
Universal Basic Income Revisited

Videos:

“What is Universal Basic Income? | Robert Reich”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UqESogRgrYw> (3:39 minutes)

“What a UBI Would Really Do to People...and Our National Debt”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W XtZqu1pPpE> (4:27 minutes)

Guide:

The questions below will help students achieve a better understanding of the arguments made on either side of a contentious topic. Because these questions often touch upon statements made briefly in the videos, we recommend reading the questions before watching each video.

Students are encouraged to take notes during the videos, and it may be helpful for students to break into groups, each taking responsibility for only a few questions, before coming together for discussion.

Analysis Questions:

1. What are the opposing ideas in these two videos?
2. Robert Reich hypothesized about technology advancing to the point where it can do everything, eliminating all paying jobs. Is that a real possibility? Are you concerned about technology replacing all jobs? Why/Why not?
3. John Stossel said that protesters were “right to say ‘people are the economy.’” What does that mean?
4. Robert Reich said: "Even now, we're producing more and more with fewer and fewer people." Is this a bad thing? Why/Why not?
5. John Stossel said he would have stayed in bed all day if he didn't have to make money. Do you feel the same way? Why/Why not?
6. Robert Reich said universal basic income could be "financed out of the profits going to labor-replacing innovations." If labor-replacing innovations were taxed enough to fund universal basic income, how would that impact innovation? Would it encourage it or discourage it? Why?
7. In the Stossel video, we learned about a study of universal basic income. In the study, participants significantly increased the amount of money they spent helping family and friends. If we had actual universal basic income, do you think the result would be the same? Why/Why not?

8. Robert Reich said that universal basic income has historically had support from people on the left and right, quoting Martin Luther King Jr. and Milton Friedman. Why do you think universal basic income has found support on both sides of the political spectrum?
9. The study shown in the Stossel video found that people who received a basic income worked less. Is this a bad thing? Why/Why not?
10. Robert Reich showed that Richard Nixon proposed replacing welfare with a "basic federal minimum" income. Were you surprised to learn that a U.S. president proposed a universal basic income? Why/Why not?
11. In the Stossel video, Conrad Shaw said that universal basic income could replace most welfare spending. Do you think universal basic income would be an improvement over our current welfare system? Why/Why not?
12. Robert Reich said some people think universal basic income is superior to welfare because "a universal basic income doesn't tell people what to spend the assistance on." Why is that significant?
13. In the Stossel video, Jeffrey Miron said that adding more assistance programs would cause a debt crisis, and that "the people who will bear the brunt of that will be people who are poor." Why is that?
14. Overall, what was your reaction to the study shown in the Stossel video? Do you think it's an accurate portrayal of how universal basic income would impact people? Why/Why not?
15. After watching these videos, what do you think would be the biggest positive effect of a universal basic income?
16. After watching these videos, what do you think would be the biggest negative effect of a universal basic income?
17. Did these two videos share any common ground? Were there any points on which they agreed? If so, what were they?
18. Should one of the arguments we heard carry more weight than the other? If so, which one? Why?
19. Did you have an opinion on this topic before watching these videos? If so, what was it? Has your opinion changed? If so, how? What did you learn from these videos that affects your views on this topic?
20. What else would you like to learn about this topic?