

Overview:

Timothy Snyder, a historian and professor at Yale University, explores tyrannical democracy in the United States in his talk, "Tyranny," at the Toledo Lucas County Public Library.

Summary:

Yale University historian Timothy Snyder contextualizes current U.S. political issues, emphasizing the importance of truth in media in this excerpt, "Government and the Truth." He explains differences in authoritarian, fascist and communist governments. Snyder asserts that by not valuing or understanding regimes and their rhetoric, America is following a similar pattern of dismissing the truth and ultimately being manipulated by governments, foreign and domestic.

ODE 9-12 STANDARD 1: *Social Studies; Course, American Government; Topic 1, United States and the Post-Cold War World*

ODE 9-12 STANDARD 2: *Social Studies; Course, Contemporary World Issues; Topic 1, Civic Participation and Skills; Topic 2, Civil and Human Rights*

Discussion Questions:

1. What does Snyder say about truth according to the Fascist, Communist and Authoritarian styles of government?
2. Why is being compliant and accepting lies empowering to leaders who use tyrannical strategies?
3. List ways in which the suppression of media and a free press can be detrimental to a country.

Activity:

In this role-playing activity, students will play the role of a country's citizens and a random student will take the role of a leader or president. Privately, give the student acting as the leader a few political articles to choose from. Ask him or her to choose an article and then explain to the "citizens" or his or her classmates why the facts in the article are incorrect using tactics such as discrediting the source.

Then, ask the students the following questions:

1. Did you believe the article was true before "the leader" argued against it?
2. Did your opinions on the article change after they called it "wrong" and "fake news?"
3. Do you think society today changes their opinions based on what authorities think?
4. What examples of current events and news can you name that fit this kind of situation?

Resources:

Background on Tyranny: <http://www.crf-usa.org>
Review of Snyder's Book: <https://www.washingtonpost.com>
Majority Tyranny: <https://www.britannica.com>

