

Investigating U.S. Police Budgets
Unit plan by Vincent Pham

Focus Question(s): What is the relationship between our city government's expenses and police expenses? How do our police departments allocate their budgets? **Is it necessary to defund the police in order to have a just society?**

Lesson Plan 1 (60 minutes): City Government Budget Allocation to Policing

[Slides for this lesson: #1-13](#)

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will be able to compare and contrast their perceptions of how much of their budgets governments allocate to policing with the reality of police funding.
- Students will be able to contextualize the relationship between Black Lives Matter with the protests against police brutality in the United States.

Evaluation of lesson objective (Performance task): Students will be able to complete a worksheet packet that refers to the different components of the lesson (video on police violence in the US, creating an ideal budget allocation for a just society, and exploring the actual NYPD budget in relation to the rest of the NYC budget)

Introduction (8 minutes)

Do Now Question: Describe the police in **one word**.

- Students will silently think about their answer. Then they will share out with the whole class. Teacher will ask clarifying questions and ask for justification from student volunteers.

Teacher Note: By beginning the unit with conversations with students about their impressions of and relationship to the police (both in the U.S. and in their origin countries, if applicable), the class will have a set of perceptions that we will work with during the unit.

Content Delivery (12 minutes)

Introduce Black Lives Matter. (See the PowerPoint slides)

What is Black Lives Matter?

Source: <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/>

- “#BlackLivesMatter was founded in 2013 in response to the **acquittal** of Trayvon Martin’s murderer.”
 - Movement started when a 17 year old was killed by a man (who was then found not guilty)
- “Mission is to **eradicate white supremacy** and build local power to intervene in violence **inflicted on Black communities by the state...**”
 - Social movement that protests against racism and organizes to stop the government harming Black communities



Source: “History of Black Lives Matter Movement” by Newsweek (2020)

Teacher instructions: Summarize these two quotes from the Black Lives Matter organization. Ask students if they know anything else about this organization / movement prior to playing the following videos:

Video #1: Newsweek video on the [History of the Black Lives Matter Movement](#)

Video #2: [A brief history of police impunity in Black deaths by Vox](#) (June 2020)

Video Questions:

1. Why does the video show footage of Martin Luther King talking about police brutality in the 1960s? (0:34-0:42 seconds)
2. At the 1:38-1:43 mark of the video, it shows a newspaper reporter saying “it’s the feeling that among many of these people, that Black lives don’t matter.” Why does she say this?
3. From January 2013 to October 2019, how many Black Americans were killed by the U.S. police? How many police officers were charged? How many police officers were convicted? (6:10)
4. What does the video show at the start at the 7 minute mark to 7:20? What is the importance of this information?

Teacher Note: Educators should preview these videos beforehand in order to identify key points in the video to stop and discuss. It is recommended that the teacher use their discretion to think about what footage can be shown or what footage can be skipped. Provide a disclaimer for potential trigger warnings.

In-Class Activity (35 minutes)

Create your own city budget activity (20 minutes)

In a morally just society, how much money should the city government provide for different services? Your budget is \$90 billion (90,000,000,000). Students work in groups and justify their allocation amounts.

Provide 6 general categories for funding:

- Debt Service (Paying off money that the city government borrowed a long time ago)
- Education (Pre K-12, College)
- Pension (retirement money for people who have worked for a long time)
- Police
- Social Services (Health care, job training, housing opportunities, and etc.)
- Other

[For examples of student-created budgets, click here.](#)

Student groups will compare and contrast their proposed budgets with other groups. These interactions will be recorded in the worksheet.

Researching actual city budgets (15 minutes)

After creating their ideal budgets, students will then compare and contrast that information with the reality of how New York City (or their local community) allocated their budget. In particular, specific excerpts (especially the graphs of how police budgeting) will be examined. Students will then answer questions related to these visuals.

- [The N.Y.P.D Spends \\$6 Billion a Year. Proposals to Defund It Want to Cut \\$1 Billion](#) by Ella Koeze and Denise Lu (*New York Times* June 2020)
- [How Much Do U.S Cities Spend on Policing?](#) By Niall McCarthy (June 2020)

Conclusion & Exit Ticket (5 minutes)

Exit Ticket

1. Reflect on how much local governments spend on U.S. police budgets. Does knowing this fact make you feel safer? Why or why not?
2. Share the two most important things you learned about U.S. policing. What are some additional questions you have about this topic / What do you want to learn more about?

Lesson Plan 2 (60 minutes): Case Study of Baltimore and Police Funding for Surveillance

[Slides for this lesson: #14-19](#)

Lesson Objective: Students will be able to describe the details of how the Baltimore police utilize their budget on surveillance technology.

Evaluation of lesson objective (Performance task): Students will be able to annotate, summarize, and respond to the main ideas in the article

Do Now (10 minutes)

Do Now Question: Look at this image. What do you observe? Infer? Wonder (Wh-Questions)? [Link to Political Cartoon](#) (Jared Rodriguez for *Truthout*, 2020)



Follow-up questions: Ask students to reflect on the medium itself a bit.

- What information does this political cartoon communicate? (This political cartoon is part of a news story titled “Over 1,100 Policing Agencies in the US Have Bought Drones Capable of Recording.”)
- What is the value of political cartoons, and of images more generally, in journalism and storytelling? How might images communicate more effectively than words in some cases?

Content Delivery (10 minutes)

Teacher will review notes from the last class (the idea that governments provide extensive funding to police forces). Discussion question for the lesson: What are some specific ways the police use this funding?

[US city deploys camera-equipped planes for surveillance](#) by *Al Jazeera English* (May 2020)

- Students will be completing the question sheet while watching this video.
- Discussion question: Is exchanging our privacy worth the price for a sense of “security”?

In-Class Activity (30 minutes)

Read [Prying Eyes](#) by J. Cavanaugh Simpson (2020) for *Baltimore Magazine*

Teacher Demonstration

- Teacher will review the task of summarizing, providing an example for the students to follow.
- The worksheet (below) includes a model example of summarizing which allows students to see what type of information they should be looking for when they summarize their own text.
- Annotation includes defining words students don't know, underling / circling main ideas, writing notes on the side. Summarizing is not the same as paraphrasing.

Whole Class work

- Teacher and class will annotate, summarize, and create inferences / questions to one paragraph of reading. This joint activity will provide further clarity about the work process.

Independent Activity

- [Using this worksheet](#), students can work collaboratively or on their own to finish reading, annotating, and summarizing the article.

Conclusion & Exit Ticket (10 minutes)**Exit Ticket (Summary Partner Activity)**

1. Partner A asks "What stood out to you in this section?"
2. Partner B picks one section they have completed.
3. When Partner B finishes talking, Partner A summarizes what they heard. ("So what I heard you say was...")
4. Reverse roles!

Homework: Students should finish reading, annotating, and summarizing any parts of the article they didn't get to during class.

Lesson Plan 3 (60 minutes): Police Budgets and Militarization

[Slides for this lesson: #20-24](#)

Lesson Objective: Students will be able to explain how heavy government investment in police funding has resulted in an increase in police militarization.

Evaluation of lesson objective (Performance task): Students will be able to annotate, summarize, and respond to the main ideas in the article.

Do Now (10 minutes)

Do Now Question: Look at this image. What do you observe? Infer? Wonder (Wh-Questions)? [Link to photo](#) (Scott Olson / Getty Images 2014)



Students will silently respond to this question via writing. Then they will share out with a partner (1 minute each). Finally student volunteers will share with the whole class. Teacher will ask clarifying questions and ask for justification if needed.

Content Delivery (15 minutes)

Teacher will present photos of militarized police and active duty soldiers. Students will be asked to predict which is which. Discussion question to prime for video and article: What are some potential consequences of police militarization?

Vox video [“Why America’s police look like soldiers”](#)

- Students will be completing the question sheet while watching this video.

In-Class Activity (30 minutes)

Read [After Pouring Billions Into Militarization of U.S. Cops, Congress Weighs Limits](#) by Allision McCartney, Paul Murray, and Mira Rojanasakul for *Bloomberg* (July 2020)
Teacher Demonstration

- Teacher will review the task of summarizing, providing an example for the students to follow.
- The worksheet (below) includes a model example of summarizing which allows students to see what type of information they should be looking for when they summarize their own text.
- Annotation includes defining words students don't know, underling / circling main ideas, writing notes on the side. Summarizing is not the same as paraphrasing.

Whole Class work

- Teacher and class will annotate, summarize, and create inferences / questions to one paragraph of reading. This joint activity will provide further clarity about the work process.

Independent Activity

- [Using this worksheet](#), students can work collaboratively or on their own to finish reading, annotating, and summarizing the article.

Conclusion & Exit Ticket (5 minutes)

Students will answer the following questions: Based on these two past lessons, what are your thoughts on police funding? Which topic would you prefer to explore more: police funding & surveillance or police funding & militarization? Justify your answer

This will provide further clarity to the educator about where the students' interests lie. Subsequently, the instructor can identify additional resources to share during the project process.

Homework: Students should finish reading, annotating, and summarizing any parts of the article they didn't get to during class.

Lesson Plan 4 (60 minutes): Introduction to Digital Zine Project (Social Justice Slideshow) & Identifying Key Evidence

[Slides for this lesson: #25-31](#)

Lesson Objective: Students will integrate multimedia or visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

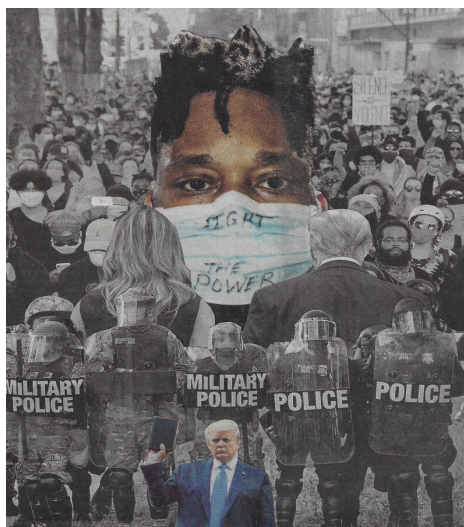
Evaluation of lesson objective (Performance task): Students will identify relevant quotes and images to use for their digital zine.

Do Now (7 minutes)

Students will refer to their notes from the videos and their articles (“[Prying Eyes](#)” and “[After Pouring Billions Into Militarization of U.S. Cops, Congress Weighs Limits](#)”)

Students will identify and circle the 5-7 most significant pieces of evidence. They should consider these texts to use in an online presentation.

Thought question: Look at the images below. What stories / arguments do these works communicate?



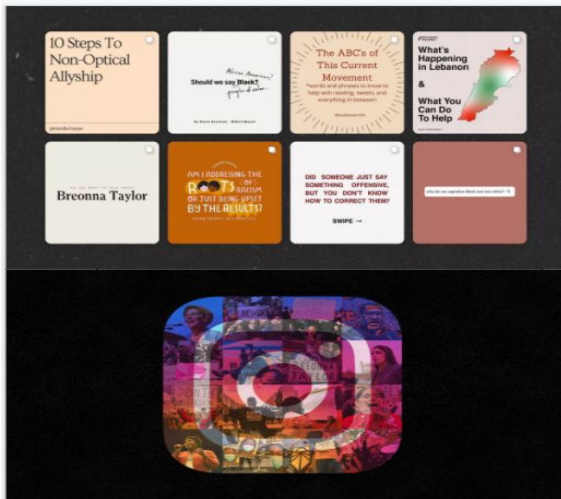
Source (Left image): Penny Mateer, “6/3/2020 Lives Buffeted by Terrorism and Injustice”

Source (right image): Michael D’Antuono, “DomiNation,” 2020, Oil on canvas

Discussion question: How can art serve as social activism?

Content Delivery (10 minutes)

1. What is a digital zine? (Refer to slide 27 in [the slides](#))



Understanding “digital zine”

- Zines started off as independently “mini magazines” that was a safe space for people to creatively share their thoughts.
- Zines are accessible to people, especially those who may face systemic barriers to traditional writing/art/journalism opportunities
 - Examples: BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), those with limited financial means, women, and LGBTQ+ individuals.
- Instagram is now increasingly being used for news, activism, and creative and informative purposes.

Your final project: Creating a digital zine that combines art & journalism about police budgets. Use visual images and quotes to enhance the meaning and argument.

Purpose: To share online as a way to educate others

This [Vox article about “social justice slideshows”](#) explains the increased popularity and proliferation of this medium. Students will be using Canva to design their digital zines in order to contextualize and educate about the topic of police budgets in the US.

- Source 1: Students can look at the police surveillance planes in Baltimore
- Source 2: Students can look at how police budgets have funded militarization

Furthermore, students will advocate for their own views on what the appropriate amount of funding for police is necessary to have a just society.

Why design a product meant to be published on Instagram?

- Context: Instagram has a carousel feature which showcases 10 different images or videos within the same space. Traditionally it has been used to highlight memories of vacations, special events, and etc. Beginning the spring of 2020, the carousel feature has been used for reporting social justice issues.
- It is important to understand that posting informative zines on IG is NOT the foundation for civic engagement and nuanced media literacy. Instead it can be a tangible way to begin the process of moving towards activism.

Review the components of the digital zine:

- Slide #1: Describe your thoughts about the police in your home country (if applicable) and in the U.S.
- Slide #2: Introduce the problem of large police budgets

- Slide #3: Copy and paste one quote from your chosen reading about the effects of the police budget use
 - Option one: [Police budgets used for surveillance](#)
 - Option two: [Police budgets used for militarization](#)
- Slides #4-8:
 - Summarize and analyze additional quotes from your chosen reading and/or other news stories
 - Find interesting pictures / statistics / political cartoons to supplement your work
 - Conclusion: In a just society, is it necessary to imagine ways to defund police budgets? Why or why not?
 - Reference page (cite your sources!)

Review [the evaluation rubric](#)

In-Class Activity (40 minutes)

Teacher Demonstration

- Teacher provides a [model final product](#). Teacher reviews how each slide connects back to the project expectations.

Whole Class work

Students evaluate the following zine examples in small groups. (What do you like about them? What do you dislike about them? What is missing?)

- [So you want to talk about cops in schools?](#) By “So you want to talk about” Instagram (October 20, 2020)
- [What’s happening in Lebanon & What you can do to help](#) By “Chnge” Instagram (August 4th, 2020)
- [The Importance of Socially Responsible Cocoa Production](#) By “The Slow Factory” Instagram (September 29th, 2020)

Teacher’s Note: These zines are not all ideal examples. Point out how they make it very difficult to identify the sources for their evidence. Suggest that we create a “reference page” at the end of the slideshow for easier documentation. If students are English Language Learners, we should empower them by having some slides in English, some slides in their native language.

Independent Activity ([This link](#) offers templates for designing digital zines in Canva)

- Students will begin working on the zine on their computers / ipads.
- Teacher circulates for support

Conclusion & Exit Ticket (3 minutes)

Exit Ticket: Teacher marks each student’s progress. Additional class time may be provided based on the overall group’s progress. (Recommended for additional class time given the new platform and task of synthesizing visuals and text)

Lesson Plan #5 (60 minutes) Completing the Digital Zine & exploring policing worldwide (extensions)
Slides for this lesson: #32-36
Lesson Objective: Students will be able to create a visual, informative document that critiques how police departments allocate their budgets.
Evaluation of lesson objective (Performance task): Completing the digital zine and then having it evaluated by the rubric.
<u>Do Now</u>
(Students will be working on their digital zine.) Teacher and peers can provide feedback during this time
<u>Content Delivery</u>
(Students will be working on their zine) Teacher and peers can provide feedback during this time
<u>In-Class Activity</u>
(Students will be working on their zine) Teacher and peers can provide feedback during this time Students present their completed digital zines (This may happen in the next lesson)
<u>Extension Activity (Future Lessons)</u>
Stories of Police Injustice Worldwide (2019 / 2020)
<u>Chile (Protests against the government)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police officer in Chile accused of throwing teen from bridge (<i>Al Jazeera English</i>, October 2020) • Chile: riot police fire teargas after one million people join in anti-government protests (<i>The Guardian</i>, October 2019)
<u>Nigeria (Protesting against SARS and police brutality)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police brutality in Nigeria: what is the #EndSars movement? (<i>The Guardian</i>, October 2020) • ‘Enough is enough’: Nigerians demand SARS police unit scrapped (<i>Al Jazeera English</i>, October 2020)
<u>Thailand (Protesting against the monarchy)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thai police fire water cannon at Bangkok protesters (<i>Al Jazeera English</i>, October 2020)

- [Thai police arrest 21 at pro-democracy rally, drawing chants against royal motorcade](#) (*South China Morning Post*, October 2020)

Puerto Rico 2019 (Police against Dominicans)

- [Police Violence Against Dominicans in Puerto Rico Suggests Systemic Problem](#) (*The Guardian*, October 2019)
- [Puerto Rico police fire teargas at protesters demanding governor's resignation](#) (*The Guardian*, July 2019)