

Provost's Teaching Academy's Faculty Forum on the Teaching and the Election

These brainstormed ideas were generated at the Provost's Teaching Academy Fall Gathering October 22, 2020. They are offered here as illustrations of some of the principles in [TEP's Teaching and the Election](#) post; each heading below corresponds to a heading in the post. We hope that the principles and ideas found in each of these support you in your planning, and we invite you to contact TEP if we can provide support in implementing any of these ideas.

Communicating care: instructors are already providing significant care to students. Here our emphasis is not on an increase in the level of care, but in *how we directly communicate that care*. In addition to the strategies and ideas in the TEP blog post, faculty brainstormed the following ideas:

- *Explicitly express care for all students. Acknowledge that regardless of views, this is a challenging time. Key messages include:*
 - I see and value each of you.
 - Well-being matters; self-awareness and self-management are also professional skills. We can engage this message through metacognition activities.
 - I can be flexible to accommodate your needs. We can proactively share any flexibility so students don't need to individually request it.
 - You are supported. We can share UO resources and elicit anonymous feedback around what students need more information about or help with.
 - Resources to post might include specific [Counseling Services](#), such as individual, drop-in, or other sessions; ["Duck Life"](#) and ["Student Support"](#) pages. Pay particular attention to supports for students of color and international students who may be experiencing higher, and multiple, levels of stressors right now.
 - Anonymous survey and feedback might make resource needs students have visible, particularly for students in higher-precarity situations who may want additional referrals
- *Create a module in Canvas on self-care with resources for students. Consider inviting students to include some of their own. Examples to watch include Alicia Garza's ["Radical Self-Care"](#) (6 min.) and Angela Davis' ["Radical Self-Care"](#) (5 min). Examples to read include ["True Self Care is Not About You"](#) and ["The Unspoken Complexity of Self-Care."](#) and [this quote](#) by Audre Lorde.*
- *Invite them to join you in self-care where voluntary and appropriate. One faculty member is hosting a weekly meditation hour with students.*
- *Check-in with students and take the temperature of the class. This can give students a space to note how they are in the moment, such as choosing a word or an emoji*
- *Make conversations about stress, anxiety, balance, and self-care a normalized part of class discussion.*

Connecting students as peers. This past June, nearly four thousand UO students took the national [Student Experience in the Research University survey](#), which asked them about obstacles to their remote learning. The second most commonly cited (by 68% of UO respondents) obstacle was a lack of interaction and communication with their peers in class. Peer-to-peer connection is key to supporting significant learning experiences; it is also a key coping strategy. In addition to the many strategies in the TEP blog post, Teaching Academy participants noted faculty could:

- *Offer intentional opportunities to connect outside of class* to discuss issues and results of the election with peers and colleagues.
- *Plan a fun social event after class following election* to help students connect around self-care, building community and resilience.

You may also choose to ask students in an anonymous survey what kind of engagement around the election they would want. If you do facilitate more a more personal social experience, we encourage you to make multiple methods of engaging possible (writing or talking, for example), and to help students identify a specific goal and structure they'd like to have for this social engagement.

Self-connection through reflection/metacognition. We know metacognition is a powerful tool to help learning “stick” – metacognitive activities can connect to course content, as well as to the intersection of course content and the election. Metacognition also offers opportunities to have students participate in [three types of coping strategies that increase self-efficacy](#): planning, support-seeking, and reframing. TEP’s blog post offers detailed suggestions for prompts and vehicles for reflection. In addition to these, faculty planned on:

- *Inviting students to reflect ahead of the election* on what they might need (see examples of questions in post)
- *Giving students space to share hopes and fears* (see examples of questions in post)
- *Assigning a written reflection* on how learning will be affected by election. Students reflect on their own systems of support and how those impact their learning; could turn into a wordcloud/slide with quotes to share back to class (if generating something from the group, make it opt-in for students).

Connecting to disciplinary practice. Key course topics may include issues at stake in the election, and candidates’ positions on these issues might provide illustrative case studies or scenarios for analysis. There may be certain policy decisions that result from the election that will influence the future direction of your discipline. It may even be important to you to foster skills of democratic participation. The TEP post identifies ways to integrate this broadly, and Teaching Academy faculty brainstormed some additionally specific ways they might do this in their classes, including:

- Using the distance that the class/subject matter provides to discuss parallels with current times/topics.
- Using a critical thinking and research focus to discuss how we think about evidence and news. This might include focus on fact checking strategies like lateral reading. UO Libraries have a great guide for students [here](#) and a [lesson plan](#) that fits their framework. Do [contact our excellent library faculty for support](#)—they are our experts in this and are already doing this work with students.
- Using reflection questions for in-class discussions and/or assignments that help students to construct meaning between their experience in their current context and the course content. They will make connections we may not.
- In Environmental Studies courses can explore pathways towards making a difference. Introduce different ways for students to engage with politics and governance.
- In Political Geography, explore how the electoral map became the way it is; explore the impact of the electoral college and the original arguments for and against it; use discussion structures like [the Structured Academic Controversy](#) to complicate our analysis as individuals and at a systems level.
- In Dance, could view a video of an historic (60's) dance of political protest and compare with protest dances today.
- In writing courses, can bring in current events from the newspaper to generate a writing prompt.
- In cross-disciplinary courses, introduce possibilities of different futures that ignite hope; invite students to draw from their disciplines to provide examples of this future-thinking or freedom dreaming. For example, could explore Afro-futurism—a popular cross-disciplinary social, artistic, and political movement centering people from the African diaspora and focused on the future and world-making.

The Teaching Academy noted that making these connections may mean letting go of some planned course content, and that doing so may be in service of deeper student learning.

Connecting to community through action and creativity. Many people respond to stress or feelings of powerlessness by engaging in action that aims to make a constructive difference or pursuing creative endeavors that influence others to imagine different possibilities or future alternatives. Many students already are engaged in work that is rooted in their values and their vision of what the world could be. In addition to the ideas highlighted in the TEP blog, additional ideas for facilitating connection (and sharing existing connections) to community,

faculty might have students draft a letter to the editor or pen a first-person report for the Daily Emerald, Register-Guard, or other publication.

In addition to these ideas for demonstrating care and facilitating connection, Teaching Academy members highlighted the importance of:

- Asking students to set up and agree to set of ground rules for discussion after the election (see “Student to student connection” in the *Teaching and the Election* post and Section 5 of [Teaching in Turbulent Times](#) for details)
- Considering changing the original course plans to make room for more immediate concerns.
- Cutting as needed to lighten the load (for you as well as for your students).
- Demonstrating empathy for the challenges of working during this tough moment.
- Being vulnerable by sharing some of your own challenges/concerns where it feels appropriate and does not ask more of your students.