

Carnegie Council Lesson Plan for Applied Ethics Strategies to Accelerate Climate Action in Cities (60 minutes)

Overview

This lesson plan will enable students to gain an understanding of how to use Carnegie Council's Climate Action in Cities tool to bring forth solutions in their local communities. Students will learn about the nine Applied Ethics Strategies, develop case studies, and articulate how they would apply ethics to enable change.

Core Objectives

1. Learn about Carnegie Council's nine Applied Ethics Strategies to solve climate issues in cities.
2. Develop case studies and articulate ways to work with stakeholders to use applied ethics for solutions.

Carnegie Council principles that the lesson addresses:

- **The defense of democracy in the U.S. and globally** requires confronting autocrats who discriminate based on ethnicity, gender, and religion, and who deny basic freedoms to their citizens.
- **Fidelity** means honesty, integrity, and a good-faith effort at serving the truth. Rhetoric certainly matters, and in an age of disinformation, leaders must fight against lies, willful deception, and deliberate misrepresentation of facts.
- **The humanitarian imperative** is the duty to save lives and alleviate suffering through humane and equal treatment. As violence and cruelty abound in conflict zones around the world, mounting effective humanitarian responses remains the essential moral imperative of our time.

1. Activity (35-45 minutes)

Introduce the nine [Applied Ethics Strategies](#) from the [Carnegie Council Climate Action in Cities tool](#). Walk through each Applied Ethics Strategy with the class.
(5 minutes)

Part 1: Understanding applied ethics with an existing climate challenge (15- 20 minutes)

Split students into four groups. Each group is assigned a Climate Challenge Case from the [Carnegie Council Climate Action in Cities tool](#). You can pick the cases you'd like to assign. Below are suggested Climate Challenge Cases:

1. Energy: [Managing Offshore Wind Energy Misinformation Concerns](#)
2. Governance: [A Grassroots Response to Siloed Governance](#)
3. Public Health: [Protecting Older People from Heat Risks](#)
4. Waste Management: [Lack of Trust in City Council to Deliver Waste Management Improvements](#)

Have the students familiarize themselves with their group's Climate Challenge Case. Once students have read through the cases, have them discuss:

- a. Are there any barriers this ethical strategy does not address?
- b. Are there any groups this ethical strategy would not be tailored to target?
- c. Students will then propose a second ethical strategy and explain why it is a better fit at addressing a barrier, or concern of a constituent group.
- d. How does this second ethical strategy solve for the concerns of groups you identified and address the barriers to cooperation (questions a and b)?

As a group, students **select and discuss one or two alternative ethical strategies that could also apply to this case.**

Building Trust	Facilitating a Just and Orderly Transition	Finding Common Language
Grafting onto Existing Rootstock	Prioritizing Middle-Ground Solutions	Putting Yourself in Other's Shoes
Speaking to an Existing Truth	Strengthening Ethical Literacy	Valuing Small Decisions

Students discuss: Who would need to participate in this ethical strategy?

Local Government	Community Members	Private Businesses	Non-Governmental Organizations
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Group Discussion (5 minutes): After 15-20 minutes, have the students pause. Allow each group to present one alternate ethical strategy that they think applies to their case. Have them articulate how this second ethical strategy incorporates the concerns of the groups they identified and address the barriers to cooperation.

Part 2: Creating their own Climate Challenge Case (15-20 minutes)

In the same groups, students then create their own Climate Challenge Case. They can choose to work in their local community or a city they are familiar with.

Students identify an area their climate challenge relates to:

Energy	Building & Transportation	Finance	Governance
Carbon Removal	Education	Waste Management	Agriculture & Food

Working together, the students begin writing about their Climate Challenge Case.

Select which applied ethics strategy you think best addresses the root of the Climate Challenge Case you identified.

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Speaking to an Existing Truth	Strengthening Ethical Literacy	Valuing Small Decisions

Students then discuss: Who would need to participate in this ethical strategy?

Local Government	Community Members	Private Businesses	Non-Governmental Organizations
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Students then explain how this ethical strategy incorporates the concern of the group they identified and addresses the barriers to cooperation.

Bring together the students for class discussion.

Group Discussion (15 minutes): Have each group present their Climate Challenge Case, and which applied ethics strategy they think best applies and why they chose it.

2. Closing remarks (5 minutes)

After all groups have presented, if there is still time, open the discussion and ask the following reflection questions:

- a. How did this exercise help you identify obstacles to climate issues and think through new pathways to overcome them?
- b. As a leader, which of these ethical strategies can you apply to complex problems in your everyday life?

Post-Lesson Resources

- [Accelerating Climate Action in Cities Meeting Note](#), Carnegie Ethics Accelerator, Carnegie Council, March 2025