

#### **OUR GREAT CHALLENGES TODAY**

Title:

Class 6: Our Great Challenges Today

**Topics (CHAPTERS - Video lectures):** 

Chapter 1 Video. 8 billion people on a crowded planet

Chapter 2 Video. Poverty in the midst of plenty

Chapter 3 Video. A deeply unequal and divided world Chapter 4 Video. The Complexities of modern life

Chapter 5 Video. Finding peace and cooperation in a deeply unequal and divided world

Subject/Course: Civics, History, Geography, Religion, Ethics, Social Studies

**Grade:** Secondary School Level

#### The Ages of Globalization book reference chapters:

► Chapter 1 (Malthusian Pessimism)

► Chapter 8 (The Challenge of Inequality, The Challenge of Planetary Boundaries)

► Chapter 9 (Ethics in Action for a Common Plan)

Download your free copy of the AOG book here.

## Stage 1 – Desired Results



In this section, you will find a detailed framework that outlines the overall learning goals, the enduring understandings, attitudes and values students will develop, essential questions students should be able to formulate and/or to provoke deep thinking and discussion, and specific learning outcomes that emphasize both knowledge and skills.

#### **Established Goals:**

#### **Summary/Overarching:**

Learners will explore the major challenges facing the world today and examine frameworks and potential solutions to address them. They will also gain an understanding of how historical events across different eras have influenced and contributed to the current global challenges and inequalities.

## **Enduring Understandings:**

#### Students will understand that...

- ► The nature of the great challenges facing the global community in the current age.
- Frameworks and solutions that can help to improve the current challenges.
- ► Historical events explain to a large extent the current state of the world, including the inequalities and global challenges.

#### **Essential Questions:**

- ► What are some of the great global challenges that require a solution-oriented approach?
- ► How have historical events of the prior ages shaped

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- ★ the current challenges and inequalities we see in the world?
- ► What are some of the frameworks we can utilize to improve the inequalities in our society?

#### Students will know...

The #s in parenthesis point to <u>UNESCO's Learning</u> Objectives for the Sustainable Development Goals

- ► The inequalities that exacerbate poverty in the world and what the Gini coefficient measures.
- ► The challenges of planetary boundaries and environmental crises.
- ► How life expectancy and health of populations are also indicators of inequality.
- ▲ (3.1. C) Climate change is a complex and pressing problem and an opportunity for societal transformation.
- (3.1. C) The interconnectedness of climate impacts with societal issues, such as inequality, health, migration, and politics and how climate exacerbates existing social issues.
- The multi-faceted social implications of climate change, including effects on health, migration

- patterns, economic disparities, and societal infrastructures.
- ► How systemic inequalities amplify the impacts of climate change on marginalized communities, considering factors such as race, gender, socioeconomic status, and geographical location.
- Differentiate between global impacts and how specific regions or localities may experience unique challenges due to climate change.

#### Students will be able to...

- Trace the current issues of the world, such as income inequalities and low versus high-income countries, back to the history of development of the prior ages of globalization
- (3.1. C) Critically analyze existing and potential solutions to inequalities in the world, including the effects of climate change, ensuring they prioritize both sustainability and equity.
- ▲ (3.1. B) Demonstrate understanding of the multifaceted social implications of climate change through presenting written or visual work or action projects to their community.

## Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence



In this section, you'll find key concepts and definitions essential for understanding the course material as well as activities, such as Vocabulary Flashcards, Check-Your-Facts and Fill-in-the-Blank to enhance your students' comprehension and retention. You can adapt these activities to suit various subjects and grade levels.

## **Concepts & Definition**

Familiarize yourself with the provided terms such as "Carbon Dioxide," "Gini Coefficient," "Poverty," and others. Understanding these definitions will help you effectively teach the material and connect it to your lessons

## **Vocabulary Activity**

Create physical flashcards for each term. This hands-on approach helps reinforce terminology and aids in building a solid foundation of knowledge. Encourage students to use these flashcards for review and practice.

► Carbon Dioxide (CO2): is Earth's most important greenhouse gas. It is a gas that absorbs and radiates heat. Unlike oxygen or nitrogen (which make up most of our atmosphere), greenhouse gasses absorb heat radiating from the Earth's surface and re-release it in all directions – including back toward Earth's surface. Without carbon dioxide, Earth's natural greenhouse effect would be too weak to keep the average global surface temperature above freezing. By adding more



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carbon dioxide to the atmosphere, people are supercharging the natural greenhouse effect, causing global temperature to rise (NOAA).

- Gini Coefficient: or Gini index, is the most commonly used measure of inequality. It was developed by Italian statistician Corrado Gini (1884–1965) and is named after him. It is typically used as a measure of income inequality, but it can be used to measure the inequality of any distribution such as the distribution of wealth, or even life expectancy. It measures inequality on a scale from 0 to 1, where higher values indicate higher inequality. This can sometimes be shown as a percentage from 0 to 100%, this is then called the 'Gini Index'. A value of 0 indicates perfect equality where everyone has the same income. A value of 1 indicates perfect inequality where one person receives all the income, and everyone else receives nothing (Our World in Data).
- ▶ **Poverty:** Extreme poverty is defined by the World Bank as living on less than \$2.15 per day, and almost 700 million people around the world live in extreme poverty (World Bank).
- ▶ GNI vs GDP: Gross national income (GNI) measures the total income earned by residents of a country, including income earned abroad. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) instead counts only income generated from goods and services produced domestically (Our World in Data).
- Greenhouse effect: is the process through which heat is trapped near Earth's surface by substances known as 'greenhouse gasses.' Imagine these gasses as a blanket enveloping our planet, helping to maintain a warmer temperature than it would have otherwise. Greenhouse gasses consist of carbon dioxide, methane, ozone, nitrous oxide, chlorofluorocarbons, and water vapor (NASA).
- ▶ **Income gap:** refers to the difference in income earned between demographic segments (Investopedia).
- ▶ Inequality: can be viewed from different perspectives, all of which are related. Most common metric is 'Income Inequality', which refers to the extent to which income is evenly distributed within a population. Related concepts are 'Lifetime Inequality' (inequality in incomes for an individual over his or her lifetime), 'Inequality of Wealth' (distribution of wealth across households or individuals at a moment in time), and 'Inequality of Opportunity' (impact on income of

- circumstances over which individuals have no control, such as family socioeconomic status, gender, or ethnic background). All of these inequality concepts are related and offer different yet complementary insights into the causes and consequences of inequality, hence providing better guidance to governments when designing specific policies aimed at addressing inequality (International Monetary Fund).
- Life expectancy: The average number of years that a newborn could expect to live, if he or she were to pass through life exposed to the sex- and age-specific death rates prevailing at the time of his or her birth, for a specific year, in a given country, territory, or geographic area. Life expectancy at birth reflects the overall mortality level of a population. It summarizes the mortality pattern that prevails across all age groups children and adolescents, adults and the elderly (World Health Organization).
- **► Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR):** is a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 (General Assembly resolution 217 A) as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected and it has been translated into over <u>500 languages</u>. The UDHR is widely recognized as having inspired, and paved the way for, the adoption of more than seventy human rights treaties, applied today on a permanent basis at global and regional levels (all containing references to it in their preambles)" (United Nations).

#### **Check-Your-Facts / Review Questions**

Utilize this activity to promote critical thinking by having students verify and analyze information related to the concepts and definitions.

 What are some of the great challenges affecting the current world? (Alleviating poverty, addressing inequality, solving environmental crises, and achieving global peace)



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- 2. What are some of the inequalities we are seeing today? (Income inequality, inequality of wealth, inequality of opportunity, life expectancy)
- 3. What are some of the frameworks in place to address the current global challenges? (Public policy favoring more equality in societies, sustainable development and international organizations like the United Nations calling for global partnerships and peace.)
- 4. Why are there such large income divisions among countries, which is also reflected in geographical differences when it comes to low versus high-income countries? (One clue is in the fifth and sixth ages of globalization of the transoceanic empires, and especially the industrial age. It was the North Atlantic countries that had an early start, whether it was in navigation and military power or in industrialization. And they leveraged that early advantage into domination through imperial conquest of other parts of the world and really frustrated the economic development of other parts of the world. So when we look at a snapshot of the world today, we are seeing the effects of history.)
- 5. Why do we see Gini coefficients in North America and in South America that are very high compared to counterpart populations? (To a large extent, the inequality is explained by history and how politics and differences among groups in this society have shaped economic life, and in this case, the inequalities across society. The colonization during the age of oceanic empires brought subjugation of indigenous peoples with disease that afflicted indigenous populations and Africans as slaves. Our highly unequal societies are divided by ethnicity and race.)
- 6. What are some ways in which we can tackle inequalities? (Europe, especially northern Europereminds us that public policy can change equalities in society and inequalities can be reduced with the power of education for all the single most important pathway to reduced inequality and prosperity for all.)
- 7. What are some of the major ecological crises?
  (Human induced climate change, destruction of biodiversity on the planet, and massive pollution, such as plastic waste or chemical pollutants.)

#### Fill-In-The-Blank

Incorporate this activity to assess students' understanding of key concepts and historical periods. Provide a word bank to support their learning and check their grasp of the material.

- This quote from the 1961 inaugural address of (John F. Kennedy) "The world is very different now, for man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life" sheds light on the aspect of moral choice and not just a technological choice when it comes to addressing the challenges of the world.
- 2. The World Bank classifies countries depending on average incomes into the following: 1) (low-income) with a (GNI per capita) of less than \$1,135; 2) (lower middle-income) economies with GNI per capita between \$1,136 and \$4,465; 3) (upper middle-income) economies are those with a GNI per capita between \$4,466 and \$13,845; and 4) (high-income) economies are those with a GNI per capita of \$13,846 or more.
- 3. The age of (transoceanic empires) and (industrialization) link to the current prosperity and poverty of nations; the long history includes the history of imperial conquest and (colonization).
- 4. Inequality or extreme poverty can show up in many forms: a very important indicator of extreme poverty is a (low life expectancy). Countries' income levels tend to align with life expectancy. The North Atlantic region and a few countries in East Asia and the countries of Oceania have the (highest longevity) in the world and the highest concentrations of countries with very low life expectancies are found in sub-Saharan Africa.
- 5. Life expectancy is also linked to physical geography due to the endemic (tropical diseases), and have a negative impact on health and economic development as a consequence.
- **6. (Gini Coefficient)** measures inequality on a scale from 0 to 1, where higher values indicate higher inequality.
- 7. In the sixth age of globalization at the end of the 19th century and in the 20th century, Northern Europe developed a set of (public policies) that came to be called social democracy, that aimed specifically to



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- reduce the inequalities in the social democratic system. Everybody pays a pretty high (tax) burden, but then those (tax revenues) are used to ensure universal access to quality education, health care, infrastructure, water, sanitation, and power.
- 8. The greatest breakthrough of the sixth age of industrialization the (steam engine) turned out also to have the side effect that it was the greatest source of (carbon dioxide) emissions.
- 9. The United Nations Security Council is a body of (15) U.N. member states charged and given the tools to keep the peace and its responsibility under the U.N. Charter to find solutions to threats to global peace, even before wars break out. In the event of war, it is meant to use instruments like sanctions, international law, peacekeeping forces, or even military forces to stop wars.

## Stage 3 – Learning Activities



In this section, you will find the different learning activities associated with this specific Class. We recommend that you begin by watching the lecture videos as a basis for the course and as a primary element for the course content. Interactive reference maps are mentioned in the lectures and activities.

#### Lecture Videos

Chapter 1 Video. 8 billion people on a crowded planet

Chapter 2 Video. Poverty in the midst of plenty

Chapter 3 Video. A deeply unequal and divided world

Chapter 4 Video. The Complexities of modern life

Chapter 5 Video. Finding peace and cooperation in a

deeply unequal and divided world

#### Reference Maps

https://sdgstoday-sdsn.hub.arcgis.com/pages/ages-of-globalization-data

Chapter 8. Figure 8.10 Planetary Boundaries. Page 189. Digital Age. Ages of Globalization book.

Chapter 8: Figure 8.5 Growth Rate of GDP Per Capita, developed and Developing Countries, 2000-2018. Page 179

Chapter 8: The Rate of Extreme Poverty (Rate and Headcount), 1990-2015. Page 177

## **Chapter Summaries**



In this section, you can find a summary of each Chapter in this Class for your reference. Chapter summaries provide insight into the era discussed in each class period. Should you have issues watching the videos, e.g. due to internet bandwidth, the summaries provide some of the key insight you can build on.

#### Video Lectures

#### Class 6 Chapter 1 Video Summary

- ▶ Understanding global changes helps address real-world issues and makes life better on a global scale. Sustainable development is crucial for aiming to end extreme poverty by 2030, despite challenges and distractions. Inequality, both within societies and globally, is highlighted as a major issue, with extreme wealth coexisting with poverty and deprivation.
- The world's population has increased tenfold since 1800, leading to environmental challenges such as deforestation, overfishing, pollution, and climate change, as



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#### Class 6 Chapter 1 Video Summary

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- ► The world's population has increased tenfold since 1800, leading to environmental challenges such as deforestation, overfishing, pollution, and climate change, as Earth's resources remain constant.
- Conflict, exacerbated by advanced weapons and technology, poses a significant threat, with wars impacting various parts of the world. The lecture emphasizes that the challenges of sustainable development involve achieving prosperity for all, social justice, environmental sustainability, and global peace and cooperation.
- ► Wise statements from biologist Edward Wilson and President John F. Kennedy underscore the paradox of advanced technology: it can be used for both positive solutions and destructive purposes.
- ▶ It is crucial to deploy knowledge, skills, and institutions to make choices that benefit humanity.

#### Class 6 Chapter 2 Video Summary

- ► There are many challenges in alleviating poverty, addressing inequality, solving environmental crises, and achieving global peace.
- ► The income gap between very poor and very rich countries can exceed 100 times.
- ► The World Bank classifies countries into low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high-income categories based on GDP per capita. A world map color-coded by average income reveals a significant geographic variation between rich and poor nations.
- Roughly 1 billion people live in low-income countries, and another billion in high-income countries, with the remaining 6 billion divided between lower-middle and upper-middle income nations.
- Geographically, high-income countries are concentrated in North America, Western Europe, parts of the Middle East, and certain countries in the Far East and Oceania.

- Low-income countries are primarily found in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and Southeast Asia.
- ► The historical context, including transoceanic empires and the industrial age, has contributed to thecurrent division of wealth and poverty.
- Inequality manifests not only in income but also in life expectancy. Countries in the North Atlantic andparts of East Asia have the highest longevity, while sub-Saharan Africa faces lower life expectancies.
- ► Disease burden, influenced by physical geography, is a factor in countries' struggles to escape poverty.
- ► The gap in life expectancy, while narrower than income gaps, can still be substantial, with differences of up to 30 years between countries at the bottom and top.
- Poverty is a significant contributor to low life expectancies, and improving healthcare and economic strategies could save millions of lives annually.
- It's important to explore the ways to end extreme poverty and improve access to modern health services to enhance life expectancy globally.

#### Class 6 Chapter 3 Video Summary

- Sustainable development aims to create more equal societies, ensuring everyone has the conditions for a decent life.
- Adopted by the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) asserts that everyone has the right to basic economic conditions, including decent livelihoods, education, health, shelter, and other basic needs.
- Aristotle's idea emphasizes that political stability requires a large middle class with diminished gaps between rich and poor.
- Sustainable Development Goal 10 'Reducing Inequalities' calls for actions to reduce inequalities both between and within societies globally.
- ► The Gini Coefficient is a statistical measure of inequality, ranging from 0 to 1, where 0 signifies equal income distribution and 1 indicates extreme inequality.
- Global Inequality Map (Gini Coefficient): There are higher inequalities (darker shades) in South Africa



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and the Americas, especially in Brazil, Mexico, and the United States. Lower inequalities (lighter shades) are observed in Western Europe, particularly in Scandinavia.

- Inequalities are shaped by history, with regions like the Americas experiencing extreme disparities due to colonization, conquest, and the slave trade.
- Public policies, such as social democracy in Northern Europe, demonstrate that accessible, quality education is a powerful tool to reduce societal inequalities.
- Scandinavian countries are champions of SDG 10. Social democracy in Scandinavia combines high living standards and reduced inequalities, serving as an example for achieving SDG 10.
- ► The possibility of reducing inequalities increases by joining forces, making commitments to leave no one behind, and working towards a Gini coefficient closer to zero for decent lives for all.

#### Class 6 Chapter 4 Video Summary

- Sustainable development aims to protect Earth's physical systems for human survival.
- We are facing three major environmental crises: climate change, destruction of ecosystems, and pollution.
- ► Greenhouse gasses, including carbon dioxide (CO2), methane, and nitrous oxide, warm the planet.
- ► We're facing over 1.2 degrees Celsius warming due to increased CO2 levels from burning fossil fuels.
- Consequences include disrupted climate processes, water supply issues, rising sea levels, and melting ice sheets.
- ► Human activity threatens biodiversity through habitat destruction, overfishing, and resource overexploitation.
- Pollution from industrial chemicals and plastics poses a triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and

- mega-pollution.
- The concept of planetary boundaries establishes safe limits for greenhouse gas emissions, freshwater use, and chemical releases.
- ► Staying within 1.5 degrees Celsius warming limit is crucial to avoid irreversible consequences.
- Smart technologies and changes in agriculture, energy, and urban design are essential for environmental sustainability.
- ► Examining planetary boundaries helps ensure a safe balance between economic activity and environmental protection.

#### Class 6 Chapter 5 Video Summary

- ▶ SDG 16 and SDG 17 focus on peace, cooperation, and global partnerships in sustainable development.
- ► Conflicts are widespread globally, particularly in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.
- ► The danger of conflicts lies in their potential to escalate, especially in a world with nuclear weapons.
- ► The UN Security Council, with its 15 members and the right of veto for the five permanent members, plays a key role in preventing and resolving conflicts.
- Wars are a significant threat to sustainable development, and their resolution requires international cooperation, diplomacy, and compromise.
- The wars around the world reflect underlying political conflicts that can be solved through nonmilitary means.
- ► The urgent task for sustainable development is to find peaceful solutions to end global conflicts, creating a safe environment for addressing development challenges.
- ► The course will explore ways to improve the functioning of the international system, prevent wars, and enhance global cooperation for sustainable development.

## **Activities**



In this section, you can find a range of interactive activities involving maps, community engagement and a capstone

project, designed to engage students in exploring geographic, historical, and environmental concepts.



These activities foster critical thinking and help students connect personal and community experiences with larger global patterns, encouraging them to take positive action in their schools and communities. You can use these activities in their entirety or select certain sub-sections, use them as in-class activities or assign them as homework or both, providing you with additional materials to help students showcase their understanding of the desired learning outcomes. For the maps, you can work with <u>ArcGIS</u> to develop these maps or you can use your own maps.

#### Graphics Activites (Map, Data, Diagrams)

## Activity: "What's it like in my locale/home?" (45-60 minutes)

#### Introduction (10 minutes)

- 1. In this unit, students were introduced to the planetary boundaries. This concept is a set of nine planetary boundaries within which humanity can continue to thrive and develop within the years to come (Stockholm Resilience Center). These include biosphere integrity, climate change, novel entities, stratospheric ozone depletion, land-systems change, freshwater change, biogeochemical flows, ocean acidification, and atmospheric aerosol loading. For the purpose of this activity, students will use this framework as inspiration, but focus specifically on three areas: land, oceans, and freshwater.
- 2. Divide students into groups or pairs. Assign each group or pair one of the following topics: land, oceans, and freshwater. Students will be responsible for investigating the state of one of these planetary boundaries on their own country or local community.
- **3.** Have students engage in an initial brainstorming activity within their groups or pairs:
  - a. Land:
    - i. What national parks are in your country?
    - ii. What type of species exist?
    - **iii.** What are the major types of ecosystems or biomes that exist in your country? Does it have deserts, forests, or mountain regions?
  - **b.** Freshwater:

- ii. What freshwater bodies exist in your country?
- **iii.** What types of species exist in these freshwater bodies?
- c. Oceans:
  - i. What oceans are closest to your country?
  - ii. Do you live in a coastal region?
  - **iii.** Does your country rely on ocean-related industries, such as shipping or fishing?
- **4.** Have students briefly share back with the entire class, and collate ideas on the board.

#### Research (30-40 minutes)

- 1. Ensure students have notebooks or a note-taking worksheet. For this part of the activity, students can engage in a webquest or they can interview peers, other teachers, or members of the community. The majority of the answers can be found on this site, CIA World Factbook.
- **2.** Have students engage in guided research to answer the following questions:
  - **a.** What is the name of your country?
  - **b.** What is the population of your country?
  - **c.** What is the rate at which the population is growing?
  - **d.** What is the GDP and growth rate of your country?
  - **e.** What are the major natural resources in your country?
  - **f.** Under which World Bank classification does your country fall? (based on GNI per capita)
  - g. https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/ knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bankcountry-and-lending-groups#:~:text=For%20 the%20current%202024%20fiscal,those%20 with%20a%20GNI %20per
  - **h.** For your chosen topic (land, oceans, freshwater), what are the significant issues that are facing the climate?
  - Do these issues affect different populations in different ways? How do they affect rural populations, minorities, youth or other distinct



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#### **Journal Activity**

#### **Journal Prompt**

Reflect on this quote: "The world is very different now, for man holds in his mortal hands the power to abolish all forms of human poverty and all forms of human life" (John F. Kennedy, 1961 inaugural address). This quote sheds light on the aspect of moral choice and not just a technological choice when it comes to addressing the challenges of the world. What are some famous quotes in your culture/country that speak to how we can improve as a humanity and as a collective society?

# Community Engagement & Student Action Considerations & Capstone Project

## Community Engagement & Student Action Considerations

What is one public service action you can take in your school and/or community? Write some ideas down, and choose 1 action you will take in the next 1 academic semester.

#### **Capstone Project**

In this lesson, we learned about the many challenges the world has faced in the past and how humanity overcame them. Furthermore, we also looked at the current challenges we face. Choose 3 SDGs from your original 5-7 and find which global challenges they were meant to address. Provide examples of these challenges and how we are addressing them (2-3 per SDG). How are these challenges present in your community?

## Readings

#### **Limits to Growth**

Overshooting the environmental limits https://www.clubofrome.org/wp-content/up-loads/2022/02/CoR-TheMessageOfLtG.pdf

# The Age of Sustainable Development Sachs, Jeffrey D. The Age of Sustainable Development. Columbia University Press, 2015.

Chapter 4. Why Some Countries Developed While Others Stayed Poor (p.101 - 135) Chapter 6. Planetary Boundaries (p.181 - 214) Chapter 7. Social Inclusion (p.219 - 244)

#### **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

"The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 (General Assembly resolution 217 A) as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected and it has been translated into over 500 languages. The UDHR is widely recognized as having inspired, and paved the way for, the adoption of more than seventy human rights treaties, applied today on a permanent basis at global and regional levels (all containing references to it in their preambles)". (United Nations)

# Inaugural address, by John Fitzgerald Kennedy, President of the United States, 1961 to 1963 Video and Transcript

https://www.jfklibrary.org/learn/about-jfk/histor-ic-speeches/inaugural-address

Clausewitz, Carl von, 1780-1831. On War. New and rev. ed., with introduction and notes by F. N. Maude. London: K. Paul Trench, Trubner and Co. ltd., 1911. #69 (p.23)

https://hdl.handle.net/2027uiug.30112061166366 "War is a mere continuation of policy by other means

\*Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005) Understanding by design (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development ASCD