ACT to Sustain Learning Through Current Events

Stanford continues to navigate multiple sources of uncertainty, including the November 2020 national election. Under these circumstances, how can Stanford instructors ACT to support student learning? The suggestions below are intended to provide a range of ideas that may be adapted to your courses.

ANTICIPATE the need to support students

- Acknowledge during class and in written communication that students and TAs might be struggling to focus on their work, that this is understandable, and you want to help them succeed in your course.

- Provide students with helpful resources about voting procedures and well-being, and from units offering student support.

- Give examples of how you are prepared to work with students and their needs without expecting or requesting details of their situations, e.g.:
  - providing extensions
  - including options to revise and resubmit
  - dropping a lowest grade
  - adding review sessions
  - revisiting class material at a later date

- If you anticipate disruption to your own ability to teach effectively, consider some of the following:
  - utilize BeWell resources such as fireside chats
  - develop a personalized menu of self-care strategies guided by Vaden
  - schedule support from campus professionals at the Faculty Staff Help Center
  - prepare back-up asynchronous content, such as videos and activities

CREATE SPACE for students to process their reactions

OPEN

- Build in optional and ungraded opportunities for students to free-write/journal on what they are thinking and feeling around the election, and holistically assess their well-being.

- Take quick surveys or use anonymous Zoom polls to get feedback from students on how they are doing, especially around election events. Familiarize yourself with signs of student distress and steps you can take to help.

- During election week (week of Nov. 2), hold optional classes to provide them with a supportive community and alternatives to obtaining course materials and making up work. If you don't hear from students, contact Stanford staff who will follow up with them.

- If you devote class time to discuss the election, create class norms around how all of you will interact respectfully and productively.

- On Election Day (Nov. 3), consider supporting student civic engagement and reflection by:
  - canceling scheduled class/section meetings
  - recording lectures for students to view later
  - adjusting assignments, as possible

- Ensure that your teaching remains non-partisan and that your individual political views are not brought into the classroom (see Stanford AdminGuide 1.5.1).

TIE current events to course learning

- If possible, use the 2020 election as an example or case study.

- Connect content covered in the course to issues addressed by candidates. For instance,. the methods and contestation of scientific claims, economic growth and recession, the science of COVID-19 and/or other viruses, etc.

- Connect skills students are learning in your course with skills relevant to the election and political office, e.g., argumentation, ethical decision-making, shaping policy, interpreting statistics and scientific studies, predicting from economic models, etc.

- Connect habits of mind/affect students are developing in your course with those relevant to the election, e.g. authentic listening, receptivity to new ideas, seeking evidence for claims, anticipating challenges, respect and value for others' perspectives, developing empathy, etc.

For more information, see the full version of this resource.