

POLITICAL SCIENCE EDUCATOR

A Newsletter of the Political Science Education Section of the American Political Science Association

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MESSAGE FROM THE SECTION PRESIDENT

As I enter my second year of leading the Political Science Education section, I hope everyone had happy holidays and wish you a peaceful and joyous new year. It was so exciting to see so many of you in Los Angeles for the annual meeting.

In my column for this year, I want to do two things. First, I would like to congratulate each of the section award winners. This is always the most enjoyable part of the business meeting because we can celebrate the accomplishments of our friends and colleagues. Please join me in congratulating each of the following for their important work and service.

- The Craig T. Brians Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research & Mentoring went to **Andrew Porwancher**, Arizona State University (formerly University of Oklahoma)
- The Best APSA Conference Paper went to **Chelsea Kaufman**, Wingate University, for "From Global to Local: Service-Learning in a Comparative Politics Course."
- The Distinguished Service Award went to **Mitchell Brown**, Auburn University.
- The Lifetime Achievement Award went to **Terry Gilmour**, Midlands College.

Many thanks to the award committees for their thoughtfulness and care in selecting the awardees.

Second, I want to take this column in a slightly new direction by asking the section to consider a problem, in the hopes of starting a dialogue. The problem is the rise of two trends in the undergraduate students we serve, which I think are interrelated. (It may also be affecting graduate students, but I am at a liberal arts institution without graduate students in my department.) At my institution, and my conversations with others suggest that my institution is not unique, the first trend that I see is that significantly more students are receiving accommodations from support services than before including new accommodations that seem unusual. The second trend is that students are far less prepared for the classroom than before.

In the first trend, I am seeing as many as one-fourth of my students with some sort of accommodations. Most are the typical support of extended time or using the testing center for exams, using a computer for notes, or having a snack available. However, for the first time, we are seeing accommodations that direct us not to ask the students questions in class, to call on them, or to require them to make presentations. I am concerned that by not requiring students to engage openly and publicly with peers, engage in quick, logical responses to questions, or to present their work to the class we will limit the students' success later in the clichéd real world. Of course, I acknowledge that anxiety is real and is a powerful force for students. My own strategies for this have been to focus more on open-ended questions allowing students to self-select to answer and to use one-on-one presentations. Is there a better way to address the student needs? How can we work with students to meet their social and emotional needs while also providing them with the necessary skills to navigate jobs and careers in the future?

In the second trend, a recent article in *Insider Higher Ed* asks if "Generation P" is ready for college (Knox 2023). While this is an important question, I want to know if we are ready for Generation P. My colleagues and I are seeing that students are

less prepared for class, often do not read the required material or do not read it critically, need more and more scaffolding of assignments, and do not want to engage in class by asking questions or working in small groups, among other similar problems. My own observations, corroborated by others (e.g., Sparks 2022), suggests that these problems relate to hybrid-learning during the pandemic. Students lost significant ground in reading, writing, science, and math. Equally important, students seem to know that they lost ground and are less prepared, so they are not as engaged. Students are facing decreased performance in courses where hands-on learning or in-person interaction. Moreover, online learning seems to have led to decreased engagement and motivation. Students are challenged by in-person interactions and active learning environments. Finally, students seem to be challenged more by time management, leading to missed deadlines and incomplete assignments.

To me, these two trends are related. COVID seems to have brought a significant change to students both academically and emotionally. Anxiety levels are high, and preparedness is low. How do we, as college professors, manage our expectations in class? How do we maintain the rigor in our classrooms? How do we create assignments, activities, or other learning opportunities with the challenges we are facing? How do we provide the resources to students to succeed? For my classes, I have always offered differentiated instruction incorporating different modalities (e.g., lectures, group work, flipped classroom, and active learning games or simulations) to keep students focused and learning. This has proved to be critical with the COVID slide though sometimes these strategies run into difficulties with student accommodations. I have also provided significantly more scaffolding of assignments with very explicit instructions for each component. Equally important, I have found that more frequent check-ins on prior learning is essential. Lastly, I have found that I need to also teach students metacognitive strategies for success including time management, note taking, organization, and study skills to help them manage their workload and learning effectively.

This is an important problem that we need to solve collectively. Where better to do the work in our discipline than in the Political Science Education section? The question now is, where and how do we have these conversations and learn from one another? I look forward to having these discussions over the next year. I think a virtual teaching and learning symposium coordinated by the PSE section and APSA Teaching and Learning on these issues may be useful.

Best Wishes,

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The Teacher Scholar

CIVIL DISCOURSE: HELPING STUDENTS TO BECOME CONVERSATION PARTNERS

By Elizabeth A. Bennion (ebennion@iusb.edu)

I recently received a request from the St. Joe Valley Notre Dame Club to co-present the annual Hesburgh lecture. They asked me to team up with Notre Dame business professor Amanda McKendree to discuss the topic of civil discourse and provide the audience with advice for becoming a better discussion partner. In today's political context, these lessons seem important to share broadly in the political science class, the general education class, and the wider public. I offer these thoughts to encourage my fellow teacher-scholars to formulate their own and to consider the best ways to encourage civil discourse in their own classrooms, campuses, and communities.

What is Civil Discourse?

In defining civil discourse, it is important to explain what it is, and what it isn't. Civil discourse requires civil conversation. Whether in the context of a democratic society or a boardroom, civil discourse requires people to listen to each other, discuss, debate, deliberate, and, in many cases, work collaboratively to determine a course of action. Civil discourse is truthful and productive dialogue; it is about talking *and listening*; and it is each speaker's shared responsibility to make the conversation productive.¹

Civil discourse is not a shouting match, an attempt to dominate the discussion, or a series of *ad hominem* attacks in person or online. It is also not mere politeness, agreeing on everything, or telling people what you think they want to hear to

¹ See the American University web site on civil discourse at <https://www.american.edu/spa/civildiscourse/what-is-civil-discourse.cfm> for more information.

maintain the peace. Civic discourse is about inviting a person, or persons, into a thoughtful dialogue that includes a genuine exchange of ideas. The goal of this dialogue is not agreement, it is a deeper understanding. Such dialogue should not include speaking for others, telling others who they are, or telling others what to think. At its best, civil discourse is a way to gain new understandings, move a conversation forward, and develop new ideas and opportunities for collective action.

Civil discourse can take many forms. It includes *discussion* in which people examine an issue and learn more about each other's views. It includes a formal *debate* in which each side states a specific opening position, supports it, and argues against the opposing view—while focusing on supporting key claims with relevant evidence. When conducted in a civil manner, each of these forms of discourse play an important role in strengthening representative democracy.

Civil discourse can also take the form of *deliberation* in which participants honestly confront different choices and weigh the benefits and trade-offs of each choice. This includes tackling issues that are not easily resolved, such as climate change and immigration policy. To do this, participants must deal head on with disagreement and competing values, listen carefully to differing perspectives, and think carefully about their own values and what compromises they are willing to accept.²

It is important to remember that civil discourse is about inviting people into a conversation. You cannot force a person to engage in civil dialogue. Whether you are acting as a private citizen, employer, political leader, parent, or educator, you must invite others into the conversation while also abiding by mutually agreeable ground rules and comfortable conditions for such conversations to take place.

Why is civil discourse needed?

² For more information about how deliberation differs from other forms of civil discourse, explore the training materials available at the National Issues Forum web site at <https://www.nifi.org>.

The need for civil discourse is clear. Political polarization and negative partisanship pit neighbor against neighbor, creating an environment of distrust and fear that cause people to define those who disagree with them as “threats” to their values and to the nation. Since 2021, a plurality of both Democrats and Republicans have identified members of the other party as a threat to their way of life and reporting that other Americans are the biggest threat to the nation.³ During recent campaign rallies, former President Trump used even stronger language when referring to political opponents, promising to “root out communists, Marxists, fascists and the radical left thugs that live like vermin within the confines of our country” and accusing immigrants of “poisoning the blood of our country.” Historians warn that such dehumanizing language can lead, and be used to justify, to political violence.

The Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI) recently found that 23% of voters, including one-third of Republicans, agreed that “true American patriots may have to resort to violence in order to save our country.” That poll also found that 38% of Americans, including nearly half of Republicans, agree that the U.S. needs a leader who are “willing to break some rules if that is what it takes to set things right.”⁴ When people feel threatened and being “othering” entire groups—whether immigrants or political opponents—it can lead to support for authoritarian regimes that undermine civil rights, civil liberties, and democratic institutions.

It is up to ordinary citizens to interrupt this cycle and change our political culture by recognizing that “we are the ones we are waiting for.”⁵ Together, we can teach and

³ See YouGov/CBS poll results here: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/08/01/democrats-republicans-elections-democracy/>

⁴ See American Values Survey overview here: <https://www.prri.org/research/threats-to-american-democracy-ahead-of-an-unprecedented-presidential-election/>

⁵ This famous phrase, coined by poet June Jordan was sung by Sweet Honey in the Rock and as the title of books by famous author Alice Walker (*We are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: Inner Light in a Time of Darkness*, New York: The New Press/W.W.Norton, 2006) and political philosopher Peter Levine (*We are the Ones We Have Been Waiting For: Civic Renewal in America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

learn the art of civil discourse that allows people to discuss difficult issues, deliberate a range of policy options, talk respectfully across difference, and forge a new—and better—path forward.

We live in a democratic republic defined by an indirect, or representative, democracy in which the people are ultimately supposed to be sovereign. Whether we're talking about families, or workplaces; neighborhood or public policy, people should be involved in thoughtful and ethical decision-making. This requires us to think about what matters most to us and what we really value. Our communities and society benefit when citizens and their elected representatives come together and make collective decisions, especially with tough problems. Such collective decision-making requires thoughtful deliberation. Civil discourse and dialogue is needed to make ethical choices about what we should do, which solutions reflect our individual and collective values, what unintended consequences might result from the choices we make, and what trade-offs we are willing to accept knowing that no solution is perfect.

What challenges must be overcome to promote civil discourse?

According to a 2023 Pew Center national survey, most Americans report feeling angry and exhausted when thinking about politics (Pew Research Center 2023). Many also view members of the opposing political party as more immoral, dishonest, and closed-minded than members of their own party (Pew Research Center 2022). Such beliefs make it difficult to hold meaningful conversations about a shared future.

The fact that sometimes limit, or even prevent, discussions about religion and politics in the workplace means that we don't get much practice talking about these issues. Even when businesses allow such conversations, many people are reluctant to take part.

Outside of work, we tend to be surrounded by others who agree with us also makes practicing civil discourse difficult. Increasingly, Americans live with, live near, date, and marry people who think like they do about politics. A study by political scientist Lynn Vavreck found that parents increasingly frown on interpolitical marriages. In 1958, only one-third of Democrats and one-fourth of Republicans cared if their children married a person from a different political party. By 2016, 60% of Democratic parents and 63% percent of Republican parents disapproved of such marriages (Vavreck 2017).

Of course, there is a lack of highly visible role models in a U.S. Congress that is more ideology divided than at any time in the last 50 years (Kight 2022). Combined with the fact that the nation's top headline-grabbing politician, Donald Trump, has rebranded a lack of civility as a form of honesty. His supporters see this as evidence of being candid, real, and fighting for "ordinary" Americans.⁶ This can make it seem like civility is part of a bygone era.

Notably, however, most Americans are critical of political leaders who focus more on fighting each other than on solving problems. Most Americans (57%) believe that conflicts between Republicans and Democrats receive too much attention, and 78% believe that there is too little focus on important issues facing the country (Pew Research Center 2023).

This means that many Americans recognize that there must be a better way, making room for "ordinary" Americans to lead the way toward a better, more thoughtful, inclusive, and productive, future.

⁶ Research demonstrates that Trump supporters often find Donald Trump trustworthy because they prioritize "belief speaking" (telling people what you think and feel) over "fact speaking" (which relies on the quality and veracity of facts provided). This conception of honesty, which values sincerity over accuracy, is strongly linked to negative emotions. Therefore, criticizing members of the other party can make a politician seem more candid, honest, and sincere to supporters. See Steven Lewandowski and Jana Lasser's 2023 [article](#) in *The Conversation* or read Lasser et. al's 2023 article in *Natural Human Behavior* (volume 7, pp. 2140-2151, <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-023-01691>) for more information.

How can we become better conversation partners?

To be good conversation partners, we must listen to understand. We must recognize on our own situatedness and biases, recognize that history and historical context matters, articulate our values, define our competing “goods” and interests, draw upon our communication skills, find common ground (when possible), and amplify the voices of others (when necessary).

- ***Listen to understand.*** To engage in productive civil dialogue, it is critical to keep an open mind and to listen to what the other person is telling us. Even if our goal is to convince people to change their minds, talking rather than listening will not be persuasive. Treating others as if they should be ashamed for their views or as if they are stupid or gullible will only cause them to become defensive and push back against you (McRaney 2022).

All-too-often, we focus on being understood, rather than trying to understand what the other person is saying. Our focus on getting our point across causes us to listen selectively while thinking about what we are going to say next, the questions we’ll ask, and the points we’ll make. This often includes filtering everything through our own life experiences, thinking about what story we will share or planning what advice we can give. While finding common ground can be important, recentering our own experiences—and thereby making the conversation about us—is no more useful than giving unsolicited advice to a person who was seeking empathy and understanding rather than a solution. It is important to listen closely and to reflect what the other person is saying.

Rather than assuming that we have nothing to learn or that our own thoughts are the only valid ones, we must be open to learning something new, hearing different perspectives, and recognizing that others have the right to think differently than we do. A helpful technique for people to

practice, with their families, neighbors, co-workers, and classmates is to use this formulation:

Step 1: Listen to understand: "What I hear you saying is that you feel _____ about _____."

Step 2: Seek to be understood: "I feel _____ about _____."

When utilizing this technique, it is important to reflect what our conversation partner actually said, not what we assumed they would say, and it is important to talk for ourselves and not to speak for somebody else or a whole group of people. While listening with an open mind can be difficult, it is important to recognize that we do not have to adopt, or even respect, beliefs that seem immoral or wrong to us, but that we should try to understand why others feel differently and to treat others with the same respect with which we wish to be treated.⁷

If a person's speech crosses the line into racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, or other stereotypes, slurs, insults, or threats, it is okay to tell the person that their words are unacceptable, explain why, and ask for more respectful language. If they refuse, it is acceptable to call in the instructor or facilitator, or end the conversation. A civil conversation requires people to accept the invitation to fully consider different views and ideas without disrespecting others who are seeking to listen, understand, and share their ideas. In a classroom situation, instructors should remind people of these ground rules and goals in advance.

It is also important to distinguish between empirical claims about the way the world is and normative claims about the way the world ought to be. If someone makes empirical claims, it can be very useful to ask what evidence

⁷ For more tips visit the Community Dialogue web site at communitydialogue.org.

has informed their opinions. Similarly, we should be ready to provide valid, reliable evidence to support our own empirical claims.

- ***Acknowledge your own situatedness and biases.*** To have an honest and productive conversation, we must recognize, and acknowledge, our own situatedness and bias. All humans are prone to cognitive biases. Confirmation bias is among the strongest and most common of these. We are more likely to readily accept claims that conform to our existing beliefs and worldview (Nickerson 1998). It is important to recognize that we are also all prone to fallacious reasoning. Studying common cognitive biases (yourbias.is⁸) and logical fallacies ([yourfallacy.is](https://yourlogicalfallacyis.com/)⁹) is very useful when preparing to engage in productive conversations with people who do not share your pre-existing opinions and beliefs.
- ***Identify your values and interests.*** Each participant in the conversation should begin by stating their stake in the issues. Why is the issue important to you? How does it affect your life? How does your position on the issue reflect your values? Recognizing that even people with strong reasoning skills and identical evidence may have different values, views, and experiences than we do is critical. We should also not assume that a single policy solution will benefit us all equally, or that any policy comes with all pros and no cons.

Politics is about who gets what, when, and how (Lasswell 1936)—and it is unlikely that our preferred policies will benefit everybody equally. Our own personal history and the history of the groups to which we belong may shape our relationship to politics, public policy, and political actors. We do not all require the same services. We cannot all access the same goods, services, and benefits. Even when we can, this generally was not always the case. And we do not all prioritize or value the same things. When deciding between lower gas taxes or more funding for public transportation, weighing the

⁸ <https://yourbias.is/>

⁹ <https://yourlogicalfallacyis.com/>

benefits of tax cuts for seniors or new funding for pre-school, or determining the new location for a city dump, homeless shelter, hospital, or museum, our own situation and needs will influence our position. The phenomenon of opposing developments in one's own neighborhood or vicinity while not necessarily opposing similar developments elsewhere is so common that it resulted in a widely-used acronym: NIMBY, meaning 'Not in My Backyard'.¹⁰ Pretending that we are entirely selfless and unaffected by our own positionality or self-interest does not allow for honest conversation. It is important to consider that the trade-offs are not the same for every member of a community. Students should be asked to identify their own interests and to compare and contrast those with others in their group—and to the interests of the larger community.

- ***Draw upon your communication skills and, when possible, find common ground.*** While it is important to be honest about our own biases and self-interest and to acknowledge differing backgrounds and opinions, it can also be important to find common ground. This need not mean that we all come to the same conclusion about the best policy or course of action. Perhaps we both loved to make chocolate chip cookies with our grandmothers, or both had seven sisters, or were both raised by a single mom. Finding commonalities as humans can be useful in building the type of relationship necessary to talk about more controversial issues. Finding common ground, practicing empathy, and sharing stories, instead of just facts, are all important ways to build rapport and gain a better understanding of where each conversation partner is coming from; it also makes it more likely that you will be able to find a solution that works for everybody in the group. In classroom situations, any time spent building a sense of community will pay off later when students discuss, debate, and deliberate about controversial issues on which they do not all agree.

¹⁰ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/earth-and-planetary-sciences/not-in-my-back-yard-response>

- ***When necessary, amplify others' voices.*** Sometimes minority viewpoints are overlooked. Conservatives may be reluctant to speak up in a room that they perceive to be full of liberals, and vice versa. Teachers may call on boys more than girls. Women's voices may be ignored in the boardroom. There is empirical evidence supporting all of these patterns. To promote productive civil discourse that maximizes our understanding of the effects of—and tradeoffs involved in—various policies options, it is important to actively listen to all voices—encouraging (without forcing) those who seem reluctant to speak and amplifying the voices of those whose productive ideas are ignored and whose voices seem to go unheard.

What opportunities and resources exist to teach and practice civil discourse?

There are many opportunities to practice civil discourse in our homes and neighborhoods, with family and friends, in our places of employment and worship, and within local civic organizations (e.g. League of Women Voters, Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, VFW Halls, Junior League). However, such experiences can be difficult to cultivate without shared ground rules and trained moderators.

In many ways, the classroom is the ideal place to practice civil discourse. Students can get to know each other before discussing controversial political issues. They can study cognitive biases and logical fallacies to better prepare themselves to separate unsubstantiated assumptions and claims from sound evidence-based arguments. Conversations can be structured by the instructor using best practices to create useful frameworks for discussion, debate, deliberation, role play, storytelling, and other forms of civil civic discourse. You can read more about how I incorporate these things into my Political Controversies course in the Chronicle of Higher Education.¹¹

¹¹ In Najmabad, Shannon. 2017. "How Colleges Can Teach Students to Be Good Citizens." The Chronicle of Higher Education." Jan. 13. Retrieved Dec. 15, 2023 (<https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-colleges-can-teach-students-to-be-good-citizens/>)

Civil conversations can take place in person or online. Contrary to popular belief, and conventional wisdom, Dr. Karin Tamerius, a psychiatrist who's the founder of the website [Smart Politics](https://www.joinsmart.org/)¹²—which teaches people how to communicate more productively and persuasively—considers online platforms one of the most fruitful places for political discourse. The key is to introduce yourself and establish some rapport, while also setting and enforcing boundaries. This can be easier as part of a formal class that uses a monitored Learning Management System (LMS) but can work outside the classroom, too. “We cannot have this conversation if you are going to call me names,” is a perfectly reasonable statement. A reminder is appropriate if boundaries are crossed and muting or blocking people is always an option. While we can invite people into civil discourse, we cannot force them to engage or to follow appropriate rules of engagement.

Fortunately, there are many resources available to college teachers, and community educators, to use when teaching—and promoting—civil civic discourse in our classrooms, online, and in our communities.

1. The [National Issues Forums](https://www.nifi.org/)¹³ Institute provides free issue guides and discussion starter videos, as well as moderating tips and training materials on their website. It is easy to host a National Issue Forum in the classroom, on campus (while incorporating several classes and/or the general public), or online. All necessary training materials and issue guides are provided free online.
2. Caitlin Quattromani and Lauran Arledge's TEDx talk entitled [“How Our Friendships Survives Our Political Differences”](https://www.ted.com/talks/caitlin_quattromani_and_lauran_arledge_how_our_friendship_survives_our_opposing_politics?language=en)¹⁴ provides a relevant example of everyday people learning to bridge the partisan divide. Based on their own discovery of their substantial political differences during the 2016 presidential election, the talk offers specific advice for promoting understanding and maintaining friendships despite deep political disagreements. I required students

¹² <https://www.joinsmart.org/>

¹³ <https://www.nifi.org/>

¹⁴ https://www.ted.com/talks/caitlin_quattromani_and_lauran_arledge_how_our_friendship_survives_our_opposing_politics?language=en

in both in-person and online classes to watch the video and report back on what they learned and what strategies, if any, they've tried to maintain bipartisan relationships.

3. The free websites [yourbias.is](https://www.yourbias.is/)¹⁵ and [yourfallacy.is](https://yourlogicalfallacyis.com/)¹⁶ offer free materials to teach students, or yourself, about logical fallacies and individual biases that clog our thinking and prevent us from logical, evidence-based reasoning and discussions. Understanding our own biases and recognizing common logical fallacies is an important first step to creating the self-awareness and critical thinking skills required to engage in productive conversations about controversial political issues. Students in my political controversies study cognitive biases and logical fallacies for the first half of the semester before we dive into our conversations of controversial political issues.
4. The [Duke University Polarization Lab](https://www.polarizationlab.com/)¹⁷ offers free online resources to help fight polarization by allowing people to measure the strength of their echo chamber, learn what their tweets say about their political ideology, and follow bots that help find conversation partners with views that differ from their own. This can be very instructive to students as they consider the ways in which their own social media habits are shaping their understanding of—and attitudes toward—people with whom they disagree.
5. The [Constructive Dialogue Institute](https://constructivedialogue.org/)¹⁸ offers the “Perspectives” curriculum free online. The six interactive online lessons weave together psychological concepts and practice scenarios. These lessons can be used by groups or individuals. They also offer three peer-to-peer discussion guides and a dashboard to track learners’ progress and quiz scores for instructors who want to assign the lessons as a required part of a graded course. There is some evidence that peer mentors are particularly successful at building on social connections and facilitating active listening and perspective-taking techniques among college students. Peer-to-

¹⁵ <https://www.yourbias.is/>

¹⁶ <https://yourlogicalfallacyis.com/>

¹⁷ <https://www.polarizationlab.com/>

¹⁸ <https://constructivedialogue.org/>

peer interactions can increase students' comfort with political dialogue, including discussions of controversial issues. This appears to be true for both peer-instructors and student-learners as both benefit from practicing the skills required for civil discourse (Garcia and Ulbig 2023).

6. Unify America hosts [The Unify Challenge](#)¹⁹ including online college bowls that match people from different ideological backgrounds for one-on-one guided conversations online. The easy-to-use online platform provides everything participants need to engage in a one-hour guided activity appropriate for extra-curricular, co-curricular, and curricular use. Unify America provides multiple dates for easy scheduling, handles all reminders to participants, and even records which students participated and how many questions they answered for instructors who wish to assign the Challenge for credit.
7. [Resetting the Table](#)²⁰ supports collaborative deliberation across strong differences. In addition to consultation, coaching, and facilitator training, this organization helps communities host a wide variety of programs including MOTH-style²¹ (live, no notes) storytelling events, policy input forums, communication skill-building workshops, facilitated town squares (for "charged" community issues), and multi-vocal (multi-viewpoint) education surrounding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
8. [Braver Angels](#)²² brings Americans together to bridge the partisan divide and strengthen our democratic republic. Organizers are eager to partner with educators across the U.S. and are happy to visit classrooms and conducts training workshops, presentations, and forums across the United States co-facilitated by members from different partisan and ideological backgrounds.

Other useful resources, recommend by my conversation partner, business communications professor Amanda McKendree, include [The Better Arguments](#)

¹⁹ <https://www.unifyamerica.org/unify-challenge>

²⁰ <https://www.resettingthetable.org/>

²¹ <https://themoth.org/about>

²² <https://braverangels.org/>

[Project](#)²³, [The Dialogue Project](#)²⁴, [Civic Health Project](#)²⁵, [Crucial Conversations](#)²⁶, and the Center for Creative Leadership's [5 Steps for Tackling Difficult Conversations](#)²⁷. Each of these should prove useful in setting up a course, workshop, or public deliberation series designed to promote and facilitate the type of civil discourse our nation so desperately needs.

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²³ <https://betterarguments.org/>

²⁴ <https://dialogueproject.fuqua.duke.edu/>

²⁵ <https://www.civichealthproject.org/>

²⁶ <https://cruciallearning.com/browse-courses/crucial-conversations-for-dialogue/>

²⁷ <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/5-steps-for-tackling-tough-conversations/>

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Research Note

TRANSFORMING CIVICS FOR HIGH-NEED STUDENTS BY USING DESIGN-BASED IMPLEMENTATION RESEARCH

*By Diana Owen (owend@georgetown.edu), Donna P. Phillips (phillips@civiced.org),
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The civic mission of schools—providing students with “the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that will prepare them to be competent and responsible citizens through their lives” (Carnegie Corporation of New York and CIRCLE 2003, 4)—has become more challenging in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the increasingly fraught political environment. The disparities in civic education between high-need middle and high school students and their more advantaged counterparts have widened significantly (Kuhfeld, et al. 2020). High-need students are at risk of educational failure, underserved, and in need of special assistance and support. They often receive substandard civic education or are denied opportunities for civic learning entirely.

The James Madison Legacy Project Expansion (JMLPE) is a multi-year (2022-2026) innovative educator professional development (PD) program and curriculum intervention aimed at mitigating these educational disparities. It is funded by a grant from the Education Innovation and Research Program of the U.S. Department of Education. The core goals of the JMLPE are to impart civic and related social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies to multilingual learners (MLs), students with disabilities (SWDs), and students of color (SOC). MLs are students whose native language is not English or who lack proficiency in English (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Among their ranks are refugees, migrants, students with interrupted education, internationally adopted students, and unaccompanied minors. SWDs, as defined under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, are students with “a disability that adversely affects academic performance and are in need of special education and related services” (IDEA, 2018). Students with disabilities have unique learning needs and require specially designed instruction.

The range of disabilities that can affect students' learning ability includes intellectual disabilities, speech or language impairment, hearing impairment, visual impairment, serious emotional disturbance, traumatic brain injury, orthopedic impairments, autism spectrum disorder, and developmental delay. SOC are defined as students who identify as Black or African American, Latine, Chicanx, Asian, South Asian, Pacific Islander (AAPI), Middle Eastern, Native American, and multiracial (Institute of Education Sciences, 2023).

The [Center for Civic Education](#)²⁸ implements the JMLPE, and the [Civic Education Research Lab](#) at Georgetown University is the project evaluator. The Center and its partners have been innovating and disseminating teacher PD and instructional resources for the Center's longstanding We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution (WTP) curricular program to address the needs of MLs, SWDs, and SOC. The WTP program was developed in 1987 and adopted as the principal education program on the U.S. Constitution by the Commission on the Bicentennial of the U.S. Constitution. WTP is grounded in the foundations and institutions of American government and is distinctive for its emphasis on Constitutional principles, the Bill of Rights, and Supreme Court cases, and their relevance to current issues and debates. Over 30 million students and 75,000 educators have participated in WTP. Students take part in a range of learning activities, such as primary document analysis, group projects, debates, democratic simulations, and student speeches. The culminating experience is a series of simulated congressional hearings where student teams testify before a panel of judges who are typically community leaders, government officials, academics, lawyers, judges, and distinguished civic educators. Students research and prepare sets of questions where they demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of constitutional principles and defend their positions on historical and contemporary issues. Middle and high school classes can participate in district, statewide, and national competitions.

²⁸ <https://www.civiced.org/>

It is challenging to design, execute, sustain, and scale powerful and effective learning opportunities for high-need students. Often educators' focus on curriculum innovation and researchers' analyses of what works are siloed when working in tandem would enhance the benefits to teachers and students. The JMLPE offers a blueprint for the development, implementation, and assessment of civic education programs through a cooperative, systematic process. The project employs design-based implementation research (DBIR) where program developers and evaluators work in partnership to solve problems of practice. Four common elements shared by DBIR projects are: "1) a focus on persistent problems of practice from multiple stakeholders' perspectives; 2) a commitment to iterative, collaborative design; 3) a concern with developing theory and knowledge related to both classroom learning and implementation through systematic inquiry; and 4) a concern with developing capacity for sustaining change in systems (Fishman, et al., 143). DBIR reconceptualizes the relationship between research and practice to be a multi-way, recursive experience between innovators who design curriculum and PD programs, implementers who teach the curriculum, and researchers who conduct assessments.

The JMLPE is guided by a theory of change positing that the PD program and adapted WTP curriculum will significantly improve learning outcomes, especially civic knowledge, dispositions, skills, and SEL competencies, among the three student populations. The Center and CERL work collaboratively with educator-experts to develop and assess a curricular model based on WTP. CERL simultaneously conducts research that informs the design and implementation of the PD program and adapted curriculum. The iterative development process incorporates regular feedback from participants and data from CERL's research studies. A central goal of DBIR is to instruct the development of programs that can be scaled up to improve outcomes in a variety of settings. This type of scalability is consistent with the JMLPE's objective of advancing civic outcomes for MLs, SWDs, and SOC by adjusting the WTP curriculum.

During the first phase of the project, the Center and CERL consulted with teacher-experts to identify priorities, educational objectives, pressing needs, best instructional practices, and barriers to curriculum implementation, including pandemic-related obstacles. CERL collected data from 33 middle and high school educators from fourteen states who had experience designing civics curricula and instructing students in the target populations. Teachers responded to an online survey, the results of which were shared during a JMLPE Curriculum Workshop that took place in June of 2022. The teacher-experts identified adapting teaching practices and protocols for student-centered, active learning as a particular challenge. They felt that teachers should make the curriculum accessible and relevant by connecting students' experiences and cultural background to the content and showing the relationship to their daily lives. They recommended providing content knowledge to teachers so that WTP can be accessible to students who have limited prior awareness of the U.S. Constitution, American government, and history. Classroom implementation of WTP should be consistent with Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a flexible approach to teaching and learning that provides all students with an equal opportunity to succeed by finding ways to keep individual students motivated (Stapelton-Corcoran, 2022; Owen and Phillips, 2023).

Informed by the teacher-expert study, Center staff worked closely with classroom teachers and experts in SEL, UDL, culturally responsive pedagogy, and ML instructional best practices on an initial draft of the fifty JMLPE lesson plans. The JMLPE lessons employ inquiry-based learning, a "student-centered teaching method that encourages students to ask questions and investigate real-world problems" (Scholl, 2023). The use of inquiry is an equity strategy where students can have greater agency, voice, and choice. Students can explore sources beyond the text, bring their own perspectives, and consider the views of others. They ask and answer questions to actively engage the curriculum and experience more cultural relevance. The lessons were piloted in classes with teachers instructing high concentrations of the target population students who implemented the adapted WTP materials in their classrooms.

CERL conducted a pilot study in spring of the 2022-23 academic year to assess student outcomes using a quasi-experimental, pretest-posttest survey design. The pilot study indicated that the WTP curriculum intervention resulted in large knowledge increases, especially for SOC and SWDs. The gains were somewhat less pronounced for MLs, suggesting the need to further develop the curriculum to meet their needs, including translated materials. The intentional integration of SEL competencies into the WTP curriculum is an innovation of the JMLPE. The pilot study revealed a need to strongly emphasize SEL competencies and related pedagogies in the lesson plans and PD program. Finally, one-third of students reported that they did not learn about other races and cultures in their WTP class. This finding pointed to a need to integrate more civics content that is historically and culturally relevant to students in the target populations into the curriculum, lesson plans, and pedagogy.

The Center used the evidence from the pilot study to design the teacher PD program that was launched in the summer of 2023 and revise the adapted WTP curriculum which was then taught by the first cohort of JMLPE teachers. CERL has been conducting research on the effectiveness of the PD program for teachers and student outcomes that will inform the Center's implementation of the PD program and curriculum intervention in the next academic year when the next iteration of the DBIR will take place. The JMLPE was instituted in seven states in the 2023-2024 academic year and will expand to a total of twelve states in 2024-2025. The project ultimately will provide fifty-two hours of PD to 400 teachers and reach more than 28,000 students in schools with substantial concentrations of high-need students.

For further information about how to implement this project in your own class or understand its basic utility, please see the [WTP overview document](#)²⁹ or our APSA Annual Meeting paper: Owen, Diana, Donna P. Phillips, and Alissa Irion-Groth. 2023. "Transforming Civics for High-Need Students," paper presented at the Annual

²⁹ <https://civiced.org/pdfs/WethePeopleOverview.pdf>

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USING SCIENCE FICTION AND CREATIVE WRITING IN THE POLITICAL SCIENCE CLASSROOM

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Aside from reading the odd political thriller novel, for many the link between creative writing and political science will seem like a tenuous one. The use of the scientific method (as the name political science obviously implies) means that the study of politics has largely focused on hypothesis testing through qualitative and quantitative approaches - methods outside of that remit might, within this logic, be viewed therefore as illegitimate (Trepanier 2020, 1). However, studying creative writing can teach us a lot about both historic and contemporary understandings of politics and that the application of creative writing exercises can add to political science education. Creative writing can disrupt the norms of students reading journal articles and textbooks.

The capacity for using creative writing as part of my teaching practice has interested me over the last few years. I began integrating it more into my courses. In part, this is made easier as one of my main areas of research and teaching interest is environmental politics – a subject area that demands students engage with a range of “what if” questions about the future, be it ones marked by ambitious environmental action or ones where environmental inaction has devastated the human and non-human world alike. While not exclusive to the subject area, environmental politics is a field where students’ creative imagination is especially useful in engaging with the subject area.

Creative writing has the potential to add excitement to courses by disrupting the established patterns of teaching and learning of university classrooms. Whilst I would disagree with Porritt’s (2005) claim that environmentalism is ‘depressing and dowdy’, it never hurts to try and add vibrancy to a field of study. In fact, this is already happening to some extent within the political sciences. For example, International Relations (IR) has been noted as having taken a contemporary ‘aesthetic turn’, one that has stretched into IR pedagogy and included the use of

creative writing (James 2021). This aesthetic turn is one that already builds on the humanistic approach in IR, one that more squarely focuses on world politics through the lens of individual experiences and values (e.g. Alker 1996).

Commenting on this development, Ramel and Vergonjeanne (2022) emphasize the potential to boost students' hope for the political futures that they envision through engagement with creativity as part of the teaching and learning process.

There are two primary benefits of using creative writing in the political science classroom to deepen student engagement with the subject area. Firstly, the use of fiction anchors discussions around conceptions of environmentalism and different modes of governing the human-environment relationship. Secondly, the use of an in-class creative writing exercise gets students to consider possible environmental futures.

Fiction can shape discussions of political possibilities. Utopias and dystopias can create binaries of future possibilities that illustrate the ills of our present age. Two works, in particular, have been useful reference points in my own environmental politics teaching: Ursula le Guin's *The Dispossessed* and Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia: The Notebooks and Reports of William Weston*. Both lean more towards the utopian than dystopian. They balance portrayals of important "whats ifs" in their fictional accounts of attempts to reset the human-environment relationship. These fictional accounts can, in turn, be used as stark contrasts with contemporary norms, providing the kind of counterfactuals which are key to political science hypothesis testing (Fearon 1991).

Interestingly, Callenbach, the author of *Ecotopia*, made a clear prescription for engaging with potential environmental futures through creativity, arguing that "It is so hard to imagine anything fundamentally different from what we have now... But without these alternate visions, we get stuck on dead center. And we'd better get ready... We need to know where we'd like to go" (Callenbach quoted in Timberg 2008). This framing provides a good introduction to the second way that I see

creative writing as beneficial to the political science classroom - by asking our students themselves to write.

Of course, not every political science student will jump at the chance to write creatively. After all, perhaps there is a reason they chose not to study creative writing at university. However, there is a clear benefit in doing so: One that, if communicated to them, should allay concerns. Especially within environmental politics, there are many parts of contemporary society that are taken for granted and yet are key drivers of environmental destruction (for example, see Moulton 2023 for one specific example of this approach in practice). Challenging students to write fictional accounts of worlds without economic growth or consumerism, for example, gets them to experiment with thinking that otherwise might be limited by ingrained imaginaries.

This is not a practice that needs to be limited to the study of environmental politics. Asking our students to think creatively could provide a new framing on many different situations and issues that we study within the political sciences (for other examples that link science fiction and political science see Weldes 2006). These exercises can provide refreshed thinking and approaches that can enable our students to best engage with the problem of the day.

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REFLECTIONS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF CONFERENCE PANELS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

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I recently attended a smaller, regional political science conference. In addition to workshopping the article version of my dissertation, this was my first year on the job market as a late-stage ABD and I thought that it would be a wise decision to attend. My initial thought was that I could try to network with individuals from local colleges who might be looking for a lecturer or even a tenure-track position. Hopefully, I could make myself known in local circles where I am more likely to obtain a position in an increasingly difficult academic job market. I and two others from my department decided to apply to present our research and were all accepted. However, I was confused when I looked at the conference program to find that everyone from my department was on the same panel. Even more surprising, the three of us were the only members of the panel, with one individual who was serving as discussant and chair. This was, in my mind, disappointing. I was hoping to present my work to others outside of my department to obtain feedback from new perspectives and to meet prospective local collaborators. While disappointing, I still decided to attend if for no other reason than to let this be a low-stakes practice session for the more important conferences that were on the horizon. However, once I attended the conference, my disappointment shifted to frustration when I learned that the individual who was our chair/discussant was also the person who arranged the program. They informed us that they deliberately put us together in a panel to provide feedback on our prospective papers, to offer some advice on our careers, and to show their undergraduate students in attendance what graduate level work looks like. While they did provide each of us some feedback on our papers, the majority of the conversation was relating our work back to their undergraduate students and to offer us unsolicited advice to not strive for an academic job and how we could use our skills to gain employment elsewhere.

I do want to stress that this individual was kind and genuinely wanted to be a supportive mentor. However, there seems to be a mistake here that ties to a larger issue of undervaluing the conference panel experience as if it were a less vital aspect of networking and mentoring graduate students. Considering the importance of the conference panel for graduate students attempting to network, this deserves some discussion. As such, this is meant to be a reflection on the conferences panel experience, its importance to the networking for graduate students, and how we can use our field's conferences to be better mentors.

Conferences are a vital aspect for the graduate student at any level of their career. It helps them broaden their horizons, be exposed to opposing viewpoints, and find individuals to collaborate with on future projects (Turner, Boyes, Bennion, & Newman 2022). The importance of networking cannot be understated for a young scholar to become integrated into an academic community that can offer them opportunities outside of their own little academic bubble (Kim, Lebovits, and Shugars 2021). However, I think that more senior scholars often see presentations as a less important part of the overall conference and place more emphasis on the networking occurring outside of the conference panel itself. What can often be the case is treating the presentation as primarily a feedback opportunity that is a significantly minor part of a much larger networking framework (Fakunle, Dollinger, Alla-Mensah, & Izard 2019). It is true that, more often than not, what is meant to be a forum of workshopping ideas turns into a mostly vacant hotel ballroom with five individuals trying to politely troubleshoot computer issues, with the only substantive payoff potentially being a business card, elevated blood pressure, and some decent suggestions written in a small field notebook. This is most likely the reason why advice for graduate school conference networking involves a wider collection of talking points like recommendations of approaching people at tables, having mentors introduce the enterprising grad student to fellow colleagues, and attending other non-panel events that put a lot of emphasis on footwork and communication (e.g., Gupta & Waismel-Manor 2006; Kim, Lebovits, & Shugars 2021).

However, it does need to be stressed that the conference panel is the only *guaranteed* opportunity a prospective graduate has to reach out to other people outside of their bubble at these conferences. While it may not be a definitive career-making opportunity, to have that lessened does take away a vital opportunity to network. This is especially the case for those who are neurodivergent or introverted, who often struggle to engage in group settings where approaching random individuals in a hotel ballroom can be a near-Herculean task (Zack 2019). Beyond that, there is the face-value benefit that the presentation itself leads to academics hearing about your work who would not have otherwise engaged in the paper that can lead to more opportunities to publish and make connections with fellow scholars (Leon and McQuillin 2020). But more broadly, the conference presentation experience also helps connect graduate students to a broader academic community. It can help them feel less like a mere student and more like the burgeoning scholar that belongs in the room with the others that they have read in their classes (Campbell et al. 2021). Even if the conference panel is a small piece of a much wider conference networking puzzle, it is a much more substantive piece than what is often considered.

Considering the importance of the conference panel for graduate students, I recommend three strategies we can utilize to maximize the potential for graduate students to network and engage specifically in the conference panel experience. First, everyone should keep in mind both horizontal and vertical networking opportunities. As noted, it is important for scholars to not just strengthen their network with other junior scholars but to build relationships with senior scholars as well (Kim, Lebovits, & Shugars 2021). Those that assemble panels should be especially cognizant of this. The optimal panel for a graduate student is a mix of senior and junior scholars from diverse schools and locations. Second, discussants and chairs should remember there is a time and a place for certain discussions. Keep the panel discussion to conversations about the junior scholar's research and provide feedback on their projects. After the panel is concluded, most junior scholars would welcome a continued conversation that provides feedback on career opportunities, potential work outside of academia, and collaboration on future

projects. Third, senior scholars attending conferences and program organizers should not undervalue the panel or the conference if it is not one of the major conferences in the field. It is certainly the case that a panel at a local conference are less likely to drastically change the trajectory of a junior scholar's career. But the smaller local conferences can build those local networks which are more geographically convenient both for employment and cooperation among cohorts (Fisher & Trautner 2022).

This reflection is meant to be an opportunity to educate others to be aware of the role that they play in mentoring graduate students. We should be cognizant of the importance something that is perceived as potentially low-stakes to more senior academics—like a conference panel at a small regional conference—can significantly benefit a junior scholar's career. They may seem small. However, a conference panel is a guaranteed opportunity for the graduate student to put themselves out into the world and to present their thoughts and ideas to those outside of their academic social circles. Even well-intentioned actions meant to mentor can have unintended consequences for those that we are attempting to help.

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STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND CAMPUS INTERVIEWS

By Ryan Gibb (ryan.gibb@bakeru.edu)

Cultivating an engaged public is at least part of the responsibility of university professors. As such, it is necessary to help to connect students with their political environments. Politics is salient in students' lives, but as an academic subject it can be alienating. Rationally, students invest their time in things that interest them (their careers, their relationships, their hobbies). In this way, students are much like adults. However, American Politics in general, and the activities of contemporary political actors in particular, have never been more important.

As a final project, students in my Introductory American Politics course had a civic engagement assignment to illustrate concepts from the semester. Students had the option to 1) investigate the process of petitioning the city for a parade or demonstration, 2) on writing about the process of becoming a US citizen, or 3) conduct person-on-the street interviews with questions culled from the US Naturalization test. Civic learning, similar to service-learning projects, can help students to ground in-class content with their political communities and increase students' sense of personal efficacy (Bardwell 2011, Marcus et al. 1993). While the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning research is limited with regards to campus interviews specifically, civic engagement projects have become a well-established learning tool in political science courses (Bennion and Laughlin 2018).

Each of the options connect well with concepts from the course. However, of the fifteen students in this class, twelve decided on the third option and chose to conduct the interviews. While the first two options resemble many standard assignments, the third (and most popular) option presented a problem and a lesson: are the student participating in human subjects research when interviewing their peers? We had to ask, would this assignment require Internal Review Board (IRB) approval? Ultimately, it did not, but this potential issue provided another topic (ethics in human subjects research) to discuss with students.

Students were eager to ask their peers “gotcha” questions, knowing that the proximate effect would be to embarrass their peers. That indeed happened. However, it is clear that the interviewers in the project, the ones who were in on the joke, were also insecure with their knowledge. I modeled this process after a series called Politically Challenged, a video created by Texas Tech students. Like those videos, students asked their interviewees for their name, age/year at university, and their major. Unlike that series, I used questions from the US Naturalization test and two, updated, questions from popular culture. Students were free to find peers where ever they could on campus, and the results included common areas in the dormitory, the campus union, and even cheer practice. After explaining the purpose of the interview, students asked their peers:

1. How many amendments does the US Constitution have?
2. Who makes federal laws?
3. Name one of your state’s senators
4. How many members of the House of Representatives are there?
5. Who is the chief justice of the Supreme Court?
6. Who is the speaker of the House?
7. Name one of the writers of the Federalist Papers.

The “gotcha” element illustrated when the students were asked to respond to questions about popular culture. In this instance, students were asked

1. Who is Travis Kelce dating?
2. Name a Kardashian

Using iMovie, I compiled video clips using the most usable elements of each interview. Students related that these videos were reminiscent of those that they have seen on TikTok. While better apps or programs likely exist, I used iMovie and published the end results on my private YouTube channel. This privacy gives me an elevated level of control over the viewers and the content, though once something is online it potentially exists somewhere forever.

Students conducting the interviews thanked their subjects and discussed the objectives of their questions. The objective was not to embarrass students. Chief among the objectives was to consider the steps involved in gaining citizenship, and also the factors that lead to alienating citizens. As Courtney Plunk of PoliTech argued in the original Texas Tech version, "this is not a criticism of the school's academics but instead a bold message to college students everywhere to get more involved. We are confident that if we were to conduct this same experiment at any other university in the nation, we would receive the same answers" (2014, 0:21). Plunk correctly identified students, even very passionate students, as "politically challenged" insofar as becoming civically engaged often includes a steep learning curve with little immediate payoffs. For many, this is a hobby. For others, it is a career. However, there is a significant number of students (and citizens) who will remain disengaged. In this project, students shared videos of their interviews, and effect was a practical application of the concepts of an engaged public (or lack thereof) and the alienated American public.

However, there was also a methodological lesson in this exercise: were the interviews human subjects research? Federal Regulations define human subjects research as, "a living individual about whom an investigator conducting research obtains (1) data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or (2) identifiable private information (45 CFR 46.102 (f)(1)(2))." The interviews themselves did not disclose anything personal or illicit, but the subjects were identifiable, and (according to the language of the protocol) they may be subject to an element of shame for not knowing these answers. In class, we discussed ethics and informed consent. We reviewed a researcher's obligation to protect human subjects when conducting research. We also discussed the distinction between generalizing public knowledge and conducting in-class activities. Though this was an introductory class, it was important for students to begin to think about research ethics and how their actions might influence the subjects of their research.

According to the University of Iowa's Human Subjects Office Institutional Review Board, a study is generally exempt for educational purposes or as part of a course-related activity. There are other stipulations, including that the data is not to be used outside of the classroom. It is important, then, to not share the outcomes of the research with campus. It is possible to conduct the same project with IRB approval, and future iterations of this project may involve the university's IRB.

Civic and student engagement projects are not only popular, but evidence suggests that they enhance learning. However, like other course planning, it is necessary to carefully understand the potential implications of these projects.

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COMPARING VARIOUS TECHNOLOGIES TO ENCOURAGE UNDERGRADUATE COURSE PARTICIPATION

By Elizabeth Dorssom (DorssomE@lincolnu.edu)

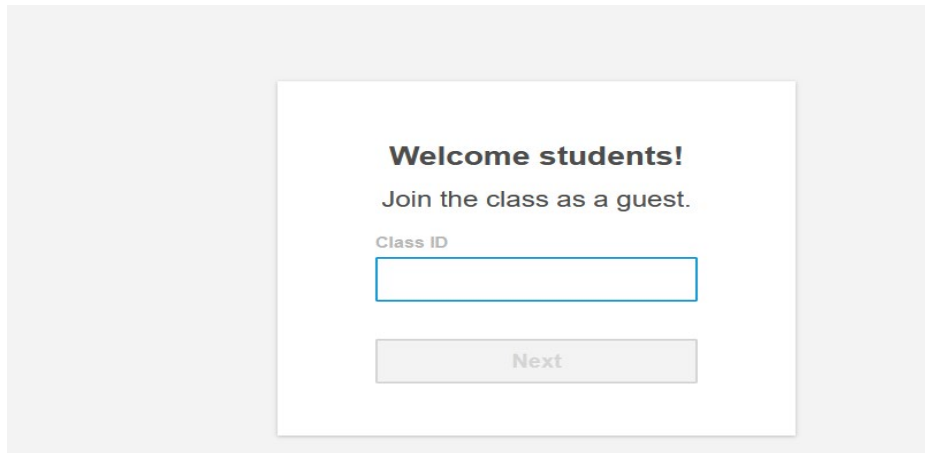
Encouraging course participation among undergraduate students can be one of the most difficult yet rewarding aspects of teaching. There are a variety of reasons that many undergraduate students are less inclined to engage in class discussions including, but not limited to, nervousness to engage, the feeling that their opinions are not as well-developed as their peers and being from a marginalized group (Addy et al. 2021; Aguillon et. al 2020; Benton and Dorssom 2022; Bergquist & Philips 1975; Crawford & McCloud 1990; Dorssom 2023; Lee & McCabe 2021).

This essay compares three technological resources (Lumio, Mentimeter, and Quizizz) that can be used to encourage undergraduate class participation. Each of these programs offers their own benefits and disadvantages so professors should use the program that best suits their instructional needs.

LUMIO

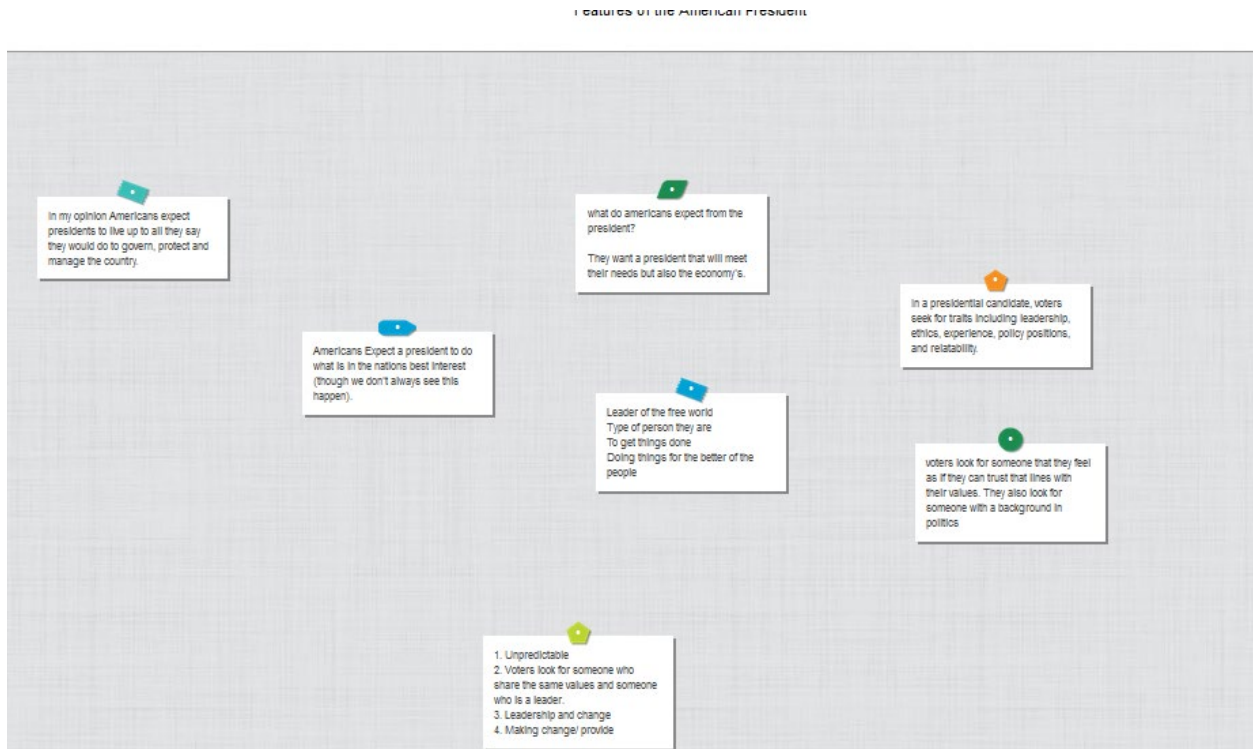
Even though having a SMART Board is a great asset to the classroom, having one is not a requirement to use the online Lumio website (from the same company) and activities, and this software is particularly useful for incorporating technology in the classroom to reinforce learning. Professors need to create an account, but students are not required to create an account to participate. When an instructor creates a Lumio account, they are given a class code that students can use to join Lumio activities via HelloSmart.com. Unlike other commonly used resources Mentimeter and Padlet, this code remains the same, regardless of activity. An example of how students can join an activity on HelloSmart.com is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Student view how to join activity on HelloSmart.com



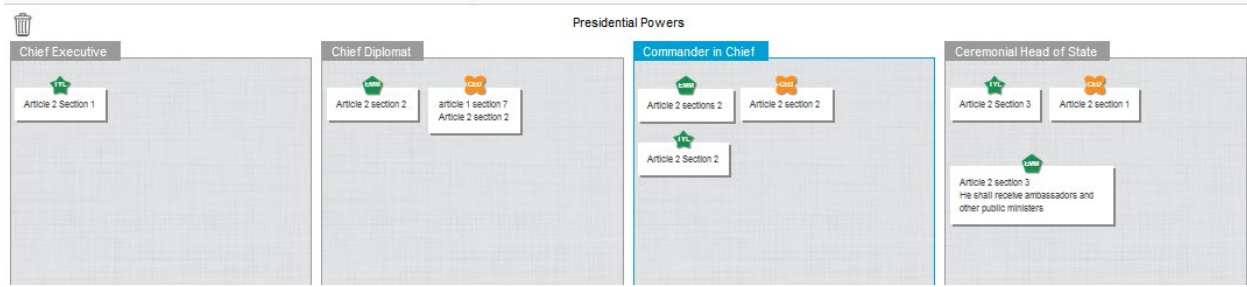
Lumio offers a variety of activities to engage students in the classroom. These activities include, "Shout-it-Out!", "Response," and "Game-Based Activities." Shout-It-Out is useful for a variety of activities and has two options: Randomized and Categories. The Randomized option is similar to a program called Padlet which allows users to post digital notes, as students can use it to respond to a prompt from their instructor. Figure 2 displays an example of the Randomized "Shout-It-Out!" option available through the Lumio. In the Randomized "Shout-It-Out!" option, an instructor can pose a question to the class, and the class responds by typing in the virtual equivalent of a sticky note. The student" responses are anonymous both to other students as well as to the instructor by default. There is an option to have student names included on the posts, but in my experience, students will participate more if their responses are anonymous.

Figure 2: Features of the American Presidency Activity



The Categorized “Shout-It-Out” option is slightly different from the Randomized option. In this activity, instructors create categories, and students can post the correct answer in each category. One of the ways in which I used the Categorized “Shout-It-Out” option was during the Presidency section of my American National Government class. I taught students about the various roles of the Presidency (Chief Executive, Chief Diplomat, Commander-in-Chief, and Ceremonial Head-of-State). I then asked my students to read through Article 2 of the U.S. Constitution, and apply the appropriate section of Article 2 that applies to each role of the Presidency. An example of the Categorized “Shout-It-Out” option can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3 : Presidential Powers Lumio Activity

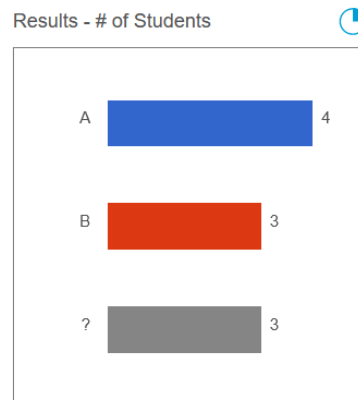


Lumio also offers class assessments with various question types available, including: Multiple Choice, True/False, Multiple Answer, Poll/Opinion, and Short Answer. An example of the Poll/Opinion option can be seen in Figure 4. After teaching about the Electoral College, I asked students whether they thought the United States should keep the Electoral College system.

Figure 4: Electoral College Poll

1 Should the United States keep the Electoral College system?

- A Yes
- B No

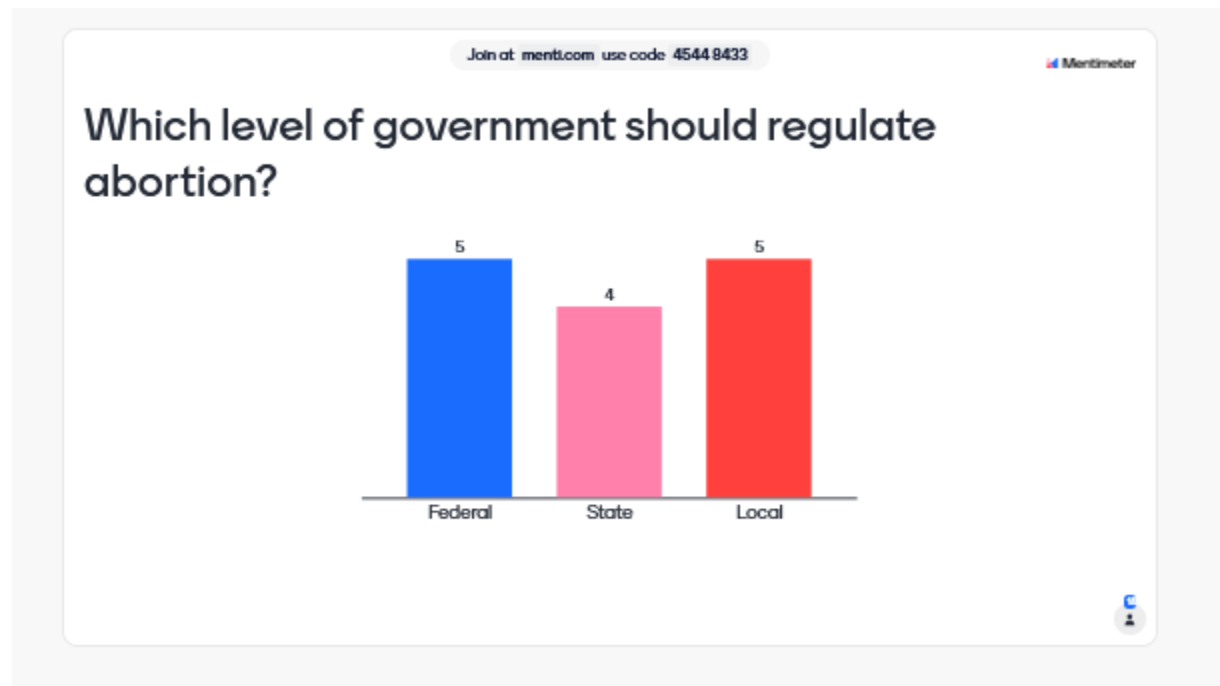


MENTIMETER

Mentimeter is an interactive presentation software accessed through its website. I predominantly use Mentimeter for discussion around sensitive topics that students may not be willing to voice their opinion verbally in class. Mentimeter offers anonymous participation which makes a good choice for discussions on hot topics or sensitive issues. Mentimeter offers numerous features that can be used in the classroom to encourage participation through polls, word clouds, multiple choice questions, and scales. Mentimeter can be accessed via a QR code, but it can also be accessed via a code that students can type in at www.menti.com[4]. Similar to Lumio, professors need to create an account, but students do not need an account to participate.

One of the ways instructors can use Mentimeter to engage students is through polls. Polls are an effective way to anonymously gauge student opinion, and then ask if any students would like to elaborate on their responses. Figure 5 shows an example of the poll feature in Mentimeter. For example, in my State and Local Government classes, I discuss Federalism, and which issues have traditionally been handled by the Federal, State, and Local Governments. I then poll students to ask their opinions on various hot topics to gauge opinion.

Figure 5: Mentimeter Poll Example



Another great feature with Mentimeter is the Word Cloud. I use this for shorter responses (1-2) words from students. It's great to see each students' opinion compiled on the screen. An example of the Mentimeter Word Cloud feature can be seen in Figure 6. This feature makes it easy to see when several students give similar responses, which can be encouraging for those who are reluctant to speak up due to a fear that they may be the only person in the class with that opinion.

Figure 6: Mentimeter Word Cloud Example



Mentimeter's Scales is a great feature for discussing public opinion in class. One of my favorite activities after discussing public opinion is to break the class into two separate groups and have them answer the same questions. By using the scale feature, we can compare opinions across male and female groups, such as whether men or women are more likely to support universal healthcare or military interventions. Figure 7 shows the Mentimeter Scale feature. This feature is slightly different from the Lumio poll feature because it includes average responses, while the Lumio feature just shows the raw number of individuals who gave a certain response.

Figure 7: Mentimeter Scale Example



QUIZZIZZ

[Quizizz\[5\]](#) is a student engagement platform that uses interactive quizzes to test student learning. The advantage of using Quizizz is that it helps gauge learning of class concepts prior to a traditional quiz. I use Quizizz at the end of class sections to see which topics students understood, and which may need to be covered more in-depth. I am able to ascertain the more difficult topics for my students as Quizizz displays results by question so I can see the raw number of students who answered each question correctly and incorrectly. Quizizz does not count against a student's grade like traditional paper quizzes or quizzes offered in online learning management systems like Canvas.

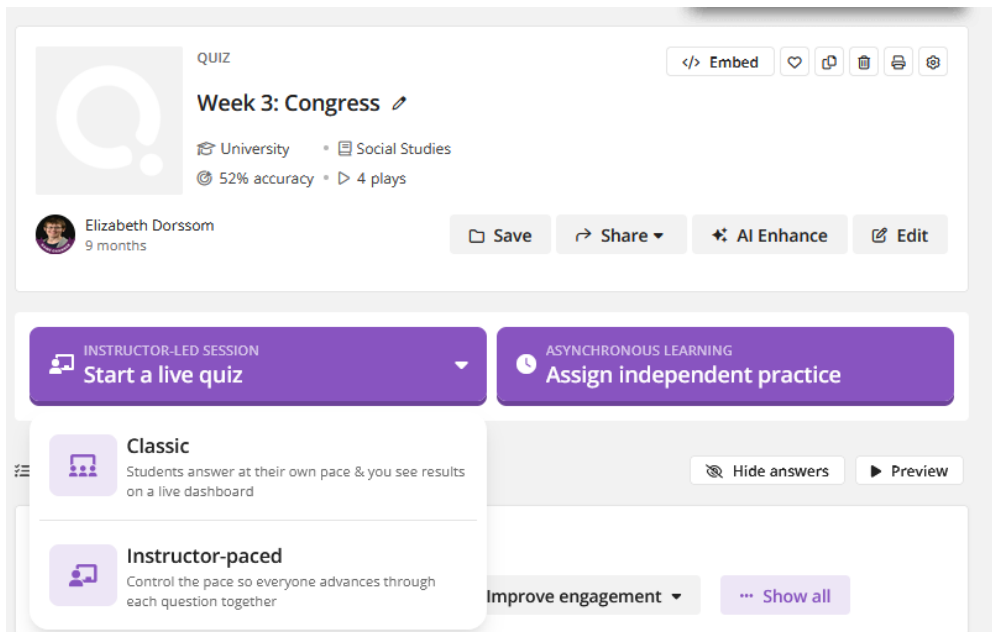
I draft the review quiz questions myself, but Quizizz also has a feature in which instructors can view a quiz bank and use their questions. Students can access Quizizz after the instructor clicks "Start a live quiz." A screen appears with a 6-digit join code that students can type in on www.joinmyquiz.com to participate in the

activity. Once all students have joined the quiz, the instructor then clicks "Start" for the quiz to begin. Students can take the quiz on their phones or on their personal computers.

Similar to Lumio and Mentimeter, only professors are required to create an account, not students. Quizizz is unique because students can use it at their own pace, and directly compete, in a friendly manner, with other students. My students look forward to Quizizz in class and directly ask during class whether we will be doing a Quizizz activity that day.

Quizizz can be used for self-paced or instructor-paced quizzes, as can be seen in Figure 8. In self-paced quizzes, students take the quizzes at their own pace during class time, but during instructor-paced quizzes, instructors can go through the questions one-at-a-time. Both versions have their benefits, and I've used both during class. I've used the instructor-paced feature during the Public Opinion section of my course. This is similar to the Lumio feature in that the results show only the raw number of students who gave a response, as opposed to the Mentimeter poll feature which give the average response data for reach response.

Figure 8: Quiz Paces in Quizizz



CONCLUSION

Each of these three programs offers unique advantages in encouraging undergraduate course participation. All of these programs is anonymous. Mentimeter, Lumio, and Padlet offer programs that can be used for discussing sensitive topics and to gauge student opinion on issues. Quizizz can be used to help track student conceptual understanding prior to an exam. These programs also offer strengths for professors wanting to incorporate active learning into their classrooms. Mentimeter, Lumio, Padlet, and Quizizz help engage students in the classroom by offering numerous methods for participation such as polls, discussion boards, and word clouds. These programs help reinforce learning and increase student participation.

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USING A SMART BOARD TO TEACH FEDERALISM IN AN AMERICAN NATIONAL GOVERNMENT COURSE

By Elizabeth Dorssom (DorssomE@lincolnu.edu)

Active learning is an important component of classrooms as it helps students reinforce information after listening to a professor's lecture (Lang 2021). The incorporation of active learning in a classroom helps students make connections with the information and remember the information better (Ambrose, et al. 2010). By engaging the students in the classroom with activities aimed at reinforcing the material, students are better able to analyze and process course content. This essay will focus on one activity I used to promote active learning in my classroom: a federalism activity using the classroom's smart board.

In my American National Government classes, I cover federalism in its entirety. I begin with the founding of the United States and work through the various eras of federalism: dual federalism, cooperative federalism, cooptive federalism. Additionally, I discuss how the federal government and state governments possess power unique to their level of government and those shared between each level. To further reinforce the material, I created a smart board activity to demonstrate the difference between expressed and implied powers (powers delegated only to the federal government), concurrent powers (powers shared between the federal and state governments), and reserved powers (powers delegated only to State Governments).³¹ Federalism offers a framework that accommodates diverse perspectives and solutions to complex challenges in American politics. By allowing states to act as independent entities within a broader federal system, federalism can foster innovation, protect individual rights, and promote democratic governance across the political spectrum. When students see how federalism has evolved throughout time, these students can further understand how the relationship between the federal and state governments has varied in response to different policy issues.

³¹ While I use a SmartBoard for this activity, it is not required to have a SmartBoard to do this activity. This activity can be created on the SmartBoard website and projected in the classroom.

To begin the activity, I give the students a “cheat sheet” containing a list of all the federal powers from Article I, Section 8 of the United States Constitution. A sample “cheat sheet” is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Federal Power Cheat Sheet

The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts and excises, to pay the debts and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States; but all duties, imposts and excises shall be uniform throughout the United States;

To borrow money on the credit of the United States;

To regulate commerce with foreign nations, and among the several states, and with the Indian tribes;

To establish a uniform rule of naturalization, and uniform laws on the subject of bankruptcies throughout the United States;

To coin money, regulate the value thereof, and of foreign coin, and fix the standard of weights and measures;

To provide for the punishment of counterfeiting the securities and current coin of the United States;

To establish post offices and post roads;

To promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries;

To constitute tribunals inferior to the Supreme Court;

To define and punish piracies and felonies committed on the high seas, and offenses against the law of nations;

To declare war, grant letters of marque and reprisal, and make rules concerning captures on land and water;

To raise and support armies, but no appropriation of money to that use shall be for a longer term than two years;

To provide and maintain a navy;

To make rules for the government and regulation of the land and naval forces;

To provide for calling forth the militia to execute the laws of the union, suppress insurrections and repel invasions;

To provide for organizing, arming, and disciplining, the militia, and for governing such part of them as may be employed in the service of the United States, reserving to the states respectively, the appointment of the officers, and the authority of training the militia according to the discipline prescribed by Congress;

To exercise exclusive legislation in all cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding ten miles square) as may, by cession of particular states, and the acceptance of Congress, become the seat of the government of the United States, and to exercise like authority over all places purchased by the consent of the legislature of the state in which the same shall be, for the erection of forts, magazines, arsenals, dockyards, and other needful buildings;-- And

To make all laws which shall be necessary and proper for carrying into execution the foregoing powers, and all other powers vested by this Constitution in the government of the United States, or in any department or officer thereof.

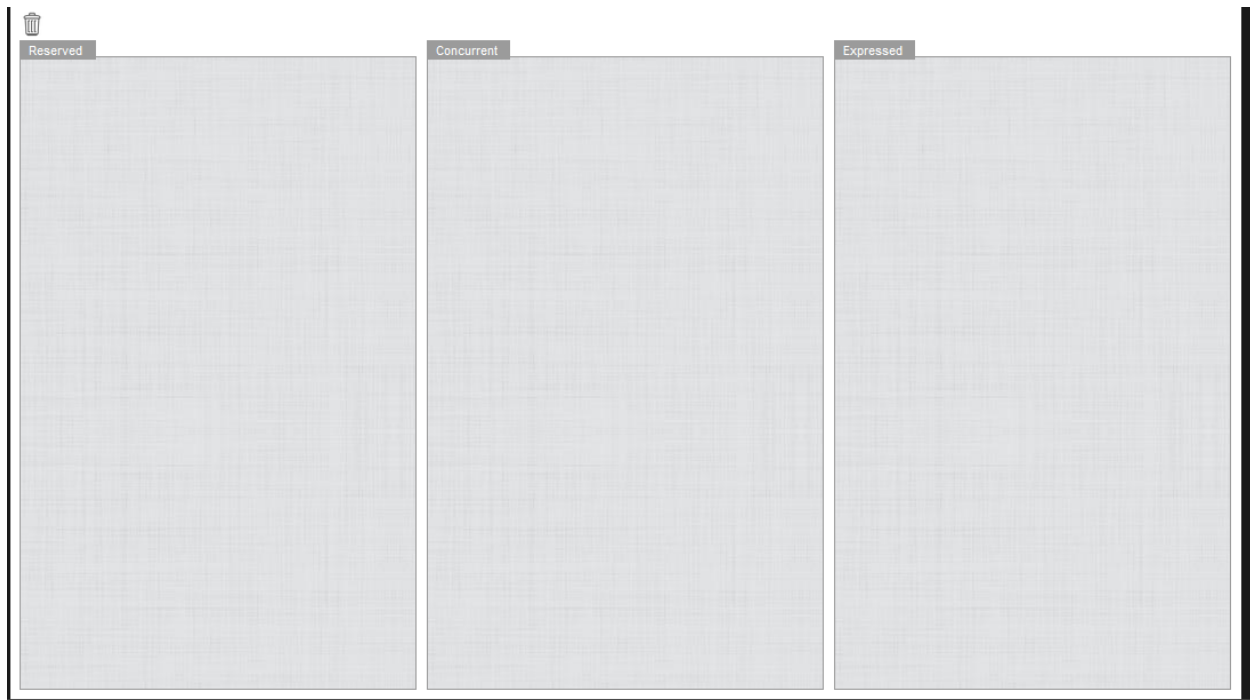
After giving students the Federal Power “cheat sheet”, I give them a list of government powers. The powers listed on this handout are a mixture of Expressed & Implied Powers, Concurrent Powers, and Reserved Powers. The handout can be seen in Figure 2, and include such powers as print money, conduct elections, and build roads.

Figure 2: Government Powers Handout

- Print Money
- Protect public health and safety
- Collect Taxes
- Issue Driver's and Marriage Licenses
- Make rules about trade between states and nations
- Establish Local Governments
- Make treaties and deal with foreign countries
- Conduct Elections
- Declare War
- Build Roads
- Use any power the Constitution does not give the federal government or deny the states
- Run Public Schools
- Make and Enforce Laws
- Establish a Post Office
- Establish Courts
- Provide an Army and a Navy
- Make laws that are necessary and proper to carry out its powers
- Borrow money on credit of U.S.
- Make copyright laws to protect authors and writings

After students receive both the “cheat sheet” and the handout, I give the students approximately 10 minutes³² to look over both sheets before beginning the activity on the smart board with three different categories (Reserved, Concurrent, and Expressed) where students can add the correct response. These categories can be seen in Figure 3.

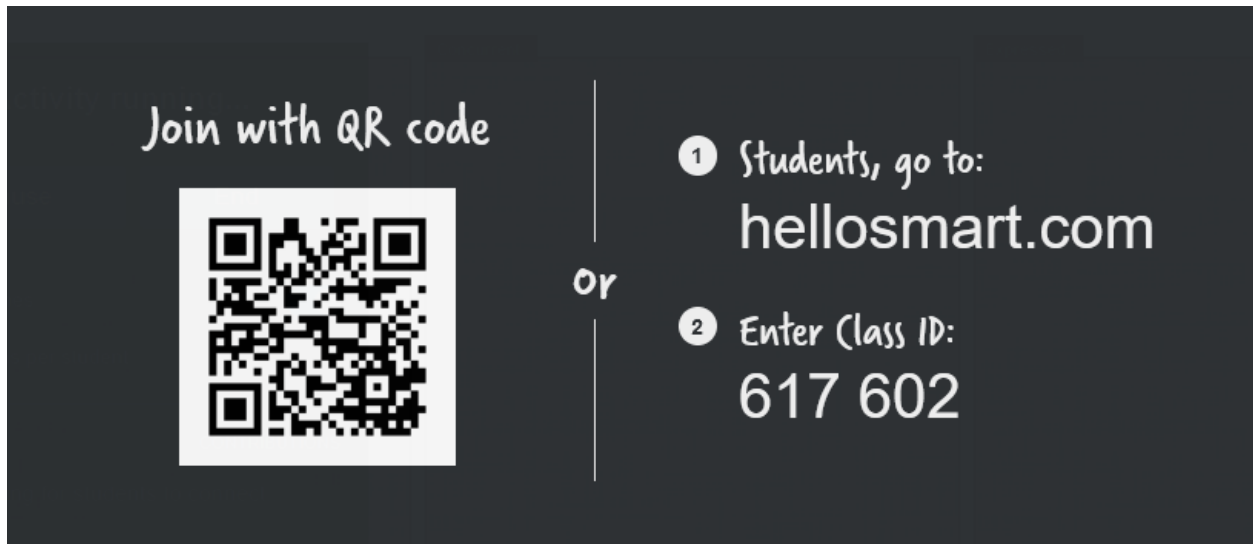
Figure 3: Categories on SmartBoard



To enter the activity, students can scan a QR code with their Smartphones, or they can navigate to www.hellosmart.com on their laptops and type in the class code. The login options are shown in Figure 4.

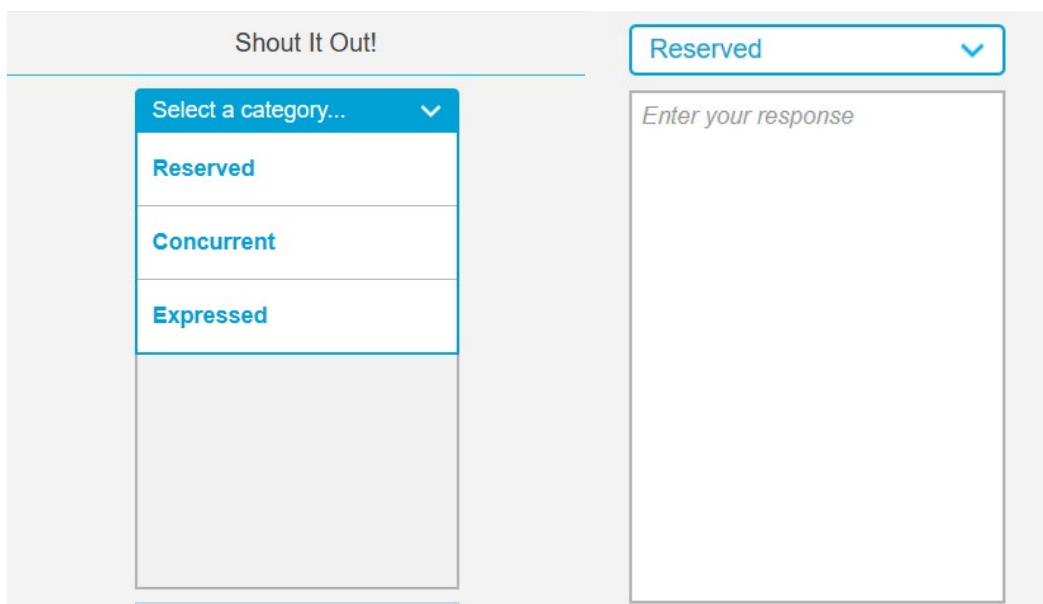
³² Times can be adjusted as necessary

Figure 4: Smart Board Login Options



When the students access the smart board, they can click on a category (reserved, concurrent, or expressed), and then enter the appropriate power under the right category. These options can be seen in Figure 6.

Figure 5: Smart Board Response Options



When the students type in their responses, they appear as post-it notes on the smart board screen. As students complete the activity, I display the screen so that students can see the responses as they are posted in real time. Once every student has had a chance to post, I encourage the students to review the posted responses to check for accuracy. This gives the students a chance to ask questions if they do not understand why a power was listed, for example, as being a reserved power instead of expressed or concurrent. This helps students further their understanding of federalism and how governmental powers can vary among the level of government. A potential problem with using a Smart Board for this activity is that occasionally a student may post an incorrect answer. Since it is a text response, it is unable to be deleted from the Smart Board without removing all of the other responses as well. Therefore, it is important to inform the students which answer is incorrect so that they do not learn inaccurate information.

This activity takes approximately 30 minutes to complete and is a great addition to any class lecture about federalism. It is a great active learning activity that also incorporates technology. Prior research has demonstrated that students learn and retain information better when engaging in experiential learning or hands-on activities (Kong 2021). Therefore, to ensure that students learn concepts, it is important to include activities in the classroom.

In my class, I try to incorporate various tech-based activities as it helps create a more engaging learning environment for students. Additionally, technology use in the classroom also helps students with different learning styles who may retain information better with a hands-on activity instead of a traditional lecture. Finally, tech-based activities are also important to help engage an age group who is accustomed to using technology in day-to-day tasks. Recent research shows that approximately 96% of individuals between the ages of 18-29 own a smartphone that can access the internet (Pew Research Center 2021). Therefore, by incorporating tech-based activities in the classroom, instructors are delivering more student-centered instruction.

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LIFE ISN'T FAIR BUT OUR CLASSROOMS COULD BE: MITIGATING STRESS TO ADDRESS RISING ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

By Darrell Carter (darrell.carter@unlv.edu)

The current events shaping student development and perception have taught a common enough lesson that may systematically alter student norms on academic dishonesty. Living through events such as the Covid-19 pandemic, mass protest movements, climate change, mass shootings teaches students that “life ain’t fair, kid.” This perception leads many students, including high achieving students, to view some types of academic dishonesty as acceptable, or even necessary, to succeed academically. Student stress, anxiety, and academic dishonesty increased during and after the Covid-19 pandemic (Abdelrahim 2022, Jenkins et al. 2023, Deal & Lee 2023). News articles and opinion pieces in education magazines discuss this issue extensively (Redden 2021, Duckworth 2022, Lem 2023). While cracking down with greater technology and more serious consequences may deter cheating and plagiarism, we might also affirm the validity of this perception. Students *are* navigating a stressful and unfair environment to try to succeed. We should be building confidence in the fairness of our courses and our evaluations, offer resources to mitigate stress and mental health issues, and take extra steps to teach students how to be successful in our classes without resorting to academic dishonesty.

Over a couple dozen courses both as a teaching assistant and instructor of record I employed online exams taken outside of the class at the students’ discretion. These exams would be available for a fixed period, were timed multiple choice with randomized questions from question banks, required an academic misconduct honor pledge to begin, and would sometimes also employ software to counter cheating.³³ By moving exams outside of class time, I felt that I gained more time for instruction and gave students some flexibility in taking their exams. When we returned to in person or hybrid instruction in 2021, discussions with colleagues and

³³ Online exam grade distributions were comparable to in-class grade distributions, suggesting best practices mitigating cheating had some mitigating effect.

students suggested views on academic misconduct had changed. High achieving students, students who we would normally expect strong norms against academic dishonesty, openly admitted to cheating on online exams and other assessments. To evaluate this in my own course, I employed an anonymous, non-scientific survey, with twenty student respondents. The results prompted me to redesign my exams and reevaluate my assumptions about my students' experiences and behavior. A highlight of results are included in the table below, but students reported that "other students" were still likely to cheat even with an honor pledge question suggesting a change from previous research. Most students who reported cheating would be more likely to cheat on an online exam than in person, even if they would not be caught. Most interesting, 70% of students selected stress as a reason they or other students would cheat on an exam.

Table 1: 2021 Unscientific Anonymous Survey of 20 Students

Question Summary	"Yes" Response Rate
Do you feel an honor code pledge makes other students less likely to cheat?	25%
Knowing you would not be caught, would you or students you know be more likely to cheat on an online exam than an in person exam?	80%
Do you feel students you know are more likely to cheat on exams in a class they don't consider to be important?	50%
Why would you or students you know be willing to cheat on online exams? (Cheating Reduces Stress Option Selected)	70%

These results prompted me to return to in person exams and to understand that even high performing students viewed their current environment as stacked against them. They viewed cheating on an online exam as justifiable to reduce the stress and pressure of succeeding. Recent research supports this sentiment by showing that cheating is on the rise during and since the Covid-19 pandemic (Abdelrahim 2022, Jenkins et al. 2023). With the stress and anxiety from the social isolation of Covid-19, “new cheaters” proliferated after the pandemic who most frequently cheated on summative assessments like exams and quizzes (Abdelrahim 2022, Jenkins et al. 2023).

Mental health, negative emotions, and stress are key factors in student academic dishonesty since the pandemic. Negative emotional states changed cheating norms to be more permissible, especially when assessments were more heavily weighted (Tindall et al. 2021). One study found the second most common topic in an open-ended response about why students cheat was about mental health issues such as high stress or depression (Deal & Lee 2023). They also found students reported cheating primarily because of feeling stress and disconnected (Deal & Lee 2023). This is supported by similar findings that, along with stress, feelings of isolation were associated cheating (Abdelrahim 2022). Students view their environment as unfair and high stress. Even when they are high performing students who know the material, they justify cheating because it reduces stress, possibly even viewing it as helping “level the field.” High levels of anxiety and stress “trigger self-serving and ethical rationalizing” to change acceptable norms on academic dishonesty (Abdelrahim 2022). Jenkins et al. argue that mental health issues lead students to “view cheating as a necessary evil to cope with the demands” of academia (Jenkins et al. 2023). Students see cheating as an acceptable coping mechanism because of their high levels of stress and the unjust academic environment. This is an important realization for us as educators in how we address cheating going forward. We should recognize the ways our students experience unfair conditions and try to restore confidence in both their ability to succeed without cheating and the fairness of their evaluations in the class. Tindall et al. (2021) suggest that stress-related cheating might be addressed through course redesign (Tindall et al. 2021). Flexible

course design in assignment due dates, 'free passes' on minor assignments, lowering the impact of exams on their final grade, and providing dedicated study materials or review sessions for exams could mitigate coping motivated cheating. Abdelrahim 2022 also suggests reducing the weight of exams to mitigate stress and anxiety (Abdelrahim 2022). Beyond course design, we also should take time to explain the value of the knowledge the course provides, communicate openly with students about their struggles and legitimate accommodations that can be provided, provide transparent grading practices, and cultivate a perception that the student and instructor are partners in the course. These techniques will help build students' confidence in their abilities and the fairness of their evaluation. Finally, we need to do more to raise awareness of mental health resources on campus (Tindall et al. 2021). More than just including links in syllabi or course pages, we should mention and normalize using these resources multiple times throughout the course, especially close to exam times.

Through these approaches of flexible course design, supportive instruction, and greater awareness of mental health resources, we can start to address a root cause of increasing academic misconduct, likely with more effectiveness than punitive measures. These are not new solutions. Their benefits have been supported in multiple studies. Now post pandemic and with other current events adding stress and pressure for our students, these practices may have additional importance for minimizing cheating, especially for online exams. Our students are learning what many of us already know: Life is not fair. Perhaps we should do more to acknowledge that fact in our classrooms.

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REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND ZOMBIES IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

By Kristen Rosero (roserok@wit.edu)

Zombies used to be a fun way for me to teach International Relations. Now, I'm not so sure. For some context, I teach political science at a polytechnic institution where none of my students are political science majors. This has always presented both a challenge and an opportunity for me. The challenge is often getting them interested in the material and seeing its broader value. The opportunity is that I can customize classes in many ways to speak to their interests. Inspired by Daniel Drezner's *Theories of International Relations... and Zombies*, I originally designed my course on International Relations and Science Fiction in 2015 as a way to have fun with a very standard subject in political science, and *hopefully* tap into some pop culture interests on the part of my students to get them engaged. The idea was to use science fiction examples to illustrate International Relations concepts and culminates in an informal model UN simulation of a worldwide zombie outbreak. The course was a success and has filled whenever I have taught it since then— and it *was* fun. In a post-pandemic world, though, I find myself reflecting on how a class like this fits—or no longer fits.

In many ways, the class is a typical International Relations class—covering the broad IR theories and a number of general topics from Terrorism to Climate Change—but with a twist. In addition to referencing current news stories and salient real-world events, it makes use of examples from science fiction films and TV shows as pedagogical tools for helping students to understand international relations. While the Drezner text serves as a great entry into exploring the various theories of International Relations, we also explore a broad range of science fiction subgenres to illustrate important concepts and global challenges: from the Intergalactic Senate in *Star Wars* and Star Trek's Prime Directive to *District 9* and the Twilight Zone. What was exciting and unexpected about developing and tinkering with this course over the years was that it served as a learning experience

for me as well, as I was able to explore these critical topics from entirely new perspectives.

One of the most successful elements of this course was the UN simulation to which the last few weeks of class were devoted. The simulation models several emergency meetings of the UN General Assembly and Security Council. Their task is to reach an agreement on a Security Council resolution to address a global zombie outbreak. This particular scenario allowed me to tie in the zombie theme introduced with the Drezner text and to use the hypothetical crisis as motivation for international cooperation and UN action. Throughout the simulation, each student represents a particular country and must debate and negotiate driven by their country's national interests. Daily updates are provided as the crisis continues to unfold and develop. Invariably, it is silly and raucous. Yet the end result has always been a resolution which reflects an understanding of the operation of the United Nations, current relationships among states and the nature of the international system. It was incredibly rewarding for me as a political science professor to hear all these engineering students arguing about things like sovereignty and to see that they truly internalized the concept and its implications for the international system.

My experience with this simulation is by no means unique. There is plenty of literature out there that supports the value of simulations for political science education (McIntosh 2001; Chasek 2005; Asal & Kratoville 2013; Sears 2018; Hammond & Albert 2020; Leib & Ruppel 2020 just to name a few). Nor even is the undead approach to teaching the topic. I am certainly not the only one who has used the idea of a zombie outbreak.. Truth be told, I am not nearly that creative. My original inspiration came directly from the official Model UN resources (UNA-USA 2019) and a mini-simulation that has been used by countless model UN clubs and classes. Many fields have applied and sought to demonstrate the effectiveness of various zombie simulations to demonstrate the complexities of real-world challenges in a way that force students to suspend their disbelief and think creatively. For example, Jackson et al. (2020) found a simulated zombie-themed pandemic to bring important collaborative problem-solving to preclinical medical

students while integrating virology, population health, and bioethics concepts. Zombie simulations have been found to be effective in teaching mathematic modeling of infectious diseases (Lofgren et al. 2016) to business operations (Horner 2015; Horio & Arrowsmith 2015; Robichaud 2020). And zombies have of course demonstrated their worth in the study of international relations (Brandle 2020; Horn et al. 2016, Blanton 2013).

The real question I find myself reflecting on though is does the class and assignment make sense *now*?

The UN Simulation has always been a highlight on top of what was already an enjoyable course. For all the iterations I have taught of this class, it has always been a blast to get to this point and watch students as they joke about zombies while also applying all of the concepts discussed all semester. It has allowed students to make metaphorical connections to real-life problems like terrorism, collective security, and of course... pandemics.

And therein lies the issue with this class now. It has become almost too real. As Drezner himself writes, "Of all the baddies in the horror genre, zombies are the perfect metaphor for a pandemic." In his April 2020 piece entitled "What I Learned About the Coronavirus World From Watching Zombie Flicks" he points out that the parallels between zombie film tropes and the breakdowns in cooperation seen during the COVID-19 outbreak are "unsettling." Der Derian and Gara (2021) ask "Is COVID-19 our first global zombie event?"

In March 2020, I received an email from a student who had taken this course with me the previous term. He began with the sort of "never thought I would actually use this stuff" kind of thing a professor just *loves* to hear, but went on to express how quickly that changed and how surprisingly relevant our fictional zombie outbreak turned out to be in light of the unfolding pandemic. That in fact, the class was one of the most useful he had taken up to that point.

I found myself coming back to this email a number of times throughout the pandemic. On the one hand it is oddly gratifying. What professor does not want to hear that their course had an impact? On the other hand, it is a bit sad. It was never my intent for the simulation to be *quite* so realistic. For so many, the pandemic was personal. We lost loved ones and we have seen the way we work, and learn, and interact with others completely upended.

I recognized all this when I decided to teach the course one more time in the Fall of 2021. I was torn between the subject matter being incredibly important and timely, and hitting a little too close to home. I began the course completely upfront with this and invited feedback from students if they had any concerns about the material. It might be worth noting here that Robichaud's *Leadership Simulation: Patient Zero* for Harvard Business now has the caveat: "The concept for this simulation was developed by the author in 2015. However, it presents visual content and scenarios that may be unsettling to students in light of the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020. Educators should consider whether this simulation is appropriate for the intended participants." An important point to make these days.

Ultimately, there were no real concerns among my students, and they did have fun with it. But it was different this time. And it was not just because we were all required to mask up in class and test regularly per our university policies, or that (perhaps fittingly) because of a close contact situation in the class shortly before the end of the semester, we ended up switching the last two classes and simulation days to Zoom. There was just a lot less need to use their imaginations in finding solutions to our simulation challenge. All they had to do was draw from the news. Altogether, I was left a bit nostalgic for the days when I could use a zombie pandemic as a far-fetched imagined scenario, rather than something we have lived through. But perhaps all is not lost. The class could always be taught again utilizing a different scenario for the UN simulation. After all, there is still the possibility of alien invasion...

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OPEN PEDAGOGY: CHARTING THE POTENTIAL TO CO-CREATE NON-DISPOSABLE OBJECTS WITH STUDENTS IN YOUR CLASSES

This interview is the third installment in a Q&A series focused on education and politics. Matt Evans, Professor of Political Science at Northwest Arkansas Community College, interviewed Jamie Witman, the Open Educational Practices Specialist at the [Open Education Network](#)³⁴, about open pedagogy. The concept of open pedagogy centers on students co-creating knowledge with faculty and moving away from disposable assignments (that hold no importance other than achieving the immediate learning objective); the point is to create objects that can be freely used without purchase or fee in future contexts and as a result are Open Educational Resources. The Open Education Network focuses on the promotion and the creation of Open Educational Resources (OER) and open pedagogy; it includes universities, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges around the country.

Whitman holds a M.A. in Library and Information Science and a B.A. in Religion from Florida State University. She previously worked as Online Learning and OER Librarian at the Community College of Baltimore County where she led the OER initiatives across the institution, including an OER/alternative textbook grant program and OER Institute. She also served on the leadership team for the award-winning United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Open Pedagogy Faculty Fellowship Program and co-developed the [Maryland H5P Collaborative](#)³⁵. She remains a member of the American Library Association and has published chapters in two edited volumes on her work on information literacy and online learning. This interview took place by email and has been edited for clarity.³⁶

How would you define open pedagogy? How is it connected to open educational resources? How does it compare to and draw upon other

³⁴ <https://open.umn.edu/oen>

³⁵ <https://most.oercommons.org/hubs/mdh5p>

³⁶ *Evans, in his role as co-chair for his college's OER committee, took part in the Open Pedagogy cohort facilitated by Whitman. NWACC is not currently an OEN member.*

pedagogical approaches and philosophies (like constructivism, experiential learning, feminism, pragmatism, universal design)?

There are a lot of definitions for open pedagogy, but I think the ones that resonate with me the most are the ones that center on the idea of empowering students and inviting students to be content and knowledge co-creators,[and] really seeing students as whole people with different perspectives and ideas that are valuable to the classroom, and allowing them to share these different ideas with a broader or more global audience.

Some definitions of open pedagogy include the same principles of the 5 R's that OERs are built on and I think engaging in open pedagogy is a natural evolution for folks using OERs. [The 5 R's are retain, reuse, revise, remix, redistribute; and apply to the way that [different Creative Commons licenses](#)³⁷ allow different types of uses for OER.]

I think open pedagogy complements many other pedagogical approaches like constructivism and experiential learning. Additionally, open pedagogy's foundation stems from Black feminist pedagogy and praxis like the work of bell hooks, Regina Austin, Audre Lorde, and others. For more on this I would suggest taking a look at the work of scholars [Marco Seiferle-Valencia](#)³⁸ and [Jasmine Roberts-Crews](#)³⁹.

Marco Seiferle-Valencia is the the Open Education Librarian at the University of Idaho Library and the co-creator of the Chicana por mi Raza Digital Memory Collection. His work at the University of Idaho Library's Think Open Fellowship works to promote OER projects that center principles of social justice. His article: [It's Not \(Just\) About the Cost: Academic Libraries and Intentionally Engaged OER for Social Justice](#)⁴⁰ explores these OER projects and examines the work of bell hooks and Regina Austin as foundational for intentionally engaged OER. For

³⁷ <https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/cclicenses/#:~:text=Creative%20Commons%20licenses%20give%20everyone,creative%20work%20under%20copyright%20law>

³⁸ <https://vivo.nkn.uidaho.edu/vivo/display/n1005348>

³⁹ <https://comm.osu.edu/people/roberts-crews.1>

⁴⁰ <https://doi.org/10.1353/lib.2020.0042>

additional viewing: [Marco's presentation at the Open Education Conference in 2020⁴¹](#).

Jasmine Roberts-Crews is a Lecturer in the School of Communication at The Ohio State University. Her advocacy work centers on the experiences of people of color, women and queer communities. Professor Roberts-Crews is a renowned open education leader and she was the first OEN Fellow in which she created a video: [Creating a Socially Just Open Education⁴²](#) for community members wanting to intentionally design their open education programs around social justice. She most recently was a [keynote speaker at Open Education Conference 2023⁴³](#) where she invites the audience to adopt a post-oppositional lens to imagine transformative social justice pathways in open education.

What sort of non-disposable objects are students creating in these open pedagogy class projects, and what contexts do we see them used?

Students are creating a variety of projects: infographics and learning aids that can be shared with future students or the community at large, videos, new open textbooks, audio recordings, new and/or updated Wikipedia entries, digital galleries, and more. Many of these projects have life beyond a single semester where students can build upon them to enhance the resource, or [they can serve] as inspiration for the next set of students. Some of these projects also have an impact on local communities: students are creating resources for their hometowns, communities, environments, etc.

How did you get involved in open pedagogy? What brought you to it?

When I was at the Community College of Baltimore County, I was looking for more ways to get involved in open work. Our OER program was ramping up, but I wanted to think about how we could continue to connect and engage with students in new ways and specifically do more to center social justice principles. Around that same

⁴¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YGaeHVmPHmQ&feature=youtu.be>

⁴² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=shared&v=vBUeagrtnps>

⁴³ <https://youtu.be/GvUSubcSC0c>

time, I was invited to join the Leadership Team for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Open Pedagogy Faculty Fellowship. This was a great opportunity to offer this fellowship to faculty who are what I would call “power users” of OER in their courses. Through working with the other members of the Leadership Team, I was able to learn more about open pedagogy itself and that knowledge is what led me to working with the OEN in my current position, which is to build resources and support around open pedagogy for our members and to share these resources openly with everyone.

How should faculty determine the Creative Commons licenses for student products? How much autonomy should students have in the process? What resources should faculty use for this process?

To truly practice open pedagogy, student consent must be at the forefront, so I would say a faculty member should provide [instruction around Creative Commons](#)⁴⁴, including the rights granted by each license and the impact choosing a specific license can have on a student’s work. But the choice to license is ultimately up to the student. Whether that is choosing a Creative Commons license, choosing not to openly license at all, or choosing to license anonymously. Each of these choices should be supported by the faculty member.

I think the best resources come from the Creative Commons organization. Doing a walkthrough of the [license chooser](#)⁴⁵ is a great way for students to think about the different decisions they need to think about to choose the license that fits best for them.

What would you say to faculty that have some of the standard objections: that students co-creating knowledge means intellectual anarchy, that there is just too much material to cover in the class to do these projects, that students lack basic skills to create these renewable objects?

⁴⁴ <https://creativecommons.org/share-your-work/cclicenses/>

⁴⁵ <https://chooser-beta.creativecommons.org/>

I think the best approach to getting started with open pedagogy is starting small. Choosing just one aspect of the course or one aspect of an assignment to change helps to alleviate some of the pressure and stress an instructor might feel about how they fit open pedagogy in with all the other requirements and expectations of a course. Additionally, scaffolding is key. Even if you are starting small, students need to have support around this new endeavor, and scaffolding is the best way to do that. Offering opportunities for input and feedback will also help instructors guide students appropriately. The beauty of open pedagogy is that it recognizes that students have different skill sets, so allowing them to use those skills sets them up for success.

What is scaffolding and who are some of its major proponents in pedagogical theory?

Scaffolding refers to a variety of instructional techniques used to move students progressively toward stronger understanding and, ultimately, greater independence in the learning process (Source: [The Glossary of Education Reform](#)⁴⁶). It originates from [Jerome Bruner](#)⁴⁷ a cognitive psychologist and later built on by Russian psychologist [Lev Vygotsky](#)⁴⁸ and his concept of the Zone of Proximal Development. Northern Illinois University's Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning has a great write up on [Instructional Scaffolding](#)⁴⁹. Scaffolding is really about providing a supportive learning environment to help learners excel and succeed. Martha Larkin furthers the concept of [scaffolding to optimize learning](#)⁵⁰.

How would you address the argument that open pedagogy is surplus labor in getting students to do work that would otherwise be paid, or that

⁴⁶ <https://www.edglossary.org/scaffolding/>

⁴⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerome_Bruner

⁴⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lev_Vygotsky#Zone_of_Proximal_Development

⁴⁹ <https://www.niu.edu/citl/resources/guides/instructional-guide/instructional-scaffolding-to-improve-learning.shtml>

⁵⁰ <https://www.niu.edu/citl/resources/guides/instructional-guide/instructional-scaffolding-to-improve-learning.shtml>

students are putting stuff out there that could be harvested by for-profit companies to make money?

I think this is where the rights students have as creators come into play. Students are entitled to and own their intellectual property so building in conversations and instruction around this topic is key for students understanding their rights. Talking about open licensing and copyright gives students the chance to think about how someone else might use their work. The article [Student Collaborators' Bill of Rights⁵¹](#) gives a great foundation for how to approach these conversations. I also think this is where Care for our students gets built in too. We don't want to overburden students with the work, so making sure students feel supported and comfortable asking questions or raising objections is a fundamental aspect of open pedagogy.

Does open pedagogy help faculty address issues of artificial intelligence, human isolation, or disconnection from the educational and societal institutions? Do you think doing open pedagogy has spillover effects to improving representative democracy or direct democracy?

I would say engaging in open pedagogy and the principles of open pedagogy can certainly help address shortcomings in educational institutions and society at large too. Social Justice principles and open pedagogy principles are two sides of the same coin, so they lend themselves to having deeper conversations around societal institutions and government. I also think open pedagogy relies heavily on sharing work outside of the classroom and reaching out to communities and global audiences, so I think it can help to combat feelings of isolation.

How do we see open pedagogy playing out in different academic disciplines? Are there some academic disciplines that are invested in open pedagogy, and others that are not?

⁵¹ <https://humtech.ucla.edu/news/a-student-collaborators-bill-of-rights/>

I would say right now the humanities areas probably have the biggest foothold in open pedagogy. I've also worked with folks in math, health sciences, and natural sciences though. I think every discipline has space to engage in open pedagogy, so I think we will continue to see growth in these other areas. One place to look for some examples organized by disciplines is the [Open Pedagogy Portal](#)⁵².

Are there any great examples of open pedagogy done in political science courses for introductory and upper-level courses that you might point us towards? Can you point us to examples in different subfields of political science (like American politics, comparative politics, international relations, public administration, political theory)?

There are three projects to look at as examples of open pedagogy in the political science discipline:

- [And Still We Rise](#)⁵³
- [MLK and the Ecology of Black Thought](#)⁵⁴
- [Sharing the End of the World](#)⁵⁵

Is there a difference in terms of how you approach open pedagogy in an introductory course versus an upper-level course?

I think students at all levels can thrive and succeed in a course that engages in open pedagogy. There might be different types of assignments offered in an intro course versus an upper-level course, but I think being intentional about how you introduce open pedagogy and how you scaffold the work in a course is what makes a difference in its success.

⁵² <https://oen-openpedportal.pubpub.org/>

⁵³ <https://milnepublishing.geneseo.edu/openpedagogyapproaches/chapter/and-still-we-rise/>

⁵⁴ <https://oen-openpedportal.pubpub.org/pub/23yq5d8f/release/1?readingCollection=ed56a98b>

⁵⁵ <https://milnepublishing.geneseo.edu/openpedagogyapproaches/chapter/sharing-the-end-of-the-world-students-perceptions-of-their-self-efficacy-in-the-creation-of-open-access-digital-learning-objects/>

What advice would you give to someone considering open pedagogy assignment for their class, or someone who might be moving from lecture-based pedagogy with a lot of tests to open pedagogy?

I think the best advice is to start small—just thinking of one adjustment you could make to a single assignment. Perhaps changing one of the tests into a more interactive assignment or having students create test questions for future tests. Making sure to scaffold any of those changes and providing students support with these new changes.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Member Announcements

Victor Asal published "[The Use of Popular Songs and Cartoons in Teaching Introduction to International Relations and Comparative Politics](#)" in *International Studies Perspectives* (with Inga Miller and Andrew Vitek)

Elizabeth A. Bennion was selected to receive the Roland Kelly Award – an award presented annually during the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Service Recognition Breakfast by the Mayor of South Bend. The Martin Luther King Jr. Foundation of St. Joseph County established the award in 2009 "to honor one of its founders and long term, active Board Member and to recognize a South Bend Citizen who exemplifies the ideals and actions that guided his life. The recipient is recognized for their dedication to the community ideals through the promotion of diversity, love, and respect for all humanity."

Elizabeth A. Bennion's new edited book [Teaching Experimental Political Science](#) is now available from Edward Elgar Publishing. From the author: "Learn how to spark students' natural curiosity about the world they live in by using experimental design to test basic intuition, generate and answer 'what if' questions, and address real world problems that matter deeply to students, researchers, policymakers, political practitioners, and the community at large. Contributors provide advice for engaging students in survey, lab, and field experiments across course levels and subfields."

Iva Bozovic published "[Misuse of Data as a Teaching Tool](#)" in the *Journal of Political Science Education*.

Colin M. Brown published "[Setting Expectations: Rubrics as a Formative Tool for Communicating in the Social Sciences](#)" in *College Teaching* (with George Soroka, Sarah E. James, Matthew Reichert, and Aaron Watanabe).

Daniel Casey published "[Bridging the Expectation Gap: A Survey of Australian PhD Candidates and Supervisors in Politics and International Relations](#)" in the *Australian Journal of Political Science* (with Serrin Rutledge-Prior).

Matthew D. Nelson published [The Color of Civics: Civic Education for a Multiracial Democracy](#) at Oxford University Press.

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Submissions: Please send any article submissions or announcements for future newsletters to the editors at editor.pse.newsletter@gmail.com. Please include "PS Educator submission" in the subject line of your email, and include a short, two-sentence biographical statement. Research notes, reviews, and reflections are all welcome. Research notes in this newsletter should be considered as working papers and have received editorial review but have not undergone peer review.

The general policy of this newsletter is to publish all teaching-related articles that are submitted, as much as possible. We will, however, offer suggested revisions to improve the quality of the presentation, to verify academic integrity and citation standards, and to make the writing more

accessible. We may occasionally require significant revisions or require authors to hold their submissions until a later issue, in order to ensure that ideas will be suitably ready for distribution, and we may occasionally refer articles or research notes to better-suited outlets.

Submission deadline is April 15 for the Summer/Fall newsletter, and December 15 for the Winter/Spring newsletter. Contributions may be as brief as 200–500 hundred words, but should not exceed 1500 words. Please use APSA citation style for in-text citations and a list of references at the end of your submission. Research notes, reviews, and reflections should include in-text citations for relevant academic literature. The editors reserve the right to make minor corrections for style, clarity, readability, grammar, spelling, or factual errors.

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