



## Understanding the Federal Judiciary

<b>Time Frame:</b> One day to complete (finish for homework) and then time on another day to discuss	<b>Author:</b> Jennifer Conlon
<b>Proven Practices (indicate which practices used)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Instruction on government institutions</li><li>✓ Use of current &amp; controversial issues</li><li>✓ Simulations of democratic practices</li><li>✓ Service Learning</li></ul>	
<b>IL Social Studies Standards</b>  <u>SS.IS.4.9-12: Gathering and Evaluating Sources</u> <u>SS.CV.3.9-12: Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, and agreements on the maintenance of order, justice, equality, and liberty.</u> <u>SS.CV.4.9-12: Explain how the U.S. Constitution established a system of government that has powers, responsibilities, and limits that have changed over time and are still contested while promoting the common good and protecting rights.</u>	
<b>Essential Question:</b> How is the federal judiciary work and where can I find information about it?	
<b>Supporting Questions:</b> What is the structure? What are the current issues before the courts? How can I research those issues? How can I learn about past issues before the courts?	
<b>Resources Required w/Citations:</b> Access to the internet to complete the attached google doc <a href="https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WBfXigxSG7vC82Cp4VcUnnLfBwwX7dLmDJv6lbZmQlw/edit?usp=sharing">https://docs.google.com/document/d/1WBfXigxSG7vC82Cp4VcUnnLfBwwX7dLmDJv6lbZmQlw/edit?usp=sharing</a>	
<b>Recommended Procedures:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Either upload the assignment in google classroom, making a copy for each student, or share the doc with students using e-mail and tell them to make their own copy of the doc.</li><li>2. Decide whether you want students to work alone or with partners. I usually assign several of these web searches; the first they do in partners, later they complete them on their own - your choice.</li><li>3. Tell the students to complete the search using the links embedded in the web search.</li><li>4. Any work that is not done in class can be completed for homework.</li><li>5. Follow with a discussion next day.</li></ol>	

**Possible Service Learning Informed Action:**

If students feel strongly about issues they discover while researching, they may want to get involved in civil efforts to address those.

**Differentiation:**

Two ways to differentiate this: have students work in pairs that support their relative strengths or divide up the work so that some students are working on questions more suited to their abilities.

**Possible Assessments:**

I use this as a formative assessment.

**Other Considerations:**

Students will draw on these skills later when they work to research a case to analyze a fact pattern addressing the Bill of Rights issues.

See the next page for a copy of web search.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ **COURT SEARCH (10 points)**

Directions: Try to complete this today. There are some things you need to know to begin:

1. Each state has its own court system to enforce its own laws. State courts are important. Most criminal cases are tried in state courts, for example.
2. There is also a system of national courts called federal courts. There are 94 district courts (the entry-level trial court) and there are at least one of these district courts in each state. If you want to appeal the decision of these courts, you would appeal to a federal Court of Appeals and there are about 13 of these. Several states share an appellate court. The states in a group that shares an appellate court form a circuit. At the top is the United States Supreme Court.

This web search will help you understand how the courts are organized and where you can get information about their decisions, especially the decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court. Use the websites to get answers. You can work with a partner, but everyone should write his or her own responses.

1) First of all, play this game to learn what courts have jurisdiction over what types of cases. Go to [www.icivics.org](http://www.icivics.org). Go to Check Out All the Games, near the top. Scroll down to the Judicial Branch and pick Court Quest. Click on a person. Read the question. If there are court choices written, choose one. Go to the map. Click on the different courts to read about them, then pick the one you think is correct. Everyone should play for 10 minutes. What's your score?

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2) Now for some research. Go to <http://www.uscourts.gov/uscourts/images/CircuitMap.pdf>. What states make up the Seventh Circuit? \_\_\_\_\_

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3) Look at the official **Supreme Court website**: <https://www.supremecourt.gov/>.

This is a good source for information about judges, the history of the court, and their current calendar. Go to About the Court. Go to Justices. Go to Current Members.

a) Who is the current Chief Justice of the Supreme Court? \_\_\_\_\_

b) Name any two other justices currently sitting on the Supreme Court:

\_\_\_\_\_

4) From the Supreme Court home page, go to About the Court. Go to Justices. Go to The Justices' Caseload.

a) How many cases are the justices asked to hear each year? \_\_\_\_\_

b) How many cases do they actually take and hear with oral arguments? \_\_\_\_\_



c) How many additional cases do they decide without plenary review? \_\_\_\_\_

5) Go back to the main Supreme Court home page. Look at the calendar. What is the first day the Supreme Court began hearing cases this fall (red boxes)? \_\_\_\_\_

Click on the date of the first hearing. What was the first case?

\_\_\_\_\_

6) Look at [www.oyez.org](http://www.oyez.org), a webpage about the Supreme Court. **Oyez** is a great source for the facts, issues, and major points of the decisions for current and past cases.

Click on Cases. The cases to be heard by the Supreme Court this term will be listed alphabetically later on. We'll look at a case for 2017. Look at the 2017 cases, sorted by name. Go to *Carpenter v. U.S.* Click on the case. In your own words, what is this case about?

\_\_\_\_\_

What was the legal question presented? Copy it here:

\_\_\_\_\_

7) Go to [www.scotusblog.com](http://www.scotusblog.com). (SCOTUS = Supreme Court of the United States.) **Scotusblog** is a very sophisticated site designed for use by attorneys. It provides access to legal documents pertaining to cases. It also provides information about the facts, issues, and decisions of current and past cases.

Click on Merits cases at the top. Click on October Term 2017. Click to look for cases by name. Go down to *Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights Commission*. Click on the case name. What is this case about? \_\_\_\_\_

When did the Court hear arguments on this case?

\_\_\_\_\_

Look at all the amicus curiae briefs filed in this case. What was their purpose?

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8) Another source is <http://www.law.cornell.edu/supct/index.html>, the **Cornell Legal Information Institute** site. What was the most recent decision of the court and when was it decided? \_\_\_\_\_

9) Look at **Landmark Cases** website to find historic cases. <http://www.landmarkcases.org/>. If you recognize any cases, write the name of one here:

\_\_\_\_\_.



## IllinoisCivics.org Lesson Plans

10) Go to <http://www.streetlaw.org/en/page.sccasesalpha.aspx>, the **Street Law** website. This site provides discussions of significant cases. Look at *Atkins v. Virginia*. What was it about?

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If you have time and want to look some more, check out the Library of Congress law Library website: <http://www.loc.gov/law/help/guide.html>. Write about something you find interesting:

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