Class Activities

Chapter 15: Hate Crimes, Terrorism, and Homeland Security

**Class Activity 1: Hate Crimes**

**Case Study (Group Activity)**

**Instructions:** Read the case study and answer the questions below.

**Murder of James Byrd Jr.**

Standing as one of the most heinous hate crimes ever, the lynching-style murder of [**James Byrd Jr.**](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/25008925/ns/us_news-life/t/years-later-dragging-death-changes-town/) at the hands of three white men in Texas served as a painful reminder that racism was very much alive in America, even on the cusp of the 21st century.

On June 7, 1998, the 49-year-old Byrd would find himself on a Texas road near the town of Jasper at night when a trio of men, **Shawn Berry, Lawrence Brewer,** and**John King**, offered him a ride. It was later reported that Byrd and Berry knew each other. The friendly gesture turned deadly, though, when the men savagely beat Byrd and chained his ankles to the back of the pickup truck Berry was driving, dragging him 3 miles over asphalt and road and causing severe injuries. Byrd was said to be conscious during most of the harrowing ordeal, finally dying by way of a decapitation after his body hit a culvert in the road.

The men were quickly arrested, with Jasper finding itself uncomfortably under the glare of scrutiny and shocked stares. Police charged the trio with capital murder, as each of the men was tried in separate cases. King, considered the ringleader, and Brewer were part of a white supremacy group; they reportedly met in prison when they joined the gang years prior.

Both men were sentenced to death row [with Brewer being killed by lethal injection](http://newsone.com/1542055/lawrence-russell-brewer-executed/) last September. On the eve of his death, Brewer said he felt no remorse and would do it all over again. King currently sits on Texas’s death row list, while Berry, who is serving life in prison, was spared capital punishment after prosecutors determined by some manner of miracle that he was not a racist.

1. What is a hate crime?
2. Identify the types of hate crimes listed in the textbook.
3. How many hate crimes happen in the United States yearly? Are you surprised by the number? Why or why not?
4. Do you think the “Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009” will help combat hate crimes in the United States? Why or why not?
5. Do you agree that offenders who commit hate crimes should receive more severe sentences than other types of violent crime? Explain your answer.

**Class Activity 2: Terrorism**

**Case Study (Group or Paired Activity)**

**Instructions:** Read the section on the Extent of Terrorism and answer the following questions.

1. What is terrorism?
2. What are the most recent statistics regarding terrorism?
3. How likely is it that a terrorist attack will occur in United States? Why or why not?

**Class Activity 3: The Gun Control Debate**

**Debate (Paired or Group Activity)**

**Instructions:** Read the following section of the text book: “Policy Implications” and answer the questions below.

1. Why is the gun debate at the center of policy implications for this chapter?
2. Select a side for the gun control debate and make a compelling argument for your side.