

Lesson Plan: Climate Consciousness in the National Constitution: Bhutan at the Forefront

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As a **Humanities** or **Social Sciences high school or undergraduate** teacher, you can use this set of computer-based tools to teach about the **Constitution** of a country, the **components** of a nation's Constitution, and the recognition that **climate change** is a fundamental constitutional issue for certain nations. This lesson plan uses the **Constitution of Bhutan** as an example.

Bhutan transitioned from a monarchy led state to a democratic nation recently and adopted its constitution in 2008. By perusing the Constitution of Bhutan, you can teach your students about various parts of a nation's Constitution including the preamble, the fundamental rights and duties of a citizen, and principles of state policy amongst others. This lesson plan includes a tool to study the constitutions of different nations and to compare their national policies on various issues like climate, climate change and the environment. In the Constitution of Bhutan, the promotion of Gross National Happiness (GNH) is a principle of state policy and this lesson plan will enable your students to understand how Bhutan's GNH is threatened by climate change.

Thus, the use of this lesson plan allows you to integrate the teaching of a climate science topic with a core topic in **History/Civics** in the **Humanities** or **Social Sciences**.

Use this lesson plan to help your students find answers to:

1. How is the Constitution structured?
2. What are the purposes of a government and how is it organized?
3. Who is a citizen of a Nation? What are the fundamental rights and duties of a citizen?
4. What are the major similarities and differences between Bhutan's Constitution and your nation's Constitution?
5. How is Bhutan's GNH impacted by climate change?

About the Lesson Plan

Grade Level: High School, Undergraduate

Discipline: Humanities, Social Sciences

Topic(s) in Discipline: Monarchy, Democracy, Constitution, Articles of the Constitution, the Preamble to the Constitution, Parliament, Government, Citizenship, Fundamental Duties, Fundamental Rights, Principles of State Policy, Rules of Governance, Gross National Happiness, Poverty, Environmental Policy

Climate Topic: Policies, Politics and Environmental Governance

Location: Global, Bhutan

Access: Online, Offline

Language(s): English, Arabic, Spanish

Approximate Time Required: 60-70 min

1 Contents

1. Video micro-lecture (~6.5 min)

A video micro-lecture that describes what a nation's Constitution is and why it is fundamentally important for it.

This can be accessed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0UzKD8rZCc0>

2. Reading (20 min)

The Constitution of The Kingdom of Bhutan as an example of a Constitution of a democratic nation with emphasis on the State Policy of promoting Gross National Happiness (GNH).

This can be accessed at:

https://www.nationalcouncil.bt/assets/uploads/docs/acts/2017/Constitution_of_Bhutan_2008.pdf

3. Video and Associated Reading (20 min)

A documentary (~12 min) and an associated media write-up on a United Nations Development Project (UNDP) report that lists the impacts of climate change on Bhutan's state policy of pursuing GNH.

This can be accessed at:

<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2011/09/01/bhutan-s-gross-national-happiness-threatened-by-climate-change.html>

4. Classroom/ Laboratory Activity (20 min)

An exploration of a website to study and compare the Constitutions of almost 200 countries. The tool is also available in [Arabic](#) or [Spanish](#) for around 50 constitutions.

This can be accessed at:

https://www.constituteproject.org/search?lang=en&status=in_force&status=is_draft

5. Suggested questions/assignments for learning evaluation

- How is the Constitution structured?
- What are the purposes of a government and how is it organized?
- Who is a citizen of a Nation? What are the fundamental rights and duties of a citizen?
- What are the major similarities and differences between Bhutan's Constitution and your nation's Constitution?
- How is Bhutan's GNH impacted by climate change?

2 Step-by-step User Guide

Here is a step-by-step guide to using this lesson plan in the classroom/laboratory. We have suggested these steps as a possible plan of action. You may customize the lesson plan according to your preferences and requirements.

1. Topic introduction and discussion

Use this video micro-lecture, '[What is a Constitution?](#)' by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), to introduce the concept of a Constitution and explain why it is fundamentally for every nation to have it. Explain how the Constitution defines the aims and ideals of the nation that it represents. Use the tool to introduce the different parts of the constitution such as the Preamble, the Articles of the Constitution, the State Policies, the pillars of democracy- Parliament, Government and Judiciary, citizenship, fundamental rights and duties of every citizen and the rules of governance.

This can be accessed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0UzKD8rZCc0>

2. Develop the topic further using an example

Use the document, "[The Constitution of The Kingdom of Bhutan](#)" by the National Council of Bhutan, as an example to describe the different parts of a country's constitution. Go through every section to give a brief overview of Bhutan's Constitution. Use the reading to discuss with your students, what they perceive are the aims and ideals of the Bhutanese people. Draw attention to Article 5 that pertains to the Environment and discuss the fundamental duty of every citizen and the Royal Government to protect the natural environment of Bhutan, conserve its rich biodiversity, and prevent its ecological degradation: and thereby, 'ensure a safe and healthy environment'. Use this point to bring focus to the Preamble that pledges to 'enhance the unity, happiness and well-being of the people for all time'. Discuss how this pledge ties into the Principles of State Policy outlined in Article 9, no. 2- 'The State shall strive to promote...Gross National Happiness'.

This can be accessed at:

https://www.nationalcouncil.bt/assets/uploads/docs/acts/2017/Constitution_of_Bhutan_2008.pdf

3. Discuss further

Use the news report, '[Climate change threatens Bhutan's Gross National Happiness](#)' by Surekha Subarwal and Sonam Tsoki Tenzin of the UNDP to discuss the findings of a 2011 report published by the Gross National Happiness Commission Secretariat and UNDP, on the impact of climate change on Bhutan's GNH.

- First, play the documentary, 'PEI Bhutan, in pursuit of Sustainable Development' by the UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative, to initiate your students to how climate change adversely affects a cross-section of the people of Bhutan. Discuss how this goes against the ethos of the Constitution in achieving Gross National Happiness in Bhutan.
- Then, use the text to discuss the greater impact of climate change on 'the livelihoods of a quarter of Bhutan's population that live in poverty and depend on subsistence farming and local natural resources which are vulnerable to changing weather patterns and melting glaciers'. Optional: Further information about the global link between poverty and climate change can be obtained in the additional resources section.
- Use the report to explain the threats to Bhutan's natural resources and the measures adopted to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change. Explain how Bhutan has strived to become a carbon-neutral state; and by increasing forest cover to 70-80 percent of land, is now a carbon sink for the world.
- Finally, discuss the sustainability strategies employed by the Gross National Happiness Commission of Bhutan to improve resilience against climate change.

This can be accessed at:

<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/news-centre/news/2011/09/01/bhutan-s-gross-national-happiness-threatened-by-climate-change.html>

4. Classroom/Laboratory Activity

Explore the website, '[CONSTITUTE](#)', by Comparative Constitutions Project, University of Texas, Austin, to study almost 200 different national constitutions. The tool is also available in [Arabic](#) or [Spanish](#) for around 50 constitutions. Use the tool to discuss the constitution of a nation or to compare policies between constitutions- for example, the environment or climate policies. Use the navigation tools to 'quickly find relevant passages' for a particular topic, 'filter searches' for specific regions or time periods, 'read excerpts in List or Compare view' and 'pin for further analysis'. The documents are available to be downloaded, exported to Google Docs or rendered in PDF.

This can be accessed at:

<https://www.constituteproject.org/search?lang=en>

5. Questions/Assignments

Use the tools and the concepts learned so far to discuss and determine answers to the following questions:

- How is the Constitution structured?
- What are the purposes of a government and how is it organized?
- Who is a citizen of a Nation? What are the fundamental rights and duties of a citizen?
- What are the major similarities and differences between Bhutan's Constitution and your nation's Constitution?
- How is Bhutan's GNH impacted by climate change?

3 Learning Outcomes

The tools in this lesson plan will enable students to:

- define and describe the importance of a country's Constitution
- learn about the Constitution of Bhutan
- study the Constitutions of different nations
- compare the state policies of different countries on various topics like climate, climate change, and environment
- understand Bhutan's state policy of achieving Gross National Happiness (GNH)
- describe the fundamental duties of a Bhutanese citizen towards protecting the environment
- explain the effect of climate change on Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNH)

4 Additional Resources

If you or your students would like to explore the topic further, these additional resources will be useful.

1. Reading

A paper, "[Forest ecosystem services and the pillars of Bhutan's Gross National Happiness](#)" published by Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) that describes the 'Environment' as one of the four pillars of Bhutan's GNH.

This can be accessed at:

http://www.cifor.org/publications/pdf_files/OccPapers/OP-178.pdf

2. Reading

A Bhutan National Human Development Report, '[TEN YEARS OF DEMOCRACY IN BHUTAN](#)' by the UNDP and the Parliament of the Kingdom of Bhutan that showcases human development in Bhutan under democratic governance, through the perspective of achieving Gross National Happiness and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

This can be accessed at:

<http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/nhdr-2019ii.pdf>

3. Lesson Plan

A lesson plan, '[Poverty and Climate: An Inextricable Link](#)' by the Trans-disciplinary Research Oriented Pedagogy for Improving Climate Studies and Understanding (TROP ICSU) Project, to explain the strong link between poverty and climate change.

This can be accessed at:

<https://tropicsu.org/lesson-plan-poverty/>

5 Credits/Copyrights

All the teaching tools in our collated list are owned by the corresponding creators/authors/organizations as listed on their websites. Please view the individual copyright and ownership details for each tool by following the individual links provided. We have selected and analyzed the tools that align with the overall objective of our project and have provided the corresponding links. We do not claim ownership of or responsibility/liability for any of the listed tools.

1. Video micro-lecture; “What is a Constitution?”

Presented by the [International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance \(International IDEA\)](#).

2. Reading; “The Constitution of The Kingdom of Bhutan”

Provided by the [National Council of Bhutan](#).

3. Video and Associated Reading; “Climate change threatens Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness”

Video by the UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative. Write-up by Surekha Subarwal and Sonam Tsoki Tenzin, [United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#).

4. Classroom/Laboratory Activity; “CONSTITUTE”

Provided by [Comparative Constitutions Project](#), University of Texas, Austin.

5. Additional Resources

A paper, “Forest ecosystem services and the pillars of Bhutan’s Gross National Happiness” by [Center for International Forestry Research \(CIFOR\)](#).

A report, “Ten Years of Democracy in Bhutan” by the [UNDP](#) and the [Parliament of the Kingdom of Bhutan](#).

A lesson plan, “Poverty and Climate: An Inextricable Link” by the [Trans-disciplinary Research Oriented Pedagogy for Improving Climate Studies and Understanding \(TROP ICSU\) Project](#).