938): Direct judicial and extrajudicial executions of political rivals and citizens (~700,000 to 1 million). * The GULAG System: Millions passed through forced labor camps, with an estimated 1.5 to 2 million dying from exposure, starvation, and overwork.
Adolf Hitler (Nazi Germany, 1933–1945)	17 million to 20 million (Democide / Holocaust) <i>Note: Excludes regular combat casualties.</i>	* The Holocaust: The deliberate, industrialized genocide of approximately 6 million Jews and millions of others targeted by Nazi racial and political ideology (including Romani people, Soviet prisoners of war, Poles, the disabled, and political dissidents). * Generalplan Ost: Millions of civilian deaths across occupied Eastern Europe through deliberate starvation policies (such as the Hunger Plan) and mass anti-partisan reprisals.

Methodological Notes

- The table above focuses on civilian and prisoner deaths directly attributable to the policies, camps, and executions of these regimes. If standard military casualties from World War II were added to Hitler's or Stalin's totals, the numbers would increase significantly.

- For Mao and Stalin, archival access remains politically restricted or incomplete, forcing demographers to calculate excess mortality rates by comparing pre- and post-crisis population censuses. For Hitler, while documentation was extensive, tracking mobile killing squads (*Einsatzgruppen*) and unregistered camp arrivals requires meticulous forensic reconstruction.
- Deaths from wars v. life under Communism

War	Total deaths	Notes
World War II 1939-1945	70-85 million	Over 100 million people were mobilized worldwide.
Russian Civil War 1917-1922	7-12 million	War that brought Communists to power in Russia. Deaths include war-induced famine
Chinese Civil War 1927-1949	8-11 million	War between nationalist government and the Chinese Communist Party, which ended with Mao Zedong in control.
Korean War 1950-1953	2-3 million	War sparked when Communist North Korea invaded the democratic South Korea.
Vietnam War 1955-1975	1.5-3.8 million	Fought in attempt to prevent Communist control of Vietnam
Soviet-Afghan War 1979-1989	1-2 million	Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan to maintain the Communist government of the country.

- All of the wars in this table involved Communist nations in some way, but casualties from these wars are not included in the deaths under Mao, Stalin, and Hitler noted above.
- Mao's policies alone were more deadly than any conflict other than World War II.
- On the high end, the combination of Mao's policies and Stalin's exceed the deaths even in World War II.
- Mao's policies kill 2-4 times as many as the Holocaust.
- Stalin's policies may have killed as many as the Holocaust.

- If you hold Hitler responsible for all the deaths in World War II (which minimizes Japan and Italy's responsibility), the total of all the deaths of World War II and the Holocaust (105 million) is lower than the total numbers of deaths due to Communism (117 million).
- Visualizing numbers for above
Comparisons to populations of cities, countries, and sports stadiums (Daytona, "The Swamp")
[THIS WILL BE DONE AS A GRAPHIC SHOWING THE NUMBER OF "DAYTONAS," ETC, WOULD BE EQUIVALENT TO STALIN'S DEATH TOLL, ETC.]
- Communist mass killings as a percent of population

LEADER	COUNTRY / ERA	ESTIMATED DEATHS	APPROX. % OF POPULATION	PRIMARY DIRECT / INDIRECT CAUSES
POL POT	Cambodia (1975–1979)	1.5 – 2.0 million	20% – 25%	Cambodian Genocide: Mass executions, forced labor, and forced starvation.
JOSEPH STALIN	Soviet Union (1924–1953)	6 – 20 million	4% – 12%	Great Purge executions, Gulag labor system, forced deportations, and the Holodomor/Soviet famines.
MAO ZEDONG	China (1949–1976)	40 – 70 million	6% – 10%	Great Leap Forward famine, land reform campaigns, Cultural Revolution, and labor camps.
KIM IL-SUNG	North Korea (1948–1994)	700,000 – 1.6 million	4% – 8%	Political purges, labor camps (Yodok/Kwan-li-so), and early agricultural policy failures.
HO CHI MINH	North Vietnam (1945–1969)	200,000 – 900,000	1% – 5%	Land reform purges (1953–1956), political repression, and wartime civilian casualties.
FIDEL CASTRO	Cuba (1959–2008)	5,000 – 15,000	0.07% – 0.2%	Post-revolution firing squad executions (<i>paredón</i>), extrajudicial killings, and deaths during attempted escape at sea.

- Ten Stages of Genocide:

1. Classification
2. Symbolization
3. Discrimination
4. Dehumanization
5. Organization
6. Polarization
7. Preparation
8. Persecution
9. Extermination
10. Denial

"

"Genocide is a process that develops in ten stages that are predictable but not inexorable. At each stage, preventive measures can stop it. The process is not linear. Stages occur simultaneously. Each stage is itself a process."

- Developed by Dr. Gregory H. Stanton, Genocide Watch

Activities

Students will complete activities to compare data from the various tables. Activity will end in a writing assignment to draw conclusion that Communism dehumanizes those under its government, resulting in genocide.

From Past to Present

Karl Marx:

*In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual to the division of labor...has vanished; after labor has become not only a means of life but life's prime want; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-around development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly—only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be crossed in its entirety and society inscribe on its banners: **From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!***

Democratic Socialists of America, "Our Program," 2026

*You enjoy your work; it's interesting to you, and you're well trained for it. **You work as much as you are able and no more than needed**, and you would control your own labor and see it going to good use.*

How does the program of the Democratic Socialists of America repackage Marxist thought in a more subtle way? Why do you think they have obscured the Marxist language in their "program"?

Lesson I.2: America the Exceptional

Summary

This lesson introduces students to the basic concepts of both Marxism and free-market capitalism, including the identifying the first to describe each system, Karl Marx and Adam Smith. Students will also get an overview of the importance of competition and supply and demand to set prices and ensure a healthy economy, compared to the Marxist concept of proletariat control of the means of production. Students also begin to understand how the conditions of the Industrial Revolution led some people to seek alternatives to capitalism in the hopes of reducing the suffering of workers in those early industries.

Introduction

...the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.... And the abolition of this state of things is called by the bourgeois, abolition of individuality and freedom! And rightly so.... In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so; that is just what we intend.

- Karl Marx, The Communist Manifesto, 1948

When we think of American values, we often think of things like the Pledge of Allegiance and its description of "liberty and justice for all." Or we remember the Declaration of Independence telling the world, in radically clear and certain terms, that everyone is equally "endowed by their Creator" with the rights of "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness." The Declaration also says these rights are "unalienable," which means we cannot give them away under any circumstances. But that has never stopped people from trying to take them.

Our Founding Fathers fought the American Revolution and made our Constitution for the explicit purpose of securing our liberties. They were not merely fighting for their rights, they were fighting to secure those liberties "to ourselves and our posterity," as they wrote in the Preamble to the Constitution. The Founders wanted to make sure that the liberties they had fought to defend would last for all time. And one of the key defenses of our liberties is our ownership of our own property. As Alexander Hamilton wrote in *Federalist No. 79*, "A power over a man's subsistence amounts to a power over his will." In other words, if someone controls the things a person needs to live, they can control that person. It does not erase that person's rights, but it can certainly cause that person to act against their own rights. Because of that, when the first Congress drafted the Bill of Rights, they built in several protections for our property. While no specific Amendment says "the government cannot

interfere with your right to your property," a person's property is protected by Amendments 2, 3, 4, and 5. The First Amendment protects your speech, writing, religion, and ability to meet with the people you want – four things in one Amendment. But your right to what is yours is protected in FOUR separate Amendments. That is how important it was seen by the Founders, because if you ever lose your ability to provide for yourself, all your other rights become immediately vulnerable.

Karl Marx's promise of a property-free world was the latest version of an ancient illusion: the "utopia." The term traces back through Sir Thomas More's 1516 book *Utopia* (literally meaning "no-place") to Plato's *Republic*, where an idealized city eliminated private family life and personal possessions for its guardian class. While the definition of a "utopia" differs among thinkers—from Plato's rule by philosopher-kings to More's communal island—all utopian models share a fatal flaw: human beings are diverse, fallible, and possess individual wills. Because a universal paradise cannot naturally exist among real people, any attempt to force it into existence requires absolute state tyranny.

This dangerous logic was championed by French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who argued that if an individual's will clashed with the state's collective "General Will," the citizen must be "forced to be free." The American Founders rejected this coercion entirely. In *Federalist No. 10*, James Madison explained that the diverse interests, talents, and property of individuals are natural to human freedom, and the primary purpose of government is to protect that diversity, not crush it into forced uniformity. Rousseau's collectivist vision helped fuel the radical phase of the French Revolution, creating an early framework for modern socialism by using state violence and property confiscation in the name of the collective good. Decades later, as the rapid growth and harsh working conditions of the 19th-century Industrial Revolution caused social upheaval, Karl Marx seized upon these collectivist ideas, declaring that the ultimate secret to universal happiness was the total abolition of private property. The experience of our Founders, and the entire 250 year history of American freedom since then, provides clear and ample evidence that he is not merely wrong, but completely opposite the truth. In March 1776, even as American Patriots were placing cannons around Boston to drive the British out, Adam Smith published his most famous work, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, often simply called *The Wealth of Nations*. In it, Smith explained how the economy could work most efficiently. Smith realized something that might seem obvious today: the best way to "run" an economy is simply to let everyone make the choices that will best serve their own interests. That way, people who make things and people who need things will naturally arrive at what needs to be produced and what price to pay for it. They do this because the best price for the buyer is the lowest one, and the best price for the seller is the highest, so the resulting price will be at the balance point

between those two. Smith called this the "invisible hand" of the market place. This invisible hand not only guides what things cost, but also what is made and how much of it. A producer will make the things that they can sell in the amount they can sell, because anything beyond that costs them money. As a result, sellers will produce as much as people are willing to buy, no more, but no less. We call this system capitalism.

After the Revolution, the Founding Fathers embraced Smith's economic ideas. Because Smith approached economic theory with something like the scientific method, the system he described really works. And that system has led the United States to produce more innovation, wealth, and material well-being than any other nation in the history of the world. Adam Smith's "invisible hand" has guided the United States economy to become the strongest in the world.

American capitalism has produced innovation for two centuries, from Benjamin Franklin's bifocals to laser eye surgery. And that innovation has brought people to America from all over the world. One example is Sergey Brin. He was six years old when his family fled the Soviet Union. In 2026, he told the New York Times, "America gave my family the freedom and opportunity to build things that would have been impossible under state control." The things Brin built here, things that could never have happened under "the devastating, oppressive society" in the Soviet Union, include a search tool he designed called "Google." American innovation powers the world. [1]

[1] **James Madison:** *The Federalist No. 10*, November 23, 1787.

[2] Sergey Brin, quoted in Theodore Schleifer and Kate Conger, "Sergey Brin Moves to the Right, with a 'MAGA Girlfriend' by His Side," *The New York Times*, April 27, 2026.

Personal Stories

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/Db8oDcuyYGe/>

In a classroom discussion session, students will be given a list of actions, and will decide whether or not they are fair. Actions will start with "One student at a lunch table bought tater tots, but has to share them with anyone at the table who wants some," "A teen mows lawns for spending money, but has to divide the money among all the kids in the neighborhood" and gets progressively more abstract, while remaining essentially the same: one person is making the sacrifice of their resources, yet everyone feels entitled to the benefits.

Primary Sources and Data

- Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776)
- Table listing U.S. and U.S.S.R inventions and innovations, 1949-1989, showing that Soviet "innovations" were either copies or bogus, such as Lysenko's plant genetics.
- In the 20th century, the world engaged in a massive natural experiment testing the relative strength of Marxist economic theories against those of Adam Smith. The Soviet Union and China tried to apply Marxist principles, while, after World War II, the United States expanded its reliance on Smith's free market principles both in domestic business and, increasingly, in foreign trade. At the same time, the Soviet Union tried to make Marxist economic principles work through forced industrialization. In 1948, the Soviet economy was worth roughly 30% of the U.S. economy, with a total value of approximately \$450 billion to the U.S. value of \$1.5 trillion. By 1988, the U.S. economy had grown to \$6.2 trillion, while the Soviet economy had reached only \$2.1 billion.
- When seen as share per capita, the difference is even more striking. By 1988, the United States GDP per capita had reached over \$25,000, while the USSR had only reached \$7,355. This economic failure would lead to the political collapse of the Soviet Union and its European puppet states by 1991.

Activities

Students will compare the innovations and achievements of the United States and compare them to those of the Soviet Union. Using that comparison, students will explain why communism prevents innovation.

From Past to Present

Karl Marx, 1948

...the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.... And the abolition of this state of things is called by the bourgeois, abolition of individuality and freedom! And rightly so.... In one word, you reproach us with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so; that is just what we intend.

Vicky Osterweil, *In Defense of Looting*, 2020.

Looting is a method of direct redistribution of wealth, from the store owners and capitalists to the poor... It is a practical, immediate form of improving life. Looting represents a material way that riots and protests help the community: by providing a way for people to

solve some of the immediate problems of poverty and by creating a space for people to freely reproduce their lives rather than doing so through wage labor.

How does Osterweil's justification of looting show the true nature of Marxist thought?

Lesson I.3: From Liberty to Totalitarianism

Summary

In this lesson, students build on their understanding of the economic impossibility of Marxism from lesson I.2 to see how the economic impossibility of Marxism creates the need for totalitarian authority to force people to work and live within such a framework. Students examine data to see the impact of command economies, both enforced through the violence of the Soviet Union and the CCP, and through the implied violence of social welfare states such as Nordic nations and blue cities.

Introduction

Strikes, boycott, parliamentarism, meetings and demonstrations are all good forms of struggle as means for preparing and organising the proletariat. But not one of these means is capable of abolishing existing inequality. All these means must be concentrated in one principal and decisive means; the proletariat must rise and launch a determined attack upon the bourgeoisie in order to destroy capitalism to its foundations. This principal and decisive means is the socialist revolution.

- Joseph Stalin, *Anarchism or Socialism?* 1906.

One of the strangest things about communism is that so many people find the idea of it attractive. The historical record shows clearly that it leads to nothing but starvation, poverty, suffering, and death, and yet, again and again, people come back to it and try it again. Even now, with communist nations around the world having collapsed under the weight of their repressive governments and the lies of their economic system, people still find the idea of a Marxist utopia attractive. The dream of everyone having everything they want without anyone suffering or even having to work hard is just too tempting for some people – tempting enough that people are willing to explain away the harsh reality of starvation, prison camps, and mass murder.

This rationalization of widespread suffering and death began with the Marx and Engels themselves. They were very clear that starting communist societies would require violent revolutions. But they said it would be worth it, because those revolutions would create the **utopia** they claimed communism would provide. But once the initial revolutions were over, the flaws and lies in communism meant that it never worked the way it was supposed to, so the men in charge kept trying harder and harder to "force people to be free." That force caused involved widespread human rights abuses, famines, poverty, and even genocide, all

in the name of trying to make life perfect. The history of Communism, then, shows us that the harder you try to force people to do what you think will end suffering, the more suffering you create.

Why Communism Requires Force

The central problem of Communism is that it seeks to end capitalism. But capitalism is not an idea Adam Smith forced on anyone: it is a description of what happens when one person wants something that another person has. The best way to get it is to pay for it. At a very basic level, that is all capitalism is. But if you want to get it without paying for it, the only thing you can do is steal it. And that is communism. All of Marx's theory comes down to this fundamental fact: Communism is just a very complicated way to justify theft. Marx did not try to hide this fact. He was very clear that to get to his utopian world, the workers would have to rise up and take over the factories – in other words, they would need to steal the businesses from the people who owned them. He called it a revolution, but his revolution would not be like the American revolution, fought by farmers and business owners trying to keep a king from stealing their livelihoods. What communism calls revolution is just a wide-scale theft by the revolutionaries in the name of "the people."

Some people would like to believe that socialism is a gentler form of communism that avoids this theft. Socialists say they are not trying to bring about a violent uprising to take over the factories and replace private businesses with government-run programs. They still want the exact same results, though, just without violence. So socialism is still theft. Socialists just want to use the government's power to take things from people who own them and "distribute" them to people who don't. Instead of violently overthrowing the government, socialists create restrictive laws and high taxes to take your money and give it to someone else. In a sense, "communism" is a thief putting a gun to your head and demanding everything you own, while "socialism" is a con artist tricking you into signing papers that do the exact same thing. When an individual takes your things, whether by violence or by deceit, it is still theft. But somehow, communists and socialists seem to think that if a group takes your things, that is just a political movement.

Why Communists Never Learn

Every example of Communism shows the same failure to deliver on the idealistic promises of Marxism. The entire history of communism is proof that, no matter who is in charge or how they try to govern, communist regimes always result in the same genocidal violence, political repression, and economic collapse. It might seem strange, then, that people still think communism, or "socialism," as it is often called today, is a good idea. The reason for that, though, is **ideology**.

An ideology is the set of ideas and beliefs associated with a particular political view. Having an ideology is not a problem. All political parties have some kind of ideology, because what makes it a party is those common beliefs. But ideology should be determined by how you understand the world, not the other way around. When you see the world with open eyes, and think about it with an open mind, your ideology is grounded in reality. When you see the world through the lens of your ideology, and only think in terms of your ideology, then facts that don't fit the ideology become problems, even if those "facts" are human beings.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was born in Russia in 1918, the year after the Soviet Union was formed. Despite Lenin's anti-religious campaign, his family remained devout Russian Orthodox Christians, but young Aleksandr embraced the anti-religious ideology of Marxism-Leninism. As a young man, Solzhenitsyn joined the Red Army and became a captain in an artillery company. But he wrote a private letter to another officer in which he criticized Joseph Stalin, and was sentenced to eight years in the Soviet prison system called the Gulag, followed by "internal exile," which meant being forced to live in a remote area of Kazakhstan under constant government supervision.

Despite the harsh conditions, Solzhenitsyn began writing. He wrote some 30 books, including novels, memoirs, histories, and even plays. He also returned to his Russian Orthodox roots, because he came to understand that the evils of communism were directly connected to its ideology of militant atheism. He explained how Communist thinking invariably dehumanizes people and leads people to commit atrocities. "Ideology—that is what gives evil-doing its long-sought justification and gives the evildoer the necessary steadfastness and determination. That is the social theory which helps to make his acts seem good instead of bad in his own and others' eyes, so that he won't hear reproaches and curses but will receive praise and honors." [1]

In 1974, Solzhenitsyn was deported to West Germany. Once in the freedom of the West, he became an outspoken criticism of the Soviet Union, particularly its oppression of free thought. Confirming what Alexander Hamilton had wrote in Federalist No. 10 two hundred years earlier, Solzhenitsyn explained that the Communist system was based on lies, but because it controlled every person's access to basic needs like food, water, and shelter, it forced everyone to participate in those lies.

Solzhenitsyn knew that truth was the key to avoid the dehumanization of ideology. He refused to be blinded by his hatred of the Soviet Union. He loved the freedoms of American liberty, but saw that some Americans took those freedoms for granted and held an idealized view of the Soviet system. He frequently wrote and spoke out against this self-blinding ideology that used the very freedoms of America to criticize it while ignoring the vast sins of the Soviet Union. "It has been forgotten that the defects of capitalism represent

the basic flaws of human nature, freed from all limitations just as the various human rights are; that under communism (and communism breathes down the neck of all moderate forms of socialism, which are unstable) — under communism the very same flaws become completely unbridled in any person with the last degree of authority; and that everyone else under that system truly does attain 'equality' — the equality of destitute slaves." [2]

[1] Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*. YMCA-Press, 1973.

[2] Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Acceptance Speech for the Templeton Prize," May 10, 1983.

Personal accounts

A story of a business that moved from NYC or LA to a more friendly environment, such as Florida, Texas, etc. Could use Elon Musk's relocation of his businesses from California.

Primary Sources and Data

- Population shifts among select U.S. states:

State	Political lean ¹	Top Marginal Personal Income Tax Rate (2025/2026) ²	PPP ³ USD	% population change, 7/1/2024-7/1/2025
California	Democratic	13.30	\$91,116	-0.01 to -0.49
Florida	Republican	0	76,440	+0.5-0.99
Hawaii	Democratic	11.0	76,592	- 0.5+
Idaho	Republican	5.3	64,846	+ 1.0+
New Mexico	Democratic	5.9	61,645	-0.01 to -0.49
New York	Democratic	10.9	88,847	0
North Carolina	Republican	4.25/3.99	68,511	+ 1.0+
South Carolina	Republican	6.0	63,179	+ 1.0+
Texas	Republican	0	72,364	+ 1.0+
Utah	Republican	4.5	69,991	+ 1.0+
Vermont	Democratic	8.75	74,580	-0.01 to -0.49

- Sources:

¹ As determined from control of state legislature, party distribution of state delegation to Congress, and voter registration.

² Idaho, North Carolina, and Utah have a flat state income tax for all residents.

³ Per Capita Disposable Income

- <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2026/demo/state-population-percent-change-map.html>
- <https://taxfoundation.org/data/all/federal/us-tax-burden-on-labor-2023/#:~:text=For%20labor%20income%2C%20it%20is%20the%20difference,a%20worker%20making%20the%20country's%20average%20wage.>
- <https://taxfoundation.org/data/all/state/state-income-tax-rates/#:~:text=Top%20marginal%20rates%20span%20from%202.5%20percent,are%20clustered%20within%20a%20narrow%20income%20band.>
- https://www.experian.com/blogs/ask-experian/states-with-the-highest-and-lowest-income-taxes/#:~:text=Table_title%3A%20State%20Income%20Tax%20Rates%20in%20All,2025%3B%203.99%25%20for%202026%20and%20beyond%20%7C
- <https://turbotax.intuit.com/tax-tips/fun-facts/states-with-the-highest-and-lowest-taxes/L6HPAVqSF>
- Hawaii and Florida have very similar disposable income and climate. Yet Hawaii has the greatest year-to-year decrease of any U.S. state, while Florida is among the highest in population growth. According to the table, what is the most likely explanation for this stark difference?
- The states labeled "Democratic" all implement policies similar to those in social democracies such as Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and France. Communist nations such as the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic ("East Germany"), Communist China, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, or "North Korea") all build walls to keep their population in, rather than to protect their nation from people outside trying to get in. How does the data in this table help explain that practice?

- Summary table of economic models

Communism	Socialism	Social Democracy	Free market capitalism
Seeks to end capitalism through violent revolution	Seeks to end capitalism through gradual reforms	Seeks to nationalize key industries and restrain "excesses" of capitalism	Allows market forces to adapt freely to scarcity and demand, leading to the greatest production at the lowest cost.

- Data of communist regimes

	United States		Soviet Union		China	
	1960	1980-90	1960	1980-90	1960	1980-90
Infant mortality (per 1000 live births)	26	12.6	~36-414	~275	Up to 300	~38-42
Life expectancy at birth	69.7	Average:75.4	68.7	Average:69.2	<30	~69
		Women: 78.2		Women: 73.5		
		Men: 71.2		Men: 64.0		
Approximate median household income		\$23,827				
Purchasing Power Parity (PPP)		\$21, 082		\$9,211	\$60	\$315
Average living space per capita (in square meters)		50-60		16		7-10

In 1989, future Russian president Boris Yeltsin visited a Randall's supermarket outside Houston. It is reported that he said to the other Soviet representatives present that if Soviet citizens saw an American grocery store, "there would be a revolution." Two years later, the Soviet government collapsed.

4 Soviet statistics excluded extremely premature or low-birth-weight infants who died within the first seven days, suppressing their numbers by perhaps 25%.

5 Soviet statistics excluded extremely premature or low-birth-weight infants who died within the first seven days, suppressing their numbers by perhaps 25%.

1989 Possessions per 100 families:

Consumer Durable Item	United States	Soviet Union⁶
Television Sets	~200+ (<i>Multiple TVs common</i>)	107 (<i>Mostly 1 per home</i>)
Color Televisions	~95+	49
Refrigerators / Freezers	~115–120 (<i>Deep freezers common</i>)	92
Washing Machines	~75–80 (<i>Plus widespread laundromats</i>)	75
Passenger Cars	~190 (<i>Multi-car households standard</i>)	19
Dishwashers	~45–50	~0 (<i>Deemed a "bourgeois luxury"</i>)

⁶ Not captured in this data is the disparity in capability of items such as refrigerators and washing machines. For example, Soviet refrigerators tended to be small models equivalent to U.S. "bar fridge" units.

- Nordic Model socialist nations
- Note that there is a direct correlation between the degree of social programs and the PPP, but the chart doesn't show that clearly. Instead, it shows that there is a correlation between higher taxes and lower income.

Nation	Average Tax Wedge on Labor (2024)	Top Marginal Personal Income Tax Rate (2025/2026)	Average Net Adjusted Household Disposable Income Per Capita (PPP USD)
us United States	30.1%	37.0% (<i>Federal top rate</i>)	\$51,147
SE Sweden	41.5%	52.3%	\$33,730
NO Norway	36.4%	47.4%	\$39,144
DK Denmark	36.1%	60.5%	\$33,774
Los Angeles (CA)	~38.5%	51.60% (<i>Fed + State + SDI</i>)	\$44,800 (<i>Metro area estimate</i>)
New York City (NY)	~41.2%	54.176% (<i>Fed + State + City</i>)	\$46,200 (<i>Metro area estimate</i>)

In an interview with New York Times journalist Ross Douthat, Bhaskar Sunkara, author of *The Socialist Manifesto*, said:

There's an immediate set of demands that you could call us attempting to bring about doses of socialism within capitalism. So this comes at the realm of decommodification of certain goods, providing them as social rights instead of them being dependent on your ability to pay. Healthcare in America is partially decommodified, if you're elderly, if you're very poor, if you're a child, you're going to have a guaranteed access to healthcare. We want to see that extended. Same thing with things like Social Security and certain other benefits. So an expansion of the welfare state not unlike Norway.

Based on the data in the chart above, why would expanding the U.S. welfare state to match that of Norway be a bad idea?

Activities

Students will examine data on infant mortality, standard of living, housing, life expectancy, and diet to understand the "reality gap" between the promise of communism and the lived experiences of those under its rule. Students will also compare the disposable incomes of the United States, the "Nordic model" socialist nations, and New York City and Los Angeles to see the impact of socialism within otherwise democratic governments.

From Past to Present

Milly Bennet, 1932

The thing you have to do about Russia is what you do about any other 'faith.' You set your heart to know they are right.... And then, when you see things that shudder your bones, you close your eyes and say... 'facts are not important.'

Milly Bennett, letter to "Florence," January 27, 1932, Milly Bennett Papers, box 2, folder 1 (unidentified correspondence, 1932–1933), Hoover Library, Palo Alto, California.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, 2019

I think that there's a lot of people more concerned about being precisely, factually, and semantically correct than about being morally right.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in Anderson Cooper, "Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez: The Rookie Congresswoman Challenging the Democratic Establishment," *60 Minutes*. January 6, 2019.

How does Ocasio-Cortez's dismissive attitude about being "factually...correct" show the same willful ideological blindness as Communist reporter Milly Bennet suggested in her letter?

Module II: Communism in the 20th Century

The 20th century saw Communism reach the height of its global influence, controlling over a third of the world's land area, and roughly 25% of its total population. This provides more than enough examples that the dehumanizing principles of Communism create nothing but starvation and violations of human rights.

Lesson II.1: The Russian Revolution

Summary

In 1917, with World War I raging, the Russian Empire reached the breaking point. Protests turned into revolution, and Germany arranged for Vladimir Lenin to return to Russia to lead the Bolshevik faction. Lenin quickly gained the upper hand and seized control, becoming the founder of the world's first Communist nation, the Soviet Union. In this lesson, students will see the historical examples of key learnings from the first module. They will learn about the conditions in Russia led to the revolution, and how Lenin's attempt to create a stateless, classless paradise through the abolition of private property in fact created a totalitarian regime with the resulting dehumanization of the population and declines in both agricultural and industrial production. Students will also look at early attempts to spread the revolution through the Comintern and Stalin's use of Five Year Plans to try to force the increase of production while covering up the realities of poverty and famine.

Introduction

...the task of Social-Democracy, is to ... divert the working-class movement from ...under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social Democracy... Social-Democracy leads the struggle of the working class not only for better terms for the sale of labour power, but also for the abolition of the social system which compels the propertyless to sell themselves to the rich.

- Vladimir Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?* 1902.

Marxist ideology states that the entire world is divided into two classes, factory workers, who he called the "proletariat," and the factory owners, called the "bourgeoisie." But Marxism is an ideology that ignores reality whenever it doesn't fit the theory. For example, when the first Marxist Revolution came, it wasn't a spontaneous uprising of factory workers around the world. It was a revolt against the Russian leadership, fueled by anger over the disastrous Russian participation in World War I. But it was soon led by a man from a minor noble family, Vladimir Lenin.

This is the first lie of Marxism. It claims to be a movement of workers, but workers have never wanted socialism. Socialism is an idea of wealthy intellectuals, and Lenin was no different. He was the son of an imperial official in Russia, and had studied to be a lawyer. He was not even in Russia when the revolution began. He was on the other side of the front in World War I, living in exile in Germany. But the German government helped him cross the line in the hope that he would disrupt Russia's ability to fight the war, and it worked. Lenin manipulated his way to leadership in the revolution, and justified his strong-handed leadership by claiming to speak for "the workers" or "the people." The reality of communism is that Marx is simply wrong, and it's really a small elite that want his utopian dream. Over time, Lenin developed a complex justification for the fact that he and his small group of officials had to force "the people" to do what "the people" were supposed to want. For this reason, the theory behind communism is sometimes referred to as Marxism-Leninism.

This "first lie" is often seen in the names of communist countries. The "soviets" of Soviet Union were small local workers organizations that supposedly were leading the revolution. But within a year of taking power, Lenin had removed the soviets from exercising any power. The Soviet Union – theoretically, a union of workers groups, or soviets, was in fact a dictatorship. Other communist countries put similar lies in their official names. Communist North Korea is officially named the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, despite being a dictatorship run by a single family for three generations. The Communist nation of East Germany was officially known as the German Democratic Republic, even though it never held a free and open election. The official name of China, the largest Communist nation today, is the People's Republic of China. The last time the people of China got to vote in a meaningful way for their national leaders was in 1948, the year before the Chinese Communist Party took control of the country.

So Lenin's seizure of power in the name of "the people" was always a lie, and it used a lying economic theory to justify itself. Boris Bajanov was an early believer in the lie, but he came to see the truth. He helped Lenin control Russia, holding high positions on leadership councils in the Soviet Union. But he realized that the entire regime was built on lies and violence, so he fled, on foot, across the border into Iran. Despite repeated assassination threats, he published a memoir in which he explained that "the Communist experiment was never an attempt to free humanity; it was the ruthless seizure of an entire country by a small criminal sect. Every decision made at the top had one purpose: to preserve the party's absolute control over every crumb of bread and every thought of the people." [1]

And this lie was not just the product of bad or selfish leadership. It is built into Marxism. Marx bases his theory on the assumption that "the people" all want the same thing, and that anyone who doesn't want that is an enemy of "the people." But this division of all of

humanity into an "us" who is right and justified, and a "them" who are evil and despicable invariably creates "a state of unprecedented misery, moral degradation, and slavery." [2] That was the accusation made by Pitirim Sorokin, who fled Lenin's takeover of Russia in 1922. He saw firsthand how Marxism dehumanized the very people it was supposed to be saving. Once he reached America, he published his detailed diary that he had kept as Lenin rose to power. His daily entries showed clearly the nature of Lenin and his communists. "They have established an organized system of terror, executing thousands without trial, turning cities into cemeteries, and stripping individuals of all rights." [2] Later proponents of communism would blame Stalin for the dehumanizing evil of the Soviet regime, but Bazhanov's diary shows that the evil was there from the start, and that it is inherent in any attempt to impose a Marxist utopia by force. Stalin might have increased the misery and slavery in which people lived, but Lenin created it. And he did so because the lies of Marxism require it.

[1] Boris Bajanov, *Bajanov Reveals the Kremlin: The Memoirs of Stalin's Former Secretary*, 1930.

[2] Pitirim Sorokin, *Leaves from a Russian Diary*, 1924.

Primary Sources and Data

- Passage from *Doctor Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak
- Map of the 16 republics of the USSR
- One or more of the following:
 - Walter Duranty, New York Times articles concealing the Holodomor.
 - Gareth Jones, Press release transcripts exposing the Soviet famine (1933).
 - Vladimir Lenin, The "Hanging Order" targeting kulaks (1918).
 - Official records/maps of the Soviet GULAG system or China's Laogai camps.
 - Soviet Decree on the Separation of Church and State (1918).

Activities

Student will examine facets of life in Soviet Russia such as Soviet propaganda, controls of the press, religious repression, dekulakization, famines, youth indoctrination, Stalin's constitution of 1936 and the Great Purge in comparison to American rights and freedoms.

From Past to Present

Vladimir Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?* 1902

...the task of Social-Democracy, is to ... divert the working-class movement from ...under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social Democracy... Social-Democracy leads the struggle of the working class not only for better terms for the sale of labour power, but also for the abolition of the social system which compels the propertyless to sell themselves to the rich.

- Vladimir Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?* 1902.

Bhaskar Sunkara, interview with Ross Douthat, July 16, 2026

So the question is always, Now, why would you go about calling yourself a democratic socialist? And for me, I call myself a democratic socialist because I actually believe in socialism beyond capitalism. I actually do believe in economy built on the idea that workers should control their workplaces, and on this more radical vision of a society without capitalism.

For Lenin, the point of "Social-Democracy" was not merely to get better working conditions and wages for workers, but to abolish the very system of property, supply, demand, and profits that make up a functioning capitalist economy. Bhaskar Sunkara is a major intellectual leader of democratic socialism in the United States. How do his views fulfill Lenin's goals as stated in 1902?

Lesson II.2: Rise and Fall of the Soviet Union

Summary

This lesson explains the dominant role of the Soviet Union in the development of Communism throughout the 20th Century. It begins with Stalin's repressive rule within the Soviet Union, including an examination of the Roosevelt administration decision to recognize Stalin's government. Students will be introduced to the use of "cult of personality" to maintain control, as well as the Soviet Union's role in spreading Communist influence in Eastern Europe, China, North Korea, Cuba, and elsewhere. Students will also examine U.S. activity to confront and contain the Communist threat, including the Marshall Plan, NATO, the Korean and Vietnam Wars, and CIA activity throughout the Cold War. The session will conclude with an examination of the factors that led to U.S. victory in the Cold War.

Introduction

"Be devoted to the working class, its Party, its state. That is a fine and useful thing. But do not confuse it with devotion to persons, this vain and useless bauble of weak-minded intellectuals."

- Joseph Stalin, "Letter to Comrade Shatunovsky," August 1930

The death of Vladimir Lenin led to a brief power struggle in the Soviet Union. Joseph Stalin emerged as the new head of the Soviet Union, and set about ruthlessly consolidating his power. His thirty year rule was characterized by brutal "five year plans" that collectivized and centralized economic development in an attempt to match the industrial capacity of western democracies. To justify both the need for the plans, and their later failures, Stalin targeted supposed enemies, beginning again with the kulaks that Lenin had targeted. Stalin also relied heavily on forced labor and ended the Soviet practice of controlling factories with local worker collectives. When other leaders in the Communist Party objected, Stalin initiated a purge through show trials and summary executions. His rule was so brutal, even his own daughter defected. She could have had a life of privilege and security, but she saw the evil her father was committing and fled the country, leaving her two adult children behind. When she arrived in the United States, she told the press "I found it impossible to live in a country where one cannot speak one's mind, where an individual's conscience is completely subordinated to state ideology. I came here to America to seek the self-expression that had been denied me for so long in Russia." [1]

The collective impact of Stalin's policies led to the deaths of perhaps as many as 20 million people within the Soviet Union through starvation, prison and labor camp conditions, and outright execution. But Stalin also actively sought to further the spread of Communism. He supported the Chinese Communist Party, leading to a protracted civil war that concluded with the communist dictatorship of the equally brutal Mao Zedong. At the conclusion of World War II, he directly seized control of eastern Europe and imposed a communist regime in northern Korea. With the support of both Stalin and Mao, northern Korea invaded the democratic republic in southern Korea, launching the Korean War. He also supported communist insurgents in Vietnam, which would grow into the Vietnam War. When he failed to secure an alliance with the new nation of Israel, he began to encourage antisemitic policies both within the Soviet Union and across the international Communist movement.

The United States did not stand by quietly as Communist influence spread. The Truman administration made clear that it would support any nation that was threatened by Communism, a position which came to be called the Truman Doctrine. It made good on this pledge through financial support of Greece and Turkey, modeled on postwar reconstruction support known as the Marshall Plan. This financial assistance was largely successful in containing Communism in Europe, but in 1948, Stalin attempted to eliminate the democratic enclave of West Berlin within the Communist nation of East Germany. He instituted a blockade of all land and water access to the city, in the hope of starving the city into submission. Instead, the western democracies, led by the United States, instituted a massive airlift to support the people of West Berlin. This show of resolution on the part of the U.S. and its allies prevented further Communist expansion in Europe, and the founding of NATO served to further secure western Europe from Communist incursions.

Although stymied in Europe, Communism continued to seek new areas to dominate. Truman stopped its spread in Korea, but U.S. efforts to prevent a Communist takeover of Vietnam were not supported by the international community and undermined by leftist anti-war agitation within the United States. In addition, Stalin learned from his boycott of the United Nations (UN) at the start of the Korean War. Far from disabling the organization, his refusal to participate had allowed the United States to work rapidly to stop North Korea's attempted invasion. So Stalin changed his tactics, working within the United Nations to increase his power. He worked to place Soviet officials in high positions within the UN. One such official was Arkady Shevchenko, who became the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, the third highest rank in the organization. Shevchenko, however, saw that Stalin had no interest in the goals of the United Nations, so he began passing information to the American Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and, in 1978, openly defected to the United States. He later explained that he "had reached the highest levels of the Soviet establishment, and what I saw was a system run by cynics who viewed

diplomacy merely as an instrument for global domination and suppression of liberty. I could no longer serve an empire built on lies." [2] Many other Soviet leaders chose to remain in their positions, because it gave them security and comfort. But Shevchenko could not put up with the lies of Communism.

[1] Svetlana Alliluyeva, Statement to the Press, New York, April 26, 1967.

[2] Arkady Shevchenko, *Breaking with Moscow*, 1985.

Primary Sources and Data

There are a great many primary sources from the Cold War Era. Some that could be included are:

- Winston Churchill, "Iron Curtain speech"
- NSC-68, April 7, 1950
- George Kennan, "The Long Telegram," Feb. 22, 1946
- East German Directive No. 101 (Schießbefehl / Order to shoot at the Berlin Wall)
- Soviet propaganda posters
- President Ronald Reagan, "Tear Down This Wall" speech at the Berlin Wall (1987)
- Transcript of Nikita Khrushchev's "Secret Speech" (On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences, 1956)

Activities

The session will contain multiple student activities such as:

- a map activity tracing the spread of Communism and its global influence during the Cold War.
- A writing assignment in which students will use the above map, data from module 1, and additional information such as military strength comparisons to explain the extent of the Communist threat to the United States between 1945 and 1989.
- An analysis of the effect of the Reagan administration in bringing about a successful conclusion to the Cold War.

From Past to Present

Joseph Stalin, August 1930

Be devoted to the working class, its Party, its state. That is a fine and useful thing. But do not confuse it with devotion to persons, this vain and useless bauble of weak-minded intellectuals.

Kshama Sawant, July 17, 2026

the Democratic Party has also betrayed the working class, and people are disenchanted with both parties. When the Democratic establishment anointed Hillary Clinton as a candidate, there was just mass disgust and anger, because if there ever was an epitome of the Goldman Sachs type of class, it was her.

Kshama Sawant served on the Seattle City Council as a member of the Socialist Alternative party from 2014 to 2024. In 2026, she ran for Congress, but placed third in the nonpartisan primary. She has repeatedly expressed her view that the Republican and Democratic Parties are effectively the same. How does her statement of July 17, 2026 show her adherence to Stalin's instructions to Communist Party members?

Lesson II.3: Maoism

Summary

This lesson focuses on the Chinese Civil War and the eventual consolidation of Chinese government under Mao Zedong. Students will use the lens of the 10 phases of genocide to examine Mao's various imposition of Revolutionary campaigns such as the three and five antis, the Great Leap Forward, the Anti-Rightist Movement, and the Cultural Revolution. Students will also consider reasons for the failure of Mao's Five Year Plans and compare them to Stalin's. The lesson will conclude by examining the extent, limitation, and impact of the reforms of Deng Xiaoping.

Introduction

The People's democratic dictatorship uses two methods. Towards the enemy, it uses the method of dictatorship, that is, for as long a period of time as is necessary it does not let them take part in political activities and compels them to obey the law of the People's Government and to engage in labor and, through labor, transform themselves into new men. Towards the people, on the contrary, it uses the method not of compulsion but of democracy, that is, it must necessarily let them take part in political activities and does not compel them to do this or that, but uses the method of democracy in educating and persuading them.

- Mao Zedong, "Closing speech at the Second Session of the First National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference," June 23, 1950.

China has a long history as an empire, but in 1912, it became a Republic. Before the new Republic of China could set up regular elections, however, the country splintered into regions governed by local warlords. In order to try to reunite the country, the nationalist government formed an alliance with the Soviet Union and the small Chinese Communist Party (CCP). This was a mistake that would come back to haunt the Republic of China after World War II. As soon as the war ended, the CCP launched a new war against the legitimate government of China, and by October 1949, all of mainland China was under Communist control. Only the small island of Taiwan was still controlled by the Chinese Republican government. This situation has continued to the present day, with both governments claiming to be the legitimate government of China.

The first leader of Communist China, Mao Zedong, was a ruthless and brutal leader. Even before the civil war had ended, Mao began a policy of land redistribution. The CCP divided the entire population into five groups: landlords, rich peasants, middle peasants, poor peasants, and landless peasants. Property was taken from the landlords in 1946, and by

1947, landlords were being buried alive, dismembered, strangled, and shot all across the country. Specific policies directed that at least one landlord, but preferably more, should be publicly executed in every village, leading to an estimated 2-5 million deaths. Mao also ordered the execution of at least 700,000 people he identified as "counter-revolutionaries," meaning people who were more loyal to the old order. Other so-called counter-revolutionaries were sent to labor camps. Estimates of how many were placed in these camps range from 1.5 million to more than 6 million, with untold numbers dying in the camps.

The numbers are horrific, but they don't begin to tell the full story of the horrors under Mao's rule. Mao's ideological insistence on the superiority of Communism led him to set a goal of having a greater industrial output than the United Kingdom, even though China at the time had a predominantly agricultural economy. His solution to this self-made problem was pure communism: he had the farms, just recently collectivized under the land reforms, combined into massive communes of roughly 5,000 households each. The theory behind this was that communist agricultural work would be more efficient, but the reality was that people had to walk long miles to reach their assigned fields, giving them less time to work. Communist ideology was applied even to the basic biology of farming: farmers were instructed to plant their crops too close together on the theory that seeds from the same "class" would cooperate with one another to create higher yields, when in reality the opposite occurred. At the same time, the communist assumption of commune efficiency led Chinese officials to believe that there would be "excess" workers who could be diverted to industrial work. That meant that farms had fewer people working them.

Despite all these negative impacts on food production, Chinese officials reported falsely glowing results in an effort to please Mao. They reported dramatic increases in production, even as production was actually falling. But Chinese farmers were ordered to ship food out to the cities based on these false numbers, leaving nothing behind to feed themselves. But even as these food shortfalls were beginning to take effect, China continued to export grain. Famine swept the entire country, but was especially deadly in the rural areas – which led to further declines in food production.

The Great Leap Forward was a disaster that damaged Mao's reputation within the government. But Mao had been cultivating a "cult of personality" among the general population. Cults of personality are another way communist dictators try to hide the lies of communist ideology. They promote the leader as having an almost magical connection with the people, so that only the leader can truly speak for the people. In an ideology that claims to be officially atheist, the cult of personality almost takes the place of religious belief. In China, it allowed Mao to use the people to defend himself from other party

leaders. Ji-li Jiang was a middle school student during Mao's reign. She later recalled that "we were brainwashed into believing that Chairman Mao was our true savior and the Communist Party was our real parent." Mao used this "brainwashing" to create what he called the Cultural Revolution. He claimed that there were bourgeois elements hidden within the Chinese Communist Party, and he called on students and other young people root them out. The students formed what were called the Red Guard," organizations that called out, humiliated, punished, and even killed anyone they thought might be "counter revolutionary." The Red Guard targeted government officials, teachers, army officers, even their own parents. Ju-li Jiang wrote, " when I was forced to choose between denouncing my father or defending the truth, I realized the Party demanded that we surrender our humanity." [1]

Another teenager who joined the Red Guard was Jung Chang. She joined out of loyalty to Mao before seeing the senseless violence they perpetrated. She later escaped to the United Kingdom and became a writer. In 1991, she recalled that "in a totalitarian society, human feelings are seen as dangerous counter-revolutionary emotions. Mao required total devotion to the State, demanding that children inform on their own parents and that human decency be subordinated to class struggle." [2] This is the fundamental reality of communism everywhere. Marxism treats people like things, either worker or owner, without any individuality. And because that's how Marxism sees people, that's how Marxists treat people. Socialists claim to be doing what is best for "the people," but in the process, they take away the very humanity from every individual, precisely because they don't see people as individuals.

[1] Ji-li Jiang, *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*, 1997.

[2] Jung Chang, *Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China*, 1991.

Primary Sources and Data

Sources that may be incorporated into instruction include:

- Graphs showing food production during Great Leap Forward; death rate during Great Leap Forward
- Official policy documents detailing China's internal Hukou (passport) or Social Credit System
- Mao Zedong, Quotations from Chairman Mao Tse-tung (The Little Red Book)
- Big-character posters (Dazibao) from the Cultural Revolution
- The Declaration of University Students / Hunger Strike Manifesto (May 1989)

- Declassified Western diplomatic cables regarding the military crackdown on June 4, 1989
- Ten Phases of Genocide (See Module I, Lesson 1)

Activities

Students will complete a graphic organizer that shows how the Maoist campaigns to change Chinese society align with the 10 Phases of Genocide.

From Past to Present

Mao Zedong, "Closing speech at the Second Session of the First National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference," June 23, 1950.

The People's democratic dictatorship uses two methods. Towards the enemy, it uses the method of dictatorship, that is, for as long a period of time as is necessary it does not let them take part in political activities and compels them to obey the law of the People's Government and to engage in labor and, through labor, transform themselves into new men. Towards the people, on the contrary, it uses the method not of compulsion but of democracy, that is, it must necessarily let them take part in political activities and does not compel them to do this or that, but uses the method of democracy in educating and persuading them.

New York City mayor Zohran Mamdani, June 2026

When we talk about my politics, you know, I call myself a Democratic socialist in many ways inspired by the words of Dr. [Martin Luther] King from decades ago, who said, 'Call it democracy, call it Democratic-Socialism, there has to be a better distribution of wealth for all of God's children in this country.'

When Mao described his government as "democratic dictatorship," he claimed to distinguish between enemies who would be dealt with through dictatorial labor camps and "the people" who be educated and persuaded through "democracy." But democracy is not a method for the government to influence the people, it is the way the people choose the government. And the "enemies" Mao is fighting are simply the people within China that he blamed for the failures of his government. Mao is demonstrating a key communist strategy of distraction by misusing words in ways that confuse and attempt to hide the truth of the horrors of Communism.

In what ways does Mamdani's quote of Dr. Martin Luther King reflect the same strategy of distraction?

Keep in mind that Mao was speaking here well before both the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, yet in hindsight, his ability to do those things is beyond question. How might we come to look back at Mamdani's words? Could they be used to justify all the excesses of communism?

Lesson II.4: Communism Across Asia

Summary

In this lesson, students see how the Communist drive for control spreads beyond national borders. They compare the Communist regimes of North Korea, Vietnam, and Cambodia to see clear examples of how communism leads to cults of personality around communist leaders and dehumanization of the entire population. They also begin to understand how both of these things grow out of the foundational lies on which communist regimes are necessarily built.

Introduction

But now, despite the bombs, despite the crimes being created---being committed against them by Richard Nixon, these people own their own land, build their own schools----the children learning, literacy---illiteracy is being wiped out, there is no more prostitution as there was during the time when this was a French colony. In other words, the people have taken power into their own hands, and they are controlling their own lives.

- Jane Fonda, "Radio Broadcast from Hanoi," August 22, 1972.

As Arkady Shevchenko learned, the Soviet leaders were only interested in "global domination and suppression of liberty." At the end of World War II, Stalin did everything he could to ensure the spread of communism into areas already reeling from the occupation of Germany and Japan. His efforts captured Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Moldavia outright, making them part of the Soviet Union. He also imposed nominally independent communist governments in Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland, and East Germany.

The Soviet Union stretches from Europe to the Pacific. In Asia, Stalin supported the rise of a communist dictatorship in northern Korea, and supported Communist uprisings in Vietnam and Cambodia. While less extensive than the territory Stalin controlled in Europe, the impact would prove to be far great.

North Korea

After World War II, northern Korea was to be temporarily administered by the Soviet Union, while the southern half would be supported by the United States. The two nations had agreed to hold elections for a united Korean government, but instead, the Soviet installed Kim Il Sung as a communist dictator, while the southern half held democratic elections to establish a true republic. Korea would become two countries, a democratic Republic of

Korea in the south, and a communist Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the north. Because the two names are confusingly similar, and the communist name is intentionally deceptive, the two countries are commonly called simply South Korea and North Korea.

At the time of their division, North Korea had more industry, while South Korea was a more highly-populated agricultural area. This was the rare instance where a communist nation was actually industrialized, but it wasn't the workers who had called for communism. It was entirely imposed by Kim Il Sung and his supporters in China and the Soviet Union. After the war, Kim consolidated power and began constructing a cult of personality to support his rule. To strengthen the North Korean's belief in him, he cut off all contact with the outside world and strongly censored access to outside information, even from other Communist nations. He also permanently divided the country into three classes based on the perceived loyalty to him. The lowest class, called "hostile," consisted of land owners, intellectuals, and people who had cooperated with Japan when it had occupied Korea. But this was a permanent class, so today, the grandchildren of people who cooperated with Japan continue to have the lowest access to education, housing, and even food.

Like all Communist nations, North Korea harshly punished any suspected disagreement. But Kim Il Sung took this to the extreme: the entire family of the accused individual was punished. In 1977, a seven-year-old boy, Kang Chol-hwan, was sent to prison along with his family because his grandfather had lived in Japan. "Under North Korea's system of hereditary guilt, entire families – three generations – are condemned to the gulags for a single member's political misstep," he would explain later. In the camp, the guards treated the children harshly in an attempt to make them loyal to Kim. "In Camp 15, starvation and brutalization were deliberate tools used to break the human soul," [1] Kang recalled. But it didn't work. Kang was released in 1987, and in 1992, he escaped across the border to China and eventually made his way to the free nation of South Korea.

Kim's control over the population only strengthened with time. By the end of his life, he had mandated total loyalty to himself. People were required to write his name in bold or a larger size. Travel certificates were required for anyone who left their home county, and the only source of information for anyone were the official publications of the government. Kim Il Sung appointed his son, Kim Jong Il, to be his successor, ensuring a stable maintenance of communist control through his family, even after his death. In turn, Kim Jong Il appointed his youngest son, Kim Jong Un, and Kim Jong Un is widely expected to nominate his sister, Kim Jong Un, to succeed him. The Kim family maintains the strong cult of personality that supports their rule, making it not only illegal, but, after three generations of enforcement, almost unthinkable for any North Korean to disagree with them. In a sense, Communism in Korea has come full circle to be an absolute monarchy.

Vietnam

North Korea was not the only Communist regime in Asia. In Southeast Asia, Ho Chi Minh took power as a communist dictator of Vietnam. The United States tried to prevent him from taking control of the southern part of the country, but undermined by anti-war demonstrations within the United States, and lacking the international support it had in the Korean War, the United States pulled out of Vietnam after a 20 year struggle. Vietnam has remained a communist country ever since.

In Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh's communists took advantage of Vietnamese resentment of foreign control to gain followers. The argument was that Communism provided a way for Vietnam to achieve freedom and independence after almost 100 years of French colonization. But once again, the communist promises were false. Doan Van Toai had been an opponent of the South Vietnamese government. He welcomed the communist takeover in 1975. But he quickly saw through the lies of Communism. "I had spent years fighting for what I believed would be peace and freedom, only to find that the communist victory meant the death of both." Lured by communism's false promise of universal harmony, Toai found that instead, communism creates the appearance of harmony through brutal oppression. "The party demanded not just total obedience, but the total surrender of independent thought. In the new Vietnam, the entire country had been turned into a prison." [2]

Duong Thu Huong was a young woman in the Communist Youth Brigade supporting the fighters of North Korea during the war. "We sacrificed our youth, our blood, and our innocence for a dream of liberation. But when the war ended, we discovered that we had merely traded foreign domination for an even more suffocating tyranny – a regime that feared truth and turned human beings into mechanical servants of the state." [3] Too late, she saw that communism is based on the assumption that someone – Marx, in part, along with the leader or small circle of leaders of each communist nation – knows what is best for everyone. But that invariably means forcing people to do what the leadership thinks is best. Such a regime cannot tolerate disagreement, because it is based on the assumption that the leader knows best. If anything even hints that the leader is capable of making mistakes, it must be ruthlessly repressed. No one is perfect. In a democracy, the various individual imperfections of the citizens cancel each other out, leading to good decisions – which includes changes if mistakes are made. Communism has no mechanism to cancel out imperfection, so it seeks to eliminate the appearance of imperfection through propaganda, control of the population, and brutal enforcement.

Cambodia

While all communist regimes are inherently repressive, one of the worst was the four years of Pol Pot's rule in Cambodia. Over the course of his regime, perhaps as much as ¼ of the population died, not merely from starvation and oppression, but through direct killing.

Unlike other Communist leaders, Pol Pot did not publicly lead Cambodia. He hid his leadership behind a government that actually had no power. Instead, all decisions were made by his central group, called the Angkar. Ideologically, the Angkar held that agricultural peasants were inherently more trustworthy than urban workers. Because of this, every resident was forcibly removed from cities into the countryside. Loung Ung was just five years old when she and her family were "evacuated" from the capital, Phnom Pen. "The Angkar taught us that an individual's life was completely worthless," she recalled later. "Their motto was: 'To keep you is no benefit, to destroy you is no loss.' In their pursuit of a pure communist society, they destroyed families, faith, and every trace of human dignity." [4]

The Pol Pot regime ruthlessly sought to exterminate any "enemies," which meant anyone who questioned their rule, but also included people who had connections with foreign governments, or even just spoke a foreign language; anyone with an education; Christians, Muslims, and Buddhists; even people who simply wore glasses! These people faced the constant threat of being taken without warning to what would later be called the "killing fields." These were some 20,000 sites across the country where people were simply executed and buried where they fell. Officials involved in this genocide were one of the few communist authorities to face justice for their inhumane crimes. In testimony, child labor camp survivor Arn Chorn-Pond recalled, "In the labor camps, they turned children into guards and executioners to strip away their conscience. We worked from dawn to dusk with almost no food. If you showed grief, weakness, or asked questions, you were taken to the killing fields." [5]

The "us" versus "them" mentality is written into Marxism. All the workers are good, and everyone else is a "capitalist," or the "bourgeoisie," and therefore bad. There can be no debate, no difference of opinion, because claims to know what's best. The only choice for "the people" in whose name communism claims to rule is to comply or face punishment. Across Asia, from North Korea to Vietnam to Cambodia, this dehumanizing logic was taken to its extreme. But Communism's repression wasn't limited to Asia and Europe. It also reached into the Americas.

[1] Kang Chol-hwan, *The Aquariums of Pyongyang: Ten Years in the North Korean Gulag*, 2001.

[2] Doan Van Toai, *The Vietnamese Gulag*, 1979.

[3] Duong Thu Huong, *Public Statements and Dissident Essays*, 1990.

[4] Loung Ung, *First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia Remembers*, 2000.

[5] Arn Chorn-Pond, Oral Testimony, Cambodian Living Arts Archives, 2001.

Primary Sources and Data

Some possible sources to include may be:

- Kim Il-sung, Speech on Juche: On Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing Juche in Ideological Work (1955)
- Examples of propaganda images produced by each regime
- Harry Truman, "Address to Congress Recommending Assistance to Greece and Turkey," March 12, 1947. ("Truman Doctrine")
- Harry Truman, "Radio and Television Address to the American People on the Situation in Korea." July 19, 1950.
- Harry Truman, "News Conference," June 29, 1950.
- Harry Truman, "Radio and Television Report to the American People on the Situation in Korea," September 1, 1950. <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/public-papers/232/radio-and-television-report-american-people-situation-korea>
- Dwight Eisenhower, press conference, April 7, 1954 ("Domino Theory")
- Lyndon B. Johnson, "Address on Vietnam Before the National Legislative Conference," September 1967.

Activities

Students create a graphic organizer that compares the Communist regimes in each nation in their use of propaganda, the extent of a cult of personality around their leadership, and the manipulation of information to control the population.

From Past to Present

Jane Fonda, "Radio Broadcast From Hanoi," August 22, 1972

But now, despite the bombs, despite the crimes being created---being committed against them by Richard Nixon, these people own their own land, build their own schools----the children learning, literacy---illiteracy is being wiped out, there is no more prostitution as there was during the time when this was a French colony. In other words, the people have taken power into their own hands, and they are controlling their own lives.

Darializa Avila Chevalier, May 24, 2026

People, including children, are dying in Cuba as Trump continues to strangle a peaceful, sovereign nation. And now, the indictment of former President Raúl Castro is a clear sign of an impending regime-change invasion in Cuba.

Jane Fonda was a movie star during the time of the Vietnam War. Avila Chevalier was a candidate for Congress from New York in 2026. Compare her statement to that of Jane Fonda. Which was more detrimental to U.S. security?

Lesson II.5: Castro and the Cuban Revolution

Summary

Students examine Castro's exposure as a socialist through his authoritarian policies, showing that communism is inevitably totalitarian. Through a focus on individuals who fled his regime, students see the human impacts of socialist policies.

Introduction

Do the people have time now for elections? No! What were the political parties? Just an expression of class interests. Here there is just one class, the humble; that class is in power, and so it is not interested in the ambition of an exploiting minority to get back in power. Those people would have no chance at all in an election. The revolution has no time to waste in such foolishness. There is no chance for the exploiting class to regain power. The revolution and the people know that the revolution expressed their will; the revolution does not come to power with Yankee arms. It comes to power through the will of the people fighting against arms of all kinds, Yankee arms.

- Fidel Castro, May Day Celebration, 1961

On January 1, 1959, Fidel Castro took power in Cuba. He began to implement a Socialist government. At first, Castro tried to hide his intentions. He installed a moderate as President, and only claimed to be the "Representative of the Rebel Armed Forces of the Presidency." He had the President ban all political parties, and claimed to be planning for multiparty elections. In reality, though, he was an absolute dictator and a firm socialist.

His first policy was to round up political opponents. Although trials were held, outside observers described them as unfair. In response, Castro described his courts as "revolutionary," so they operated not by the law, but by "moral conviction." Once again, a Communist regime was administering harsh punishments, even executions, not because the law had been violated, but because the leader felt threatened. Armando Valladares spent 22 years in a Cuban prison simply for refusing to place a sign on his desk supporting communism. He later explained, "For me, defending human rights was not a political strategy, it was a moral obligation. I spent twenty-two years in Castro's prisons because I refused to sign a piece of paper declaring loyalty to a dictatorship that destroyed the liberties of my people." [1]

Although he continued to deny it, Castro's subsequent policies were explicitly communist: he unilaterally declared all rents for low-income workers to be cut in half, and then began taking over tourist businesses. He imposed land reforms that confiscated land from large

landowners and gave it to local peasants. Not satisfied, he began fully confiscating land owned by foreign landowners and even wealthy Cubans who no longer lived on the island. He then nationalize sugar production and oil refining. Within one year of taking power, Castro had redistributed 15% of the nation's wealth.

Castro repeatedly insisted that he was acting on the will of the people, but refused to hold elections that might actually reflect the choices of the Cuban people. Cuba sits just 90 miles from the United States coast, and less than an hour by plane. As soon as Castro took power, people began to flee his communist dictatorship. One such person was Enrique Prado, who explained that he had "witnessed Castro's revolution tear apart my homeland, stealing our homes and our liberties. Coming to the United States showed me what real freedom is: a constitutional republic where the government serves the citizen, and where every person has the unalienable right to earn their own livelihood." [2]

In all, over one million people have left Cuba for the U.S. since Castro took power. Among those who have come seeking liberty and security are singer Gloria Estefan and baseball player Jose Canseco, while such Americans as Jeff Bezos, Senator Ted Cruz, and Secretary of State Marco Rubio all have parents who left Cuba for the freedom of the United States.

[1] Armando Valladares, *Against All Hope: A Memoir of Life in Castro's Gulag*, 1986.

[2] Enrique Prado, *Black Ops: The Life of a CIA Shadow Warrior*, 2022.

Primary Sources and Data

Students will read excerpts such as:

- Fidel Castro, "Second Havana Declaration," 1962.
- Fidel Castro, "May Day Celebration," 1961.
- Fidel Castro, "History Will Absolve Me," 1953.
- Fidel Castro, "Speech Before Leaving for the Moncada Barracks," July 26, 1953.
- "Biographic Summary: Latin America Solidarity Organization," September 6, 1968.
- Troy Sacquety, "Che Guevara: A False Idol for Revolutionaries," *Veritas* Vol. 4, No. 4, 2008. [Accessed](#) on 7/18/2026.
- Cuban [solidarity posters](#).
- [Map of Communist parties, 1955](#).
- U.S. Department of State, *Cuba: The Capital of 21st Century Communism*. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/Cuba-Report.pdf>, July 20, 2026.

Activities

Students will analyze Castro's words and actions to identify communist influences. The activity will conclude with a written activity identifying differences between classical Marxist-Leninist communism and Castro's "anti-imperialist" communism and analyzing how it created additional challenges for freedom, democracy, and U.S. security.

From Past to Present

Fidel Castro, May Day Celebration, 1961

Do the people have time now for elections? No! What were the political parties? Just an expression of class interests. Here there is just one class, the humble; that class is in power, and so it is not interested in the ambition of an exploiting minority to get back in power. Those people would have no chance at all in an election. The revolution has no time to waste in such foolishness. There is no chance for the exploiting class to regain power. The revolution and the people know that the revolution expressed their will; the revolution does not come to power with Yankee arms. It comes to power through the will of the people fighting against arms of all kinds, Yankee arms.

Zohran Mamdani, 2021

Right now, if we're talking about the cancellation of student debt, if we're talking about Medicare for all, you know, these are issues which have the groundswell of popular support across this country. But then there are also other issues that we firmly believe in, whether it's BDS or whether it is the end goal of seizing the means of production, where we do not have the same level of support at this very moment.

"BDS" stands for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions. It is a Palestinian campaign targeting Israeli economic interests. It is widely supported by socialists, including the Democratic Socialists of America, as part of their "anti-imperialist" stance. How does Mamdani's stated position on this, as well as on Marxist revolution, reflect the same disdain for democratic processes Castro openly declared in 1961?

Lesson II.6: The Enemies Within

Summary

In this session, students will be introduced to the communist organizations and individuals that have operated within the United States, starting with the origins of the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) in 1919, the growth of Communist membership during the New Deal years, the betrayal of the Rosenbergs, and the attempts to stop domestic communism by McCarthy and his allies in the postwar years. Students will also be introduced to the ties between Communism and the Black Panthers and other radical civil rights organizations, as well as radical movements of the 1960s such as the Weather Underground.

Introduction

What I generally say, and I answered the brother and tried to explain in a few words why I was a communist, and I said, essentially, the same thing that I said when I told you why I was a revolutionary. Because I have a very strong love for oppressed people, for my people. I want to see them free, and I want to see all oppressed people throughout the world free. And I realize that the only way that we can do this is by moving towards a revolutionary society where the needs, and the interests, and the wishes of all people can be respected.

- Angela Davis, 1972

The false promise of communism has repeatedly deceived people, even here in the United States. Even as Lenin consolidated his power in Moscow, the Communist Party was emerging within the United States. The Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) began in 1919, drawing its support mostly from factory workers, immigrants, and African Americans. The United States government sought to defend itself from the rising threat of the Communist Party by deporting foreign-born communists. One woman who gladly accepted her deportation was Emma Goldman, a Russian-born radical living in the United States. She was deported to Russia and arrived expecting to find the promised workers' paradise. Instead, she discovered the early stages of Lenin's Marxist tyranny: mass executions, forced labor, concentration camps, and all while denying fundamental rights such as free speech, free press, and freedom of religion. Her idealistic beliefs were shocked by the reality she found. In 1923 she escaped the Soviet Union and wrote a memoir to expose the truth of Marxism-Leninism. "The centralization of power by the Communist State had killed every vitality and effort of the masses... The Bolshevik dictatorship was not defending the revolution; it was maintaining its own monopoly of power by terror, prison, and the bullet. It had created a police state far worse than the one it overthrew." [1]

With the Great Depression, the appeal of the CPUSA increased among the many unemployed. It focused on organizing labor unions and working against fascist movements, which gave it an air of credibility. Despite that, CPUSA was heavily involved in espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union throughout the 1930s and 40s.

In 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy began trying to expose Communist sympathizers within the State Department. A Senate committee chaired by Democrat Millard Tydings issued a report that described McCarthy's accusations as a "fraud and a hoax," but U.S. decryption of Soviet spy messages later showed that the Soviet Union did, in fact, have widespread spy networks throughout the U.S. government.

Despite the pushback at the time, McCarthy's work did lead to a decline in CPUSA membership. By 1959, the CPUSA was struggling, but beginning in 1959, the Soviet Union began financial support of the CPUSA, which it continued until 1989. As a result, the CPUSA remained a loyal mouthpiece for Soviet propaganda for thirty years. Rising leftist activism throughout the 1960s, however, made the CPUSA increasingly irrelevant.

International Communism did not limit its work within the United States to the CPUSA, however. Through the 1960s, global Communism came to be increasingly involved in independence movements in Asia and Africa, and through these movements, communism found new audiences among the American left. While Martin Luther King is famous for his work to end racist practices in America, he also advocated for various socialist policies. More extreme Civil Rights activists, such as the Black Panther Party, and anti-war demonstrators aligned themselves with other communist figures such as Mao Zedong of China, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara of Cuba, and even Ho Chi Minh of Vietnam, against whom the United States was fighting the Vietnam War. New groups, such as the Weather Underground, embraced Communism's goals of violent struggle against the United States. After failing to spark a communist revolt through organized riots, the Weather Underground launched some 25 bombing attacks against U.S. targets in the early 1970s.

[1] Emma Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia*, 1923.

Primary Sources and Data

- Joseph McCarthy, Wheeling Speech
- Trial transcripts of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg (1951).
- Writings of Angela Davis
- FBI case files

Activities

Students will complete a graphic organizer identifying key Soviet spies within the United States and the impact they had.

From Past to Present

Angela Davis, 1972

What I generally say, and I answered the brother and tried to explain in a few words why I was a communist, and I said, essentially, the same thing that I said when I told you why I was a revolutionary. Because I have a very strong love for oppressed people, for my people. I want to see them free, and I want to see all oppressed people throughout the world free. And I realize that the only way that we can do this is by moving towards a revolutionary society where the needs, and the interests, and the wishes of all people can be respected.

Platform of Claire Valdez, 2026

International Solidarity, Not War and Genocide

For decades, we have been sold a lie: that the U.S. empire defends freedom, advances democracy, and protects human rights. We've been told that wars abroad keep us safe at home. In reality, the bipartisan war machine has delivered immense suffering around the world while doing little to improve the lives of working people here or abroad. Claire will fight to end it.

In her 20206 campaign for Congress, Claire Valdez declared US foreign policy and defense of human rights internationally to be "a lie," implying that the U.S. has instead promoted genocide. In what ways does this platform statement draw from the ideas of Communist Party member Angela Davis?

Module III: Communism Today

Despite the multiple examples of totalitarian governments, widespread death, dehumanization, and economic failure of every communist revolution, communism continues to hold sway over too many of the world's people.

Lesson III.1: Cuba

Summary

In Module II, students learned about Fidel Castro's Communist rule in Cuba. Here, students will learn about the subsequent rule of Raúl Castro and Miguel Díaz-Canel. They will examine firsthand accounts and available data to understand that, despite claims of "reform," Cuba remains a socialist state to the continuing detriment of its people.

Introduction

No one should claim they have been deceived: the Guidelines will signal the road towards a socialist future, adapted to Cuba's conditions and not to the capitalist and neo-colonial past which was defeated by the Revolution. Planning, and not free market, shall be the distinctive feature of the economy. As was outlined in the third general Guideline, the concentration of ownership shall not be allowed.

- Raul Castro, "Closing Address to the Cuban National Assembly," January 1, 2011

As you learned earlier, Fidel Castro came to power by overthrowing the U.S. allied President Batista. Once secure in his power, Castro openly allied his island nation with the Soviet Union and declared his allegiance to the global Communist Revolution. As part of his attempt to gain leadership within the larger Communist movement, Castro developed a theory of "anti-imperialist" Communism that expanded beyond Marxist concepts of capitalism to create a global model of a world divided into oppressors and oppressed that would come to define leftist politics around the world.

Castro's declining health led him to begin stepping down as leader of Cuba in 2008, a process he completed in 2011. His brother, Raúl Castro, then led the nation until 2021, when he, in turn, stepped down in favor of Miguel Díaz-Canel. Both leaders, however, made clear their continuing commitment to communist practices which have continued to impoverish the nation and leave the people of Cuba in dire need of basic necessities of life such as food, water, and healthcare, while runaway inflation has put what little is available financially out of reach for the vast majority of Cuban citizens. Despite these hardships,

Díaz-Canel continues to rely on failed central planning and inefficient state-run industries to try to supply his people, despite clear failures of water, power, agricultural, and manufacturing infrastructure.

Personal accounts

['Starving to Death': Young People in Cuba Tell of the Toll of Trump Administration's Sanctions - Ms. Magazine](#)

[Energy crisis: The daily struggle to survive in Cuba, an island on the verge of darkness | International](#)

Primary Sources and Data

In addition to the personal accounts noted above, sources students will read may include:

- Raul Castro, "Closing Address to the Cuban National Assembly," January 1, 2011.
- Amnesty International, "[Cuba: Increasing harassment of prisoners of conscience and their families](#)," February 9, 2026.
- Committee on Homeland Security, "ICYMI: Homeland Republicans Examine New Evidence of Potential CCP Surveillance Infrastructure in Cuba," May 8, 2025
- Nora Gámez Torres, "Authorities in Cuba begin to punish young protesters in summary trials," *Miami Herald*. July 22, 2021.
- U.S. Department of State, *Cuba: The Capital of 21st Century Communism*. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/Cuba-Report.pdf>, July 20, 2026.

Activities

Students will respond to a writing prompt asking them to assess the various hardships faced by the people of Cuba and the ways in which central planning and state-run enterprise have created the current crisis.

From Past to Present

Raul Castro, "Closing Address to the Cuban National Assembly," January 1, 2011

No one should claim they have been deceived: the Guidelines will signal the road towards a socialist future, adapted to Cuba's conditions and not to the capitalist and neo-colonial past which was defeated by the Revolution. Planning, and not free market, shall be the distinctive feature of the economy. As was outlined in the third general Guideline, the concentration of ownership shall not be allowed.

Claire Valdez, July 4, 2026

Freedom is only possible when we have the conditions for the good life — healthcare, housing, education, and dignity on the job. But the system is rigged and our planet poisoned by billionaires, bosses, and war profiteers.

Claire Valdez is a socialist running for Congress as a Democrat. Her political platform calls for government control over housing, health care, transportation, and other areas. She argues that government control over these areas will provide "the good life." How does the example of Cuba today illustrate the flaws in her thinking?

Lesson III.2: North Korea

Summary

While Communism in Europe has been marginalized by the collapse of the Soviet Union, Communist regimes maintain firm control in Asian nations such as Laos, Vietnam, and North Korea. Students will begin the lesson by exploring how *Juche* has supported the development of a cult-of-personality around the Kim family. They will then compare life in North and South Korea as an example of the negative consequences of both Communist and totalitarian government.

Introduction

Socialism is a human ideal, an inevitable course of historical development, and therefore it is perfectly clear that socialism will rise again in the end.

- Kim Il-Sung, *Reminiscences: With the Century*, Vol 7.

The United States won the Cold War against the Soviet Union, but the legacy of Cold War battles lives on. In Asia, North Korea and Vietnam remain communist despite U.S. efforts to prevent communist control during the Cold War. Each would appear to have chosen a different path in the post-Cold War world, but under the surface, each shows the inherent failings of Communism and the resulting damage to individuals living under their rule.

In North Korea, the Kim dynasty remains firmly ensconced in power after three generations, with no sign of weakening the family's dictatorial grip over the nation. Media access is carefully controlled within North Korea, leading to a nationwide cult of personality and a state-run ideology, "*Juche*," that combines Marxism-Leninism and nationalism and promotes the near-deification of the North Korean leader. The isolation required to maintain this cult has cut North Korea off from almost all international trade, with the result that famine is a fact of life for almost the entire population, yet the actual toll of the national food shortages is almost impossible to estimate. The North Korean population largely survives, unknowingly, on the support of the Chinese Communist Party.

Personal accounts

Primary Sources and Data

Students may examine sources such as:

- Che Guevara, "Message to the Tricontinental," April 1967.

- Vann H. Van Diepen, "Is North Korea Pursuing a "Juche-Oriented" Nuclear Triad?" *38 North*, July 16, 2026. <https://www.38north.org/2026/07/is-north-korea-pursuing-a-juche-oriented-nuclear-triad/>
- Kibum Han, "North Korea Balances Between China and Russia While Hardening Its Regional Posture," *38 North*, July 15, 2026. <https://www.38north.org/2026/07/north-korea-balances-between-china-and-russia-while-hardening-its-regional-posture/>
- Gabriella Wangmu Zhaxi, "North Korea Rebuilds Anti-American Rhetoric and Education," *38 North*, June 18, 2026. <https://www.38north.org/2026/06/north-korea-rebuilds-anti-american-rhetoric-and-education/>

Activities

Students will compare the "cult of personality" propaganda under each of the three Kims to have lead North Korea to show the role veneration of the Kim family plays in supporting the dictatorship.

From Past to Present

Kim Il-Sung, *Reminiscences: With the Century*, Vol 7

Socialism is a human ideal, an inevitable course of historical development, and therefore it is perfectly clear that socialism will rise again in the end.

Hasan Piker, June 11, 2026

For the longest time, I thought we were so far away from socialism, and we might still be far away from socialism, but we do have an opportunity right here, right now, more than ever before.

Kim Il-Sung was the founder of the Kim dynasty that continues to rule North Korea. When he died in 1994, he had written a total of eight volumes of a autobiography. This quote comes from Volume 7, which covers the years from November 1937 through March 1940, as Communist forces were training to fight Japanese occupiers. Kim's account is highly untrustworthy and completely unverifiable, and was likely written to minimize the role Soviet support and U.S. pressure on Japan played in Kim's ability to seize power in the northern half of the Korean peninsula. As such, Kim plays up the "inevitability" of his socialist movement.

Compare that "inevitable" socialist rise to the social media influencer Hasan Piker's claim that socialism has an opportunity "more than ever before." What might motivate Piker to echo Kim Il-sung's propaganda?

Lesson III.3: Venezuela

Summary

This lesson traces the rise of Socialist ideology in local political movements, the involvement of outside influences such as Cuba, Columbian Marxists, and Iran in the strengthening of these movements, and the election of Hugo Chávez . The lesson will also show how Chávez 's policies, especially nationalization of the oil industry, were tied to Venezuela's connection with Cuba and continued under Maduro. The lesson culminates with an activity that shows the economic impacts of nationalization and other "reforms" of the Fifth Republic Movement.

Introduction

Being rich is bad, it is inhuman.

- Hugo Chávez, April 14, 2005

The unique thing about the rise of socialism in Venezuela is that it came not through a violent revolution, but through an election. Hugo Chávez openly ran on overturning Venezuela's Constitution. Despite his clearly stated goal of overturning the very system under which he was running, he was able to legitimately win election with over 56% of the vote. Once elected, Chavez wasted no time overturning the constitution. Even in his oath of office, he signaled his intentions by adding the phrase "over this dying Constitution" in the traditional text. He abolished both the congress and the judicial system, supporting his move with a national referendum. While he also won that vote, he did so largely due to over 60% of the voters refusing to participate in the election. From that point forward, while Chavez would continue to hold elections, his control over the nation was effectively dictatorial. Elections were controlled in various ways to ensure his victories. Over his subsequent two terms as President, Chávez openly transformed Venezuela into a Communist totalitarian state and shifted Venezuela's political allegiance from the United States to Cuba.

Chávez was elected to a fourth term, but died without taking the oath of office for the term. His successor, vice-president Nicolás Maduro, narrowly won a special election to become president in 2013. His opponent, U.S. officials, and international observers all questioned the results, but Maduro was able to quickly consolidate his power. Within six months, Maduro was given "temporary" powers to rule by decree, becoming a true dictator. While the justification for these extraordinary powers was to give him the ability to solve the country's economic crisis, his reliance on communist solutions only worsened the

problem. At the same time, security forces under Maduro carried out over 8,000 killings of individuals said to be gang members.

Personal accounts

Primary Sources and Data

Students will work with sources such as:

- Danny Citrinowicz, "Iran in Latin America," *INSS Insight* No. 1885, August 7, 2024
- U.S. Department of State, *Cuba: The Capital of 21st Century Communism*.
<https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/Cuba-Report.pdf>, July 20, 2026.
- Alejandro Valasco, "The Many Faces of Chavismo," *NACLA Report*. March 16, 2022.
- Edwin Feulner, "[Venezuela is a Ticking Time Bomb](#)," *Victims of Communism*, Jul 24, 2026.

Activities

Using documents including images, tables, and graphs, students will explain the impacts of "Chavismo" on the economy, public health, and standard of living for Venezuelans.

From Past to Present

Hugo Chávez, April 14, 2005

Being rich is bad, it is inhuman.

Claire Valdez, June 16, 2026

We're at this terrible crisis moment where bosses and billionaires are crushing working people.

Chávez was an avowed socialist and a communist dictator when he declared that it was "inhuman" to have wealth. Claire Valdez was running for Congress when she declared that "bosses and billionaires are crushing" American workers. How does the history of Chávez's rule show the danger of electing people with views like his?

Lesson III.4: China

Summary

This lesson explores the ongoing human rights abuses of the CCP regime. While China engages in global propaganda efforts to portray a rational international image, it continues to control religious practice, personal expression, and media. At the same time, the treatment of Uyghur and other Muslim minorities within China, as well as Tibetan Buddhists.

Introduction

Article 4: *De-extremification shall persist in the basic directives of the party's work on religion, persist in an orientation of making religion more Chinese and under law, and actively guide religions to become compatible with socialist society.*

Article 7: *Every unit and individual shall conscientiously resist and oppose extremism,*

Article 12: *De-extremification shall persist in the correct political orientation and direction of public opinion to carry forward the main themes and transmit positive energy and report words and acts of extremism.*

Article 30: *All aspects of society shall jointly participate in de-extremification efforts. Every ethnic group shall study and follow the law; and build identification with the great motherland, the Chinese people, Chinese culture, the Communist Party of China, and socialism with Chinese characteristics*

Article 35: *Religious groups shall make interpretations of religious cannon appropriate for improved modern standards*

Article 44: *Families and their members shall respect and obey the law. Parents shall influence their children with positive conduct, and educate their children to respect science, pursue civility, preserve ethnic unity, and resist and oppose extremism.*

- Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Regulation on De-extremification, March 29, 2017.

China was founded as a Communist nation by Mao Zedong in 1949. Mao, like Stalin, implemented the parts of Marxism that strengthened his power and downplayed others. But there was no question that his "people's democratic dictatorship" was a totalitarian Communist nation. No Chinese leader since Mao has had the same political strength – until the current leader, Xi Jinping. Like Mao, Xi has gained absolute control over every aspect of Chinese leadership, both in the official government and in the party apparatus that truly runs the country. And, like Mao, Xi is implementing "reforms" that are, in fact, genocidal in their implementation. Most of these reforms are targeted at religious and

ethnic minorities in an attempt to bring all religious belief and practice under the control of the CCP while eliminating ethnic and cultural diversity entirely. This attempt at eliminating ethnic diversity is particularly chilling when one considers that there are over 300 languages spoken by 56 recognized and roughly 26 unrecognized ethnic groups within China.

Personal accounts

This session will include accounts of persecution of Uyghurs and Tibetan Buddhists.

Primary Sources and Data

List sources, provide example tables, etc.

- U.S. Department of State, *Cuba: The Capital of 21st Century Communism*. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/Cuba-Report.pdf>, July 20, 2026.
- The Supreme People's Court of the People's Republic of China, "[Decision of the CCCPC on Some Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening the Reform](#)," November 2013.
- United States Mission to the United Nations, "[Joint Statement on the Human Rights Situation in China](#)," Nov. 21, 2025.
- Caitlin Campbell, Michael A. Weber, "[China Primer: Human Rights](#)," Congressional Research Service. February 2026.
- Susan Lawrence, "[China Primer: China's Political System](#)," Congressional Research Service. March 2026.

Activities

Students will "decode" CCP propaganda to understand the true meaning behind terms such as "de-extremification," "anti-terrorism," and "compatible with socialist society."

From Past to Present

Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Regulation on De-extremification, March 29, 2017

Article 4: *De-extremification shall persist in the basic directives of the party's work on religion, persist in an orientation of making religion more Chinese and under law, and actively guide religions to become compatible with socialist society.*

Article 7: Every unit and individual shall conscientiously resist and oppose extremification,
Article 12: De-extremification shall persist in the correct political orientation and direction of public opinion to carry forward the main themes and transmit positive energy and report words and acts of extremification.

Article 30: All aspects of society shall jointly participate in de-extremification efforts. Every ethnic group shall study and follow the law; and build identification with the great motherland, the Chinese people, Chinese culture, the Communist Party of China, and socialism with Chinese characteristics

Article 35: Religious groups shall make interpretations of religious cannon appropriate for improved modern standards

Article 44: Families and their members shall respect and obey the law. Parents shall influence their children with positive conduct, and educate their children to respect science, pursue civility, preserve ethnic unity, and resist and oppose extremification.

Bhaskar Sunkara, July 16, 2016

I think as long as there is inequality in a society, as long as you have a class society that divides people into people who own and people who have to work for them, there is going to be some sort of egalitarian response to it.

The "Regulation on De-extremism" is a CCP law aimed at eliminating the ethnic and religious identity of the Uyghur people in China. How does this law institute a forced "egalitarian response" to the natural diversity of human experience? In what way does Sunkara show the drive of socialism to eliminate this natural human diversity?

Lesson III.5: Communism by Other Means

Summary

This lesson explains the "social democracy," primarily as implemented in the social welfare states of northern Europe. This expands on information first presented in module 1 to show that "social democracy" is simply a way to implement communist ideology and practices without a violent revolution. The lessons will show that, despite not directly calling for violence, social democracy is just as detrimental to human liberties and economic health. At the end of the lesson, students will be able to explain the way in which the welfare state relies on excessive tax burdens and stifles entrepreneurial action, work incentives, and economic growth.

Introduction

Perhaps the most damaging flaw of many welfare systems lies in the perverse incentives they create, particularly for people with modest incomes. Why get up in the morning to do a low-paid, physically demanding job, if you can receive nearly the same amount in benefits by staying home? In many EU countries, a disproportionately high "tax wedge" (the gap between what employers pay and what workers actually take home after taxes and social contributions), discourages work, eroding both motivation and fairness.

- Elisabeth Krecké, "Competing Models for the Future of Welfare in Europe," GIS, January 15, 2026.

In many industrialized nations today, "democratic socialists" promise a utopia of government services for all for free. But nothing is truly free in this world: there is a cost to produce anything. That cost must be paid somehow. Marx promised that a violent revolution to seize the factories from their owners would deliver unending plenty, but in fact, it only created shortages, famines, and oppressive governments to try to force what communist theory said would happen naturally. As a result, many who dreamt of the workers' utopia turned away from Marxist-Leninist revolution, and instead embraced "democratic socialism," the idea that socialism could gradually achieve what communism could not.

In reality, though, "socialism" is just another name for communism. Marx himself saw socialism as a step on the path toward communism. Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Castro, and others employed typical communist wordplay to sometimes label socialism as a desirable step on the path, at other times describe it as simply another name for communism, and at still other times, act as if socialism was the sworn enemy of communism. In reality, though,

"socialism" is merely the fallback of communists when they cannot implement their full concept, whether that is because of a lack of political power or the economic realities of communism's failures.

So-called democratic socialists in the United States point to European nations and their extensive social support networks as examples of "successful" socialist governments. But in reality, European workers struggle under burdensome taxes, national budgets stretched well beyond the size their economies can support, and systems that disincentivize work, entrepreneurship, and innovation. These social services, in turn, create an incentive for immigration, increasing the number of people drawing on government services without increasing the tax base that supports those services. Even as there is a growing understanding in Europe that the system is on the brink of collapse, the American left pushes to adopt the very policies that are crushing Europe's people.

Personal accounts

Accounts from individuals in Europe who cannot find jobs due to the economic stagnation of the welfare state

Primary Sources and Data

In addition to data provided in previous sessions, students will explore:

- Tax, spending, deficit, and other economic data.
- Records of

Activities

From Past to Present

Elisabeth Krecké, "Competing Models for the Future of Welfare in Europe," GIS, January 15, 2026

Perhaps the most damaging flaw of many welfare systems lies in the perverse incentives they create, particularly for people with modest incomes. Why get up in the morning to do a low-paid, physically demanding job, if you can receive nearly the same amount in benefits by staying home? In many EU countries, a disproportionately high "tax wedge" (the gap between what employers pay and what workers actually take home after taxes and social contributions), discourages work, eroding both motivation and fairness.

Democratic Socialists of America, "Our Program"

*Imagine taking a day off from work in a future without capitalism. It might not feel as badly needed as it does now. You enjoy your work; it's interesting to you, and you're well trained for it. **You work as much as you are able and no more than needed**, and you would control your own labor and see it going to good use. It's not just a job to pay the bills.... **A socialist day off could be like any good day now.** But what if you were free to spend your time how you like without worrying about cost or dreading going back to work? What if you didn't have to think about paying rent or loans at the end of the month, or saving for college, or affording groceries?*

How does the program of the DSA describe the incentives created by their vision of a "socialist day off"? What does Krecké's research suggest is the result of similar policies in Europe?

Module IV: Safeguarding America

A new generation of Communist threats requires a new awareness to confront and new strategies to defeat.

Lesson IV.1: The New Front

Summary

This lesson explains the ways digital tools have opened new avenues of attack for communist elements to undermine America. First, the lesson will provide an overview of the rise of leftist "influencers" on YouTube, Twitch, and podcasting platforms that have allowed these influencers to get a direct line to voters, especially young voters, without the safeguards traditionally provided against extreme leftist views.

As a case study, students examine the growing "red-green alliance" to see how communism has evolved to embrace an "oppressor/oppressed" mindset that creates common cause among groups opposed to U.S. values and institutions despite widely disparate views among those opponents. Originally developed as part of an "anti-imperialist" focus among anti-war and civil rights activists within the U.S. and leftist anti-colonial movements abroad, the mindset of the United States as an "oppressor" has allowed leftist, or "red" figures within the United States to make common cause with Islamist extremists (the "green" of "red-green alliance") both within the U.S. and abroad. This common attack against America has come to be known as the "red-green alliance."

Introduction

This is why you have to have discipline. This is why you have to abide by the party line.... You can't be out here saying, 'Oh, I'm a centrist Democrat and I think Abdul is a bridge too far.' That must be punished. If there's one Marxist-Leninist doctrine that the Democratic Party should deploy, it's that: follow the party line!

- Hasan Piker, August 6, 2026.

For decades, the American left has contented itself with dominating so-called "mainstream" media outlets, such as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and CNN. But leftist extremists seek more direct access to the minds of young Americans. A century of communist experience has taught the radical intellectuals that they will be most successful in spreading their propaganda if they can reach directly to young adults outside the protection of traditional institutions of American values. Digital media has made it

easier than ever to do so, leading to a proliferation of leftist voices on social media, streaming, and podcasting platforms. Perhaps the single greatest enabler of leftist ideology in the new media is Hasan Piker.

Personal accounts

The Free Press, "Confessions of a Former DSA Organizer," August 8, 2026.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=61tUsrNejRM>

Primary Sources and Data

Module IV, unfortunately, has an almost inexhaustible supply of primary source references for leftist thought in the American media. A brief sampling of sources that can be considered for inclusion in this lesson follows.

- Zohran Mamdani, <https://x.com/NYCMayor/status/2055402930677879076?lang=en>
- Ritchie Torres, "Hasan Piker is Dangerous," Oct. 29, 2024
- Fox News, "Left-wing Twitch Star's Videos Filled With Terrorist Propaganda, Extrilemism," November 20, 2024.
<https://www.foxnews.com/video/6364843360112>
- Scott Jennings, August 11, 2026.
<https://x.com/ScottJenningsKY/status/2087342051503300787>
- Lindsay Kornick, "Hasan Piker stands by 'intentionally provocative' claims that Hamas is 'a thousand times better' than Israel." Fox News, August 9, 2026.
- Moore, M. (July 25, 2019). "Ilhan Omar Suggests People Should Be 'More Fearful of White Men' Than Jihadists in 2018 Interview," *The New York Post*.
<https://nypost.com/2019/07/25/ilhan-omar-suggests-people-should-be-more-fearful-of-white-men-than-jihadists-in-2018-interview/>
- Warren, S. (March 9, 2019). "Ocasio-Cortez Blasts Capitalism as an 'Irredeemable' System," *Bloomberg*. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-03-10/ocasio-cortez-blasts-capitalism-as-an-irredeemable-system>
- Speech (August 31, 2025). "'We ain't going anywhere' . . . Rashida Tlaib tells Detroit rally," *People's Conference for Palestine*.
<https://www.youtube.com/shorts/4qcGQU2E2QM>
- Press Conference (June 11, 2026). "Video: Ahead of America's 250th, Pressley, Advocates Call on Congress to Advance Transformative Reparative Justice Agenda," *Ayanna Pressley, U.S. House of Representatives*.
<https://pressley.house.gov/2026/06/11/video-ahead-of-americas-250th-pressley-advocates-call-on-congress-to-advance-transformative-reparative-justice-agenda/>

Activities

Students complete a map organizer to identify countries with Communist governments today, as well as where countries might be vulnerable to Communist takeover.

Students will also engage in an exercise to identify Communist propaganda in media today.

From Past to Present

Hasan Piker, August 6, 2026

This is why you have to have discipline. This is why you have to abide by the party line.... You can't be out here saying, 'Oh, I'm a centrist Democrat and I think Abdul is a bridge too far.' That must be punished. If there's one Marxist-Leninist doctrine that the Democratic Party should deploy, it's that: follow the party line!

Joseph Stalin, *The Foundations of Leninism*, 1924

The achievement and maintenance of the dictatorship of the proletariat is impossible without a party which is strong by reason of its solidarity and iron discipline. But iron discipline in the Party is inconceivable without unity of will, without complete and absolute unity of action on the part of all members of the Party. This does not mean, of course, that the possibility of conflicts of opinion within the Party is thereby precluded. On the contrary, iron discipline does not preclude but presupposes criticism and conflict of opinion within the Party.... But after a conflict of opinion has been closed, after criticism has been exhausted and a decision has been arrived at, unity of will and unity of action of all Party members are the necessary conditions without which neither Party unity nor iron discipline in the Party is conceivable."

Ronald Reagan once said "'How do you tell a Communist? Well, it's someone who reads Marx and Lenin. And how do you tell an anti-Communist? It's someone who understands Marx and Lenin.'" How does the similarity between Piker's statement and Stalin's show that, like Reagan said, Piker has read, but failed to understand, Marx and Lenin?

Lesson IV.2: Enemy Intelligence

Summary

Communist nations, particularly China, North Korea, and Cuba, continue to threaten U.S. interests both internally and abroad. In this lesson, students will examine various ways that these nations seek to influence U.S. policy, undermine U.S. society, or threaten U.S. interests.

Introduction

The Chinese government is employing tactics that seek to influence lawmakers and public opinion to achieve policies that are more favorable to China.

At the same time, the Chinese government is seeking to become the world's greatest superpower through predatory lending and business practices, systematic theft of intellectual property, and brazen cyber intrusions.

China's efforts target businesses, academic institutions, researchers, lawmakers, and the general public and will require a whole-of-society response. The government and the private sector must commit to working together to better understand and counter the threat.

- Federal Bureau of Investigation, "The China Threat."
<https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/counterintelligence/the-china-threat>.
Accessed July 26, 2026.

When Americans think of the threat of Communism, too many think of Cold War spy thrillers and the threat of a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. These threats ended in the last decade of the twentieth century, but Communist nations still pose a very real threat today. The Chinese government has acquired about 220 million American voter files – more than the United States federal government has. In 2015, it stole the security files of more than 21 million federal employees, as well as nearly 80 million records from the nation's second-largest health insurance company. Chinese hackers have also stolen financial information, travel records, and professional data on millions of Americans.

At the same time, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has also been actively seeking to promote Chinese national objectives through direct propaganda in schools and universities through a program known as the Confucius Institutes. While new federal law and policies have greatly reduced the impact of the Confucius Institutes, the Chinese Communist Party continues to use trade and cultural exchanges to censor information and promote Communist propaganda within the United States. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union often sought to cultivate what were called "useful idiots," meaning Americans and other

Western figures who could be tricked into undermining Western institutions of liberty and the free market. With the end of the Cold War and the dramatic growth of its intelligence gathering, the CCP seems to have taken over this program and is poised to employ the strategy far beyond even the greatest of the Soviet efforts.

In recent years, North Korea has expanded its weapons program from a small program threatening U.S. allies such as South Korea and Japan to a full intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) program that can target the entire United States. Such a program is expensive, however, and North Korea has developed a unique way to acquire the currency to pay for it. Numerous North Koreans have taken remote jobs by pretending to be American citizens, and the salaries paid to the "employees" have gone directly to the North Korean weapons programs.

Personal accounts

Primary Sources and Data

Students will examine a number of sources in this lesson. Sources being considered include:

- Federal Bureau of Investigation, "The China Threat." <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/counterintelligence/the-china-threat>. Accessed July 26, 2026.
- American Association of University Professors Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure, "[On Partnerships with Foreign Governments: The Case of Confucius Institutes](#)." June 2014.
- Homeland Security Committee, "[Threat Snapshot: CCP Espionage, Repression on US Soil is Growing](#)." Feb. 12, 2025.
- Center for Strategic and International Studies, "[Survey of Chinese Espionage in the United States Since 2000](#)." Accessed July 26, 2026.
- U.S. Department of State, "[How the People's Republic of China Seeks to Reshape the Global Information Environment](#)," *Global Engagement Special Report*. September 28, 2023.
- Miles Yu, "[The Great Chinese Data Heist](#)," *Washington Times*, July 20, 2026.
- Robert Schmad, "[China's Influence Machine: Federal Records Expose Beijing's Push to Sway America](#)," *Fox News*, July 26, 2026.
- John Yang, Andrew Corkery, and Gerard Edic, "[How North Korean Operatives Are Infiltrating U.S. Companies to Fund Weapons Programs](#)," *PBS News Weekend*, July 5, 2005.

- United States Department of Justice Office of Public Affairs, "[Justice Department Announces Coordinated, Nationwide Actions to Combat North Korean Remote Information Technology Workers' Illicit Revenue Generation Schemes](#)," June 30, 2025.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation, "[PSA Alert Number I-072325-4-PSA: North Korean IT Worker Threats to U.S. Businesses](#)," July 2025.
- Government Accounting Office, "[China: With Nearly All U.S. Confucius Institutes Closed, Some Schools Sought Alternative Language Support](#)," Oct. 2023.
- Hannah Fischer and Thomas Lum, "[Confucius Institutes in the United States: Selected Issues](#)," *In Focus*. Congressional Research Service, May 2023.
- U.S. Department of State, "'[Confucius Institute U.S. Center Designation](#)' as a Foreign Mission." August 13, 2020.
- Lee Edwards, "[Confucius Institutes: China's Trojan Horse](#)," The Heritage Foundation, May 2021.

Activities

Students will complete a graphic organizer comparing the various ways in which Communist nations threaten United States security and stability.

From Past to Present

Joseph Stalin, *Anarchism or Socialism?* 1906

Strikes, boycott, parliamentarism, meetings and demonstrations are all good forms of struggle as means for preparing and organising the proletariat. But not one of these means is capable of abolishing existing inequality. All these means must be concentrated in one principal and decisive means; the proletariat must rise and launch a determined attack upon the bourgeoisie in order to destroy capitalism to its foundations. This principal and decisive means is the socialist revolution.

Twitter user "Boots Riley," retweeted by Darializa Avila Chevalier, February 18, 2020

I believe that we need a world in which the people democratically control the wealth that we create with our labor. This would be real, actual power in the hands of the people. Actual "democracy". [sic] You can call that communism, you can call it socialism, you can call it pancakes.

Avila Chevalier was a candidate for Congress from New York in 2026. How does her deleted retweet from 2020 reflect Stalin's call for "a determined attack" to end capitalism?

Lesson IV.3: The Fight for the Future

Summary

Protecting America from Communism: In this final lesson, students examine the very real threat posed by the rise of Socialist thought within American politics, and consider ways to counter this threat. The primary focus of the session is an assessment of policies implemented and proposed during and since the Obama administration and their previous iterations among Communist nations.

Introduction

Happy Tax Day, New York. We're taxing the rich. ... When I ran for mayor, I said I was going to tax the rich. Well, today, we're taxing the rich. ... specifically designed for the richest of the rich. ... I believe everyone has a role to play in contributing to our city. And some, a little bit more than others.

- Zohran Mamdani, April 15, 2026

In the year of America's 250th anniversary, the nation faced what could well be its greatest threat, not from a foreign enemy, but from its own voters. Many 2026 candidates ran on platforms that called for extending existing socialist programs, such as the "Affordable Care Act," and adding new ones such as federal limits to working hours, controls on competitive business practices, and requirements for universal "living wage" minimums. These policies threatened to derail the U.S. economy and drive jobs overseas. Even worse, every one of these policies has already been tried in other nations – specifically, the Soviet Union, Communist China, North Korea, Cuba, and Venezuela. In this final session, you will use what you know about the global history of Communism to examine the ways these policies gain power for office holders by enticing voters with their false promises, but ultimately deliver only ruin.

Personal accounts

In this session, students will revisit personal accounts from earlier sessions to remind themselves of how Communist policies have hurt the very people they claimed to be for.

Primary Sources and Data

Students will examine key sources to understand the lure of Socialism today. Sources will include:

- United States Department of State, "Cuba: The Capital of 21st Century Communism," July 20, 2026.
- Nate Silver, "[The DSA sweet spot: highly educated, downwardly mobile](#)," *Silver Bulletin*. July 21, 2026.
- Democratic Socialists of America, "Our Program: Workers Deserve More!" <https://program.dsausa.org/#demand-democracy-at-work>. Accessed July 25, 2026.
- Claire Valdez, "Claire Valdez for Congress," <https://clairevaldezforcongress.com/issues>
- Barack Obama, "Health Care that Works for Americans," <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/healthreform/healthcare-overview>

Activities

In this lesson, students will be provided a list of policies enacted and proposed by American leftists, from Obamacare through the proposals for a four-day work week, "living wage," and universal rent control. They will build a table identifying equivalent policies in communist regimes such as the Soviet Union, China, North Korea, Cuba, and Venezuela, the stated goal of the policies, and the actual impact of those policies in the nations where they were implemented.

From Past to Present

Zohran Mamdani, April 15, 2026

Happy Tax Day, New York. We're taxing the rich. ... When I ran for mayor, I said I was going to tax the rich. Well, today, we're taxing the rich. ... specifically designed for the richest of the rich. ... I believe everyone has a role to play in contributing to our city. And some, a little bit more than others.

Hugo Chávez, October 2011

There are some supposed owners. They privatized it, so to speak, the high bourgeoisie, including the international set.... We're going to take them over.

Hugo Chávez became the President of Venezuela in 1999, and waited until 2011 before going after the private luxury home of wealthy Venezuelans. Zohran Mamdani took the oath of office as Mayor of New York on January 1, 2026, and announced his "pied-à-terre" tax on

April 15 of that same year, just three-and-a-half months later. While not the outright confiscation enacted by Chavez, the tax adds a 6.5% burden on properties, which is widely seen as forcing owners to sell. Such a massive sell-off of property at once is likely to crash prices, leading to significant losses for property owners. Mamdani justifies the grab by saying it will support "free child care." Given what you've learned about the impact of Chávez's policies on Venezuela, how will Mamdani's tax impact "the greatest city on earth"?

