

## Keep it in mind...

The American Association of University Professors (1987) statement on professional ethics mandates that instructors maintain fairness for students and avoid harassment and discrimination.

A study by Marcus and colleagues (2003) found that students reported higher levels of bias in the classrooms than in other areas of campus.

Students reported that instructors who were comfortable discussing diversity issues and who provided support and validation of students' experiences were most effective (Sue et al., 2009).

Studies demonstrate that journal writing and debating help students learn to examine more complexly (Green and Klug 1990; Reinsertion and Wells 1999).

## Questions to Consider

How might an instructor organize a class in a way that attempts to address this issue even before it emerges?

How might an instructor address this issue when it first emerges, whether prepared or otherwise?

How should an instructor continue to address the issue after initially engaging with it?

## Resources to Address these Cases

Bailey, Sarah F., Jade S. Jenkins, and Larissa K. Barber. 2016. "Students' reactions to course policy decisions: An empirical investigation." *Teaching of Psychology* 42 (1): 22-31.

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Donald, Brooke. 2016. *Stanford researchers find students have trouble judging the credibility of information online*. November 22. Accessed December 9, 2016. <https://ed.stanford.edu/news/stanford-researchers-find-students-have-trouble-judging-credibility-information-online>.

Hedley, Mark, and Linda Markowitz. 2001. "Avoiding Moral Dichotomies: Teaching Controversial Topics to Resistant Students." *Teaching Sociology* 29(2): 195-208.

Landis, Kay, ed. 2008. *Start Talking: A Handbook for Engaging Difficult Dialogues in Higher Education*. Anchorage: University of Alaska Anchorage and Alaska Pacific University. [http://www.difficultdialoguesuaa.org/images/uploads/Start\\_Talking\\_full\\_book\\_pdf.pdf](http://www.difficultdialoguesuaa.org/images/uploads/Start_Talking_full_book_pdf.pdf).

Library, UWGB Cofrin. 2016. *Information Literacy Outcomes Supported by the Cofrin Library*. September 23. Accessed December 9, 2016. <http://libguides.uwgb.edu/infolit>.

*Project Information Literacy (PIL)*. Accessed December 13, 2016. <http://www.projectinfolit.org/>.

Saudners, Shari, and Diana Kardia. 2016. *Creating Inclusive College Classrooms*. Accessed December 9, 2016. [http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/p3\\_1](http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/p3_1).

Vanderbilt University, Center for Teaching. 2016. *Difficult Dialogues*. Accessed December 9, 2016. <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/difficult-dialogues/>.

## The Scenarios

\* A student with strong political leanings and convictions refuses to accept statistical data contrary to her views. She firmly believes, in particular, that social science statistics presented in class are "made up" to further "the agenda" of the opposing view. While she is not overly disruptive, she frequently says as much during class discussions.

\* A student cites misleading "sources" to defend her position that one racial group is "intellectually inferior." When debated by others in the class, the student cites the syllabus which states that "all perspectives are considered valuable."

\* You have given a large group assignment for which it has come time to check in on student progress. A group of students has been conducting their group work primarily on Facebook and by text messaging rather than in D2L. You note that while the group is doing well overall but that one student is performing poorly. She initially says that this is because she "does not like her group." During one-on-one conferences, you learn that this is because the other members of her group were using insensitive and derogatory speech towards her.

\* During a current events discussion in an upper-level business course, a student makes a comment which it would seem he does not initially realize is racist. Another student interjects before you can call on her and begins to verbally abuse the student calling him "an ignorant racist."

\* On a day when subject matter dictates a particularly politically-oriented discussion, a student makes an unsubstantiated argument. Before you can interject to better tease out her reasoning, another student does; while you happen to agree with the latter's point and know it to be "closer to the truth," you note that his claims go equally unsubstantiated.

\* You prefer to teach in a relaxed classroom environment. You and most students are comfortable using 'swear words' in your course discussion. Several weeks into the semester, a student sends you an email saying he is uncomfortable with this language.

\* Students are creating sculptures as a semester-long project in a visual arts course. One student expresses his "artistic freedom" by creating an inflammatory and hateful piece of art.

\* Midway through the semester, a student approaches you during passing time before class to tell you he would like you and his classmates to begin using a different gender pronoun.

\* Despite a statement regarding "acceptable source materials" pertaining to a class discussion, a number of students repeatedly quote and reference the Bible, which is not on the source materials list, to support their points. The students argue that "the Bible should be on all lists of acceptable materials."

\* A student in an intro-level literature course insists on using racial slurs when referring to minority groups. She does so in both in-class discussion and written work.

CRLT's guide for  
 "Responding to Difficult Moments"  
<http://www.crlt.umich.edu/multicultural-teaching/difficult-moments>