Engaging Students in Critical Thinking Related to Activism and Protests on College Campuses

Classroom Discussion Suggestions

Below are suggestions and resources for faculty to frame and engage students in a classroom discussion about the issues and dynamics raised in the activism and protests on college campuses (such as at the University of Missouri).

1. Faculty Preparation

As you prepare to engage your students in this conversation, you may want to think about the following:

- Why do I want to bring this discussion to the class?
- What is my comfort level with the topic both intellectually and emotionally?
- How comfortable am I sharing my own knowledge level and emotional feelings regarding this case/issue?
- How might my identity(ies), as well as the demographic composition of the class impact the discussion?
- What will I share regarding my goals and intentions for bringing this topic to the class?

Articles that may be of help for engaging students in this discussion:

- Review of above article: Volk, S. (2015). Preparing Your Class: Listening to Understand

2. Curriculum, Process, and Pedagogy Considerations

To help build some common understanding, you may wish to share a news or video clip that captures the essence of what is happening. This will help provide a common reference point for the discussion.

Video Clips:

- Action News (Wolfe statement on not resigning) note the comments after this clip
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eh_aOHNlyjs
- NBC news (resignation)
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ojQyJUbM8nQ
- MSNBC (Missouri student body president comments on the resignation)
  https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9J91iaT0t0
Free write:
Ask students to write for 2-5 minutes about their observations, personal reactions, and questions about what is happening at the University of Missouri and the wave of protests occurring across campuses.

Discussion:
Invite students to engage in a discussion about what is happening. Some potential questions are:

- What are the key issues that are emerging and/or revealed through these events? What's at stake?
- What would be a just/fair/productive outcome? Why do you think this?
- Why is there this level of intensity and engagement?
- What compels people to action?
- What things from this course help you frame and think about what is happening?
- What is the role of leaders on campus to address/engage? faculty? students?
- What compels you to act or not about a social issue?
- What is your own emotional response? (Name the emotions.) Why do you think you feel these ways?

3. UVM RESOURCES FOR INCIDENTS OF BIAS & DISCRIMINATION

Faculty are encouraged to share the following resources with students.

- UVM’s Bias Response Program (BRP) addresses incidents of bias targeting UVM students, faculty, and http://www.uvm.edu/~saffairs/bias/
- UVM’s Affirmative Action & Equal Opportunity Office resolves complaints of discrimination based on race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, positive HIV-related blood test results, status as a disabled or Vietnam Era Veteran, or gender identity or expression. http://www.uvm.edu/~aaeo/pages.php?id=harassment

4. RELATED TOPICS

The following are video clips and articles that are on related topics that you may wish to incorporate into the conversation.

- Article: Huffington Post Nov 17, 2015 - In this letter, former faculty of color who have left MU document their collective experiences and observations of interpersonal and structural racial oppression while at MU, and the impact on faculty of color. - As People of Color Formerly Employed by Mizzou, We Demand Change"
- Article: The Atlantic - A fight over Halloween costumes at Yale has devolved into an effort to ... All else being equal, outsiders who also feel like racial or ethnic ... The Halloween Costume Controversy at Yale's Silliman ...
Article: The New York Times Nov 8, 2015 - Weeks of simmering racial tension at Yale University boiled over in recent days into a debate over whether the administration was sensitive... *Yale's Halloween Advice Stokes a Racially Charged Debate...*

Video clip: ‘Nobody Got Hurt!’: Fox Panel Blows Up Over Missouri Protests, Political Correctness by *Usa News Page* A Fox News panel went off the rails tonight in a fierce argument over the University of Missouri protests and whether it's yet ... *This clip could be used to ask why Fox decided to pit these two speaker against each other.*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-HT00dhNak

Video clip: In this installment of the Illipsis, Jay Smooth argues that our racial discourse has become just as shallow and predictable as the latest cookie cutter pop songs on the radio, lamenting the endless cycle of gaffe, backlash and defensiveness that dominates media coverage of racism, …

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WifALQna4HQ

doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.17763/haer.59.3.058342114k266250


5. **General Resources Compiled by UVM’s Center for Cultural Pluralism**

This link connects to websites related to cultural pluralism, racial equality and social justice:  
http://www.uvm.edu/~ccpuvm/?Page=websites.html&SM=diversymenu.html