Lesson Plan: Understanding the Death Penalty

Grade Level: High School

Duration: 2 class periods (90 minutes each)

Objective:

- Students will understand the arguments for and against the death penalty.
- Students will critically evaluate the ethical, legal, and social implications of capital punishment.
- Students will develop their own informed opinions on the death penalty.

Materials:

- Video: City Club of Cleveland - Death Penalty Discussion
- Handouts: Pro and Con Arguments, Case Studies, Universal Declaration of Human Rights summary
- Whiteboard and markers
- Internet access for research

Day 1: Introduction and Video Analysis

1. **Introduction (10 minutes)**
    - Begin with a brief discussion on what students know about the death penalty.
    - Write down their thoughts and questions on the board.
2. **Video Viewing (35 minutes)**
    - Watch the first half of the City Club video on the death penalty.
    - Ask students to take notes on key points, arguments presented, and any questions that arise.
3. **Group Discussion (20 minutes)**
    - Divide students into small groups to discuss their notes and initial reactions to the video.
    - Each group will present one key argument from the video to the class.
4. **Homework Assignment**
    - Students will write a one-page reflection on their initial thoughts about the death penalty, incorporating points from the video.

Day 2: Deep Dive and Debate

1. **Review and Introduction to Case Studies (20 minutes)**
    - Review key points from the previous class.
    - Introduce case studies of individuals who have been sentenced to death (e.g., Troy Davis, Mirza Tahir Hussain).
2. **Research and Group Work (30 minutes)**
    - Assign each group a case study to research.
    - Provide handouts with pro and con arguments about the death penalty.
    - Groups will prepare a brief presentation on their case study, including the ethical and legal issues involved.
3. **Class Debate (30 minutes)**
    - Organize a structured debate on the death penalty.
    - Assign roles (prosecution, defense, jury) to different groups.
    - Each side will present their arguments, followed by a Q&A session.
4. **Conclusion and Reflection (10 minutes)**
    - Summarize the main points discussed during the debate.
    - Ask students to reflect on how their views may have changed and why.

Assessment:

- Participation in group discussions and debate.
- Quality of research and presentations.
- Written reflection assignments.

Extension Activities:

- Research the status of the death penalty in different countries.
- Write a persuasive essay on whether the death penalty should be abolished or retained.