

Handling Difficult Situations in Law School

Some Strategies to Consider...

- Think about the course ‘marketing’¹
- Consider how what you include – and don’t include – will affect the course climate
- Gather information from those in the course¹
- Incorporate multiple perspectives in discussion of legal policies, rulings, etc.^{2, 3}
- Help students see why you’re asking them to consider multiple perspectives²
- Share clear, positive ground rules²
- Be willing to learn from one another²
- Turn the focus to rhetorical or procedural aspects of a topic, rather than “rights”^{1,3}
- “Structured controversy” (roles assigned and controlled by prof) can help depersonalize issues¹
- Invite a guest speaker (use the expertise of colleagues; distances the professor from the viewpoint shared)¹
- Ask students to prepare responses (to reduce student silence)³
- Provide historical context or other background (or ask students to research this)^{2,3}; consider pop culture, current events¹
- Help students “grasp the differences between legal doctrine and political ideas”³
- Be a model of attentive listening and civil discourse²

References

¹Burkstrand-Reid, B., Carbone, J., and Hendricks, J. S. (2011). Teaching controversial topics. *Family Court Review*, 49(4), 678-684.

²Tavares, B. L. (2017). Changing the construct: Promoting cross-cultural conversations in the law school classroom. *Journal of Legal Education*, 67(1), 211-241.

³Ziegler, M. (2018). Navigating controversial Fourteenth Amendment topics. *Saint Louis University Law Journal*, 62, 689-700.

Friedersdorf, C. (2014). At law school, is insensitivity grounds for an objection? Retrieved from <https://www.Theatlantic.Com/education/archive/2014/12/at-law-school-is-insensitivity-grounds-for-an-objection/383882/>