

Dealing with Hot Moments in the Classroom

Tips for Dealing with Hot Moments in the Classroom: Anticipating the Moments

- Be transparent about the nature of the course material overall (topics and essential questions) in the syllabus and tag sensitive content as you journey with your students in the course across weekly modules and daily content.
- Share your story as you journeyed with Political Science over time as a student, how you navigated some of the more challenging content, positive ways in which you engaged with fellow students, and how this helped you grow academically, personally, and civically.
- Devote time to co-constructing community agreements.
- Devote time to low stakes group exercises/discussion to build community.
- Employ trigger warnings and/or content tags as necessary.
- Model and provide print/video examples of healthy dialogue techniques, e.g., focusing on issues not the person, presenting and evaluating evidence, inviting and listening to new evidence, making I-statements versus you-statements). Have students reflect upon and debrief what they are seeing and hearing and offer opportunities for practice.
- Refer to community agreements as you frame potentially controversial discussion topics.

Selected Tips for Dealing with Hot Moments in the Classroom: Dealing with the Emergent In-Class 1

- Acknowledge the tension, take a moment to decide when and how, and to what extent you will address it immediately with the class, speak later with individuals directly involved, or in the next class session. Be transparent with the students about your thinking on next steps/path forward.
- Refer to classroom agreements to guide the learning community in processing the moment.
- If appropriate, seek to clarify the comment that led to tension (e.g., some comments may come from students' challenges with understanding certain concepts).

- Provide common understandings: Discuss facts and questions relating to concepts around which the tense moments emerged. Facilitate students in sorting information around the issue (s), (e.g., using “what we know,” “what is disputed,” “what we want/need to know more about”) and acknowledge how challenging it can be to make such distinctions and to work through differences between personal opinions, assertions, evidence, et cetera.
- Give students a moment to write their thoughts down before engaging in group discussion. You can collect these anonymous writings to help you plan for the next class discussion.
- Facilitate class dialogue on the topic/issue, emerging class dynamics, encouraging students to share their thoughts and to respectfully ask colleagues about their perspectives.

Tips for Dealing with Hot Moments in the Classroom: End-of-Class & Post-Class 1

- Talk outside of class with students most directly involved and reaffirm your commitment to supporting their wellbeing and success in the course and to help them process the experience.
- Refer students to counseling support resources as needed.
- Connect with your own support as needed.
- Consider how you will approach the next class session in terms of temperature checks (how students are feeling, what they have learned that can help them approach the next class discussion).

1 Adapted from “Hot Moments,” Literature, Sciences and Arts Inclusive Teaching, University of Michigan Ann Arbor.