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Lesson Plan
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Comparing Types of Censorship on Facebook and Weibo

About This Lesson
Facebook and Weibo are two of the most popular social media platforms. They both have internal and external forms of censorship. This lesson examines the types and reasons for this internal and external censorship. This lesson can be used as a way to introduce the First Amendment or as a way to compare and contrast societal norms about sharing "controversial ideas" between citizens of the United States and China, specifically on Social Media. This lesson is designed to be used in a Citizenship/Government or Current Affairs class.

Grade Level
9-12

Classroom Time
One 85 minute block or two 45 minute periods for research and discussion.
One 85 minute block or two 45 minute periods for student-produced videos and discussion.

Resources
Weibo
The Wuhan Lockdown by Guobin Yang
https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2019/03/what-went-wrong-chinas-weibo-social-network/584728/
https://www.cnn.com/2021/12/15/tech/china-weibo-censorship-fine-mic-intl-hnk/index.html
https://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/weibo-07152022105827.html
https://www.aspi.org.au/report/weibo-diplomacy-and-censorship-china
https://www.technologyreview.com/2022/06/18/1054452/china-censors-social-media-comments/

Facebook
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Censorship_by_Facebook
https://www.propublica.org/article/facebook-hate-speech-censorship-internal-documents-algorithms
https://techcrunch.com/2016/07/08/facebook-censorship-policy/
https://www.latimes.com/business/technology/la-fi-tn-facebook-guidelines-20180424-story.html

Background
Weibo is a twitter-like service in China and is used by roughly 582 million people. Facebook is a social networking platform used by roughly 2.9 billion people, but is blocked in China. Both websites are popular ways for people to share information and ideas and both websites have had public issues with content being censored. Both platforms are censored by algorithms and

actual censors. This lesson compares and contrasts the forms of censorship and how it affects those censored.

Objectives (Students will be able to…)
Explain what freedom of speech means to them in regards to social media and how this freedom may change depending on the laws of different countries.

Standards
SS.Inq3.a.h Develop a defensible claim to provide focus for an inquiry that is based upon the analysis of sources.
SS.Inq4.a.h Communicate conclusions while taking into consideration that audiences from diverse backgrounds (e.g., gender, class, proximity to the event or issue) may interpret the information in different ways).
SS.BH4.a.h Evaluate the purpose for which a technology is created and analyze the consequences (intended and unintended) to different cultures.
SS.PS2.c.h Analyze the role of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and nongovernment organizations (NGOs such as Save the Children or the Red Cross) in how human rights have been addressed in different countries.

Activity
Whole
Post thought question and give students 5 minutes to brainstorm their ideas–
"What does censorship look like to you?"
–Record student ideas on the board.
–Ask students how many of them have Social Media accounts (show of hands) (Facebook/Instagram/Snapchat…)
–Ask students if they have ever been in "Facebook Jail" (show of hands)
–Ask students if this is a form of censorship. Have them explain why they feel this way.
–Compare their reasons to their ideas from the thought question. Are they similar/different?
–Provide students statistics from the background paragraph about the number of users.

Small
Provide articles about Weibo and Facebook censorship to small groups or pairs.
–Have students read the articles looking for the following information:
- What Platform is it about?
- Who wrote it?
- Is there obvious bias from the author? How do you know?
- What form of censorship do you see?
- What technology is used to do the censoring (algorithm, individual censor, keywords…)?

Whole
Have students share their findings with the class about their specific articles.
–While the information is being shared, have the other students take notes on the articles.

–Ask students if these forms of censorship are legal (show of hands).
–Ask students what the dangers of restricting speech on the internet does to freedom of speech.

Assessment (Introduce at the end of day one)
Students will make a short (3-5 minute) video arguing for freedom of speech on social media in the style of a TEDTalk.
If students are unaware of the format, use TED Talk format to explain what is necessary for a successful TEDTalk.

Play the student videos for class and have the students critique each other (with explanations)