

## Let's Talk About It: handling what's happening in our classes – chat insights

Robert Heinse: Part of polarization is the complete lack of interfacing with a common set of facts.

Rebekka Boysen-Taylor: Education in all its forms is political whether we acknowledge it or not. Modeling media literacy skills is essential to support our students to think critically about the news, regardless of political affiliation. I hope in our own disciplines we seek to find authentic space for that as an effort to decrease polarization and increase engagement with one another.

Amanda Moore-Kriwox: The Social Dilemma documentary on Netflix is insightful on how social media plays into polarization.

Holly Wichman: I totally agree that one of the most important things we can do is teach 'media literacy skills.'

Aman McLeod: I teach constitutional law, civil liberties and introduction to American politics. I have been dealing with this issue for years, and I have found some ways to deal with it that seem to work. I challenge students to present the evidence that they have that supports their false beliefs. I assure them that their opinions will never affect their grades by showing them that I don't ask for their political opinions. I want them to have opinions, but they will never be graded on them. I tell them that I can document everything that I am telling them about. For example, I give them a copy of the constitution and the actual judicial opinions that we discuss. I tell them that I want them to know what these documents say, but I don't care what their opinions are about them. When students say false things, I say bring your evidence and match it up with mine and we will see where we are. Teach students the difference between good evidence and bad evidence, teach them to look at different sources with different points of view.

Aaron Johnson: Aman - great point. Share the info and let them own their opinions. I wonder how often in our effort we cross the line of letting them have their opinion. I have been told that students feel more pressured and censored by fellow students than by faculty. They fear being cancelled or looked down upon. I tell them to "be excellent to each other" outside of class, quoting Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure. Yesterday, for example, I said without fear that "JOE BIDEN WON THE ELECTION"

Holly Wichman: I assign debates, where they don't get to pick their side but have to prepare for both.

Aman McLeod: I tell students that learning is a journey that takes courage. You need to have the courage to learn things that might challenge cherished beliefs. But you cannot lose on this journey. If you learn challenging things and evaluate the evidence but don't change your mind, you can have a greater assurance that you were right all along. If you change your mind, you can be happy that you have better information and now know the truth. Either way, you win, but you need to have the courage to go on the journey. We, as faculty, are guides on the journey.

Rebekka Boysen-Taylor: Cancel culture is a serious challenge for our students. I give students time to share their values and aspects of home with each other to build relationships ahead of challenging conversations.

Chelsea Pennick (she/her/hers): I am using the concept of Rogerian communication to describe expectations for discussions - that is, that we must be able to represent the other person's argument to their satisfaction before we can add our own perspective.

Aman McLeod: I always assure students that if they are afraid to ask a question in class, they can ask me privately.

Jason Dominguez: Teach students how to accept the duality in the universe/ity.