LESSON
Blogging, Civic Engagement and the DREAM Act

OVERVIEW
Every year thousands of students graduate from U.S. high schools with the expectations that their hard work will pay off as they gain acceptance to college or procure entry-level jobs. But for undocumented youth, that promise of reward is hollow. Without a Social Security number, an undocumented graduate isn’t eligible for most financial aid, a job or, in many states, a driver’s license or the ID needed to travel.

Some of these undocumented students would be covered under a bill known as the DREAM (Development, Relief and Education for Alien Minors) Act, which would establish conditional residency for those who were brought to the United States as minors and have grown up here. The DREAM Act has not become law, but that hasn’t discouraged activists who continue to work towards other forms of relief in its stead, because undocumented immigrants live under the constant threat of deportation, which in many cases would separate them from their families.

This multi-task lesson asks students to look at the DREAM Act in the context of immigration reform and also to reflect on blogging as civic engagement. They’ll research the DREAM Act and use clips from the film Don’t Tell Anyone (No Le Digas a Nadie), which features the experience of undocumented immigrant and blogger Angy Rivera, to look at the human side of this policy issue. Then they’ll engage in blogging and online conversations to express their opinions about how the nation should approach immigration policy. Finally, they’ll write reflections on whether or not blogging or participating in online conversations is a valid form of civic engagement.

POV offers a lending library of DVDs that you can borrow anytime during the school year—FOR FREE! Get started by joining our Community Network.

OBJECTIVES
By the end of this lesson, students will:
- write blog posts and short reflections
- participate in online dialogue
- know the content and purpose of the DREAM Act and understand its place in the context of immigration reform debates
- reflect on blogging as a form of civic engagement

GRADE LEVELS: 9-12, college

SUBJECT AREAS
Digital Literacy
Government/Civics
Research Skills

U.S. History
Writing
MATERIALS
- Film clips from *Don’t Tell Anyone (No Le Digas a Nadie)* and equipment on which to show them
- Student access to a blogging website of your choice
- Student access to the Internet for research

ESTIMATED TIME NEEDED
One 40-minute class, followed by out-of-class online dialogue and a brief in-class check-in.

FILM CLIPS
Video clips provided in this lesson are from *Don’t Tell Anyone (No Le Digas a Nadie)*.

Clip 1: “Meet Angy” (1:50 min.)
The clip begins at 04:00 with Angy Rivera introducing herself. It ends at 05:51 with her saying, “My mom and I could still be deported.”
  *The clip introduces the fear that comes with being part of a mixed-status family. Angy Rivera’s siblings were born in the U.S. and are, therefore, citizens, but she and her mother, Maria, are undocumented. Angy describes how something as simple as being stopped for a traffic ticket evokes terror of deportation and the possibility that the family could be split up.*

Clip 2: “High School Graduation” (1:12 min.)
The clip starts at 09:15, when Angy says, “When I graduated from high school, I think that’s when it hit me—this was real,” and ends at 10:27, when Angy says, “I didn’t have a Social Security number.”
  *At high school graduation, Angy reflects on the fact that her friends will all be heading to college, but as an undocumented immigrant, she is not eligible for financial aid.*

Clip 3: “Coming Out” (1:58 min.)
The clip starts at 12:55 with Angy saying, “Like you have coming out of the closet for LGBTQ…” and runs until 14:53, when she says, “I’m not ashamed.”
  *We see Angy on the street going public about her status. She talks about how “coming out” as undocumented felt and compares the experience to coming out for LGBTQ individuals.*

Clip 4: “Ask Angy” (3:23 min.)
The clip begins at 15:00 with Angy explaining that her email address was on a flyer as a contact to find out more about the “coming out” event. It ends at 18:23 with Angy saying, “These are the stories that go untold, like the real stuff, people’s fears and doubts for the future, for their life.”
  *Angy describes the genesis of the “Ask Angy” blog for undocumented youth and describes controversy surrounding her advice that people declare their status publicly (which means risking deportation).*

Clip 5: “Angy’s Brothers” (2:12 min.)
The clip starts at 20:36 with Angy’s brother Saul explaining what it was like when he found out that his sister and mother were undocumented. It ends at 23:48 with Luis noting that his family has always found a way to stick together.
  *This glimpse into the pressures of living in a mixed-status family shows the brothers denying they are negatively impacted while their own recollections of fearing that their mother would deported and they would be put up for adoption belie their denial.*
Clip 6: “Representations” (0:30 min.)
The clip begins at 21:12, when Angy says, “When you don’t know other people who are undocumented, you tend to feel alone.” It ends at 21:42 with her friend, a fellow activist named Juliana, saying, “This term ‘undocumented’ that you’re using, like, that’s me.”

The clip introduces the concept of media representations of undocumented youth, the need to speak for oneself and the ways in which being public about their status has allowed undocumented young people to create community and find support.

Clip 7: “Open Mic” (2:31 min.)
The clip starts at 30:19 with an exterior shot of La Casa Azul Bookstore and ends at 32:50 with a speaker thanking Angy.

Speakers share their take on being undocumented and fighting for justice.

Clip 8: “Police Encounters” (1:04 min.)
The clip starts at 48:40 with Angy eating and talking with a group of male friends and ends at 49:44 with one of them saying, “It’s so weird and scary.”

The guys talk about what it’s like to be stopped by police in New York City when you don’t have ID.

ACTIVITY

1. Introduce the DREAM Act*
Ask what students know about the DREAM Act. Fill in any gaps. If you live in a state that has passed its own DREAM Act, help students distinguish between state law and the federal proposal, as well as between President Obama’s executive order (DACA) and the fight to pass a law in Congress. At this point, they need to know only the basics. This shouldn’t take more than five minutes. You can find more information about the DREAM Act in the Don’t Tell Anyone (No Le Digas a Nadie) discussion guide at www.pbs.org/pov/donttellanyone/discussion-guide.php.

*Note: If a different piece of immigration reform legislation is pending when you are leading this activity, we recommend that you substitute that for the DREAM Act.

2. Introduce the Assignment
The class is going to create online dialogues about what should happen to undocumented youth who have lived most of their lives in the U.S. They will create a series of blog posts and responses.

Divide the class into groups of 8 to 10. For each group, draw a random name. That person is assigned to write the initial blog post that will begin the discussion. Everyone else will be required to respond to that post. All group members will be required to continue the dialogue in their group. If they wish, they may also join the conversations in other groups.

Note: This could also be an opportunity to differentiate instruction: You choose the initial bloggers, or create a group where the discussion can take place in more than one language, or assign specific positions or topics so that more advanced students can deal with more nuanced or complex issues.
As needed, remind students of blogging etiquette and tech instructions. Let them know how you will assess their posts and participation.

3. Begin the Research
Make it clear that opinions expressed in the blogs and responses must be substantiated with evidence, so students will be expected to do research on the topic. They’ll begin that research in class, with some clips from a film about a young, undocumented immigrant who was also a blogger and activist. The film is *Don’t Tell Anyone (No Le Digas a Nadie)* and the blogger is Angy Rivera (of the blog, “Ask Angy”).

4. Show and Discuss the Clips
Show and briefly discuss each of the eight film clips. Encourage students to take notes and let them know that they can view the clips online again by visiting [http://www.pbs.org/pov/video/](http://www.pbs.org/pov/video/) and typing *Don’t Tell Anyone (No Le Digas a Nadie)* into the search bar.

Let the discussion be guided primarily by the students’ reactions to each clip, providing guidance as needed. By the end of the clips, students should have considered the ways in which:

- being undocumented affects one’s daily activities, options for the future and family life (and whether any of those should be considered when formulating public policy)
- Angy used blogging for personal expression and political action
- students’ own lives are similar to and different from Angy’s (and her peers)

Wrap up the clips by letting students know that Angy and her mother were ultimately granted visas under a special-circumstance statute that allows a crime victim who aided in the prosecution of the perpetrator to gain legal residence. In Angy’s case, she was sexually abused by her stepfather, and he was convicted and jailed when she was 9 years old. While she was glad to get the visa, she was angry that she received it was because she was abused and not because she had contributed to her community.

5. Let the Blogging Begin
Choose a date when the initial blog entries must be posted and establish how many days the comments section will remain open. If needed, share the websites listed in the Resources section as places to begin more formal research on the DREAM Act.

6. Debrief
After the online dialogue is closed, spend a few minutes in class to debrief. What did students notice? What did they learn? What sorts of posts were the most interesting or the most persuasive and why? What’s the relationship between engagement in this online dialogue and actions that lead to social or political change?

7. Reflection
Invite students to write brief reflections either in class or as homework on whether they think blogging or commenting on a blog is effective as a form of civic engagement.
EXTENSIONS

1. Compare the immigrant experience of Angy and her family to immigrant experiences recounted in literature (e.g., Anzia Yezierska’s *Bread Givers*, Amy Tan’s *The Joy Luck Club*, Sandra Cisneros’s *The House on Mango Street*) or to the immigrant experiences of students’ families.

2. Research and debate other aspects of immigration reform, such as whether or not to abolish birthright citizenship as guaranteed in the Fourteenth Amendment.

3. Have students brainstorm ways to address immigrant rights and/or support undocumented youth in your school or community. Then put those ideas into action either individually, in groups or in partnership with local community groups/organizations.

4. Host a poetry slam or other performance space/speak out/open mic to give voice to the concerns of undocumented youth and their allies.

5. Create a “fact check” team to monitor the accuracy of media reports related to immigrants and immigration policy.

RESOURCES

The Film

POV: *Don’t Tell Anyone (No Le Digas a Nadie)*
http://www.pbs.org/pov/donttellanyone - The POV site provides a general discussion guide with additional activity ideas.

POV: Media Literacy Questions for Analyzing POV Films
http://www.pbs.org/pov/educators/media-literacy.php
This list of questions provides a useful starting point for leading rich discussions that challenge students to think critically about documentaries.

American Immigration Council
www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/dream-act-resource-page – This organization’s website is a good starting place for information on the DREAM Act.

Ask Angy
www.facebook.com/AskAngy – This is the Facebook page for Angy Rivera’s blog for undocumented youth.

Procon.org
http://immigration.procon.org/ - This page provides an overview of competing positions on a range of issues related to U.S. immigration policy.
STANDARDS

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects
(http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf)

Writing

W.9-10.1, 11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

W.9-10.2d Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary to manage the complexity of the topic.

W.11-12.2d Use precise language and domain-specific vocabulary and techniques such as metaphor, simile and analogy to manage the complexity of the topic.

W.9-10.4, 11-12.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization and style are appropriate to task, purpose and audience.

Speaking & Listening

SL.11-12.1 Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts and issues, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

SL.11-12.2 Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.

SL.11-12.3 Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis and tone used.

SL.11-12.4 Present information, findings and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed and the organization, development, substance and style are appropriate to purpose, audience and a range of formal and informal tasks.

Content Knowledge: (http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/) a compilation of content standards and benchmarks for K-12 curriculum by McREL (Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning).

Language Arts, Standard 1: Uses the general skills and strategies of the writing process.
Language Arts, Standard 2: Uses the stylistic and rhetorical aspects of writing.
Language Arts, Standard 8: Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes.
Language Arts, Standard 9: Uses viewing skills and strategies to understand and interpret visual media.
United States History, Standard 31: Understands economic, social and cultural developments in the contemporary United States.

NCSS C3 Social Studies Standards

Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools
Civics
D2.Civ.9.9-12. Use appropriate deliberative processes in multiple settings.
D2.Civ.10.9-12. Analyze the impact and the appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights and human rights.
D2.Civ.13.9-12. Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes, and related consequences.

Dimension 3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence
D3.3.9-12. Identify evidence that draws information directly and substantively from multiple sources to detect inconsistencies in evidence in order to revise or strengthen claims.
D3.4.9-12. Refine claims and counterclaims attending to precision, significance and knowledge conveyed through the claim while pointing out the strengths and limitations of both.

Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action
D4.1.9-12. Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.
D4.2.9-12. Construct explanations using sound reasoning, correct sequence (linear or non-linear), examples and details with significant and pertinent information and data, while acknowledging the strengths and weaknesses of the explanation given its purpose (e.g., cause and effect, chronological, procedural, technical).
D4.4.9-12. Critique the use of claims and evidence in arguments for credibility.
D4.5.9-12. Critique the use of the reasoning, sequencing and supporting details of explanations.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Faith Rogow, Ph.D., is the co-author of The Teacher’s Guide to Media Literacy: Critical Thinking in a Multimedia World (Corwin, 2012) and was president of the National Association for Media Literacy Education. She has written discussion guides and lesson plans for more than 250 independent films.