



Lavender Scare: Lesson Plan

Topic	
<p>The Lavender Scare was a federal government campaign to remove LGBTQ+ people from civil service positions, fearing that they were more susceptible to corruption and blackmail. Led in large part by Senator Joseph McCarthy, the Lavender Scare included congressional investigative hearings in 1950 and an executive order barring LGBTQ+ people from the federal government, ultimately resulting in thousands of people being fired and resigning. The campaign had lasting effects, with the executive order staying in place until 1995.</p>	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• U.S. History• LGBTQ+ Rights	30-45 minutes
Video link:	
https://academy4sc.org/topic/lavender-scare-banning-homosexuality-in-the-federal-government/	
Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>	
<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain what the Lavender Scare was and how it was implemented.• Identify several key actors involved in the Lavender Scare, as well as the actions they took.• Explain the impacts of the Lavender Scare on the LGBTQ+ community, both during the Lavender Scare and the years after.	
Key Concepts & Vocabulary	
McCarthyism, Second Red Scare, executive order, congressional investigative hearings	
Materials Needed	
Worksheets, Student Internet Access	
Before you watch	



Turn & Talk: How do media coverage and public opinion contribute to discrimination and fear-mongering? Discuss some examples.

While you watch

Students should complete the Worksheet.

After you watch/discussion questions

1. McCarthy claimed that if people opposed him and his policies, they were either a Communist or a homosexual. How do you think this rhetoric helped spread the Lavender Scare?
2. Why do you think so many people supported McCarthy's campaign to remove LGBTQ+ people from federal employment? What effect did fear have on their decision?
3. Can you think of any groups of people that the federal government is attempting to turn the public against today, using similar tactics, like fear-mongering? What can the Lavender Scare teach us about these decisions and tactics?

Activity Ideas

- Split students into six groups and have each group research one of the following topics and how it contributed to the Lavender Scare: Joseph McCarthy, moral values and public opinion, media coverage, the Wherry-Hill Committee, the Hoey Committee, and Executive Order 10450. After several minutes, have each group give a short presentation to the class on their main takeaways.
- Have students independently write a short essay on the government's large role in the Lavender Scare, as well as any parallels they see to actions the government is taking against groups of people now. What has changed between then and now? What has remained the same? What actions can people take to resist these sorts of campaigns and attitudes from the government?

Sources/places to learn more

1. Heatley, Holly S. *"Commies And Queers": Narratives That Supported The Lavender Scare*. The University of Texas at Arlington, 17 Sept. 2007. rc.library.uta.edu,



<https://rc.library.uta.edu/uta-ir/bitstream/handle/10106/584/umi-uta-1787.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

2. Johnson, David K. *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government*. University of Chicago Press, 2009.
3. *The Lavender Scare: How the Federal Government Purged Gay Employees*. CBS News, 9 June 2019. www.cbsnews.com,
<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-lavender-scare-how-the-federal-government-purged-gay-employees/>.
4. "These People Are Frightened to Death." *National Archives*, 15 Aug. 2016. www.archives.gov,
<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2016/summer/lavender.html>.
5. Wills, Matthew. "The Lavender Scare." *JSTOR Daily*, 18 Nov. 2019. daily.jstor.org, <https://daily.jstor.org/the-lavender-scare/>.