

ETHICS IN AMERICA : HOW ARE WE DOING ?

Prework for students: Ask students to read a current newspaper or watch the news on TV the night before class.

OBJECTIVE

By the end of this lesson, students will gain greater insight into the role of ethics in our society today.

OPENING

With the year 2000 approaching, many people are calling into question our ethical ability to meet new challenges. But how does our ethical barometer read? Is it rising or falling? What kinds of ethical issues do we find in newspapers and on TV news?

STRATEGIES

Use the above opening and the Selected Survey Statistics to introduce the topic, "Ethics in America: How Are We Doing?" Then begin The Ethical Barometer Exercise. As students do The Ethical Barometer Exercise in small groups, have them also take notes in preparation for the homework assignment (the Ethical Barometer Worksheet). **Extra Activities:** If time allows, consider applying the ethical barometer concept to specific issues over time (see instructions and worksheets for the Time Line Exercise).

KEY QUESTIONS

- What do we mean by an "ethical barometer"?
- What evidence do we have that it is rising? (What are our greatest sources of hope?)
- What evidence do we have that it is falling? (What are our greatest points of concern?)
- What can each of us do about it?

CLOSURE & TRANSITION

Over the course of history, observers of the prevailing culture have often called for improved moral behavior. The question is: Is there something about today that is different?

