

**MEDIA EDUCATION
FOUNDATION
STUDY GUIDE**

**THIS LAND IS OUR LAND
The Fight to Reclaim the Commons**

Featuring David Bollier

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NOTE TO EDUCATORS

This study guide is designed to help you and your students engage and manage the information presented in this video. Given that it can be difficult to teach visual content – and difficult for students to recall detailed information from videos after viewing them – the intention here is to give you a tool to help your students slow down and deepen their thinking about the specific issues this video addresses. With this in mind, we’ve structured the guide so that you have the option of focusing in depth on one section of the video at a time. We’ve also set it up to help you stay close to the video’s main line of argument as it unfolds. The structure of the guide therefore mirrors the structure of the video, moving through each of the video’s sections with a series of key summary points and discussion questions specific to that section. A list of assignments is at the end of each section.

Key Points provide a concise and comprehensive summary of each section of the video. They are designed to make it easier for you and your students to recall the details of the video during class discussions, and as a reference point for students as they work on assignments.

Questions for Discussion & Writing provide a series of questions designed to help you review and clarify material for your students; to encourage students to reflect critically on this material during class discussions; and to prompt and guide their written reactions to the video before and after these discussions. These questions can therefore be used in different ways: as guideposts for class discussion, as a framework for smaller group discussion and presentations, or as self-standing, in-class writing assignments (i.e. as prompts for “free-writing” or in-class reaction papers in which students are asked to write spontaneously and informally while the video is fresh in their mind).

Assignments encourage students to engage the video in more depth – by conducting research, working on individual and group projects, putting together presentations, and composing formal essays. These assignments are designed to challenge students to show command of the material presented in the video, to think critically and independently about this material from a number of different perspectives, and to develop and defend their own point of view on the issues at stake.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

For more than three decades, transnational corporations have been busy buying up what used to be known as the commons: everything from our forests and our oceans to our broadcast airwaves and our most important intellectual and cultural works. In *This Land is Our Land*, bestselling author David Bollier, a leading figure in the global movement to reclaim the commons, bucks the rising tide of anti-government extremism and free market ideology to show how commercial interests are undermining our collective interests. Placing the commons squarely within the American traditions of community engagement and free expression, Bollier shows how a bold new international movement steeped in democratic principles is trying to reclaim our common wealth by modeling practical alternatives to the restrictive monopoly powers of corporate elites.

Chapter 1 | INTRODUCTION (7:16)

Key Points

- Over the past few decades, resources that once belonged to the public have been bought up and turned into private property.
- This narrow market mentality has come to overshadow the American tradition of “the commons,” which privileges shared public interests over corporate concerns about the bottom line.
- In 1955, medical researcher Jonas Salk developed a new vaccine to stop polio, a disease that killed more than 3,000 people in 1952 alone.
- Salk’s research was part of a collective effort funded by the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis (also known as “The March of Dimes”) – a public organization financed by the donations of millions of ordinary Americans.
- When asked who owns the patent to his vaccine, Dr. Salk responded, “Well, the people I would say. There is no patent, could you patent the sun?”
- In the 1990s, in an attempt to save millions of lives, South African government officials tried to make affordable generic medicine available to poor AIDS patients.
- Big pharmaceutical companies stopped them, arguing that their patents were being ripped off.
- Bollier points out that the responses to these two health crises – the poliovirus in the 1950s and the AIDS epidemic in the 1990s – capture the essence of the epic and ongoing struggle between the marketplace and the commons.

Questions for Discussion & Writing

1. *This Land is Our Land* opens with this quote by Walter Hickel, a member of the Nixon Administration: “If you steal \$10 from a man’s wallet, you’re likely to get into a fight. But if you steal billions from the commons, co-owned by him and his descendants, he may not even notice.”

What do you think Hickel means? Can you think of any concrete examples of what he’s saying? How does this quote relate to the rest of what Bollier says in this opening section?

2. Why do you think a town would sell its naming rights to a private company, as Halfway, Oregon did to the Internet company Half.com in 1999? How might the company benefit from a deal like this? How might the town benefit? And what “deeper, more alarming mentality” does David Bollier say is driving deals like this?

3. What organization provided the majority of funding for Dr. Jonas Salk's research to develop a polio vaccine? How did this organization raise the money to help fund Salk's research? Why does David Bollier think it matters so much where these funds came from?
4. What was Dr. Jonas Salk's answer when he was asked who owns the patent on the polio vaccine? What question did he ask in return? What did he mean by this? And what is a patent anyway?
5. How did the drug industry respond to the South African government's attempt to produce and distribute affordable generic drugs to AIDS victims? How did this approach differ from the effort to eradicate the poliovirus in the United States in the 1950s?

Assignments

1. Research the mission of today's March of Dimes. Visit their website (<http://www.marchofdimes.com/>) and look around at what they're up to now. Then write a paper – or prepare a presentation – explaining how the focus of their work today compares with the work they did when they were founded. Be sure to talk about how they're funded today, and how this squares with Bollier's description of the March of Dimes as a prime example of the commons in the 1940s and '50s.
2. Link to the two essays cited below and write a paper in which you: 1) compare and contrast what each piece says about intellectual property, and 2) relate the main points of each essay to what happened during the polio crisis in the U.S. in the 1940s and 50s, and the AIDS crisis in South Africa in the 1990s. Be sure to summarize the main ideas in each piece, and to talk about where they agree and disagree, before explaining how each essay's take on intellectual property relates to the film's exploration of the polio and AIDS epidemics.

ESSAY 1:

“Who Owns Ideas? The War Over Global Intellectual Property.”

By David S. Evans, in *Foreign Affairs*

Go to: <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/58450/david-s-evans/who-owns-ideas-the-war-over-global-intellectual-property?page=show>

ESSAY 2:

“Deadly Medical Monopolies.”

By David Bollier, from *On the Commons*

Go to: <http://onthecommons.org/deadly-medical-monopolies>

Chapter 2 | THE COMMONS (7:33)

Key Points

- The commons consists of all the things that we collectively own and share and have a stake in protecting: for example, water, ecosystems, genes, national parks, the Internet, libraries, community gardens.
- Historical examples of commons include forestry conservation laws in Ancient Babylon 1900 B.C.; nature reserves set aside by King Akhenaten in Ancient Egypt; the legal categories of *Res Publicae* and *Res Communes* during the Roman Empire; the Magna Carta in 13th century England; and the United States Constitution in 1787.
- Distinctively American versions of the commons include quilting bees, New England town meetings, volunteer fire brigades, free public libraries, and our national park system.
- Benjamin Franklin refused to patent his many inventions because he knew future generations would build on his work with their own ideas, as he did with the work of those who came before him.
- President Abraham Lincoln signed the Morrill Acts in 1862, allowing states to use federally owned land to create “land grant” colleges that would serve everyone, especially in the teaching of agriculture, science, and engineering.
- President Franklin D. Roosevelt created Social Security, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the G.I. Bill, and the Works Progress Administration as part of “government in the service of the commons.”
- During his State of the Union address in 1944, Roosevelt proposed a “Second Bill of Rights,” steeped in the tradition of the commons, which included the right to a decent job, the right to housing, the right to adequate medical care, the right to be cared for when elderly, and the right to a quality education.

Discussion Questions

1. Define *the commons*. What, exactly, is meant by this term? What are some examples of commons not mentioned in the film?
2. What is the Magna Carta and how is it an example of the commons?
3. According to Bollier, why were states like Virginia and Massachusetts called “commonwealths”?
4. Bollier suggests that the commons is a deep part of American history. What are some of the examples he gives to back this up? Can you think of others? Do you agree that the idea of the commons seems very American?

5. What are the Morrill Land-Grant Acts of 1862?
6. According to Bollier, the commons allows “each generation to build on the contributions of those who came before.” What do you think Bollier means? And why do you think he calls Benjamin Franklin a “perfect case in point”? In what ways did Benjamin Franklin contribute to the principles of the commons? And what’s the difference between stealing and building here?
7. We hear about it all the time, but what exactly *is* Social Security, anyway? Who created it and when? Why was it created? What was, and is, its main purpose?
8. Bollier says that the creation of Social Security reinforced “the principle of the commons.” What does he mean? In what ways is Social Security similar to other examples of the commons, like national parks or public libraries?
9. What were some of the rights extended to Americans in FDR’s proposed “Second Bill of Rights”? How do these rights relate to the idea of the commons?
10. Were these rights ever formally adopted? Why or why not? Do you think they should have been? What arguments do you think people would make *against* these rights if President Obama proposed them today? What do *you* make of these rights, and these kinds of arguments against them?

Assignments

1. Break into groups of three or four, and together select ONE of the following topics to research for a class presentation:
 - a. The nature reserves created by Egyptian King Akhenaten
 - b. The concepts of *Res Publicae* and *Res Communes*, as established by Emperor Justinian in the Roman Empire
 - c. The Magna Carta and the Charter of the Forest
 - d. The U.S. Constitution
 - e. Social Security

Come into class prepared to meet with the other members of your group and share your findings. Then, in class as a group, organize all of your research and figure out how best to explain your topic to the rest of the class. Basically, your job is to find a way to teach them the maximum amount about your topic.

Note: In your presentation, make sure to be specific about how the document and/or law you chose came into being, and to explain clearly why you think Bollier classified it as an example of the commons.

2. Research Ralph Nader. As part of your research, you might want to watch *An Reasonable Man*, the documentary based on his work as a consumer advocate and presidential candidate. Write a paper outlining how Nader’s consumer advocacy, his work fighting for safety and transparency from corporations and governments alike, lines up with how Bollier describes the commons movement.

Chapter 3 | ENCLOSING THE COMMONS (6:13)

Key Points

- There's been a long and rich tradition of attacking the commons as anti-American and un-American, misrepresenting it as synonymous with communism, socialism, and big-government authoritarianism.
- These fears have given cover to free-market fundamentalists who have bought up more and more of what used to belong to all of us.
- During the 1980s and 1990s, neoliberal policies, under the leadership of American President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, led to a wave of deregulation, severe cutbacks in government, and extreme privatization, resulting in a shift of more than a trillion dollars of state-owned enterprises to private interests.
- The piecemeal theft of the commons, often referred to as the “enclosure of the commons,” has been accelerating over the past 50 years.
- The term “enclosure” originated in the 15th to 18th centuries when English nobles and royalty began claiming ownership of land that for years had been used by everyone for hay and to graze livestock.
- Economic historian Karl Polanyi refers to the English enclosure movement as “The Great Transformation,” describing it as “a revolution of the rich against the poor.”

Discussion Questions

1. How did American-made propaganda films during the Cold War distort or misrepresent some of the key ideals of the commons? Is the commons still misrepresented today? Who benefits from such misperceptions?
2. If the ideas and ideals of the commons can be traced to the very founding principles of America, to some of the most cherished ideas of the founding fathers, why do you think this propaganda has succeeded in making the very idea of the commons seem anti-American and un-American?
3. Define “enclosure” and how it relates to the commons. Where did the term originate? What was being enclosed?
4. According to economic historian Karl Polanyi, what is “The Great Transformation”?
5. How did President Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher contribute to the modern enclosure of the commons in the 1980s?
6. What is “market fundamentalism”? How does market fundamentalism typically affect the commons?

Assignments

1. In the film, David Bollier says of capitalism today: “This isn’t Adam Smith’s capitalism. It’s market fundamentalism.” What does he mean by this? Do some research and write a paper explaining how Adam Smith’s brand of capitalism might differ fundamentally from what Bollier labels “market fundamentalism.”
2. Take a look at one night of primetime television on the 24-hour financial news channels – CNBC, FOX Business Channel, Bloomberg News, and others. Track down the transcripts of these programs on Lexis Nexis to create a list of all the specific stories that aired in one night. Then write a response paper explaining any patterns you find, and whether you think these stories contribute, in Bollier’s words, to a sense that “everything – including nature and culture – can be bought and sold as a commodity.” Your main goal here is to talk about how the things talked about on these shows relate to the things Bollier talks about in this film.
3. Google “Glenn Beck + Socialism,” watch some videos featuring Beck on YouTube, and read some articles about Beck’s views on socialism. As you do your research, make note of the following: How does Beck seem to be defining socialism? Does his definition of socialism seem accurate? For example, do you get the sense he makes clear distinctions between socialism and communism? How about between liberals and socialists and communists? Do you think in some ways he’s attacking not only socialism, but also the very notion of the commons? Does he show awareness or acknowledge that some of the key principles of the commons are a deep part of American history and were embraced by the founding fathers? If so, make note of some examples.

Based on your research, and your notes, write a paper comparing and contrasting Glenn Beck’s vision of America to David Bollier’s. Be sure to think about the questions above as you compare and contrast these two different visions. And after summarizing the positions of both Beck and Bollier, weigh in yourself: Who do you think has the more accurate vision of America?

Chapter 4 | THE ENCLOSURE OF NATURE (5:13)

Key Points

- Nature is often the first victim of market enclosure – as seen in the clear-cutting of public forests or the mining of national mineral wealth.
- Private corporations are allowed to profit from the exploitation of public lands owned by taxpayers.
- According to the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration, one quarter of the Earth’s biomass – all of its forests, crops, and plants – have been commodified for sale on the world market.
- Water, itself, has been commodified, so that Americans now consume about 500 million bottles of branded water *every week* even though it has been discovered that most store-bought bottled water is no cleaner than tap water.
- Meanwhile, private companies that sell bottled water, like Coca-Cola and Pepsi Co., are sucking away water needed by farmers in India, Africa, and Latin America.
- Setting aside good and bad and right and wrong, these kinds of enclosures do not make sense from a pragmatic point of view: exploiting nature and trashing the commons in order to produce abundance is not a sustainable economic model.

Discussion Questions

1. Bollier claims that nature is always the first victim of market enclosure. What are some examples of nature falling victim to enclosure? Why do you think this has been allowed?
2. What is the 1872 Mining Act? According to Bollier, how is this law still affecting Americans?
3. How do private corporations benefit from propertizing public lands? What do you think David Bollier means when he calls this theft? Do you agree with him? If so, why do you think the federal government would agree to allow private corporations to steal property and resources that belong to all taxpayers?
4. PepsiCo, which owns and distributes bottled water they call Aquafina, started labeling the water’s source as P.W.S. What does P.W.S. stand for?
5. How has the commodification of water affected farmers in communities in India, Africa, and Latin America, where companies like PepsiCo and Coca Cola have established bottling plants?
6. Bollier argues, “This private grab of natural resources has had consequences.” What are the consequences he’s referencing? What does he say have been the effects of this propertizing of public lands by private companies on the commons? On nature?

Assignments

1. Read *Who Owns Nature? Corporate Power and the Final Frontier in the Commodification of Life*, a report prepared by the Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC). (The report can be found at <http://www.etcgroup.org/en/node/707>).

Write a response paper 1) summarizing the report's primary focus and findings, and 2) evaluating how all of this lines up with Bollier's analysis of the enclosure of nature.

2. Research the 1872 Mining Act. Detail your findings in a research paper. Make sure to answer the following questions: What is the stated purpose of the 1872 Mining Act? Who signed it? What were the factors at the time that led to the creation of the Act?

In addition, David Bollier claims that this Act has cost American taxpayers billions of dollars. Does your research match up with his claim? If so, give examples of how the Act has resulted in the loss of so much money for taxpayers. If not, according to your research, what *has* been the result of the Act?

Chapter 5 | ENCLOSING CULTURE & KNOWLEDGE (10:33)

Key Points

- Culture may be more abstract than land, but it is no less fundamental to human existence, and no less profitable to corporations.
- One of the primary disseminators of modern culture – the broadcast airwaves – are in reality a gift of nature and therefore belong to all of us.
- Nevertheless, Congress decided to give licenses to corporate broadcasters, allowing them to use the public airwaves for free.
- In return, Congress said that a portion of their programming had to serve the public interest, leading Bollier to observe that “if you take from the commons, you should give back to the commons.”
- Under President Reagan and, later, President Clinton in the 1980s and 90s, deregulation struck down government policies designed to protect the public from excessive corporate control and domination of the public airwaves.
- A similar battle has emerged over control of another vital public information resource: the Internet.
- Those arguing for an open Internet refer to “net neutrality” – the principle that all Internet users should have equal and open access to content on the web, unhindered by Internet service providers or government agencies.
- Over the past few years, copyright laws have gotten stricter as sharing and pirating have cut into music and movie industry profits.
- In 2009, Prince’s record label sued a woman for posting a video of her kid dancing on YouTube because a Prince song was playing in the background.
- In 1996, the Girl Scouts and hundreds of summer camps were sued by ASCAP, a music licensing body, for singing copyrighted songs like “Puff the Magic Dragon” around the campfire.
- Universities are increasingly turning to private corporations for funding of their scientific research – leading to concerns that results could be suppressed if they stand to embarrass or threaten the profits of their corporate sponsors.
- Even though most pharmaceutical drugs are researched and developed with taxpayer money, drug companies are allowed to patent these drugs and to turn around and charge the public high prices for them, reaping huge profits.

- Like copyright law, trademark law has become more and more restrictive, reaching the point where corporations like McDonald's have tried to stop companies from using the prefix "Mc" in their names.
- These corporate crackdowns are at odds with a fundamental fact about creativity: that it has always required sharing, imitation, and collaboration, especially true throughout the history of American art and music.
- Folk legend Woody Guthrie, who wrote and sang "This Land Is Your Land," openly acknowledged that his music was built on the work of others, and encouraged others to do the same with his.

Discussion Questions

1. Define culture. Why is culture important to human existence?
2. How and why are the broadcast airwaves relevant to culture?
3. Why did Congress decide to issue licenses to broadcasters to allow them to use the public airwaves? How much did they charge broadcasters for the right to use the airwaves? What was the condition broadcasters had to adhere to in order to use these airwaves for this cost? How did it turn out?
4. What is "net neutrality"? Why has this issue been so prominent lately? What's been happening to make it important?
5. How does the struggle for net neutrality compare to battles over control of television and the public airwaves? What's your take on these battles? Do you think it's smart that we've given so much power to corporations to do whatever they want with airwaves that belong to us?
6. Why did ASCAP sue the Girl Scouts and hundreds of summer camps? What do you think of this? Did ASAP have a point? Or do you think it set a bad precedent?
7. What are some of the possible negative effects of private companies funding research at public universities?
8. How does federally funded research benefit drug companies? Do you think it's fair that even though taxpayers fund drug research, all the profits go to the drug companies?
9. Why does Bollier say that trademark law has "gotten out of hand"? What are some of the specific examples he cites?
10. Can you think of examples in American music and art where sharing, imitating, and collaborating often occur? What's the cultural benefit of this kind of sharing? How do you think we should balance the need for this kind of openness and sharing and imitation and sampling with the need to protect our work from being plagiarized, ripped off, and exploited?

Assignments

1. Break into a group. Then together prepare an argument for or against ONE of the following propositions:
 - a. McDonald's should be able to stop other businesses from being able to use the "Mc" prefix. For instance, a sushi restaurant owner should not be able to name their "McSushi" and a hotel chain should not legally be allowed to be named "McSleep" because these names infringe on the trademark protected rights of McDonald's.
 - b. Trademark law should legally prevent and prohibit artists from displaying images of Barbie that might embarrass Mattel, the manufacturers of Barbie dolls.
 - c. YouTube users should be prohibited from using copyrighted music in their videos even if it is in the background – as when a woman posted a video of her infant daughter dancing to a Prince song.

Your group's job is to make the best case you can either for or against this proposition. Regardless which side you are on, make sure to incorporate whether these examples fit or do not fit within the creative freedoms laid out in the Fair Use clause of the Copyright Act of 1976. As you make your case either way, consider what David Bollier says about Ben Franklin and Woody Guthrie in the film – how they regularly borrowed and re-used the work of others.

2. Research Woody Guthrie's song "This Land Is Your Land." Write a research paper answering the following questions: Where did Guthrie get the inspiration for the melody? Did he borrow from other songs? If so, how does this square with what the film says about the principles of the commons?

After summarizing your answers to these questions, track down all of the known lyrics to the song, including the lesser-known verses regarding private property. How do you think these lyrics relate to some of the main themes of this film?

3. You're a reporter for your school's paper. Your editor gives you the following assignment: "Write a column about how the replication and repetition of iconic images in Andy Warhol's work is in line with the idea and ideal of the commons – and why this is important to remember in today's world." Make sure to make connections to the contemporary art and music scene, and to talk about how Warhol's attitude toward art and culture might have something important to say to us today.

Chapter 6 | RECLAIMING THE COMMONS (8:42)

Key Points

- According to Bollier, a new global movement to reclaim and protect the commons is gaining power around the world.
- This movement includes campaigns to protect the Internet, strike down patents on human genes, stop corporate marketing in schools, build local food systems, and protect our oceans from over-fishing.
- The practical approach, and concrete results, of these campaigns fly in the face of the longstanding argument that the idea of the commons is nice in theory, but naïve and unworkable in practice.
- This criticism of the commons as naïve has its roots in the work of Garret Hardin, whose influential essay “The Tragedy of the Commons” argued that the commons always ends up being over-exploited by self-interested individuals.
- Bollier argues that Hardin is not really describing a commons, but a free-for-all where there are no rules or boundaries.
- In 2009, Indiana University professor Elinor Ostrom became the first woman to win a Nobel Prize in Economics for showing, in direct opposition to Hardin, how communities can self-organize to manage forests, irrigation water, fisheries, wild game, and other resources as commons.
- The Internet has proven to be an especially productive commons, meeting people’s needs in new and vital ways with new models that run the gamut from open-access journals and OpenCourseWare to Wikis such as Wikipedia and Wikileaks.
- The commons movement is nothing if not international, a global force led by such organizations as The World Social Forum, the Peer to Peer Foundation in Asia, the Heinrich Boll Foundation in Germany, Pachamama in Latin America, the Solidarity Economy Movement in Brazil, and the International Association for the Study of the Commons.
- Ultimately, according to Bollier, if we’re going to solve the multiple and interconnected environmental, political, social, cultural, and spiritual crises we now face, we need to recognize, protect, and build on our common wealth and heritage.

Questions for Discussion & Writing

1. At the start of the concluding section, Bollier quotes the great American engineer and visionary inventor R. Buckminster Fuller as saying, “You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.” What’s the relevance of this quote to the film? What, exactly, do you think Fuller meant?
2. Do you agree with Bollier that the movement to reclaim the commons from market enclosure is putting Fuller’s idea into practice? If so, what stands to become obsolete? What sort of effect do you think that will have?
3. What are some of the campaigns emerging worldwide to reclaim the commons? What are the goals of these campaigns? What’s the common thread that runs through them?
4. In your own words, what was Garret Hardin’s central point in his essay, “The Tragedy of the Commons”? Why did he believe the commons was an idea destined to fail?
5. Bollier argues that the main reason Hardin got the commons wrong was because he wasn’t describing a commons at all – he was describing a “free-for-all.” What do you think Bollier means by this? How would Bollier describe the difference between a commons and a free-for-all?
6. How is the local food movement an example of a new model of the commons? What are some of the goals of the local food movement?
7. Why do you think corporations try to shut down online sharing and collaborations and believe that free programs like GNU/Linux, OpenCourseWare, and Creative Commons represent a threat to their bottom line? Do you think they might be missing how commons like these may actually benefit businesses in the long run?
8. Bollier stresses that while “government certainly has a role in helping the commons,” the commons is not simply another name for “big government.” Explain what you think he’s getting at. How is the concept of the commons different from government ownership of resources? How might the commons, at times, actually pose a threat to government? Can you think of any instances where governments have had to defend themselves from the commons? How about instances where the government has supported the commons?

Assignments

1. Garrett Hardin was one of the 20th century's most vocal critics of the commons. Consider the following statement from Hardin, as seen in *This Land Is Our Land*:

Well, the problem is this. Suppose you have a commons open to everybody – everybody can put his cattle on it. Each person wants to maximize the profits from his herd of cattle. So, of course, he wants to add more and more cattle to his herd. The trouble is that this eventually overloads the commons, destroys the good grasses on it, results in lesser production of beef from the ground. But the loss that's taken by each person is only a fraction of the total loss, whereas the gain from overloading by adding one more animal ... he gets almost all of the gain. So he's trapped in a system that compels him, and all the others, to overload this, each one seeking his own interest.

David Bollier responds by saying that Hardin's argument was wrong "because [he] wasn't really describing a commons; he was describing a free-for-all where there are no rules, no boundaries. In short, no community and no commoners."

With Bollier's critique in mind, write a paper testing Hardin's theory that a commons can never work in reality by applying it to a specific example of the commons today (Wikipedia, for instance). The film provides multiple examples of commons beyond the farm and field example used by Hardin, so how do you think his theory of the commons would relate to something like the Internet, or Social Security, or water, or public libraries, or national parks? In light of your discussion of a concrete example of a commons, does his analysis hold up?

2. Break into groups of three or four. Prepare to represent one side in a debate on the following proposition:

Side A: Wikileaks, and the classified reports it has released, represents a dramatic manifestation of some of the guiding principles of the commons movement. Because transparency is vital to democracy, no government should have secrets, and Wikileaks is in keeping with the kind of investigative journalism and whistleblowing that have long helped assure that democracies remain democratic. As a result, Wikileaks should be vehemently defended and allowed to continue its important work.

Side B: Wikileaks is committing treason against the governments whose secret documents they've illegally released. It has committed treason against the United States. Wikileaks – its staff and its sources – should be prosecuted for their crimes to the full extent of the law.

No matter which side you are on, explain how and why Wikileaks is considered a commons, specifically, before you defend your position on the role this commons should be allowed to play in a free society.