

## Naturalized Citizenship

### What should we teach 10 million immigrants?

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### My experience

- U.S. citizen and voter
- Flight Instructor
  - Prepared Ss to pass government tests
- SHINE coach @ CCSF
  - [students helping in naturalization of elders]
- Vietnamese Community Center
  - developed
  - teaching Citizenship/Naturalization course



### Questions

- 10 million immigrants?
- What is this naturalization test?
- How did it start?
- What's the new pilot test like?
- Challenges for teachers Ss
- Activities
- Resources

### 10 million immigrants

- 1-2 million annually x 5 years to be citizen = 5-10M
- 12 million illegal, hoping for amnesty
- 10 million eligible, yet lack English proficiency

Total  
25-30+ million over next 5 years!

### History of Naturalization test

- 1790: 1st naturalization act: residency
- 1906: Immigrants over 16: able to read
- 1952: Immigration & Naturalization Act
  - Limit and exclude
- 1986: Amended
  - Amnesty: 2.7 Million illegal immigrants
  - Mandated a history & civics test
    - Current test created over a weekend

## Current naturalization test (citizenship)

- Interview
- Tests knowledge of English
  - Primarily listening and speaking
    - Small talk, following directions
    - Questions about N400 form
      - 10 pages, 107 questions
  - Reading and dictation
- 100 U.S. history & civics questions

## How good is current test?

- 1997: Commission - immigration reform
  - No standard test content
  - No testing instruments
  - No test protocols or consistent test methods
  - No scoring system
  - No consistency in threshold # correct answers
  - “Due consideration” clause

## “Due consideration”

- Adjudicators take into account:
  - Elderly age
  - Limited education in native country
  - Longtime U.S. residence as an LPR
  - Efforts to attend classes, prepare for test
- No rules for “due consideration” either
  - Changes subjectively each test

## Biggest challenges for Ss Ts [and test developers]

- Abstract U.S. history & civics concepts  
USING beginning level English
  - Interactions of 3 branches
  - Amendments
- Memorize AND/or understand?
  - Pass test & become active informed citizens
- N400 form created by lawyers
- Uniform test and “due consideration”

## The new “pilot” test

(3rd design in 10 years)  
Offered as an option in 10 cities/2007

- English is consistent w DOE adult ed “high beginning”
- Uses DOE’s national standards for civics and government
- Adjudicator training
- Focus on concepts: rights and responsibilities ...
- 141 Q: Ts are asked to comment: 100 best

## Improvements to pilot test

- Rephrased questions on speaking test
- Geography:
  - What country is on the U.S.’s northern border?
  - Southern border ?
- American history:
  - In 1803, the U.S. bought a large amount of land from France. Where was that land?
  - Why were colonists upset with British?
- More meaningful civics content

## Civic examples from pilot test

- Q: Name 2 ways that Americans can participate in their democracy
  - A: Vote, join a political party, help out with a campaign, join a civic group, tell an elected official your opinion on an issue, call your senators and representatives, publicly support or oppose an issue or policy, run for office, write to a newspaper.
- Q: Instead of “name 3 branches,” - “Why?”
- Q: Instead of “What is the head executive of a state government called?” - “What is one thing a state government can do?”

## Improved test, BUT

- Abstract concepts
  - U.S. history & civics
- Beginning level English
- Memorization without understanding
- N400 form filled with legalese

My aim:

Help Ss pass test AND understand material and be good citizens

- How?
- Make material more **visual**
- **Relate** material to Ss lives

## Make material more **visual** and **relate** to students' lives

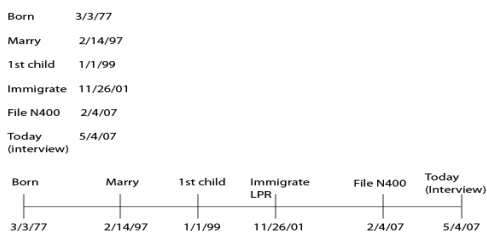
- Use maps
  - French colonization in 1700s, 1800s...



## Make material more **visual** and **relate** to students' lives

- Teach timelines to organize information

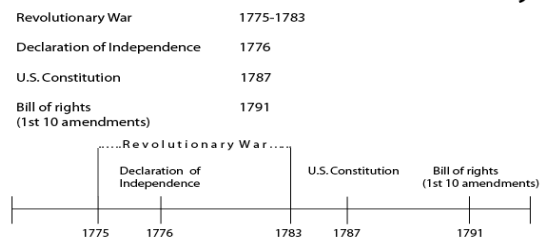
Timeline of events in a student's life



## Make material more **visual**

- Use timelines to organize history

### Timeline of events in U.S. history



## Relate N400 form & interview to student's lives

- Role plays - practice interviews
  - “Where do you work?”
  - “What is your occupation?” “What do you do?”
  - “Have you left the country *since* you applied for citizenship?”
- Discuss meaning of N400 questions
  - “Have you ever smuggled controlled substances, illegal drugs or narcotics?” “What are narcotics?”
  - “Have you ever been a prostitute or procured anyone for prostitution?” “What is prostitution?”

## Relate abstract material to students' lives

- Create lessons with concrete examples of the Bill of rights

“What happens if Bao Li writes letter to the SF Examiner. that says the Vice-President should be impeached?”

“Kim Chi doesn't stop at a stop sign. Can she be fined \$1000?”

“The police think Luisa sells [illegal] drugs. While she is out, can they search her apartment?”

“Thuy participates in an anti-war march; Khiem gives a speech called “democracy doesn't work.” Who could be arrested?”

## Answers

- What this Naturalization test is
- How it started
- What the new pilot test is like
- Challenges for teachers Ss
- Activities
  - Maps, timelines, role-plays, civic examples
- Resources

## Helpful free legal resources

- Asian Law Caucus (415) 896-1701
- Asian Pacific Island Legal Outreach (415) 567-6255
- Asylum Program of the SF Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights (415) 543-9444
- Catholic Legal Immigration Network (213) 251-3505
- Legal de la Raza (415) 575-3500
- Nolo Press guide - see next page
- Volunteer Legal Services Program  
vslp@sfbbar.org

## Other helpful resources

- Lisa Remmer [lrmr@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lrmr@sbcglobal.net)
- [Http://www.USCIS.gov](http://www.USCIS.gov)
- [Http://www.USCIS.gov](http://www.USCIS.gov)
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- Bray, I. (2006) *Becoming a U.S. citizen: A guide to the law, exam and interview*. Berkeley, CA: Nolo

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- Garcia, C. & Hilgeman, K. (3/23/2007). “*American history in the revised U.S. naturalization test*.” ppt presentation at TESOL, Seattle, WA.
- [Http://www.uscis.gov](http://www.uscis.gov)
- Jones, M. (3/21/2007). “*U.S. adult civics and citizenship training*.” ppt presentation at TESOL, Seattle, WA.
- *Project SHINE training manual*. (2005). Community-Service Learning: A collaborative project between SFSU and CCSF.