

## Global Issues: Some suggested topics by area of inquiry

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**Note to teachers and students:** *This is intended as a list of examples alone and is not an exhaustive list of possible inquiry topics. The selection of issues for inquiry should be flexible, should allow for new or emerging issues, and should be based upon student interests and access to reliable resources. Note that some topics may reappear in more than one area of inquiry, depending upon the entry point or approach to research. Student inquiry throughout this course must focus on issues in at least three of the ten Areas of Inquiry.*

### **Area of Inquiry: Media**

- concentration of ownership and convergence
- power and profit
- propaganda, social engineering
- bias in media
- critical analysis of media
- selection and omission of news items
- marketing and advertising strategies
- freedom of the press: regulation, ethics, legislation, and censorship
- public control and citizen journalism
- alternative media and social justice
- stereotypes
- psychological influence (objectification, sexualisation, body image, fear)
- violence
- rise of infotainment
- power and influence of advertising (pervasiveness, embedded messages, product placement)
- popular culture and social mores
- culture of consumerism and environmental consequences

### **Area of Inquiry: Consumerism**

- consumer-based economies
- capitalism and free market economies
- citizen responsibilities and decision making
- corporate responsibilities and decision making
- culture of entitlement
- culture of credit

- culture of excess
- commodification of Indigenous cultures
- impact of branding, marketing, and advertising
- mass-media manipulation
- corporate sponsorship, product placement
- perceived/planned obsolescence
- lifestyle and health issues (e.g., obesity, chemical intolerances, allergies, illnesses, sedentary living)
- energy and natural resource depletion
- generation of waste
- petro-politics
- corporate and consumer greed
- sweatshops

### **Area of Inquiry: Environment**

- healthy ecosystems, preservation of biodiversity
- water management and quality
- limited resources versus unlimited development/growth
- responsible resource extraction
- energy efficiency and alternative energy sources
- environmental and human disasters (prevention, response, individual and collective)
- environmental degradation and technological solutions
- sustainable cities, design, urban planning
- alternative transportation
- standard of living versus quality of life
- carrying capacity
- energy consumption, carbon footprint, travel and transportation alternatives, alternative energy sources
- stewardship and equitable sharing of natural resources
- economic and environmental refugees
- population increase, distribution, movement, migration, urbanization
- politics and economics of climate change (e.g., impact of industrialization, responsibilities of developed/less-developed economies, Kyoto Accord; Arctic sovereignty)
- Gaia hypothesis, systems thinking, interconnectedness of human and natural systems, living sustainably

## **Area of Inquiry: Poverty, Wealth and Power**

- globalization: economic globalization, multinational and transnational corporations (control, regulation, erosion of government authority)
- global domination, military industrial complex, international arms sales
- organized crime
- technological advances
- forms of inequality/disparity: income, consumption, access to necessities of life (food, water, shelter, education, health, employment, safety)
- causes of inequality: colonialism, debt, unequal trade, economic policies (World Bank, IMF), natural and human causes of inequality/disparity
- bridging the gap between rich and poor countries: development assistance, debt relief, trade over aid, fair trade, rebuild fragile states/promote democracy, labour movements, community-based projects
- economic sanctions
- measuring poverty: absolute, relative
- causes: political, economic, natural
- forms of poverty: discrimination, marginalization
- effects of poverty: infant mortality, maternal health, child labour, working conditions, social vitality, income, basic needs, safety
- solutions/poverty reduction

## **Area of Inquiry: Indigenous Peoples**

- ethno-diversity of world's Indigenous peoples
- the legacy of colonialism, colonization, and decolonization
- enculturation, assimilation, and cultural loss
- disappearance of Aboriginal women in Canada
- impact of development and globalization on Indigenous peoples, cultural homogenization, disappearance of Indigenous peoples and cultures (e.g. population decrease, illnesses)
- restitution and reconciliation processes
- Indigenous resurgence and development, circumpolar and other international Indigenous organizations
- international rights of Indigenous peoples
- preservation of traditional Indigenous cultures and languages
- commodification, falsification, and marketing of traditional Indigenous knowledge
- recognition of distinctive Indigenous world views and values

### **Area of Inquiry: Peace and Conflict**

- nature and forms of conflict: international terrorism, transnational, and intrastate conflict, civil disobedience, terrorism, violent and non-violent revolutions, nuclear proliferation and deterrence
- agents of conflict: economic, military policies, military industrial complex, international arms sales and marketing
- ideology, religion; sources of conflict (e.g., human security, competition for land or resources, religion, racial or ethnic tensions, self-determination, political goals)
- ethical issues in war and military alliances
- impact of conflict: civilians, children, quality of life, environmental impact, economic impact
- intervention and conflict resolution: military, national security, government policies, citizen rights, multilateral intervention (UN), International humanitarian law (Red Cross, Red Crescent), reconstruction, international criminal courts, peace movements, pacifism, peacekeeping, peace building, diplomacy, counterinsurgency, policing, international development
- alternatives to war: economic sanctions, diplomacy, aid

### **Area of Inquiry: Oppression and Genocide**

- forms of oppression: racial, cultural, ethnic and religious
- inequitable control of land or resources, xenophobia, perceptions of racial or cultural superiority, systemic racism (e.g. Apartheid, state-based exclusion, oppression, or violence)
- political oppression: state authority, dictatorship, enforcement (role of military, police, secret police), punishment, racial profiling/discrimination, propaganda and dissemination of hatred, bureaucracy, racial laws
- abuse of power and genocide (Shoah – Holocaust, Holodomor, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, Armenia, Darfur)
- compliance, blind obedience, denials of genocide, crimes against humanity, disregard for international conventions, opportunism, ostracism, religion, peer pressure, stereotypes, supremacy, prejudice, ignorance, bystanders, propaganda, fear
- atrocities: concentration camps, exclusion, persecution, crimes against humanity, mass murder, deportation, extermination, genocide, Final Solution
- peace and reconciliation processes: dissent, state restitution/reparations, international tribunals, Righteous Among Nations (Yad Vashem), survivors, upstanders

### **Area of Inquiry: Health and Biotechnology**

- science, technology and human health, economic implications of health care, controversial genetic research (embryonic and stem cell research, animal testing, patenting DNA, genetic intervention and modification, preservation of genetic material, genetic information privacy)
- longevity and life-preservation measures

- controversial medical interventions (plastic surgery, in vitro fertilization, euthanasia, abortion)
- epidemic and pandemic prevention and response, disease control (AIDS, virus control, immunization)
- birth control and maternal and child care, pharmaceutical industry (Big Pharma, marketing, testing, control)
- food and drug management and testing, alternative health practices, safety, control and marketing

### **Area of Inquiry: Gender and Identity**

- feminism and views of gender roles
- worldwide gender equity issues, education of women, eco-feminism, women and power, women and the economic system, female health, maternal health, access to birth control and abortion, domestic labour, child-rearing, child care, female poverty
- cultural relativism versus rejection of oppressive cultural practices (e.g., female genital mutilation, honour killings of women, women's dress restrictions—hijab, burqa, niqab, limitations on female rights and freedoms)
- hetero-normativity, masculine/feminine gender role stereotypes
- same-sex marriage, homophobia
- sexual marketing, prostitution, human trafficking and slave trade, sex tourism, pornography, sexualization and abuse of children
- body image, female sexual stereotyping, the marketing of sexuality, impact on human relations

### **Area of Inquiry: Social Justice and Human Rights**

- universal human rights (ethnicity, race, culture, class, religion, sexual orientation, gender, abilities)
- economic disparities, poverty, quality of life
- access to food, water, health care, education, employment
- child exploitation, human trafficking and slave labour
- action for human rights
- forms of activism (the power of one, resistance to oppression, civil disobedience, conscientious objectors, boycotts, protests, grassroots movements, local community groups, citizen action groups, social networking and mobilization for change, popular culture and the arts)
- labour movement and unions, strikes, non-violent revolution
- Indigenous rights and self-determination
- crime and punishment, penal systems and economic implications, ethical treatment of prisoners
- environmentalism and environmental organizations

- ethical treatment and human use of animals
- eco-activism
- NGOs and international collaboration, role of governments in international aid (e.g., CIDA, disaster relief, the economics of aid)