



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
2008 Volume I: Controlling War by Law

The Switchroom: NSA Spying and Defending the Constitution

Guide for Curriculum Unit 08.01.03
by James P. Brochin

The purpose of this unit is to examine the limits of governmental power to intercept communications during times of war or times of fear of terrorism. Students will begin with examining tensions and fears surrounding the Cold War, including Soviet spying on their own citizens. Then, students will examine the causes and consequences of the McCarthy era, and the extent to which government intimidated political nonconformists. The heart of the unit is the examination of the National Security Agency's warrantless wiretapping of telephone calls and e-mail, as well as its monitoring of Internet use, at AT&T and other telecommunication companies' facilities. A primary focus is the story of the AT&T employee Mark Klein's discovery and exposure of the NSA spying program and the recently passed law giving AT&T and others retroactive immunity for cooperating with the NSA.

(Recommended for U.S. History and Civics, grade 11)

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