Managing the 2020 Election on Campus

Plan Ahead
What kind of conversation do you want to facilitate?
How will you moderate discussion?
What level of conflict are you willing to allow in the discussion?
Will you connect the discussion to course topics?

Set Ground Rules
For example:
- Listen with empathy and strive toward understanding
- Speak honestly and without hostility
- Attend to the impact of our words on other people
- Remain in relationship with one another
- Treat one another with respect
- Stay present in the room/discussion
- Request permission to share someone’s words with others not in the room (do not text, tweet, email, or post what is said here without permission)

Emphasize Voluntariness
This will protect those who feel uncomfortable sharing their opinions.

Consider the Psychological Impact
Students may:
- Have difficulty keeping track of tasks
- Have difficulty prioritizing tasks
- Have a hard time engaging with others
- Have difficulty with time management
- Freeze in stressful situations

Practice Humility
Regardless of who wins, encourage students to avoid de-humanizing language and broad blame-casting.

Provide Context
Especially for international students
USA.gov Presidential Election Process
https://www.usa.gov/election
CNN: 2020 election explained
BBC “US election 2020: A really simple guide”

Strategies to Manage Stress
Inform students: talk about ways stress may affect the body and mind
Be aware students are experiencing a high cognitive load, and provide extra attention to guiding them through tasks and skills
Connect with students
Be flexible
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When Difficult Conversations Arise

Open The Front Door (OTFD):

Observe: concrete, factual observations "I have noticed..."

Think: thoughts based on observation "I think..."

Feel: emotions "I feel..."

Desire: specific request "I would like..."

Example:
"I'm noticing a lot of murmuring after that last statement and I think some of you might have strong feelings about the topic. I feel that it is best that we stop and take a moment to reflect further because I would like for us all to understand the complexity of this issue."

Other Strategies

Clarification
"What I heard was..."

Depersonalize:
"Why might others disagree as well?"

Inquire Then Feel:
"Let's consider the evidence, because when I hear that, I feel..."

Pause & Reflect:
Stop and write what you think, feel, heard

Connect Students to Campus Resources

https://counseling.emory.edu/resources/political-climate.html

http://campuslife.emory.edu/about/initiatives/evi/index.html

https://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/about/letters/newsletters.html

Works Cited:

https://blogs.uoregon.edu/keepteaching/teaching-in-turbulent-times-toolkit/

https://www.coursera.org/instructor/drellenottmarshall

https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/crisis/

https://www.fearlessdialogues.com/

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