Lesson Plan Template

- **Title**: Expressing an Opinion: Marriage or Cohabitation?
- **Author**: Mary Hillis
- **Proficiency level**
  
  _____ Beginning _____ Intermediate ___X___ Advanced
- **Grade level**
  Secondary school, higher education, adult
- **Skills**
  Please check all that apply and mention related subskills (e.g., Speaking/pronunciation, or Reading/scanning):

  _X_ Reading          Related subskills: Understanding statistics; critical thinking
  _X_ Speaking         Related subskills: Expressing opinions; participating in a debate
  _X_ Listening        Related subskills: participating in a debate
  _X_ Vocabulary

- **Subject area**
  ESL/EFL
  Social Studies

- **Objectives**
  Students will critically read and examine a newspaper article about changes in U.S. households.
  Students will answer comprehension and critical thinking questions based on the reading.
  Students will prepare and express opinions on the issue of marriage vs. cohabitation.

- **Duration**
  Approximately 2-3 hours

- **Materials and technology**
  Comprehension and Critical Thinking Worksheet (attached)
Marriage vs. Cohabitation Debate Preparation Worksheet (attached)

- **Procedure**
  1. Students read the newspaper article, “For first time, unmarried households reign in U.S.” and complete the comprehension and critical thinking worksheet.
  2. Students use the comprehension and critical thinking worksheet to discuss the article in a small group. The teacher should circulate and assist with comprehension difficulties, as needed. Round off the activity, by asking a few students for their answers.
  3. Students prepare to express opinions on the topic of marriage or cohabitation. Assign pairs to favor either marriage or cohabitation. Then, have each pair brainstorm a list of reasons why their assigned living arrangement is preferable using the included worksheet. Finally, in preparation for the group discussion, have students practice explaining their opinion. For a list of expressions useful in debate and discussion, see [http://claweb.cla.unipd.it/home/mcanapero/debate.htm](http://claweb.cla.unipd.it/home/mcanapero/debate.htm)
  4. Organize a group discussion by putting pairs with opposing opinions together. To begin, each pair should discuss the reasons why their assigned living arrangement is beneficial. Then, the group should engage in a question/answer discussion of the topic. If it would be appropriate, round off the activity by asking students to share their actual personal opinions and/or examples on this topic.
  5. As a whole class, finish this speaking activity by asking each team to share the most interesting or striking points from their discussion and/or for each student to write a short response to this lesson.

- **Assessment**
  The students’ performance can be assessed through completion of the worksheets and participation in the pair and small group discussion. Here is a specific list of questions for assessment purposes.

  Did the student read the article and complete the Comprehension and Critical Thinking Worksheet?

  Did the student actively participate and share ideas in group discussion?

  Did the student complete the discussion preparation worksheet with the other members of his or her team?

  Was the student able to express his or her opinion during both the pair and small group the discussion?

  Was the student able to summarize the discussion activity either orally or in writing?

- **Extension or Follow up**
  Students can write an opinion paper explaining their reasons for supporting either marriage or cohabitation.

  Students can research the changes occurring in families in another country or culture and present their findings to the class.
This lesson plan may be adapted to use with other debatable issues or topics. Instead of the group discussion outlined above, students may be asked to participate in a debate. Although most advanced-level students are likely familiar with the procedures of a debate, if they are not, then please see “Teaching Debate to ESL Students: A Six-Class Unit” by Daniel Krieger at http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Krieger-Debate.html

- **References**

- **Useful links**
  If students need further support in the vocabulary to express and opinion, then a list of useful expressions for giving an opinion during debates and discussions can be found at http://claweb.cla.unipd.it/home/mcanapero/debate.htm