# Civil Rights in the USA 1865–1992

# Introduction

## Overview

Delivery guides are designed to represent a body of knowledge about teaching a particular topic and contain:

* Curriculum Content: A clear outline of the content covered by the delivery guide;
* Thinking Conceptually: Expert guidance on the key concepts involved, common difficulties students may have, approaches to teaching that can help students understand these concepts and how this topic links conceptually to other areas of the subject;
* Thinking Contextually: A range of suggested teaching activities using a variety of themes so that different activities can be selected which best suit particular classes, learning styles or teaching approaches.

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# Curriculum Content

## Overview

### Thematic Study:

This theme focuses on the nature and development of civil rights for key sectors of society in the USA from 1865 to 1992. Students should understand the similarities and differences in aims and methods between individuals and groups who campaigned for greater equality and opportunity, as well as those who attempted to maintain prejudice and racial discrimination. Inevitably, within a study of each defined social group, it will be necessary to study the role of government institutions and key events which shaped development, the reasons for resistance to change and the significance of improvements.

Students should develop the ability to analyse thematically the following issues across the full period:

African Americans: their relative position in 1865 and 1992 as well as other key turning-points such as the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s; the impact of Federal and State institutions as well as anti- and pro-civil rights groups during periods of Reconstruction, segregation and the New Deal; the nature of discrimination; the role of key individuals in gaining or resisting greater civil rights.

Trade Union and Labour Rights: their relative position in 1865 and 1992 as well as other key turning-points such as the 1960s and Reagan era; the impact of immigration, industrialisation, war and economic circumstances; nature of support and opposition for union and labour rights; the role of Federal and State governments, politicians, union leaders and sector workers on the development of labour rights.

Native American Indians: their relative position in 1865 and 1992 as well as other key turning-points; the nature of discrimination; the impact of individuals, groups or government institutions, laws and policies; reactions to discrimination and the nature of campaigns to gain civil rights including the Plains War, pressure groups and the American-Indian Movement of the 1960s and 70s.

Women: their relative position in 1865 and 1992 as well as other key turning-points such as the interwar period, the New Deal, WW2 and the era of the Civil Rights Movement; the nature of discrimination and methods of counteraction; the role and impact of female individuals and groups in the quest for equal rights including the campaigns for prohibition, female suffrage and Equal Rights Amendment, as well as the rise of feminism.

### Depth Studies

Additionally, students must develop the ability to analyse and evaluate the ways in which aspects of this period of American history have been interpreted in debates between historians. These interpretations are likely to reflect different emphases and approaches as different historians may have been writing in widely different periods or may have been direct witnesses to the events they are analysing. Students will be expected to show that they can discriminate between different interpretations to reach a supported judgement on the issue into which they are making their enquiry.

Civil rights in the ‘Gilded Age’ c.1875–c.1895: the nature and extent of progress in civil rights due to the impact of industrialisation, westward expansion, sectional and east-west divides and government policy; the attitudes and effectiveness of individuals and institutions such as the Presidents, Congress, Supreme Court and state governments; the nature, extent and effect of reactions to civil rights issues from social groups such as women, workers, African Americans and Native American Indians.

The New Deal and civil rights: the nature of their situation by 1932 and Roosevelt’s developing aims and motives regarding women, African Americans, Native American Indians, workers, trade unions and minority groups; the nature and extent of developments or improvements with regards to greater civil rights from the First and Second New Deals; nature, extent and effectiveness of opposition to relevant parts of the New Deal such as the Second New Deal and workers’ rights.

Malcolm X and Black Power: the nature and impact of his leadership in terms of his aims, motivations, methods, success, changing priorities and legacy to the Black Power movement; reasons for the rise of Black Power, the nature of its development and impact on other civil rights groups and approaches, such as Non-Violent Direct Action; extent of success of the Black Power movement and its impact on civil rights for African Americans; relationship of Black Power with other civil rights causes, including women and workers.

# Thinking Conceptually

## Overview

### General approaches:

A study of Civil Rights in the USA between 1865 and 1992 inevitably encourages a teaching approach which consistently highlights the interconnectedness of political and economic conditions with the transformation of constitutional law and legal precedent. Whether choosing to adopt a brief or lengthier chronological overview at the start of the course, it will be useful to reiterate the significance of key events, policies and individual action which had a collective impact on social conditions for each identified social group. This will increase student confidence and familiarity with governmental processes and the characteristics of American historical eras, while also allowing opportunity to incorporate Depth Studies at suitable points. However, before focussing on each social sector, a number of communal themes and issues should be communicated to students so that they are in a better position to analyse the complexity of progression without making assumptions that there was a clear or immediate line of improvement. Similarities and differences between the experiences of each social group will become evident through analysing these themes in detail, but students’ understanding of the pace of change will increase consistently throughout the course. For example, students should be aware of the following key issues when studying the four key topics on African Americans, Trade Unions and Labour, Native Americans and Women:

* situations experienced such as social conditions, work, discrimination and equality
* reasons for the development of reforms and civil rights
* the aims, methods, actions and success of campaign groups
* the role of Federal and State governments and institutions in helping or hindering progress
* the nature, impact and significance of the Supreme Court and high profile cases
* the extent to which greater civil rights were truly achieved, including the pace of change
* the role of individuals such as Presidents, politicians, activists and campaigners
* the significance of key events and turning-points

### Common misconceptions or difficulties students may have:

Many of the issues to be studied will understandably invite intense student debate and they may need to be reminded to put personal opinions aside or to empathise with a variety of key players in the context of the period in which they lived. The dangers with studying ‘civil rights’ is to assume that the concepts of ‘rights’ and ‘equality’ were considered the same way throughout history, with static social norms and attitudes. Although all students will identify with the ‘need’ for civil rights and the removal of discrimination and inequality, they will need to set this clearly against the standards and lifestyles which were socially accepted, adhered to and supported by large sectors of late 19th and 20th century American society. This might be difficult to grasp at first as modern-day expectations will cloud comprehension of social motives, particularly given knowledge of longstanding American ideological principles of democracy, freedom and the ‘rights of man’. Rather than permitting dismissive criticism and scepticism of American politics, students should be reminded of the nature of electoral processes, the pressures or constraints upon Presidents and the complexity of legal development. A useful way to ensure students retain contextual focus is to ask them to maintain a list of key concepts whereby generic definitions are noted as well as the ‘meaning’ which was held by Americans at the time. This could be divided into ‘periods’ and form the basis of an introductory activity alongside a chronological overview.

The following general terms are essential for students at the start of the course and this can be supplemented with other vocabulary later. A full list of useful political and legal definitions can be found at [History House](http://history.house.gov/Education/Lesson-Plans/Glossary/):

democracy

constitution

federal

progressive

liberalism

capitalism

communism

socialism

Congress

discrimination

equality

emancipation

segregation

sectional

isolationism

progression

regression

### Conceptual links to other areas of the specification – useful ways to approach this topic to set students up for topics later in the course:

Against the backdrop of world events such as the World Wars and Cold War, students will be able to draw parallels with their studies elsewhere whether in relation to the emancipation of women in Britain or the study of 20th century liberalism, capitalism, industrialisation and urbanisation. Their study of primary sources for the British paper will stand them in good stead and analytical skills can be developed further through focussing on a wider variety of sources such as legal documents, photographs, speeches and documentary film clips. This will naturally link to consideration of historical interpretations with the chance to enthuse students through studies of visual media as well as journalistic or academic writing. There is ample opportunity to consider the nature of personal experience, witness and contemporary media in shaping liberal, New Left and traditional interpretations of American history, whether focussing on aspects of the Depth Studies or Thematic topics. A wealth of excellent resources is available online which can be usefully exploited and adapted in line with student needs and the pace of teaching. Inevitably, aspects of Civics or Citizenship can be highlighted and serve to enhance teaching methods which still maintain focus on the specification content and conceptual understanding.

# Thinking Contextually

## Overview

A combination of traditional and active teaching approaches will help to introduce, consolidate and organise students’ contextual knowledge in order to write thematic essays and evaluations of historical interpretations. Different styles of activity can be introduced progressively while permitting students to repeat some methods which enhance their confidence in tackling synoptic essays. Summary charts are particularly useful for prioritising key arguments and supporting examples along thematic but chronologically presented lines, especially if teachers impose a defined or limited length to preparatory work to prevent unwieldly amounts of detail or overambitious expectations. The longstanding tried and tested method of rough notes followed by amendments and clean copies is particularly suitable for the Themes topics as it encourages student progression through repetition and reinforcement while honing their analytical skills. In addition, summary charts can be used as the basis for class debates with students defending or opposing the significance of various key features, groups or individuals at respective points in time.

Due to available online resources, possibilities for ‘flipped learning’ are also recommended as they are likely to grab student’s attention in terms of directing them to the use of audio or visual media. Homework activities can then form the basis for class debate and analysis of key issues with potential extension to interpretations activities which involve group work. For example, rather than purely concentrating on written historical interpretations, an easy introduction to such work might involve activities such as writing a film or book review, directing a presentation or short film on a key event and creating a museum exhibit. All of these types of activities will engage students to consider the primary evidence and facts which support their presentation, the reasons for the construction of interpretations and issues of memory and myth. If students can grasp ‘how’ to create an interpretation, then they will find it much easier to recognise and analyse historical perspectives within written text. Whether considering academic writing, popular films, documentary clips or news articles, students will become conditioned to consider the selected content, style, tone and message behind each source, which will naturally prepare them for comparative analysis.

In addition, the nature of such a topic on Civil Rights in America, gives opportunity for simulation and role-play activities which highlight legal or political processes in order to increase students’ conceptual understanding. Recreating a Supreme Court trial with key individuals, jury members and legal representatives can help to explain how and why such results were reached, as well as highlighting the challenges of due process and limitations of the law. Alternatively, political perspectives during the passing or proposal of a Bill might be enlightening with regards to the role of President and Congress.

## Scheme of work: Unit Y319

A scheme of work for this unit.

### Resources

Scheme of work: Unit Y319 (Available on Teach Cambridge)

## Periodic table of the New Deal

An interactive and printable version of a diagram or periodic table which highlights key individuals and New Deal agencies. Teacher guidance is attached. Online Curriculum Guides for teachers are also available which include resources and links to documentary film clips by Pare Lorentz on the Great Depression and WW2.

### Resources

[FDR Presidential Library and Museum: Interactive Periodic Table of the New Deal](https://fdrlibrary.org/periodic-table)

[FDR Presidential Library and Museum: Curriculum Guides](https://fdrlibrary.org/curriculum-guides)

## The New Deal Network

A variety of educational resources and links on the New Deal which may be useful for students when building their knowledge and understanding prior to analysing key questions or historical interpretations. A range of photos provides a useful visual aid to teaching the topic.

### Resources

[New Deal Network](http://newdeal.feri.org/)

## The Big Picture: Achieving the ‘American Dream’

This resource introduces students to the topic of Civil Rights in terms of general content and scope. It will initiate discussion of conceptual terms, political structures, legal precedent and causation. It provides a model for writing further factual summaries from a thematic perspective.  
This activity is intended to support introductory reading which is supplemented with basic timelines, maps and visual material. Gaining a generalised factual overview is paramount rather than overloading students with too much detail. The aim is to consolidate understanding of the ‘bigger picture’ in order to provoke contextual thinking before embarking on detailed studies of each theme topic. Discussion points and extension work will refine students’ ability to consider the significance of events as preparation for writing thematic essays which contain clear arguments and supporting details.

### Resources

Learner resource 1 (Available on Teach Cambridge)

## Analysing the Evidence: The Civil Rights Act 1964

Based upon the online resources provided by the Archives of the US House of Representatives, this activity analyses documents relating to the Civil Rights Act 1964 as an introduction to political and legal concepts, structures and processes. It also raises the issue of historical interpretations.   
Rather than assuming that primary sources must be studied with a prior depth of knowledge of the events they entail, these activities intentionally focus on the style, tone and nature of legal documents. Through a brief study of typical phrases, specific content and the types of documents available, students will gain clarity with regards to the range of key players involved in American political and legal processes. This need not be extensive but the activities give an introductory picture of the powers and constraints placed upon government as well as the role of politicians and the American public. Extension activities highlight the issue of memory and historical interpretation.   
In terms of other complementary activities, the simulation exercises provided by Annenberg Learner and the resources available at the Smithsonian are particularly useful. Although the intention is to give a brief introduction or overview, the activity could be returned to during an in-depth study of the Civil Rights Movement.

### Resources

Learner resource 2 (Available on Teach Cambridge)

[Historical Documents: 1964 Civil Rights Act](http://history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/Civil-Rights/1964-Documents/)

## Civil Rights and Congress

Useful online resources for teachers which include detailed lesson plans, suggested activities and links to photographs, audio and video clips. Divided into sections including Black Americans in Congress, Oral History and Women in Congress.

### Resources

[Lesson Plans](http://history.house.gov/Education/Lesson-Plans/Education-Lesson-Plans/)

## The Presidency

Interactive website which contains a chronological list of Presidents, commentaries and teaching ideas related to the role of the Presidency, election campaigns and the right to vote. Also contains resource recommendations such as links to the PBS series on the American Experience.

### Resources

[The American Presidency](http://www.americanhistory.si.edu/presidency/home.html)

## Classroom Materials

An excellent range of teaching resources is available grouped under categories such as Themed Resources, Presentations and Activities, Lesson Plans and Primary Resource Sets. Topics include the Civil Rights Movement, Jim Crow, Native Americans, Women, the Great Depression and Labour.

### Resources

[Classroom materials](http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/)

## Democracy in America: Civil Rights and Legislatures

Critical thinking activities help students understand American government through simulating political or legal decision-making. ‘Civil Rights’ highlights how decisions are made and issues of legal precedent. ‘Legislatures – Laying Down the Law’ enables students to experience the way Bills are presented, negotiated and passed through Congress.

Potential link and extension to ‘Analysing the Evidence: The Civil Rights Act 1964’, due to a focus on the procedures and nature of the legal process. Additional teaching resources, lesson ideas and short videos are also available and relevant to aspects of the Themes topics or Depth Studies.

### Resources

[Civil Rights: Demanding Equality](https://www.learner.org/series/democracy-in-america/legislatures-laying-down-the-law/)

[Legislatures: Laying Down the Law](https://www.learner.org/series/democracy-in-america/legislatures-laying-down-the-law/)

## Malcolm X Project

An academic website which contains primary sources, oral testimony and articles on Malcolm X which will help students gain knowledge and understanding of the events while raising issues of interpretations.

Teachers may wish to draw comparisons between the views of Marable in his written work and the way in which information is presented on the website. This could be supported by group work where students seek to create their own ‘museum exhibit’ or ‘presentation’ which details the life of Malcolm X.

### Resources

[The Malcolm X Project at Columbia University](http://www.columbia.edu/cu/ccbh/mxp/)

## Malcolm X

Website commemorated to Malcolm X which contains an overview, chronology, pictures and video clips. Useful for studying interpretations in terms of ‘memory’ and legacy.

### Resources

[Malcolm X](http://malcolmx.com/)

## Malcolm X: Make it Plain

Interactive website which contains a timeline, commentary, video, teaching ideas and an online poll to assess the nature of Malcolm X’s methods against those of Martin Luther King.

### Resources

[PBS: Malcolm X](https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/malcolmx-timeline-malcolm-xs-life/)

## Television News of the Civil Rights Era 1950-70

Academic website which contains timelines, essays, videos and classroom suggestions for use on the Civil Rights Era.

### Resources

[Television News of the Civil Rights Era 1950-1970](http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/civilrightstv/)

## The Choices Programme

Short video clips which contain discussions by historians on a number of key issues, grouped under the heading ‘Freedom Now’. These may be useful lesson starters to provoke discussion. Also contains useful links to lesson ideas and potential supplementary resources such as a student ibook.

### Resources

[Freedom Now: The Civil Rights movement in Mississippi](http://www.choices.edu/resources/scholars_civilrights.php)

## The West

TV series charting the history of Westward Expansion which includes links to primary sources. Resources and lesson ideas are available which could be adapted as required.

### Resources

[PBS: The West](http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/program/episodes/)

## American-Indian Wars

A variety of resources to introduce students to the experiences of Native Americans. An introductory commentary is supported by a visual slide show, audio clips on the occupation of Wounded Knee and a film clip on the Last of the Sioux.

### Resources

[American-Indian Wars](http://www.history.com/topics/native-american-history/american-indian-wars)

## Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project

Academic website containing online documents and videos in relation to her charity work, public image and publications. Particularly useful for her interest in supporting minority groups and women.

### Resources

[Eleanor Roosevelt Papers Project](https://www.choices.edu/video-playlist/?unit=405)

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