



## Teaching in Tumultuous Times: Teaching Through & Teaching With

Events of crisis, tragedy, or social unrest can have a significant impact on teaching and learning. Such events impact students emotionally and cognitively and affect their ability to show up to class ready to learn. How we choose to respond to these events in our courses depends on course materials and topics, the skills and knowledge they are developing, our own social position, as well as how we, as a learning community (broadly defined and diverse in its constitution) are impacted by these events.

We may choose to *teach through* these moments, recognizing the potential impact they have on students and providing them with reasonable support, but not deliberately addressing them in the class. Or we may choose to *teach with* these events and engage with them in class. Below are some considerations and resources for faculty and instructors' as they make decisions about how to engage, or not, with current events in the classroom. In addition, the CCTL staff are always available for one-on-one consultations on all matters related to teaching and learning. To schedule a consultation please sign up [HERE](#).

### A Note about Free Expression

The value of free expression embodied in the [Chicago Principles](#) means that students should feel free to develop their own views without pressure to conform to the views of faculty or instructors. Our role as instructors is to design and conduct courses that support an open and inclusive teaching and learning climate within which students can engage with course materials, make evidence-informed arguments, and participate in respectful and productive dialogue with their peers.

### Teaching Through: Recognizing the impact of events on students

Discussing current events in (or outside of) class is not necessary to show students support and understanding during time of unrest, especially if those subjects fall outside your course topic, area of expertise, or are especially sensitive topics for you or your students. Expressing empathy for students' emotions and recognizing that recent events may have affected them can be a meaningful way to support student learning. In addition, many students may have difficulty completing their assignments, staying focused in class, or they may experience heightened anxiety about their coursework. Communicating and providing some flexibility (when appropriate) with attendance and assignment deadlines can help to mitigate the impact of current events on students. It is also important to highlight the campus resources available to support student learning and wellbeing. Below are some resources to support UChicago students in and outside our classes during tumultuous times.

[ACT to Sustain Learning Through Current Events](#) – The Stanford Teaching Commons

[Acknowledging Student Distress](#) – Published by the Carnegie Mellon Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence and Innovation

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[Student Resources in Support of Free Expression](#) – Published by the University of Chicago Campus and Student Life

[UChicago Student Wellness](#) – Published by the University of Chicago Campus and Student Life

[Expectations, Course Flexibility, and Student Engagement](#) – Published by the University of Chicago, Chicago Center for Teaching and Learning

## **Teaching With: Engaging with difficult topics**

In our courses we may choose to engage with current events to support student learning when our expertise, topic, and learning goals lend themselves to productive and open dialogue. We may also find ourselves in “hot moments” when unplanned and spontaneous engagements with current events arise. Whether your focus is on preparing for challenging discussions inherent in your course material or getting ready for the possibility of external events influencing your class, it is beneficial to proactively consider how you would respond in situations where student emotions are elevated. Below are some excellent resources to consider how to plan for or address discussion of current events.

[Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or High-Stakes Topics](#) – Published by the University of Michigan Center for Research on Teaching and Learning

[Getting Started with Establishing Ground Rules](#) – Published by the Cornell Center for Teaching Innovation

[Addressing Difficult Moments in the Classroom](#) – Published by the MIT Teaching + Learning Lab

[Getting Started with Establishing Ground Rules](#) – Published by the Cornell Center for Teaching Innovation

[Making the Most of hot Moments in the Classroom](#) – Published by the University of Michigan Center for Research on Teaching and Learning