

Discussing Controversial Issues in the Classroom

Part II



INSTRUCTOR CHALLENGES

- Current topics don't intersect with course content
- Not having the right language/vocabulary
- Preventing circumstances where students with marginalized identities perform emotional labor to educate their privileged peers

STUDENT CHALLENGES

- Our lived experiences are invalidated / ignored in a class
- Issues that matter to us are not addressed in a sensitive manner
- Not feeling safe/seen/included in a class

Consider each challenge listed and explain what does it mean, what does it look like, how can we avoid creating these challenges?

Are there other challenges you see that are not listed?

Sample Scenario

What would be some effective strategies for faculty to handle scenarios like these?

What would be some effective strategies for students to handle scenarios like these?

Strategies for Faculty

- Schedule time for discussing contemporary issues
- Anticipate and plan for 'controversial issues'
- Set expectations about classroom culture
- Writing exercises during/after a challenging conversation
- Model cultural humility
- Micro-interventions for calling in and calling out

Strategies for Students

- Listen respectfully; be open to perspectives different from yours
- Commit to learning not debating
- Report problematic behaviors (department chair, college ombuds, etc.)

General Strategies

- Speak from personal experience
- Acknowledge when you do not know/understand something
- Empathetic engagement
- Psychological safety is required for authentic conversations
- Embrace and make room for emotions

Calm yourself

Listen

Acknowledge/
Apologize

Inquire

Move forward



Identify *one thing* you can do to participate effectively in discussions about controversial issues.
