Title: The War Next Door

Concept/Main Idea of Lesson:
Students will explore the complexities of drug trafficking from cross border violence and crime associated with trafficking, to anti-narcotic activities employed by the U.S. and Mexico.

Intended Grade Level
This lesson is geared for high school students in grades 9-12.

Infusion/Subect Area(s)
World History, Global Studies, Economics

National Curriculum Standards

NCSS Standards:
---IX: Global Connections: “Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of global connections and interdependence.”

I. Instructional Objective

a. Students will be able to discuss at least three areas that relate to the illegal drug trade: escalation of cross border violence, utilization of technology like YouTube, and the merging of drug trafficking

b. Students will be able to identify the geography of major drug cartel operations in the U.S. and Mexico.

II. Learning Activities Sequence

a. Set Induction: Distribute handout 1. Show 3-4 of the video clips from the internet link section. After each clip, ask students to identify the specific issues or problems portrayed
in each clip.

Through discussion of the clips build class consensus as to why this topic deserves our attention. Develop a class statement. Students should write this statement in the space provided on their handout.

b. Learning Activities:

Tell students: Now we are going to investigate some different perspectives on drug trafficking.

1. Students will read three perspectives on drug trafficking. They will use the graphic organizer (Handout 2) to record the main ideas in each article.

Optional poster activity: Form groups of three. Give each group poster paper and markers. Have each group design a poster presentation using words and images that illustrate the main ideas from the three articles. Groups will present their posters to the class.

III. Evaluation

Students will write a position paper. A position paper is a statement of the problem, an acknowledgement of what has been done in the past to address the problem, and a statement of what the student believes should be done to address the problem now.

Handout 3 gives the framework for writing the position paper.

IV. Materials and Resources

Handout 1: Identifying the problem (Graphic Organizer for recording information from set induction selected video clips)

Handout 2: Graphic Organizer: Perspectives on Drug Trafficking (for use in recording information from three articles)

Handout 3: Writing a position paper (Assessment)

V. References

VI. Additional Suggested Readings
VII. Internet Links


The continuing violence in Mexico has forced the U.S. to bolster security on the border. As Seth Doane reports, 500 additional agents have been sent to help in the war on drugs.

2. Spring Break In Rocky Mexico Video 03/18/2009

A travel alert was recently issued warning U.S. tourists about the raging drug war in Mexico. But, as Seth Doane reports, thousands of American college students will celebrate spring break there.


In the continuing drug war in Mexico, the assault weapons they use such as AK-47s and 50 caliber rifles are largely coming from U.S. traffickers at a rate of 2,000 a day. Ben Tracy reports.

4. Mexico’s Drug War Video 03/01/2009

Drug cartel fueled violence has turned into war in Mexico, with thousands of deaths and the government battling well-armed gangs whose military-grade weapons come mostly from U.S. dealers. CNN's ...

5. The War Next Door Video 02/27/2009

Drug-cartel fueled violence has turned into a war in Mexico, with thousands of deaths and the government battling well-armed gangs whose military-quality weapons come mostly from U.S. dealers.

6. Cooper On Mexican Drug War Video 02/27/2009

Anderson Cooper speaks about the increasingly violent drug war going on between the Mexican government and the country’s major drug cartels.

7. Travel Warning At Spring Break Video 02/26/2009
The State Dept. issued a warning for Americans traveling to Mexico over drug related violence where many college students choose to spend spring break. Bill Whitaker reports.

8. Evening News Online, 02.11.09 Video 02/11/2009

Wednesday: Congress reaches a tentative agreement on a rescue economic stimulus plan; Drug wars escalate to a new level of violence in Mexico; Plus, who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks?


Mexican authorities are hunting members of a drug gang who may have escaped a deadly shootout. Warring cartels are fighting to takeover the $14 billion a year drug industry. Bill Whitaker reports.

10. South Of The Border Violence Video 01/03/2006

At least eight people have been gunned down amid drug-related violence in Mexico since New Year's Eve. As Bill Whitaker reports, the worst of it has been just south of the U.S. border.