

Teaching During and After the 2024 Election

The Office of Faculty Development
Western Michigan University
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During the election season, higher education institutions can often be the site of much debate, voter outreach, and candidate focus. This guide is designed to provide faculty, staff, and graduate students with resources for connecting students to voter information and well-being assistance, for handling challenging conversations in class, and for attending to their own well-being.

Voting Resources

While some students may be deeply engaged in political activity, others may simply want information on voting. Advocating for participation in the electoral process encourages students to learn about the voting process and the importance of civic engagement. Western Michigan University's We Vote initiative encourages students to register to vote. Sharing the website with students, especially the page instructing them on how to develop a voting plan, will ensure they have the resources they need to cast a ballot.

Links

- [WMU We Vote Site](#)
- Anderson, Jill. "[Teaching the Election in Politically Charged Times](#)." Harvard Graduate School of Education, 25 September 2024.
- Foxx, Kerry W. "[Balancing Neutrality and Support: Encouraging Students' Political Engagement without Getting Political Yourself](#)." *Higher Education Jobs*, 15 May 2023.

Supporting Student Well-Being

Election debates, rallies, and debates on TV or in social media can cause anxiety, but concerns about the safe transfer of power—an aspect of U.S. political life that up until 2021 had been taken for granted by generations of Americans—can also be cause for concern. As such, students may be feeling stress not only prior to the election but throughout the Fall 2024 semester and into the Spring 2025 semester.

Historically, many U.S. citizens have struggled to get the right to vote, and many of our students identify as members of groups that have been targeted for debate during this election. In addition to becoming familiar with Western Michigan University's well-being resources, you can also consider other ways to support our students during this period.

Links

- [WMU Health and Well-Being Resources](#)
- [WMU Refer a Student Concern Form](#)
- Mowreader, Ashley. "[Student Wellness Tip: Supporting Students in Political Uncertainty](#)." *Inside Higher Ed*, 30 September 2024.
- Ramirez, Dayanna. "[Impacts of Elections on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color \(BIPOC\): A Guide for Faculty, Staff & Campus Leaders in Supporting Students](#)." Rise Center at UCLA.
- "[How to Support LGBTQ+ Young People Ahead of the 2024 Election](#)." *The Trevor Project* blog post, 10 September 2024.

Handling Challenging Conversations

Even experienced educators who research and teach in disciplines where difficult conversations are an integral aspect of the curriculum sometimes find themselves caught off guard when a conversation goes in an unanticipated direction.

One way to prepare for these situations is to work with your students to develop discussion norms. Ideally, this occurs early in the semester, but it is **never too late** to set aside class time to establish basic norms. Having students participate in this exercise means that they are much more likely to take the norms seriously so that if you end up needing to reference them during a heated discussion, the norms have a much better chance of being respected.

Links:

- For detailed information on how to work with students to establish discussion norms, you can consult WMU's April 2024 training, "A Holistic Approach to Addressing Challenging Topics in University Courses," available under the "Meeting Students Where They Are" heading in our [Past Events](#) page.
- [The Morning After: Managing the Day\(s\) and Week\(s\) after Election Day](#)". 2024. AACU & Institute of Democracy in Higher Education.
- Aviles, Mary and Mylien T. Duong. "[Maintaining Campus Community During the 2024 Election: A Guide for Leaders, Faculty and Staff](#)." *Constructive Dialogue Institute*, 2024.
- Duong, Mylien T. "[Facilitating Contentious Conversations in Your Classroom](#)." *Teaching in Higher Ed* podcast, Episode 532, 22 August 2024.
- Metro, Rosalie. "[Mindful Teaching in Moments of Tension](#)." *Inside Higher Ed*, 8 October 2024.
- "[What to Do in a Challenging Moment](#)," University of Minnesota Center for Educational Innovation blog, accessed 30 September 2024.
- "[Civic Discourse as a Tool to Create Community](#)" Towson University Magazine.
- "[Preparing to Teach During the 2024 Election](#)." Center for Research on Teaching and Learning, The University of Michigan, 4 September 2024.

- [“Guidelines for Discussing Difficult or High-Stakes Topics.”](#) Center for Research on Teaching and Learning, The University of Michigan. Accessed on 26 September 2024.
- [“Teaching in Tumultuous Times.”](#) Eberly Center, Carnegie Mellon University. Accessed on 26 September 2024.

Supporting Faculty and Graduate Instructor Well-Being

Over the last five years, instructors have experienced several disruptive events: pandemic-era teaching adjustments, the release of Generative AI, and the ongoing political divisions and international conflicts that have impacted our lives and our campuses. Taking advantage of health and wellness benefits and prioritizing our own mental health and well-being is an important goal. The Office of Faculty Development is here to help with your professional development planning. Here are some additional resources:

Links:

- Abrams, Zara. [“Managing Political Stress.”](#) *Monitor on Psychology*, American Psychological Association, 23 July 2024.
- Chatterjee, Rhitu. [“Stressed about Politics? Here are 5 Ways to Take Care of Your Mental Health.”](#) *NPR Morning Edition*, 19 July 2024.
- St Fleur, Miranda Stratton, Shaila Kotadia, and Matthew Griffith. [“Addressing Election Stress in the Workplace.”](#) *Inside Higher Ed*, 22 October 2024.
- [Western Michigan University Benefit Guide](#) (current up to Fall 2024)