

Kathryn Benken

Life Skills Center of Hamilton County

China Lesson Plan “Consent of the Governed: A Look at the Mandate of Heaven and Social Contract Theory”

NCTA Oxford 2009

This lesson plan will consist of 10-12 students who will range from sophomores to seniors. This lesson plan intends to be used as a way of connecting both a World History student and a US Government student by comparing the political and historical aspects of the Mandate of Heaven and the Social Contract theory. This lesson plan is designed to take one-two 50-minute class periods, adaptable to the needs of the teacher, class and schedule.

The goals of this lesson are for the student to understand the connections between an ancient Chinese theory of power and a European Enlightenment theory of power, but also to understand the fundamental differences. A further goal is for the student to understand how these two main theories have influenced the governments and mentalities of the people involved in the current time.

The objectives for this lesson are: the student will be able to correctly identify the development and influences of the Mandate of Heaven; the student will be able to correctly determine the aspects of Social Contract theory and trace the influences of that theory; the student will be able to catalog the similarities and differences between the two theories and attribute the differences to the differences in the Chinese and Western cultures.

This lesson can be presented in any order; the Mandate of Heaven, then the Social Contract Theory, or the teacher can start with the more familiar Social Contract Theory and end with the Mandate of Heaven. Either way, the teacher should emphasize the fact that the Chinese system existed hundreds of years prior to the Enlightenment theorists.

This lesson meets the following Social Studies Academic Content Standards for the 9th grade.

Systems of Government

1. Explain how various systems of governments acquire, use and justify their power.

Participation

1. Analyze and evaluate the influence of various forms of citizen action on public policy

2. Describe and compare opportunities for citizen participation under different systems of government

Students will be grouped individually in the beginning of the lesson, as they are completing the pretest activity. Students will meet in the large group for direct instruction, break off into smaller groups for a question-answer session, reconvene in the large group for discussion and then work individually on the post-test activity.

Materials needed in this lesson include: the pre and post test activities-see attached. Also an area set up for direct instruction, areas for small groups, and prepared questions for the small groups (see attached).

To begin the class, the teacher should ask several questions to lead the students to the right frame of mind. Ask the students to imagine that as a group, they have been stranded on an island (think *Lost*). Which one among them should be the leader and why? What would you do as that leader? Why would the rest of you follow that person? What is the line that marks their authority? If they crossed that line, what would the others do? How would authority change hands if necessary? Based on the answers to these questions, the discussion can begin on how the Chinese answered these questions, and the European Enlightenment philosophers did.

The pretest activity consists of 8 statements. Students are asked to identify if the statement refers to the Mandate of Heaven, the Social Contract theory or to both. The purpose of this activity is to see how much the students already know about the two theories, but also to drive the point home that they are similar in certain aspects. After going over the results of the pretest activity-which should only take about 10 minutes, the group will focus on the Mandate of Heaven.

During this point of the lesson the following key points will be discussed with the class.

1. Mandate of Heaven originated with the Zhou Dynasty overthrowing the Shang Dynasty, and needing a valid reason to do so and keep their new found power
 - a. 'Heaven' is seen as a force primarily concerned in the welfare of human beings, and so appointed a ruler who would assume the responsibilities of the welfare of the people. Heaven is all knowing and can act directly on the earth to show its will.
 - b. "How do you justify your ability to rule when you seized power from those already ruling? How do you prevent just anyone from doing the same to you?"

2. The Mandate of Heaven dictated which dynasty ruled over China. There was no set length or qualifications of a ruler.
3. If the ruling dynasty ceased to rule fairly, or failed to keep the well being of the people as their primary concern, the Mandate is considered lost and it passes to another family.
 - a. How can you tell the Mandate has been lost?
 - i. China's population has always been based in agriculture. If the peasants are suffering due to: droughts, floods, fires, earthquakes, economic depressions, wars, famines, diseases (Heaven manifesting in the physical earth), etc, the peasants' revolt.
 - ii. In the political and social turmoil, a new leader is able to seize power and establish his dynasty. Because they are able to do so, they now have the Mandate of Heaven.
 - c. Because the Mandate has been passed to a new family (thanks to the all-knowing Heaven) it is their duty to revolt and form the new government.
4. The Mandate of Heaven has 4 basic principles
 1. The right to rule is granted by Heaven
 2. There is only one Heaven, therefore only one ruler
 3. The right to rule is based on the virtue of the ruler
 4. The right to rule is not limited to one dynasty
 - a. Unlike the Divine Right theory of government, which believes that god has given that family the right to rule and it was not to be challenged by the whimsy of man. The ruling family was answerable only to God (not allowing the right to revolution in Enlightenment)
5. Some of the ways that the principles are translated to actions:
 - a. gives the ruler prestige and religious importance
 - b. gives the ruler supreme power
 - c. allows a complete transfer of power to the new ruler, as they have the new Mandate
 - d. ruler's power is checked by virtue
 - e. justifies rebellion so long as the rebellion is successful.
6. The Zhou Dynasty (1050-256 BC). According to accounts, the previous dynasty, the Shang, had become corrupt. Even though the Zhou Dynasty adopted many

of the aspects of the Shang Dynasty, and went on to be one of the longest last dynasties, there was still the question over to legitimacy of their rule.

- a. the Zhou defined kingship as the intermediary between Heaven and Earth- shown through their symbol for 'king'- three horizontal lines (heaven, sovereign and earth) joined by a vertical line (mandate) the king is the 'Son of Heaven'
- b. Since they were able to successfully overthrow the Shang Dynasty, it is obvious that the Shang had lost the Mandate and it had been passed to King Wen and his son, King Wu.
- c. The only way to know that the Mandate has been passed is at the victorious conclusion of a rebellion. If the rebellion succeeds, the Mandate has been passed. If it fails, the Mandate is still with the current sovereign.

7. Confucius and the Mandate of Heaven. Confucius was alive from roughly 551-470 BC. He became one of the dominant philosophers in Chinese history, and for many centuries his teachings were held as the only way to live your life righteously. Confucius and the Mandate of Heaven are tied together through his concept of the "Right Relationships"
- a. ruler-subjects
 - b. parents-children
 - c. older sibling-younger sibling
 - d. husband-wife
 - e. friend-friend

At this point the students can write down how those 5 relationships are reflected in their own lives (or equivalent relationships since they are not married).

The people on the left side of the relationships were generally the superior of the two and have the duty of benevolence (compassion and goodwill) while the subordinate (on the right side) has the duty of obedience. However obedience is dependent on the superior member practicing and upholding their benevolence. (The only relationship that is not superior-subordinate is the friend-to-friend relationship, that one is more on equal footing)

For example, if a husband beats his wife with no provocation, the wife is not required to be obedient to her husband. True obedience, according to Confucius, is to be able to disobey anything that is wrong.

So- an emperor who is no longer benevolent-who is abusing his/her power in self-interest -- can be overthrown as obedience is no longer required. Tied in to the Mandate of Heaven, it is now the duty of the subjects to overthrow the emperor, for that is true obedience.

According to Confucius philosophy, a person who does not know the moral orders Heaven and the universe, or cannot put it into practice, has no business being in power.

8. Examples: Shang-->Zhou-->Qin (Chin) , etc.

- a. Modern Examples? Remember that the bulk of the Chinese population is living in more rural areas that rely on agriculture. If the peasants are unhappy... (“New Revolution Threatens Mandate of Heaven by Christopher Horton, *Asia Times*)

This marks the end of the first day of the lesson. The next day will focus on the Social Contract Theory.

The lesson will begin with a brief recap of the Mandate of Heaven and its main components. The discussion will then go to the Social Contract Theory and will hit the following key points.

1. The Enlightenment was a period of thinking that took place mostly in Europe during the 18th century. It emphasized using reason and logic and several of the Enlightenment philosophers applied reason and logic to government. In reaction to the reigns of monarchs who were claiming Divine Right, Enlightenment philosophers, such as Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, argued that governments came into being when groups of people agree to give up certain freedoms in exchange of protection of rights.
2. Thomas Hobbes, 1588-1679 AD, was one of the first Social Contract philosophers. He did not outright overturn the Divine Right theory. Instead he argued that people in society are understood to be equal to each other, but that one needs to grant the authority to enforce the rules if society is to continue functioning.
 - a. Men act in self-interest, however they are capable of making the rational choice to submit to a sovereign to live in a civil society-as this is in their best interest.
 - b. The contract happens in two stages: first men must agree to establish a society by renouncing rights they had before, and second, they must grant one or several persons with the authority and power to enforce the contract.
 - c. This begins to mirror the ‘right relationship’ that Confucius regards; benevolent leader and obedient subjects

3. John Locke, 1632-1704, was another Social Contract philosopher who expands on what Hobbes said. Locke says that upon agreeing to give up personal power to punish and give that power to a government, one becomes subject to the will of the majority. One only joins a form of government with express consent, and when one does, he gains 3 things: laws, interpreters of the laws and enforcers of the laws (3 branches of government). Locke also made provisions for what could happen if the contract was corrupted
 - a. When the executive power devolved into a self-serving rule, then the executive has broken the contract
 - b. When protection is no longer provided to the people, they have the right, and even the duty to dissolve the social contract and establish a new one.
 - c. Through the idea of ‘consent of the governed’, once the established government no longer has that consent, it no longer has the power and authority to rule. The ‘mandate’ of the people has been lost, and will be transferred to the person who can guarantee their rights and freedoms.

4. Example in history

- a. Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution- Thomas Jefferson, who wrote the Declaration of Independence, was profoundly influenced by the writings of John Locke. In the Declaration, he states that it has become necessary for the colonies to declare their independence from Britain because King George, the divinely appointed monarch, has no longer been representing the interests of his people. Namely, he has been passing legislation on their behalf without their contribution. And as he is no longer the ‘benevolent’ ruler, and has acted without the consent of his people, the subjects are no longer required to be obedient; they are signing their own social contract to form a new government.
- b. French Revolution: French peasants revolt against a tyrannical French monarchy after poor harvests and extreme abuse. The French monarchy is abolished; the king and queen are executed along with the majority of the aristocrats. The people form a new government after rebelling against the abusive monarchy.

5. The class will now have the opportunity for open discussion about any of the materials for clarification before the posttest activity is passed out for completion.

The teacher, who will be checking the students’ understanding of the content as it is being presented, will measure evaluation of how well the students met the objectives of the lesson informally during the entire lesson. Formal evaluation will

be measured by the posttest activity, which is attached. It begins similarly to the pretest by asking the students to determine which statement is describing the Mandate of Heaven and the Social Contract theory.

There will also be a few short answer questions to give the students an alternate way to present the information they know.

Pretest

NAME: _____

Instructions: Next to each statement, indicate if you believe that statement describes the ancient Chinese theory of power, the Mandate of Heaven (MH) or the European Enlightenment theory of power, the Social Contract Theory (SCT), or Both.

_____ 1. The ruler is the ruler because society needs someone with the authority to enforce the rules.

_____ 2. The ruler can remain in power so long as the rights of the people remain protected.

_____ 3. The ruler can remain in power so long as they are righteous and act on behalf of the people.

_____ 4. The ruler does not have to be of noble birth.

_____ 5. Citizens are self-serving, though rational. So they recognize the need for an entity to enforce the rules agreed upon by all citizens.

_____ 6. This theory utilizes a philosopher's idea on the 'right relationships' between the ruler and the subjects.

_____ 7. This theory argues that if the people are being abused in any way by the government, they have the right to a new form of government.

_____ 8. This theory is utilized to validate a new government.

Posttest

NAME: _____

Instructions: Next to each statement, indicate if you believe that statement describes the ancient Chinese theory of power, the Mandate of Heaven (MH) or the European Enlightenment theory of power, the Social Contract Theory (SCT), or Both.

- _____ 1. Mandate to rule given by the governed.
- _____ 2. Proof that the right to rule has been transferred upon successful rebellion.
- _____ 3. Established at the beginning of the Zhou Dynasty.
- _____ 4. Theory supports the removal of corrupt government leaders
- _____ 5. When failings are found in the contract, it is the duty of the people to form a new contract.
- _____ 6. Influenced by the principles of the 'Right Relationships' and that the relationships are reciprocal.
- _____ 7. John Locke and Thomas Hobbes were proponents of this theory.
- _____ 8. If the ruler were to become corrupt, the relationship or contract between the ruler and the people is broken, and the right to rule would go to another.
- _____ 9. Influenced the revolutions in America and France.
- _____ 10. This theory encourages the 'right to revolution'

Short Answers: In 2-4 sentences, answer the following questions.

1. The Mandate of Heaven has a clear definition of what 'heaven' is. What would be the equivalent to 'heaven' according to the Social Contract theory?

2. Do you foresee a change in the Mandate of Heaven in China, or a new Social Contract in America in the immediate future? Why or why not?

3. Clarify Confucius' influence on the Mandate of Heaven, and John Locke's influence on the Declaration of Independence.

Bibliography

"Social Contract." Wikipedia. 2009. Wikimedia Foundation. 31 March 2009
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_contract>.

"Right of Revolution." Wikipedia. 2009. Wikimedia Foundation. 31 March 2009
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Right_of_revolution>.

Friend, Celeste. "Social Contract Theory." The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2006 1-19. 31 March 2009
<<http://www.iep.utm.edu/s/soc-cont.htm>>.

"Mandate of Heaven." Wikipedia. 2009. Wikimedia Foundation. 31 March 2009
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mandate_of_Heaven>.

"Mandate of Heaven." mrdonn.org. mrdonn.org. 31 March 2009 <<http://china.mrdonn.org/mandateofheaven.html>>.

Ross, Kelley. "Confucius." Confucius, K'ung-fu-tzu. 2007. 31 March 2009 <[Http://www.friesian.com/confuci.htm](http://www.friesian.com/confuci.htm)>.

Hooker, Richard. "Ancient China: The Chou." World History. 6 June 1999. 31 March 2009
<<http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/ANCCHINA/CHOU.HTM>>.

Hooker, Richard. "T'ien Ming: The Mandate of Heaven." China Glossary. 14 July 1999. World Civilizations. 31
March 2009 <<http://wsu.edu/~dee/GLOSSARY/TIENMING.HTM>>.

Horton, Christopher. "New Revolution Threatens 'Mandate of Heaven'." Asia Times 2003 31 March 2009
<<http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/EC14Ad01.html>>.