Lesson Plan - An Introduction to Feminism

1. Introduction – about instructor & today (5 mins)
2. Lesson Outline – outline for the hour (3 mins)
3. Learning Target & Criteria for Success (2 mins)
   a. Learning Target: Students will understand the major goals of the feminist movement across time; critique feminist theory; and relate feminism to their own lives.
   b. Criteria for Success: Students will develop an ‘exit ticket’ from class in the form of a written position statement about their agreement with major goals of modern feminism, make connections to other social other civil-rights movements, and relate the ideas of feminism to their own lives.
4. Student Writing Prompt – Define “feminism.” (10 mins)
   a. Students have 3-5 minutes to write a definition of “feminism.” Students will volunteer or be invited to share their definitions.
   b. Instructor will develop a word cloud on the white board of recurring themes.
5. Direct Instruction – Cover the major goals of feminism across 3 major era of feminism. (10 mins)
   a. See accompanying PowerPoint
6. Interaction with Source Material – Students will read and critique an essay on a student starting a feminist club. Instructor will show images from the student’s Facebook site. Guided discussion will follow (15 mins)
   a. Discussion questions
      i. What are your reactions to Jinan’s story?
      ii. Would young women experience similar treatment at Eagle Valley High School?
      iii. What were the major goals Jinan was trying to accomplish with the club?
      iv. What similarities do you see with what happened to Jinan and what happened to leaders in other civil rights movements you have studied?
7. Exit Ticket – students will write and respond to the following prompt. Instructor will review and provide written feedback, to be returned to the student (10 mins)
   a. Write a narrative that, in 1-2 pages, addresses the following questions (choose one):
      • Enumerate and critique the major goals of the modern feminist movement for society?
      • Based on what you have learned about other civil rights movements, compare and contrast the feminist movement with at least one other movement.
      • Describe how the goals associated with feminism might have an impact on your life.

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What happened when I started a feminist society at school
We wanted to challenge sexist behaviour – but we unleashed a flood of abuse from our male peers

I am 17 years old and I am a feminist. I believe in gender equality, and am under no illusion about how far we are from achieving it. Identifying as a feminist has become particularly important to me since a school trip I took to Cambridge last year.

A group of men in a car started wolf-whistling and shouting sexual remarks at my friends and me. I asked the men if they thought it was appropriate for them to be abusing a group of 17-year-old girls. The response was furious. The men started swearing at me, called me a bitch and threw a cup of coffee over me.

For those men we were just legs, breasts and pretty faces. Speaking up shattered their fantasy, and they responded violently to my voice.

Shockingly, the boys in my peer group have responded in exactly the same way to my feminism.

After returning from this school trip I started to notice how much the girls at my school suffer because of the pressures associated with our gender. Many of the girls have eating disorders, some have had peers heavily pressure them into sexual acts, others suffer in emotionally abusive relationships where they are constantly told they are worthless.

I decided to set up a feminist society at my school, which has previously been named one of "the best schools in the country", to try to tackle these issues. However, this was more difficult than I imagined as my all-girls school was hesitant to allow the society. After a year-long struggle, the feminist society was finally ratified.

What I hadn't anticipated on setting up the feminist society was a massive backlash from the boys in my wider peer circle. They took to Twitter and started a campaign of abuse against me. I was called a "feminist bitch", accused of "feeding [girls] b.s.", and in a particularly racist comment was told "all this feminism bull won't stop uncle Sanjit from marrying you when you leave school".

Our feminist society was derided with retorts such as, "FemSoc, is that for real? #DPMO" [don't piss me off] and every attempt we made to start a serious debate was met with responses such as "feminism and rape are both ridiculously tiring".
The more girls started to voice their opinions about gender issues, the more vitriolic the boys' abuse became. Any attempt we made to stick up for each other was aggressively shot down with "get in your lane before I par [ridicule] you too", or belittled with remarks like "cute, they got offended".

I fear that many boys of my age fundamentally don't respect women. They want us around for parties, banter and most of all sex. But they don't think of us as intellectual equals, highlighted by accusations of being hysterical and over sensitive when we attempted to discuss serious issues facing women.

The situation recently reached a crescendo when our feminist society decided to take part in a national project called Who Needs Feminism. We took photos of girls standing with a whiteboard on which they completed the sentence "I need feminism because...", often delving into painful personal experiences to articulate why feminism was important to them.

When we posted these pictures online we were subject to a torrent of degrading and explicitly sexual comments. Girls who complained of sexual objectification in their photos were given ratings out of 10, details of the sex lives of some of the girls were posted beside their photos, and others were sent threatening messages warning them that things would soon "get personal".

We, a group of 16-, 17- and 18-year-old girls, have made ourselves vulnerable by talking about our experiences of sexual and gender oppression only to elicit the wrath of our male peer group.

Instead of our school taking action against such intimidating behaviour, it insisted that we remove the pictures. Without the support from our school, girls who had participated in the campaign were isolated, facing a great deal of verbal abuse with the full knowledge that there would be no repercussions for the perpetrators.

It's been over a century since the birth of the suffragette movement and boys are still not being brought up to believe that women are their equals. Instead we have a whole new battleground opening up online where boys can attack, humiliate, belittle us and do everything in their power to destroy our confidence before we even leave high school.

It is appalling that an institution responsible for preparing young women for adult life has actively opposed our feminist work. I feel like the school is not supporting its girls in a crucial part of their evolution into being strong, assertive, confident women. If that's the case for a well-established girls' school, what hope does this generation of women have in challenging the misogyny that still pervades our society?

If you thought the fight for female equality was over, I'm sorry to tell you that a whole new round is only just beginning.