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Post-Election Toolkit

The past few months have created unprecedented challenges for our students, our institutions, and our democracy. The deep divisions that marked the beginning of the 21st-century have become chasms of almost unimaginable depth. Our campuses are being asked to navigate an increasingly complex landscape where traditional democratic norms are being challenged. Most likely your campus has experienced tensions or levels of unrest, your students, faculty and staff are most likely feeling overwhelmed, confused and vulnerable about the polarized landscape. Thomas Jefferson argued eloquently that the key to a successful democracy was an educated citizenry. Your role as Stewards of Place speaks to the value of public higher education for the public good and ensures that our students have the knowledge, skills and experiences to be fully engaged citizens, and that we create the conditions that ensure students welcome and actively seek out opportunities for civic engagement while in college, and as professionals.

A hallmark of our democracy is our voice, our first amendment rights, and our ability to effect change through the ballot box. But this election is different. The pandemic, racism, threats of civil unrest, and uncertainty of peaceful transition are creating an environment of vulnerability and frustration for our students, faculty, staff and communities. This toolkit provides resources and strategies for how to navigate post-election so that our institutions can continue to provide a path forward for our students and communities.

Workshops/ Training for Faculty and Staff

- Deliberative Dialogue, Civil Discourse training
- Digital Literacy training
- Understanding Ideology and Bias via the 4Quad Diagnostic

We have also created a **Community of Practitioner** portal for faculty and staff to get advice and resources from ADP peers and to find mentors - https://discord.gg/HNj88Qd

ADP is running multiple national deliberative dialogue events to debrief and discuss the election, open to faculty, staff and students. Contact Felice Nudelman nudelmanf@aascu.org and Cathy Copeland copelandc@aascu.org for the schedule, or to arrange workshops, training and deliberative dialogue events for your campus.

Workshop Descriptions

Deliberative Dialogue Workshop
This workshop provides training in how to lead civil discourse and deliberative dialogue in the classroom or as larger campus, or campus-community activity. Our experts will discuss how to create an environment for safe and inclusive civil discourse on hot topic areas and explore the framework of intentionality and morality within deliberative dialogue, how robust civil discourse relates to student success outcomes, and provide examples of how to foster and inclusive campus environment.

Digital Literacy
The 2020 Election provides a launching pad to discuss how to navigate the post-truth era. Join experts in the fields of digital literacy and digital polarization, to explore messaging, persuasion, and rhetoric; delve into the psychological principles of mere exposure effect and trusting authorities; and discuss how to interact with "fake news," political platforms, factchecking, and charged language. We will include an in-depth discussion of how the "Mind over Chatter" modules can be utilized across the divisions and discuss strategies for integrating them into your curriculum. These modules focus on the cognitive biases that make us susceptible to faulty information in the first place, as well as the many subtle framing techniques used by a variety of media to obscure and mislead. The workshop will conclude with a focus on how the popular SIFT model can be adapted for fact-checking across disciplines and areas of exploration.

Understanding Ideology and Bias – the 4Quad Diagnostic
Are your classes or events inclusive to those with different political ideologies or are they tilting more to one side of the political spectrum? How do we understand political or ideological bias, our own or others? How do you know if your political engagement committee really represents a wide spectrum of political ideologies? Learn how this free 4Quads Political Diagnostic Tool can provide insight to the political ideology makeup of your classes, teams, and committees to guide conversations and address campus climate.

Previous Workshop Recordings

[Helping Students Navigate the Post-Election](#) (October 29, 2020): Includes strategies and resources for deliberative dialogue, ideology bias and the 4 Quad diagnostic along with other recommendations to support students as they navigate post-election

[Putting Voters First: Democratic Reforms](#) (October 28, 2020): A conversation with Colorado State Election Director, Judd Choate.

[Deliberative Dialogue Workshop: A Deeper Dive to Prepare for Elections and Debates](#) (October 9, 2020)

[Digital Literacy Workshop: A Deeper Dive to Prepare for Elections and Debates](#) (October 2, 2020)

[A Workshop to Prepare for the Elections and Debates](#) (September 25, 2020): An overview of Deliberate Dialogue, Digital Literacy, and Voter Engagement and Education.

[Not Politics as Usual: World War Zero, a Conversation With Former Secretary of State John Kerry and Former Governor John Kasich](#) (September 9, 2020)

Upcoming Events

So What Did You Think of the Election? A National Times Talk with Students
Wednesday, November 11, 2020: 1-2 p.m. EST Register here.
Join faculty, staff, and students from across the country for a national discussion to debrief and discuss the election. Designed to reach across differences and create a space for discourse, this national facilitated dialogue is based on the fundamental value of the pursuit of knowledge for the public good. We will provide access to articles covering the election and use those for guided questions and prompts for a lively conversation. Open to all ADP campuses, faculty, staff and students. Register here or contact Cathy Copeland (copelandc@aascu.org) with questions.

Cal U's popular Post-Election Analysis Forum livestreams Tuesday, November 10, 2020: 7 p.m. EST
Experts will analyze results at virtual event organized by California University of Pennsylvania
Individuals across the country are invited to attend Cal U's premier election-season event – a timely analysis of election results by a panel of nationally recognized speakers, sponsored by the campus's nonpartisan American Democracy Project. Political analyst **Jon Delano**, the Money & Politics Editor at KDKA-TV in Pittsburgh, will serve as moderator for the **Dr. Melanie Blumberg Post-Election Analysis Forum**, presented by California University of Pennsylvania. The forum has been named for the late Dr. Melanie Blumberg, a political science professor and founder of Cal U's American Democracy Project chapter. **William Binning**, emeritus professor of political science at Youngstown State University, Ohio, will deliver a brief remembrance during the event.

Viewers can watch the event live on Zoom at https://calu.zoom.us/j/97980229927 (ID number 979 8022 9927) or join by phone at 1-646-558-8656. Questions for Delano and the panelists may be submitted by email to ElectionQ@calu.edu in advance or during the presentation.

The forum's panel of distinguished experts includes:
• **Alan Abramowitz**, the Alben W. Barkley Professor of Political Science at Emory University in Atlanta, Ga. Author of *The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation and the Rise of Donald Trump* (2018), he is recognized as one of the nation's leading forecasters of presidential and congressional elections.
• **Rachel Bitecofer**, a nationally recognized election forecaster and a senior fellow at The Niskanen Center, a nonpartisan, nonprofit think tank in Washington, D.C. Her work has appeared in media outlets including The New York Times, The Washington Post, Politico, MarketWatch, The Guardian and the BBC.
• **Amber M. Gaffney**, a social psychologist whose research focuses on group processes, intergroup relations and how people's identities mobilize social change. An assistant professor at Humboldt State University in Arcata, Calif., her work has been featured on National Public Radio and the BBC.
• **Louis Jacobson**, political columnist and senior correspondent at PolitiFact. Senior author of the 2016, 2018 and 2020 editions of *The Almanac of American Politics,* he has been a visiting scholar at West Virginia and St. Bonaventure universities, & he teaches how to contribute to regional PolitiFact projects.
• **Tony Norman,** a columnist and book review editor for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. He is president of the National Society of Newspaper Columnists, a member of the advisory board of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists and a founding board member of the International Free Expression Project.
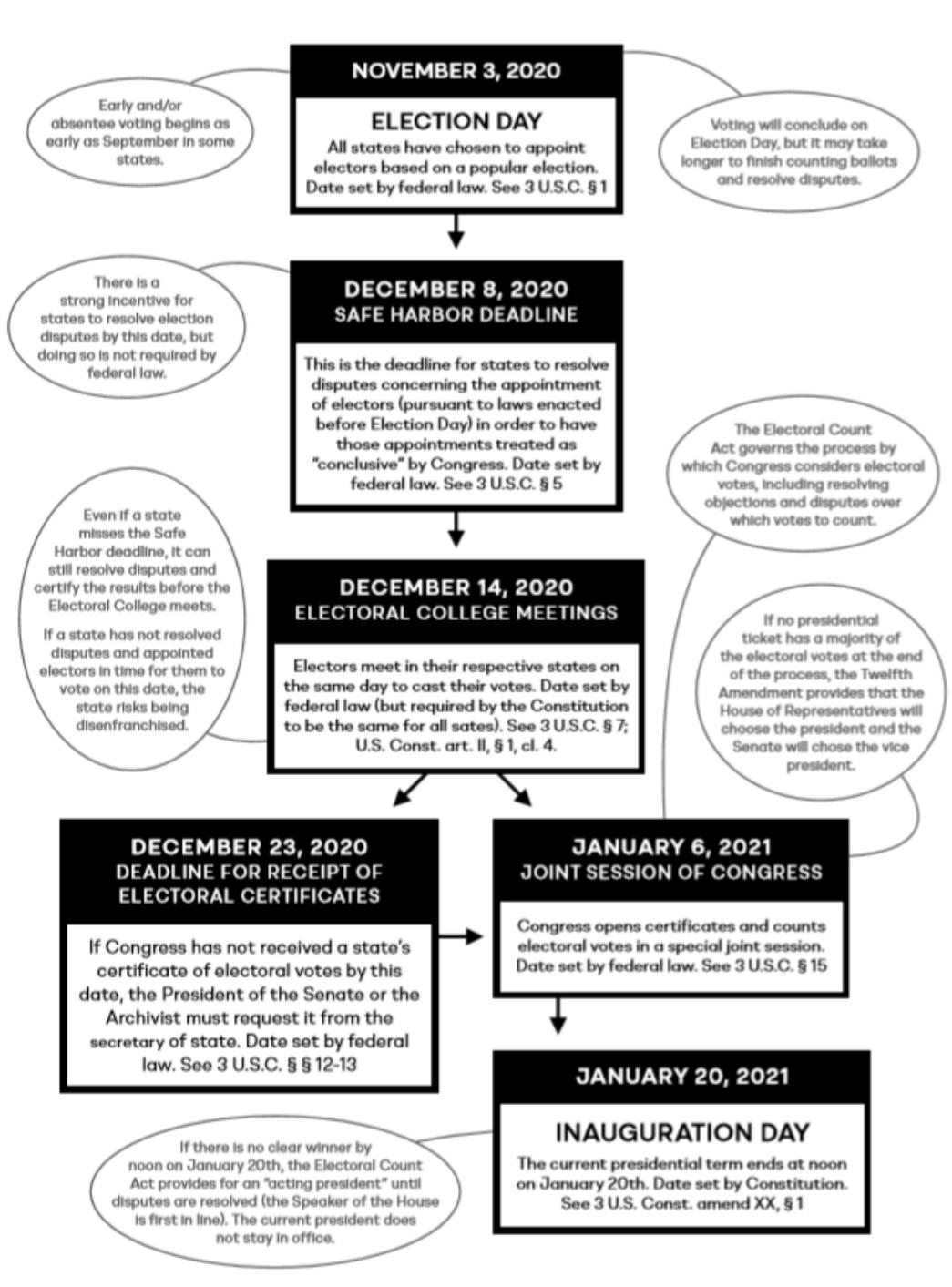
Key Dates

NOVEMBER 3, 2020
ELECTION DAY
All states have chosen to appoint electors based on a popular election. Date set by federal law. See 3 U.S.C. § 1

Early and/or absentee voting begins as early as September in some states.

Voting will conclude on Election Day, but it may take longer to finish counting ballots and resolve disputes.

DECEMBER 8, 2020
SAFE HARBOR DEADLINE
This is the deadline for states to resolve disputes concerning the appointment of electors (pursuant to laws enacted before Election Day) in order to have those appointments treated as "conclusive" by Congress. Date set by federal law. See 3 U.S.C. § 5

There is a strong incentive for states to resolve election disputes by this date, but doing so is not required by federal law.

The Electoral Count Act governs the process by which Congress considers electoral votes, including resolving objections and disputes over which votes to count.

DECEMBER 14, 2020
ELECTORAL COLLEGE MEETINGS
Electors meet in their respective states on the same day to cast their votes. Date set by federal law (but required by the Constitution to be the same for all sates). See 3 U.S.C. § 7; U.S. Const. art. II, § 1, cl. 4.

Even if a state misses the Safe Harbor deadline, it can still resolve disputes and certify the results before the Electoral College meets.

If a state has not resolved disputes and appointed electors in time for them to vote on this date, the state risks being disenfranchised.

If no presidential ticket has a majority of the electoral votes at the end of the process, the Twelfth Amendment provides that the House of Representatives will choose the president and the Senate will chose the vice president.

DECEMBER 23, 2020
DEADLINE FOR RECEIPT OF ELECTORAL CERTIFICATES
If Congress has not received a state's certificate of electoral votes by this date, the President of the Senate or the Archivist must request it from the secretary of state. Date set by federal law. See 3 U.S.C. § § 12-13

JANUARY 6, 2021
JOINT SESSION OF CONGRESS
Congress opens certificates and counts electoral votes in a special joint session. Date set by federal law. See 3 U.S.C. § 15

JANUARY 20, 2021
INAUGURATION DAY
The current presidential term ends at noon on January 20th. Date set by Constitution. See 3 U.S. Const. amend XX, § 1

If there is no clear winner by noon on January 20th, the Electoral Count Act provides for an "acting president" until disputes are resolved (the Speaker of the House is first in line). The current president does not stay in office.

Chart: Civic Alliance

Additional Resources

Digital Literacy

SIFT: Digital Literacy Guide

Developed by Mike Caulfield from Washington State University Vancouver, the "SIFT" is an acronym that reminds us to:

| STOP | INVESTIGATE THE SOURCE | FIND BETTER COVERAGE | TRACE CLAIMS, QUOTES AND MEDIA TO THE ORIGINAL CONTEXT |

These four simple "moves"—and a handful of web-based shortcuts, several of which you probably already know—can rapidly improve digital information literacy and help curb the spread of false, misleading, manipulated, and improperly-framed information.

- If a piece of content makes you feel strong emotions, surprises you, makes you feel vindication, or creates an irresistibly strong desire to share it: **Stop**. Use that feeling as a reminder to check it. Problematic information often uses emotional resonance as its first line of attack.
- Then **Investigate the Source**. See if the sharing source has enough credibility of their own to be worth your attention or a share on social media. You can hover over with your cursor as a first check, and follow up with a URL + Wikipedia search. Also: reverse Google image search.
- If the reputation of the source is not up to the size of the claim, or if you simply want to see whether more trusted outlets are reporting on a particular claim or story, **Find Better Coverage** using a Google news search (for recent news). Watch your search terms, and keep an eye out for fact-checks in the results. If the claim is particularly contentious or breaking, you may want to wait until multiple sources report it. This is also known as "trading up" for better coverage.
- Even when you recognize a shared source, **Trace Claims, Quotes, and Media to the Original Context** to make sure the way the story, photo, or video is framed is correct. Use Control-F (or its equivalent if on a Mac or mobile) to see if terms in the summary appear in the article. Check the date to make sure that the story is truly related to current events.

Suggestions for teaching about digital literacy:

- Explore the super-abundance of information on the modern web (or "information plenitude") and how this pertains to the precipitous rise of **problematic information**
- Define **basic terminology**: disinformation, misinformation, click-bait, data-dredging (or "p-hacking"), and improper framing of information;
- Use **SIFT** and other web-native techniques for fact-checking and lateral reading
- Impress the necessity of practicing a daily media habit, developing a short list of trusted sources, and practicing basic mindfulness to reflect on your information diet and promote good information hygiene.

Introduction to Mind over Chatter:
Essential Skills for Navigating the Post-Truth Era
A blog post from March 29, 2020 by Paul G. Cook of Indiana University Kokomo

Mind over Chatter: Essential Skills for Navigating the Post-Truth Era is a series of five interactive, Canvas-based learning modules designed specifically for first-year college students and aimed at curbing the spread of problematic information in our time. Made possible by a generous grant from the Rita Allen Foundation and RTI International, these modules can be dropped into any course at almost any level. The Mind Over Chatter modules were created at Indiana University Kokomo by Mark Canada, Paul Cook, Polly Boruff-Jones (Oakland University), and Christina Downey.

Grounded in cognitive psychology and reflective pedagogy, this digital intervention provides students with a fluid set of digital skills, habits, and a basic working knowledge of how to navigate the web and social media, as well as recognize information that is false, misleading, inaccurate, manipulated, or improperly-framed. Students also learn about the complexities of information-gathering and exploration in a digital environment where information and media are abundant and cheap, while attention is rare and much more expensive.

Imminently practical and self-contained, the following modules may be completed in order or as stand-alone activities in virtually any course or discipline. Each module takes approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete.

The six modules in *Mind over Chatter* are available now for free download or import in IU Expand (open access) and the Canvas Commons (Indiana University credentials required). We also encourage you to download and read the *Mind over Chatter* teaching manual, a document that includes a wealth of collaborative activities, writing projects, discussion prompts, and other materials to introduce students to the complexities of media and mindful information-gathering in the post-digital era.

The five modules (plus one epistemological overview) are as follows:

1. **Initiation into MoC**: This overview, which is embedded in the MoC Teaching Manual, is a general overview of the nature of knowledge, facts, and truth, and how higher education works to help students form an understanding of truth in a world full of complex information and diverse perspectives.
2. **Framing Effects**: This module introduces students to the elements of messaging, persuasion, and rhetoric that shape our understandings of the world.

3. **Paradox of Authority**: This module explains the relationship between knowledge and trust of authorities/experts, and how that can both help and hinder our comprehension of reality.
4. **Mere Exposure Effect**: This module introduces students to a psychological phenomenon that influences what we believe and how we become committed to certain beliefs, ideas, and assumptions.
5. **Confirmation Bias**: This module engages students in an interactive activity meant to reveal how our brains form rapid understandings and then work to preserve those understandings in the face of both confirming and disconfirming or even contrary evidence.
6. **Mindfulness, Media, and Misinformation**: This module helps students understand how mindfulness, reflection, and simple web-based search techniques can help them guard against skewed, incomplete, misleading, improperly framed, or inaccurate beliefs about reality.

In the classroom, experienced writing instructors and trained peer instructors guide students in discussion, reflection, and exploration of the concepts and skills showcased in the modules. We are currently piloting *Mind over Chatter* in first-year writing courses (ENG-W 131) because of their focus on critical reading and literacy as students develop as academic writers, researchers, and responsible users of information.

Fact-Checking Resources

Sifting Through the Coronavirus Pandemic **(Washington State University Vancouver)**
The resources on this site use the SIFT method of digital fact-checking to engage students in parsing out fact, fiction, and farce in the face of the coronavirus/COVID-19 pandemic.

"A Handy List of Reputable Coronavirus Information"
This curated post includes links to sources of reputable information like the CDC and the WHO as well as a smattering of resources for detecting and debunking misinformation online.

Data & Society is an independent nonprofit research organization that produces original research, reports, and teaching-related documents to support evidence-based public debate about emerging technology.

Truth Decay: An Initial Exploration of Diminishing Role of Facts and Analysis in American Public Life This Rand report explores the causes and consequences of what the authors term "Truth Decay", and examines eras of US history to identify evidence of Truth Decay's trends. It also outlines a research agenda and a strategy for investigating the causes of Truth Decay.

Snopes.com
The granddaddy of urban legend fact-checking sites, Snopes has been ferreting out problematic information on the web and doing deep-dive research into urban legends since 1994.

PolitiFact.com
Recipient of a Pulitzer Prize, this fact-checking website uses its patented "Truth-o-Meter" to rate the accuracy of statements made by politicians and other public figures.

FactCheck.org
Published by the University of Pennsylvania's Annenberg Public Policy Center, this nonpartisan, nonprofit fact-checking website monitors the accuracy of statements made by politicians and others in positions of power.

Media Matters for America
Launched in 2004, this nonprofit site is openly liberal in its political bias and its commitment to fact-checking "conservative misinformation" ("About").

News Busters
This site is a project of the conservative-leaning Media Research Center. Their mission is "to provide immediate exposure of national media bias, unfairness, inaccuracy, and occasional idiocy" ("AboutNewsBusters.org").
Consider these as well:
A Media Specialist's Guide to the Internet
an interactive and nuanced Media Bias Chart
the New York Times Tracking Viral Misinformation column
a "Spot the Troll" quiz

Deliberative Dialogue/Civil Discourse Resources

"Times Talk" Example Tool Kit
Updated September 2020 by Janet Hoffmann, Professor of Rhetoric, Coordinator of the American Democracy Project at Georgia College and State University

This guide provides a template for setting up and administering a Times Talk program at your college or university. It is based on the experience at Georgia College which was the first institution of higher learning in the United States to institute Times Talk on campus in 2005 by Political Science faculty member Gregg Kaufman.

Times Talk is a weekly discussion/conversation series on current issues and events. At Georgia College faculty, staff, students, and local community members meet at noon on Wednesdays to engage in a 50 minute lively dialogue about important issues reported in the *New York Times (NYT)*. Each conversation is facilitated by one or more faculty, staff, students, or local community members who choose the topic and background reading article(s). One or more articles in the *NYT* or other relevant credible information sources provide a starting point for each discussion. Our Times Talks are open to all campus and local community members, though your college or university will set your own guidelines based on your individual goals and constraints.

Ten Basic Steps to Get Started

1. **Choose a coordinator** to organize and administer the program and promote the series
2. **Determine a schedule, place, and time**. Weekly, semi-weekly, monthly? Your location should be central, accessible, conducive to conversation (allow for circular seating), and have access to parking if you are inviting people from off-campus. We have found the campus library best meets our needs. In terms of timing, keep it to 50-60 minutes ideally and think about what times of day/week there might be the fewest conflicts for the people you want to attend. Because we wanted to maximize staff and local community member access, we chose noon-12:50 for our weekly discussions, which also fit into class session times on Wednesdays.
3. **Recruit** faculty, staff, and students to facilitate discussions at the beginning of each semester. Prospective student facilitators may be drawn from specific courses or student organizations. Facilitators choose a topic and send one or more articles from the *Times* to the Times Talk coordinator ahead of their session.
4. **Promote** and disseminate the week's topic several days before the scheduled Times Talk. Use email, social media, and other university communication outlets. Include a URL link to the background article(s).
5. **Create** and strategically place Times Talk signs, posters, and banners around campus in places where they will be widely seen.
6. **Free food** helps! Arrange for food and/or beverages to nourish participants.
7. **Provide copies** of the background article(s) at the venue for those who might not have had a chance to read in advance.
8. **Welcome** the participants and announce the day's topic.
9. **Launch the discussion**. If necessary, assist the facilitator(s) in drawing as many people as possible into the conversation with a particular focus on student contributions.
10. **End promptly**. Thank the facilitator and participants and announce the next session's facilitator.

50-minute Timeline Template

1. The coordinator/host takes 2-3 minutes to a) welcome the participants, b) review discussion etiquette (silence devices, be present, actively participate, listen to understand, hear each other out, disagree respectfully, be brief), and c) introduce the day's discussion topic, the background NYT articles that will be referred to during the discussion, and the day's facilitator(s).
2. The facilitator(s) typically take(s) 10-15 minutes max to share their perspectives and insights on the topic question, integrating information from the background articles to set up a shared context or frame for the group discussion. The more interactive the facilitator can be the better, as Times Talk is designed to be a conversation rather than a lecture. When you meet FTF, I recommend you set up the seating in a circle (or use circular tables) to encourage participation.
3. As much as possible of the 50 minutes should be devoted to eliciting participant comments, perspectives, questions, and dialogue.
4. The host should give a 2 minute warning and hand it back to the facilitator(s) for their closing remarks, after which the host will thank everyone, invite them to stay for one on one conversation if they would like, and encourage everyone to attend the next scheduled Times Talk.
5. It is imperative to strictly adhere to the time limit and make sure to let everyone go at the designated end time, as people will need to get to classes and back to their offices on time.

Facilitator pre-discussion preparation tips

1. We recommend that Times Talk discussion topic titles be composed to end with a question stem, so that participants are primed for a conversation and exploration of a variety of perspectives and insights rather than a lecture. For example: "Should the U.S. make college tuition free?"

2. Prepare a brief well formulated summary or key quotes from each background article. Be sure to define any necessary terms and explain any confusing aspects. If you have questions about anything in the article, more than likely everyone else does too. A good summary gets everyone on the same page. Odds are not everyone has read the article and a concise summary will help clarify terms and definitions and get the group thinking.

3. Bring prepared discussion questions and/or interactive breakout activities: Have a set of questions to ask to keep the discussion moving. Your questions should be a) about the article and/or issues surrounding it, b) help move the discussion/keep it going, c) be open-ended (who/what/when/why/how/where…) rather than yes/no. Try to have at least five prepared open-ended discussion question prompts. You might also use a mini-debate or breakout pair-share or small group format at any time to respond to the discussion questions and increase participant involvement. *Note: A good first question to ask is if "anyone has any initial responses, comments, or concerns relating to the article?"

Discussion moderating tips

1. Limit your intro/summary to 10-12 minutes max and leave 35-40 minutes for the participants to interact and contribute.

2. Be comfortable waiting 20 seconds for a response to any question you throw out before you speak again. This is very hard but very necessary. Research tells us it takes up to that long for the receiver to process the question asked and formulate a response in their head, so make yourself count silently to 20 in your head while smiling and waiting for someone to respond. They will if you give them time, trust me. The rookie mistake is for the facilitator to move on or say something too quickly because they are uncomfortable with silence. Silence is your friend more often than you think for promoting good discussion.

3. Listen to each response and let the discussion develop authentically by encouraging piggybacking on previous comments and asking spontaneous follow-up questions. Trust the room. Odds are the discussion won't go exactly the way you planned and that is the beauty of a good conversation, you dive in and end up with unanticipated insights you hadn't imagined beforehand because of the variety and diversity of participant's contributions. As long as there is meaningful, lively, and relevant discussion it is a success!

4. If more than one person has an immediate response they would like to make to a particular prompt question, tell participants to raise their hand (virtually if not in ftf mode) and then "stack" them by giving each a number or noting their name if you know it so that they can put their hand down knowing you will get to them for that question.

5. If you are using a virtual platform like Zoom, set up the chat box options so that participants can only chat with everyone (disable the private chat function), and encourage them to respond with comments, questions, resource and article links in the chat box, and bring those questions and comments into the discussion.

6. Draw from any examples below that may help you in the moment:

   Questions to stifle a dominator and/or enhance more participation:
   - Thank you. What do others think about that?
   - How would anybody else respond to the concerns just expressed?
   - I'd like to create some space for those of you who have been quieter. Someone else?
   - Would anyone we haven't heard from yet like to weigh in on this?
   - What ideas haven't been expressed yet?
   - Does that bring up anything for anyone?

   Transition questions as you move from one issue/topic to the next
   - Is there anything else anyone would like to add or respond to concerning this issue or point before we move on to the next?
   - Let's have one more comment on this issue, and then we have to move on to a new topic.

   Questions that re-direct misinformation from a participant
   - Does anyone have a different perspective on that?
   - (use the article) "the article states….How does that fit in with the information you just gave us?
   - Would you give us a specific example to help clarify your point?

Other Tips

Align with other events. Hold Times Talks in coordination with related events on campus. At Georgie College, we hold a special constitutional Times Talk to coincide with Constitution Week.

Coordinate with all your campus media programs. We have a campus radio station, a local NPR affiliate radio station, a student-run television station and a student-run newspaper. We are able to provide half hour programming to our regional state-wide NPR radio audience via pre-recorded podcast interviews of our facilitators that go out the evening before our live Times Talks, which includes a 3-4 minute preview teaser via soundlcoud we send out with our live event announcements.

Be flexible. Sometimes local, national, or global events will dictate shifting the schedule to allow the time and space to discuss issues that are timely and relevant. Be prepared to revise the schedule as needed.

Look for unexpected facilitators. Faculty, staff and students are obvious choices as facilitators. Don't forget both alumni and the local community have a wealth of talent to draw upon too.

Provide food. Have we said this before? Like it or not, free food is a great incentive!

Facilitating Difficult Election Conversations

This guide was prepared by Dr. Carah Ong Whaley, associate director of the James Madison Center for Civic Engagement, to support faculty, staff, Resident Advisors, and students to engage in constructive conversations around the 2020 Elections, regardless of the outcomes.

In This Guide:
Important Points
Create agreed upon ground rules but provide open space for facilitated discussion.
Political IdentiTree Activity
Discuss why you are having the conversation.
Ask students to reflect on their own identities, prejudices, positions and biases and how these may impact their perspective on the election.
Ensure everyone has the opportunity to contribute and feel understood. Consider starting from a common text.
Lean in to politics and to discrepancies between ideals and reality.
Pose questions that allow students to express how they feel or what they are grappling with.
News information, Media Literacy, and Election Perceptions
Additional Resources
Resources from JMU Counseling Center

Important Points
- This has been a divisive election, but we can work together to address pressing public problems and to cultivate a more just and inclusive democracy.
- JMU believes in the safe and peaceful transition of power (if one is required by the election outcome) as central to democratic societies.
- Diversity is an asset that makes us stronger and more creative when we are inclusive and ensure that everyone has equitable access, voice and participation in discussions and decision making.
- No one's existence should ever be questioned. We believe in the dignity of every human being and believe that everyone should thrive.
- Politicians don't always live up to democratic ideals.
- We may not know the election results on November 3rd. Election administration is facilitated by localities, local election boards, and state departments of elections. There may be challenges to the results. Be patient, but persistent and willing to question.

Create agreed-upon ground rules but provide open space for facilitated discussion.
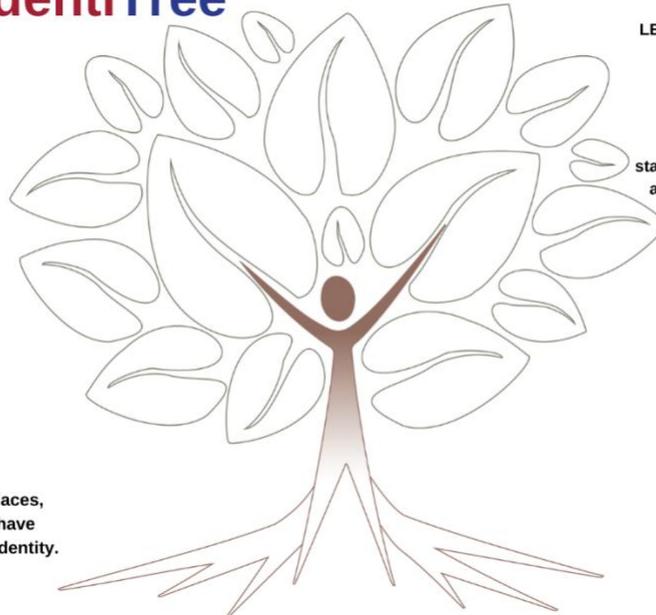Encourage collaboration over competition. Student reasoning improves when alternative viewpoints can be considered and engaged, and deliberation can help overcome polarization and reduce extremism.

Ground rules might include:
- Everyone's viewpoint counts equally.
- Share "air time." Especially online (e.g., on Zoom), there are lots of ways to contribute/participate that don't involve speaking, like in the chat box, an anonymous poll, etc.
- One person shares at a time.

- If you are hurt or harmed, say so and say why.
- Individuals can disagree, but don't personalize it; critique the ideas, reasoning, and evidence, not the person
- There are diverse perspectives in this conversation and we can talk respectfully even if we don't all agree.
- Hate speech will not be tolerated.
- This is not about changing minds. It's about listening and developing empathy and understanding.
- Avoid judgement and focus on listening with curiosity and for understanding.
- Confidentiality: what happens in the discussion, stays in the discussion.
- Consider adopting a "brave space" that allows people to take risks and speak candidly, but allows people to respond when it hurts their feelings and share why.

Political IdentiTree

LEAVES: Fill in the tree leaves with the following different types of social identities that contribute to your political identity by most important (biggest leaf) to least important (smallest leaf): age, socioeconomic status, parents' political affiliation, race and ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, education level.

ROOTS: Write the peoples, places, events and experiences that have contributed to your political identity.

Click here for a presentation using a Political IdentiTree to facilitate conversations about how social identity impacts political identities and behavior.

Discuss why you are having the conversation.
Elections can raise many emotions and not everyone will be satisfied with the outcomes. We can still work together on the many issues facing our community, nation, and world, even if our candidate or political party is not in power. Voting in elections is one of many ways people can participate in and influence decision-making.
JMU Civic has resources for other ways to get involved, including: public commenting on issues you care about to local boards and commissions; contacting elected and public officials about the issues you care about; or volunteering to fill the need of a local organization or community. Follow @JMUDukesVote on Insta for weekly ideas and resources.

Ask students to reflect on their own identities, prejudices, positions and biases and how these may impact their perspective on the election

- Reflect on your own identity, biases, and prejudices and be willing to authentically share how it influenced your perceptions of or reactions to the election.
- As a child, were you around people who were engaged in politics through their participation and/or conversations? If so, what memories do you have about being engaged in politics? If not, did anyone ever speak about why they were not more active?
- When did you first become aware of having political opinions? What do you think shaped them? Have your political opinions changed during this election cycle? Why/why not?
- How do you think the events we're living through this year may be affecting your political beliefs? Why?
- How would you feel about the election if you had a different identity?
- Resource: Gender and Intersectional Effects on Candidate Evaluation, Center for American Women and Politics, Rutgers University
- Resource: Voter Attitudes About Race and Gender Are More Divided than 2016, Pew Research Center.

Ensure everyone has the opportunity to contribute and feel understood. Consider starting from a common text.

- Suggest students listen to a podcast or read a common article or text ahead of time. Then start the discussion around that text. Suggested resource: JMU Psychology Professor Dr. Benjamin Blankenship on election emotions and how we can cope. https://www.jmu.edu/news/civic/2020/10-08-democracy-matters-episode-36.shtml
- Consider showing a photo or image from the election and asking for student responses to questions like: How does this image make you feel? What do you see in this image? How might someone from an opposing viewpoint from your own react to this image?
- JMU's Lisanby Museum has a current exhibit on voting rights. Use class time to explore a few of the images. Ask for student responses to the images and how their reactions may relate to feelings or experiences with the 2020 elections.

Lean in to politics and to discrepancies between ideals and reality

- Admit there are problems with political and partisan divisions in our country that make it difficult to solve public problems (e.g. climate change, immigration, etc.). Ask students for their ideas for addressing political divisions and for solving public problems.
- Students are knowledgeable about what is happening, but don't necessarily see politics and outcomes reflecting their knowledge, positionality, perspectives, or backgrounds. Ask them what they would like to see from elected leaders and from our government and for their ideas of how we might get there.

Pose questions that allow students to express how they feel or what they are grappling with

- What did the election mean to you?
- If you participated in the election, how did you feel about it? Why?
- Can you think of reasons why some people might be disappointed in the election outcome?
- Can you think of reasons why some people might be happy about the election outcome?
- How might those who have been historically underrepresented, marginalized, or minoritized feel about participating in the election or about the results? How can you uplift and support their perspectives and voices?

- What are ways you would like to see elected leaders work together on issues facing our community, nation, or world?
- What are some public issues that are important to you? How can you and others address those issues by engaging different levels of government and connecting with others in their community?
- What will you do to ensure we address issues facing our community, nation, or world? Offer some ideas: creating art, getting involved in student - like SGA - or community organizations, volunteering, providing research or expertise, uplift voices that are traditionally underrepresented, marginalized or minoritized, joining protests or petitions, writing public comments and attending local board and commission meetings on issues they care about, etc.).
- What barriers or challenges are there to addressing issues facing our community, nation and world? How can we overcome them?
- What is something that inspires you for the future of our democracy?
- What kind of reforms would like to see to make our democracy more just and inclusive?

News Information, Media Literacy, and Election Perceptions
- Ask students to reflect on how and from where they got news about the election.
- Show examples of how media sources can bias our perceptions of politics, elected officials, and trust in political institutions.
- Sources to explore with students: Pew Research Center; Political Divides Heading Into Election; People who get their news from social media are less knowledgeable; Many Americans get news on YouTube.
- MIT Study: How "information gerrymandering" influences voters.

Additional Facilitation Resources
- Self-facilitation conversation starters from Living Room Conversations
- World Cafe Method
- Respect Differences? Challenging the Common Guidelines in Social Justice Education
- Anti-Oppressive Facilitation for Democratic Process

About the American Association of State Colleges and Universities

The [American Association of State Colleges and Universities](#) (AASCU) is a Washington, D.C.-based higher education association of nearly 400 public colleges, universities, and systems whose members share a learning- and teaching-centered culture, a historic commitment to underserved student populations, and a dedication to research and creativity that advances their regions' economic progress and cultural development. These are institutions Delivering America's Promise.

About the American Democracy Project

The [American Democracy Project](#) (ADP)—a network of 296 public colleges and universities serving 2.7 million students across 48 states plus the District of Columbia—is committed to preparing students with the knowledge, skills and experiences to be informed and engaged citizens. We have worked diligently to build civic engagement as a lifelong practice and to instill civic agency in our students and across our institutions.

For questions about the Toolkit, contact Cathy Copeland at copelandc@aascu.org