

Prostitution and Human Rights

High School Level Plan

Objective

This lesson will offer students multiple perspectives on prostitution - as a legitimate business to be decriminalized and as abusive to women. It will also introduce students to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and challenge them to see prostitution through a human rights lens.

Time

Activity One - 2 class periods

Activity Two - 1 class period

Materials

- Computer and Smart Board for video
- [PAAFE Video](#) (7:50)
- Large Index Cards
- The following resources:
 - [Prostitution \(The Canadian Encyclopedia\)](#)
 - [A Brief History of Prostitution \(Curiosity.com – Discovery Channel\)](#)
 - [16 Facts About Gender-Based Violence \(Oxfam Canada\)](#)
 - [The Case for Decriminalizing Prostitution \(The Mark\)](#)
 - [Ontario Judge Strikes Down Prostitution Laws \(The National Post\)](#)
 - [Prostitution in Canada: Imagining Alternate Realities \(Feminist Media Collective\)](#)
 - [Prostitution in Canada: An Overview \(Library of Parliament\)](#)
 - [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women \(CEDAW\)](#)

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Learning Activities

Activity One: Prostitution – Right or Wrong?

As a class or in smaller groups, ask students to discuss the following questions:

- What is prostitution?
- Does prostitution always equal abuse?
- Are there scenarios where prostitution is acceptable?

Watch the PAAFE video, having students answer the questions below while watching:

1. *When was PAAFE started?*
2. *Why was PAAFE born?*
3. *What was to be done with the money collected from fines that men had to pay for hiring a prostitute?*
4. *What does Kate say pulls women into sexual exploitation?*
5. *Why do males get involved in sexual exploitation?*
6. *In 1992, how many underage girls were engaged in prostitution?*
7. *What caused the biggest impact on Kate and those in her community regarding prostitution?*
8. *What are the 2 alternative measures programs in Edmonton?*
9. *Kate says we are doing a lot of work in Edmonton, but what two things are we still missing?*

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Answer Key:

1. 1997
2. From the demand that something be done about the “demand” side of prostitution
3. The money would return to the community to create strategies to address exploitation and harms done to the community
4. Some kind of vulnerability
5. 100% have experienced some kind of abuse
6. 250
7. The men that were circling
8. The Prostitution Offender Program and the Diversion Program
9. Safe houses for people still active in their addictions, good prevention programs at earlier ages

Have students read “[The Case for Decriminalizing Prostitution \(The Mark\)](#)” and “[Prostitution in Canada: Imagining Alternate Realities \(Feminist Media Collective\)](#)”.

Students write a letter to the Editor as *Kate Quinn* from the PAAFE video. How would Kate respond to the writer of “The Case for Decriminalizing Prostitution”?

Write statistics from “[Prostitution in Canada: An Overview \(Library of Parliament\)](#)” on index cards and have students read them out to the class (see below).

In pairs, ask students to discuss what **they** think about the decriminalization of prostitution.

Students physically place themselves on a continuum at the front of the room – one end is *decriminalize prostitution* and the other end is *prostitution is absolutely wrong*.

In pairs or small groups, students discuss where they placed themselves on the continuum and why – teacher tries to pair students from different places on the continuum.

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Statistics

- ✓ *Street prostitution accounts for 20% of prostitution activity in Canada*
- ✓ *75-80% of prostitutes are women*
- ✓ *Most prostitutes join the profession at 16-20 years of age*
- ✓ *A disproportionate number of street prostitutes are Aboriginal women*
- ✓ *Canada is both a destination and a transit point for persons trafficked into prostitution from China, Thailand, Cambodia, the Philippines, Russia, Korea, and Eastern Europe.*
- ✓ *Police enforcement generally results in a relocation of prostitution activity*
- ✓ *Prostitution is one of the most dangerous occupations in Canada*
- ✓ *Between 1991 and 1995, 63 known prostitutes were murdered*
- ✓ *Prostitutes who work the streets are much more likely to be victims of violence than other sex workers*
- ✓ *Under section 213 of the Criminal Code, either the buyer or the seller of sexual services can be charged for communicating for the purposes of prostitution.*
- ✓ *39% of women charged with communicating for the purposes of prostitution went to prison while only 3% of men went to prison.*
- ✓ *In Sweden, the client's actions are criminalized rather than the prostitute's actions*
- ✓ *Criminalizing women involved in prostitution leads to further alienation from protection, health and social services*
- ✓ *Criminal records for prostitution-related offences create barriers to exiting the sex trade and make it difficult for those who have left the sex trade to escape the stigmatization of having participated in prostitution*
- ✓ *The ongoing distrust between prostitutes and police makes prostitutes unlikely to report assaults*

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Activity Two: CEDAW

Introduce the [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#) (CEDAW) to the class. Give each student a copy of CEDAW.

Put students into pairs or small groups and give each of them three of the following scenarios below. Students find the Articles of CEDAW that are applicable to each of their scenarios.

Have students share their scenarios and CEDAW Articles with the larger class. If there is some overlap with scenarios, have all groups with the same scenario stand while one group shares – other groups can add on if they have different Articles listed for the scenario.

Scenarios

- ✓ *I am 32 years old and I have never voted in an election. There is no law to say that I cannot vote, but it is illegal for women to enter the voting station.*
- ✓ *I have married outside of my culture, which is not looked favorably upon in my country. When I married my husband, I lost all cultural and religious rights – my husband did not.*
- ✓ *I am a nine year old girl and I do not go to school. I clean the house, cook meals and fetch water. When my brothers come home from school, I make them a snack and listen to the stories about their friends and teacher.*
- ✓ *In my family, most women get married and raise a family after high school but I want to have a career. My father isn't happy about this but has agreed that I can be a nurse or a teacher.*
- ✓ *I work in an industry that is dominated by men. I recently discovered that I make \$10,000/year less than one of my colleagues who has less experience and education than I do. I think this is because I am a woman.*
- ✓ *I recently told my boss that I am pregnant and will start my maternity leave in 5 months. Today I received notice that I have been terminated. I have never had any problems at work and have always received praise for my work.*

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- ✓ *I live in a small community about 16 hours from a large urban centre. There is no medical centre in my community and it costs too much to get to the city to see a doctor so most people simply suffer when they are ill. Some people even die from easily curable illnesses.*
- ✓ *I am a 42 year old woman with 3 children. I could go to jail if I leave my house without my husband's permission. I often miss important events in my children's lives and cannot even go to the pharmacy if my child is ill.*
- ✓ *I am a 14 year old girl. My parents have chosen a 40 year old man to be my husband. I will get married in 2 weeks.*
- ✓ *I love my children, but I only thought I would have 3 or 4. I have 9 children and my husband insists that we will have more.*
- ✓ *My marriage is an unsafe place. My husband has a problem with alcohol and when he drinks, he gets violent. I want a divorce, but this is not possible in my country.*
- ✓ *I love my job - I'm really good at it and my colleagues respect me. Unfortunately, I am getting married in a few months and my fiancé doesn't believe in women working outside of the home. I will quit my job the week before my wedding.*
- ✓ *My parents were told that my uncle would be taking me to another part of the country to get married. Since we are from a very poor family, they were so happy that I would have a husband without a big dowry. My uncle did not find me a husband. He sold me into prostitution.*
- ✓ *I lived in a very poor country. I had an opportunity to come to Canada as a nanny – this could change my life forever. When I arrived (with many other young women), I found that I was to work as a prostitute in a massage parlour. I was in Canada illegally and couldn't tell anyone about my situation for fear of being put in jail or deported.*
- ✓ *My parents died when I was 15. Since I was the eldest girl, I had to quit school to take care of my 4 siblings. My older brother finished high school today and will go to college on a scholarship. I had perfect grades like his. I'm so proud of him.*

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Assessment/Analysis

Work for Assessment:

- Letter to the Editor in response to “The Case for Decriminalizing Prostitution”
- Group work on connecting scenarios with CEDAW Articles
- If doing **Extension Activities**, final projects and presentations can be graded

Activities for Extension and/or Integration

Further Reading: History of Prostitution

Students read “[A Brief History of Prostitution \(Curiosity.com – Discovery Channel\)](#)” and “[Prostitution \(The Canadian Encyclopedia\)](#)”

Teachers can choose one of the following for all students to work on or they may allow students to choose the one that most appeals to them. Upon completion, students can present their projects to the rest of the class.

Students are asked to create a prostitution awareness program for young men/women. This can be in one of the following formats:

- * a public service announcement for television
- * an outline of measures to be taken
- * a pamphlet
- * a campaign
- * a resource list

Remind students to keep in mind who their audience is, what the message is that they are trying to convey and the best way to convey their message.

Students create a public service announcement geared toward Johns.

Students create a resource list for people interested in getting out of prostitution – find out what services are available in the community.

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Subject and Level Learner Outcomes

Grade 10, 11 and 12 Social Studies

DIMENSIONS OF THINKING

S.1 develop skills of critical thinking and creative thinking

S.2 develop skills of historical thinking

S.4 demonstrate skills of decision making and problem solving

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AS A DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE

S.5 demonstrate skills of cooperation, conflict resolution and consensus building

RESEARCH FOR DELIBERATIVE INQUIRY

S.7 apply the research process

S.8 demonstrate skills of oral, written and visual literacy

Grade 10 Social Studies

1.1 acknowledge and appreciate the existence of multiple perspectives in a globalizing world
(GC, CC)

2.2 exhibit a global consciousness with respect to the human condition (GC, C)

2.7 explore the foundations of historical globalization (rise of capitalism, industrialization, imperialism, Eurocentrism) (TCC, ER, PADM)

4.2 recognize and appreciate the importance of human rights in determining quality of life (GC, C)

4.4 explore various understandings of quality of life (GC)

4.5 analyze impacts of globalization on children and youth (awareness of global issues, employment issues, identity) (GC, C, PADM, ER, I)

4.6 analyze impacts of globalization on women (gender issues, labour issues, opportunities for entrepreneurship) (GC, C, PADM, ER, I)

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4.7 evaluate relationships between globalization and democratization and human rights (GC, PADM)

Grade 12 Social Studies

1.2 appreciate various perspectives regarding the relationship between individualism and common good (PADM, C, GC)

1.3 explore factors that may influence individual and collective beliefs and values (culture, language, media, relationship to land, environment, gender, religion, spirituality, ideology) (I, C, LPP)

1.9 analyze the dynamic between individualism and common good in contemporary societies (PADM, ER, C)

3.3 explore the extent to which governments should reflect the will of the people (PADM, C)

3.4 explore the extent to which governments should encourage economic equality (PADM, ER, C)

3.6 analyze the extent to which liberal democracies reflect illiberal thought and practice (Canada, contemporary examples) (PADM, ER)

3.7 analyze why the practices of governments may not reflect principles of liberalism (PADM, ER, C)

3.9 evaluate the extent to which the principles of liberalism are viable in the context of contemporary issues (environment concerns, resource use and development, debt and poverty, racism, pandemics, terrorism, censorship, illiberalism) (PADM, ER, LPP)