

# Supporting Students During the 2020 Election

This resource is designed to help you support your students and encourage productive discourse in your classrooms surrounding the 2020 election.

## Election-focused Educator Drop-in Session and Additional Support

In addition to this written resource, educators are invited to join Graduate Teaching Consultants from the Engaged Teaching Hub on **Monday, November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2020 from 4-5pm (PST)** for an informal drop-in session to collectively brainstorm, as a community of educators, how to best support our students during this tumultuous moment. Please [register here](#).

We will also be holding a post-election workshop in November on addressing microaggressions in your classroom. Further details will be sent out shortly. Please [click here](#) to join the Engaged Teaching Hub's listservs and receive more information. To request a one-on-one consultation with a teaching consultant to discuss your specific context, questions, or concerns, please [click here](#).

## Four Ways to Support Students Surrounding the Election

- *Be mindful about activities on election day*  
Be mindful about any class activities you might have planned on days leading up to the election and post-election. Some flexibility regarding attendance can ensure that your students have an opportunity to vote, as well as time to process the outcome of the election.
- *Consider flexibility in assignment due dates*  
The outcome of the election will likely affect students in different ways, and some may experience more stress than others, particularly students who are directly impacted by the political discourse surrounding issues of racism, immigration policy, or responses to the pandemic. Where possible, being flexible with due dates communicates to students that you care about their well-being and can allow them to put their best efforts into your course.
- *Acknowledge the impact of national events on learning and consider creating opportunities for connection*  
Acknowledging that the election, and other stressful current events, might impact student's ability to focus on learning can affirm your support for them as individuals and as learners. If you feel comfortable doing so, creating opportunities for students to connect - via a discussion board post, group office hours, or in Zoom breakout rooms -



can provide a venue for sharing their experiences and supporting one another. Instructors might also consider seeking anonymous feedback via Zoom polls or Canvas surveys, checking in with students via email, or inviting students to share feedback during office hours about what kind of support might be most helpful to allow them to continue their learning during this time.

- *Connect students with campus resources for support and dialogue*  
There are a number of organizations and services on campus that offer both academic and personal support to students, and many are organizing specific election-related programming. Instructors can encourage students to attend one of the many current and ongoing Triton [community election activities and events](#). Additionally, instructors are invited to share this [short list of student services](#).

## Creating opportunities for students to learn about and participate in the election

If your course or discipline addresses topics related to the election, you might consider providing opportunities for students to connect your course content to these topics, both to enrich their learning in your course, and to become more informed about issues they might be voting on. Framing these opportunities as an option within an existing assignment, or an optional assignment, will help ensure that students can choose to engage in a way that will not add additional stress. For further guidance on political advocacy and freedom of expression on campus, please [click here](#) to read UC system legal guidelines on political activities and [click here](#) for UC San Diego's website on freedom of expression.

Instructors might also consider connecting students with information about how they can take part in democratic processes through voting. The following are ways that instructors can encourage students to vote, if they are eligible:

- 1) Remind your students about the general election on November 3<sup>rd</sup>. If they missed the voter registration deadline, let them know that they can still [register conditionally until election day](#) in California.
- 2) Encourage them to turn in their mail-in ballots at one of the many [drop-off locations](#).
- 3) Help students [find their polling place](#) if voting in person.
- 4) Encourage them to [track their ballot](#).

## Resources to facilitate dialogue in the classroom

Whether as part of a planned discussion, or a spontaneous conversation in class, discussions surrounding the election have the potential to raise strong emotions. Helping students navigate these discussions in respectful and productive ways can lead to powerful moments of learning, but can also present complexities in facilitation. Research suggests that there has been an



increase in student anxiety, polarization, incivility, and hostility in educational spaces in recent years (Rogers 2017). There is a chance that you may experience incivility in your classrooms as the election draws nearer, and there is some evidence to suggest that online learning environments may encourage increased incivility (Campbell, Jones and Lambie 2020). To learn more about responding to incivility in the classroom, read [Addressing Disruptive Behavior in the Classroom](#) or [Conflict Resolution Strategies to Keep at Hand](#).

Instructors may want to be especially aware of microaggressions in their classrooms as the election approaches. Racial microaggressions are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color” (Sue et al. 2007). The 2020 election has placed many sensitive issues, including racial bias and discrimination in the criminal justice system, front and center, and students might feel more comfortable using microaggressions in remote classrooms (Ortega, Andruczyk and Marquart 2018). It is important for instructors to recognize and respond to these incidents to maintain a supportive learning environment for all students. To learn more about microaggressions in remote teaching environments, click here to view [Responding to Racial Microaggressions in Remote Classrooms with R.A.V.E.N.](#), a webinar delivered by Dr. Frank Harris III and Dr. J. Luke Wood. The Teaching + Learning Commons is here to support you in these efforts, and we invite you to email [engagedteaching@ucsd.edu](mailto:engagedteaching@ucsd.edu) or request an [individual teaching consultation](#).

## References

- Campbell, L.O., Jones, J.T. & Lambie, G.W. (2020). Online academic incivility among adult learners. *Adult Learning*, 31(3), 109-119.
- Harris, F. & Wood, J.L. (2020). Responding to racial bias and microaggressions in the online environment. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9cEWQJ32nqU>
- Ortega, A., Andruczyk, M. & Marquart, M. (2018). Addressing microaggressions and acts of oppression within online classrooms by utilizing principles of transformative learning and liberatory education. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work*, 27(1), 1-13.
- Rogers, J. (2017). Teaching and learning in the age of Trump: Increasing Stress and Hostility in America’s High Schools. UCLA’s Institute for Democracy, Education, and Access. [https://www.fcis.org/uploaded/Data\\_Reports/Teaching - Learning in the Age of Trump.pdf](https://www.fcis.org/uploaded/Data_Reports/Teaching_-_Learning_in_the_Age_of_Trump.pdf)
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