

## Making a Case for Teacher Political Disclosure

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### **Abstract:**

K-12 teachers in the United States are often discouraged from disclosing their political opinions in the classroom, and those that do are often accused of indoctrinating their students. In this essay, the author attempts to make a case for teacher political disclosure, specifically the “committed impartiality” stance described by Kelly (1986), based on the potential pedagogical and civic benefits of disclosure. In short, this essay argues that teacher political disclosure should not be associated with the negative stigma often attached to it, and the decision whether to disclose one’s political views in the classroom should be an open issue that requires further study.

**Keywords:** social studies education | disclosure

### **Article:**

**\*\*\*Note: Full text of article below**

# Making a Case for Teacher Political Disclosure

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## Background

IN MAY 2012, A YOUTUBE VIDEO OF A VERBAL ALTERCATION BETWEEN A North Carolina social studies teacher and several of her students went viral and became a leading story in many national media outlets. The teacher, Tonya Dixon-Neely, had included a “fact of the day” on the board that reported on a recent news story that Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney had bullied a prep school classmate in the 1960s. Several students began questioning whether President Obama had ever bullied anyone, which prompted Dixon-Neely to demand that the students stop disrespecting the President. At that point, the conversation devolved into a shouting match between Dixon-Neely and her students, which was recorded and promptly uploaded to YouTube (Troop, 2012). In the days that followed, conservative pundits across the United States used the video to assail Dixon-Neely’s actions, as well as justify their preexisting beliefs that American public education is a bastion of liberal thought. Dixon-Neely was suspended without pay by her school district, although she was ultimately reinstated the following academic year provided that she completed a monitored growth plan in response to her actions (Jackson, 2012).

Given the lack of restraint demonstrated by Dixon-Neely in the video and the national attention that it received, it is difficult to argue with the disciplinary action sanctioned by the district. Of greater concern to this argument, however, is that Dixon-Neely’s experience is just the latest example of a teacher being disciplined for expressing his or her political views in the classroom in a way that is not representative of tolerant civic behavior. Although Dixon-Neely and other teachers who are caught proselytizing their political beliefs in an intolerant fashion are rightfully chastised in the media, the focus of this criticism is too often defined by the political beliefs being espoused and not the manner in which they are being articulated.

As a result, too many teachers are afraid to disclose their personal political beliefs in their classrooms at all, which I will argue is as potentially harmful to students’ civic development as the outburst described above. The decision whether to disclose one’s political beliefs, or what Hess (2005) has termed the “disclosure dilemma,” is ultimately a personal one. In my work with inservice and preservice teachers, however, I have found that most immediately dismiss the

possibility of disclosure without pausing to consider the potential merit it might have for their classroom instruction, a decision often influenced by fears of indoctrination accusations from students, parents, or administrators. Such concerns are so widespread that, in the United States, the idea of teachers disclosing their political views to their students is largely a closed issue, both among educators and the general public.<sup>1</sup> In this essay, I will offer a counterargument to this popular narrative on teacher political disclosure by positing that tolerant disclosure, or what Kelly (1986) terms “committed impartiality,” is both pedagogically beneficial and less likely to “indoctrinate” than attempts at neutrality.

This discussion has obvious implications for social studies instruction since politics is part of the standard curriculum for civics and government courses (Journell, 2010). Other disciplines, however, are not devoid of political issues. The controversy over the teaching of evolution in biology classrooms, for example, has held political connotations in the United States dating back to the Scopes trial over eighty years ago (e.g., Apple, 2008; Long, 2012). Moreover, if teachers, regardless of discipline, dare to address topics often considered socially taboo, such as race, sexuality, and religion, politics is never too far removed, and similar threats exist (e.g., Applebaum, 2009; Evans, Avery, & Pederson, 1999; Fecho, 2001; Journell, 2011a).

### **The Myth of Teacher Neutrality**

In order to make a case for teacher political disclosure one must first debunk the existing belief that teachers can remain politically neutral while providing classroom instruction. The argument for neutrality is simple enough; that as agents of the state, teachers have a moral responsibility to avoid proselytizing given their positions of power in the classroom (e.g., Elliot, 1973; Snook, 1972). To quote a common refrain that I often hear from preservice teachers, public education should emphasize “how to think” rather than “what to think.” In short, the common belief surrounding teacher neutrality, one that still resonates with a large percentage of the public (McAvoy & Hess, 2013), is that the absence of neutrality equates to attempts at indoctrination.

Without question, there are educators who view their classrooms as spaces to purposefully shape their students’ social and political beliefs to a predetermined set of ideals. Perhaps the most famous example is Counts’ (1932/1978) call for public education to build a new social order, a proposal that was denounced by John Dewey and other progressive educators of that era as akin to indoctrination (Freedman, 2007). Similar charges have been raised against educators who utilize critical pedagogies and openly advocate teaching for social justice (e.g., Ayers, Hunt, & Quinn, 1998; Freire, 1970/1993), leading to the common refrain among conservatives that such approaches constitute a “liberal bias” in education (Applebaum, 2009). On the other side of the political spectrum, accusations of indoctrination are often raised when religious teachers are disciplined for attempting to teach creationism or intelligent design alongside or in lieu of evolution in biology classrooms.<sup>2</sup>

The problem with identifying instances of indoctrination, however, is that it presupposes that neutrality is a binary state. In other words, if one is not engaging in purposeful indoctrination, or what Kelly (1986) terms “exclusive partiality,” then one is practicing neutrality. As many scholars have noted, this line of thinking is inaccurate since the act of teaching is innately a political endeavor.<sup>3</sup> Although the educator who proselytizes could be accused of indoctrination, so too could the teacher who chooses to read directly from a scripted lesson since that curriculum was created by individuals with political agendas (e.g., Apple, 1979). Moreover, the decisions a teacher makes within the course of a given lesson, such as choosing which students get to speak

and for how long or whether to address an inflammatory comment made by a student, constitute a break from neutrality since some voices and opinions are being privileged over others, and remaining silent is a decision that ultimately supports the status quo (e.g., Callan, 2011; Jensen, 2007; Reich, 2007).

In my work with preservice and inservice teachers, I have found that most have a basic understanding of the political nature of classrooms; yet, when opportunities arise to disclose their political views to students, most choose not to (Journell, 2011b, in press). My experiences align with findings from others who have studied teacher political disclosure (e.g., Hess, 2004), although the reasons why teachers choose not to disclose often vary. Perhaps the most cited reason why teachers choose to remain politically “neutral” is for fear of indoctrinating their students. For some, such a stance means completely avoiding controversial issues in their classrooms (Hess, 2004), which prevents their students from practicing skills, such as tolerantly deliberating issues with those who have divergent beliefs, that are essential to civic participation in a politically polarized society (e.g., Hess, 2009; McAvoy & Hess, 2013; Parker, 2010). In other cases, the anxiety over the disclosure dilemma is due to a fear of being reprimanded by administrators or parents for appearing to deviate from the perceived political ideology of the school and surrounding community (e.g., Goldston & Kyzer, 2009; Journell, 2012).

The majority of teachers, then, strive for the appearance of neutrality in their classrooms, but research suggests that teachers who claim to be politically neutral are not so in practice. In my study of social studies teachers during the 2008 Presidential Election, for example, the four teachers who refused to disclose their party identification or candidate choice would say or do things that indicated which way they leaned politically. All of the teachers regularly made value statements about certain parties or candidates under the guise of teaching about the election and would occasionally privilege certain candidates or ideologies based on the materials they used in class, such as in the case of the teacher who regularly showed speeches from President Obama without offering a counternarrative from a Republican perspective (Journell, 2011b). Other research has found that “neutral” teachers may marginalize certain aspects of the curriculum that deviate from their personal beliefs while accentuating aspects that they support (e.g., Goldston & Kyzer, 2009), or they may articulate political positions that they do not consider partisan, such as condemning politicians and government agencies in general, regardless of party affiliation (Niemi & Niemi, 2007). Research also suggests that teachers have greater difficulty maintaining neutrality when political issues cross into boundaries defined by personal identity, such as race, sexuality, and religion (e.g., James, 2010; Journell, 2011a; Trani, 2004).

In short, teachers cannot realistically remain politically neutral because teachers are political beings. To further illustrate this point, I recently worked with one high school civics teacher who adamantly believed that he remained politically neutral in his classes. Yet, he admitted to openly supporting candidates by putting signs in his lawn and even had recently run as a Democrat in a local election. Not surprisingly, observations of his instruction detected a liberal bias in how he ran his classroom. It is unrealistic to expect him or any other teacher to be able to remove themselves from their political personas once they walk into a classroom.

Critics of disclosure would argue that this teacher’s instruction represents a more desirable classroom environment than the one described at the beginning of this article. I would agree; however, I would also argue that this teacher has a better chance of “indoctrinating” his students than the teacher who engaged in a shouting match with hers. In the next section, I will make a case for teacher political disclosure by arguing that it not only carries positive

implications for instruction, but it also provides the necessary context to minimize the possibility of indoctrination.

### **The Benefits of Teacher Political Disclosure Disclosure Provides Necessary Context**

Before discussing teacher political disclosure, consider the following scenario: a politically astute individual turns on Fox News or MSNBC knowing the ideological reputations of each network. The chances that individual fully believes what is being said on either of those channels is minimal because he or she knows to take that information with a grain of salt due to the fact that both networks openly advocate a certain political ideology. If that individual wants to find a more accurate interpretation of the news, then he or she knows to seek other sources. In contrast, a less politically astute observer will take whatever is being said on the channel of their choice as fact without considering other alternatives.

The same analogy applies to classrooms. If teachers do not disclose their political leanings to students, then they only way students will be able to separate political fact from their teachers' opinion is if they are politically astute, and research suggests most high school students are not (e.g., Journell, 2011b; Niemi & Junn, 1998). For example, as part of a recent study of a "neutral" high school civics teacher during the 2012 Presidential Election who had disclosed to me privately that he was voting for Obama, I surveyed students after the election and asked them to state who the teacher had voted for and to provide a reason for their guess. Only 11 of the 26 honors students correctly identified that the teacher had voted for Obama and had based their answer on things the teacher had said in class. Eight other students guessed that the teacher had voted for Obama but either could not identify why they felt that way or made an assumption based on the teacher's demographics (e.g., he was a middle-class teacher). Four students believed that the teacher voted for Romney, and three stated that they had no idea for whom the teacher voted. Yet, during my observations over the course of the semester, this teacher regularly said and did things that showed his preference for Obama's policies (Journell, in press). I found similar trends in my previous work on teachers during the 2008 election; when I interviewed students in each of the four "neutral" teachers' classes, only a handful could articulate why they thought their teacher had voted for a certain candidate, and most either guessed or chose incorrectly (Journell, 2011b).

For politically astute students who can uncover their teachers' political leanings, lack of disclosure is not an issue. For the rest, however, failure to disclose creates an environment in which students may view their teachers' political opinions as fact due to the natural authority given to teachers as content experts. Students can better determine fact from opinion when their teachers disclose their political leanings.

In the 2008 study, for example, two of the teachers openly disclosed who they were voting for early in the semester. One teacher, Mr. Ryan, was a conservative teaching a class that was predominately for Obama; the other, Mr. Leander, was an outspoken Obama supporter teaching a class split between liberals and conservatives. Moreover, both teachers went about disclosing their beliefs in different ways. Mr. Ryan's philosophy mostly aligned with Kelly's (1986) description of committed impartiality in that he articulated his beliefs but took steps to ensure that his students' opinions received equal weight in the classroom. Mr. Leander, on the other hand, was a clear example of exclusive partiality in that he unabashedly supported Obama by regularly calling Republicans a host of derogatory names, ranging from "narrow-minded" to "evil," and openly questioning the intelligence of prominent Republican politicians. When I

interviewed students in both classes, nearly all of them stated that they enjoyed their teacher's instruction and appreciated knowing where he stood politically (Journell, 2011b), which aligns with prior research that suggests students are generally in favor of teacher disclosure as long as they do not perceive their teachers as trying to force their students to adhere to specific political views (Hess & McAvoy, 2009). Despite the brash way Mr. Leander attacked Republican positions, he never penalized students for holding conservative beliefs. As a result, his students took his political beliefs for what they were—opinions that only told one side of a given story.

Another common concern about teacher disclosure is that students will align their beliefs with those of teachers they admire or want to impress. Stanley Fish (2008), writing in the *New York Times* supporting a 2008 New York City Schools decision banning teachers from displaying buttons that supported a particular candidate or party, stated that

If [teachers] look out and see [students] turning themselves into advertisements for a candidate, [the teacher's] behavior doesn't alter at all; but if they look up and see [the teacher] announcing where [he or she] stand[s], they might well alter their behavior in ways of which they are not even aware.

Although it is certainly possible that students may alter their behavior to align with their teachers' beliefs, the relatively small amount of data available from classrooms in which teachers disclose their political beliefs suggests otherwise. When I compared pre and post survey results from Mr. Ryan and Mr. Leander's classrooms, for example, there was no evidence of a shift toward the teacher's political ideology even though nearly all of the students interviewed stated that Mr. Ryan and Mr. Leander were among their favorite teachers. On the contrary, one of the more conservative students in Mr. Leander's class even went as far as to say that Mr. Leander him "more of a Republican" because he could readily see the bias in his instruction (Journell, 2011b, p. 235).

I would argue that non-disclosure classrooms actually offer an environment more conducive to students wanting to align their beliefs with their teachers' political ideologies due to the lack of context those classrooms provide. As Foucault (1990, 1991) noted, true power is often undetectable to those acting within the system. When teachers disclose their political beliefs, they are making their power more transparent and, thus, easier for students to contextualize and resist. In a classroom in which the teacher practices a committed impartiality approach, for example, students would know where their teacher stands but would feel free to disagree with their teacher's beliefs. Even in a classroom defined by exclusive partiality, assuming the teacher does not penalize students for disagreeing with his or her opinions, students are less likely to conform to the teacher's beliefs because the teacher's bias is so visible. Consider again the vignette that prefaced this article as well as the description of Mr. Leander's classroom; teachers who get in shouting matches with their students or refer to certain groups using derogatory terms are unlikely to earn enough respect among their students to encourage them to alter their political opinions.

In classrooms where teachers do not disclose their political opinions, students may try to align their own beliefs to the "facts" that they have heard in class. If students cannot decipher fact from opinion, then it stands to reason that they will take everything that is said by their teacher at face value and may alter their own belief systems accordingly. According to Foucault (1990, 1991), such behavior is the result of a power structure in which teachers, often unknowingly, push their values upon their students due to the power imbalance in the classroom.

When teachers disclose, the power imbalance is still present, but it is more transparent and, thereby, less effective.

Finally, it is important to note that a neutrality stance will not prevent students from making judgments about their teachers' political beliefs. When teachers do not disclose, students often base their assessments of their teachers' political leanings on common stereotypes that are often incorrect. As Levinson (2012) noted in her recollection of her days teaching in inner city schools,

It is not only students' ethnoracial identifications that pose pedagogical and political challenges. Teachers' own ethnoracial identities also play into the student-teacher relationship in powerful and sometimes unpredictable ways. I was always aware that my students accurately saw me as White and middle class—which to them meant wealthy—and that this led them to make other assumptions that were sometimes less accurate. Many of my students assumed, for example, that I was a Republican. This may in part have resulted from my unwillingness to tell them my political views; since my students in both Atlanta and Boston were overwhelmingly Democrats, they may have reasonably extrapolated that I was reticent because I didn't want to subject myself to their scathing attacks. But I think it also simply resulted from their associating Republicans with wealthy White people, and Democrats with poor people of color (pp. 70-71).

Levinson's account corroborates previous research on students' political assumptions (e.g., Journell, 2011a) and highlights the need for teachers to provide necessary context for their students in order to avoid these types of stereotypical characterizations that may affect students' perceptions of the political information being discussed in class.

### **Committed Impartiality Encourages Tolerance**

In addition to providing necessary context for students, teacher political disclosure, when implemented correctly, provides students with a model for tolerant political discourse that they typically will not see on television or the Internet and may not be privy to at home. The key, of course, is that teachers take a committed impartiality approach. As McAvoy and Hess (2013) note, avoiding disclosing one's political opinions is not necessary as long as "the teacher is careful to ensure that her voice is just one of many and not presented or viewed as the dominant, or 'correct' view" (p. 42).

With a committed impartiality approach, teachers can model appropriate ways in which to articulate and defend one's political opinions in a pluralistic society. For students who agree with their teachers' opinions, seeing their teacher model tolerant political discourse will demonstrate the value of showing deference to the beliefs of those who hold opposing views. For students who disagree with their teachers' beliefs, a committed impartiality approach allows students to articulate their own opinions in a safe environment and provides experience working with authority figures who hold political beliefs that are different from their own (Kelly, 1986).

In both cases, the result is that students develop greater tolerance for diverse beliefs since they are being exposed to a range of political opinions in a safe environment, which research in both political science and education has shown is necessary for fostering tolerance for ideological diversity (e.g., Avery, Bird, Johnstone, Sullivan, & Thalhammer, 1992; Mutz, 2006). More importantly, a committed impartiality approach can be used to combat the effects of what Ben-Porath (2011) terms "belligerent" forms of citizenship. In her work, Ben-Porath uses this

term to describe the resulting wave of patriotic solidarity that occurs during times of war and other domestic crises in which deliberation and disagreement with the dominant political ideology is discouraged or oppressed. I would argue, however, that the idea of belligerent citizenship can be applied to the current state of political polarization in the United States that is being fueled by partisan news organizations and pundits.<sup>4</sup> In this political climate, the same tenets that Ben-Porath uses to describe the belligerent nature of citizenship during wartime are consistently on display in that those on one side of the political spectrum refuse to acknowledge opposing viewpoints as legitimate, and civil discourse and compromise are often discouraged.

Given that communities tend to be ideologically homogeneous, the threat of belligerent forms of citizenship in schools is commonplace, and research suggests that it affects teachers' willingness to both include controversial issues within the curriculum and disclose their opinions to their students (Journell, 2012; McAvoy & Hess, 2013). A committed impartiality approach, however, can limit the effects of belligerent citizenship. If teachers voice opposition to the dominant ideology, then they provide the starting point for deliberation, which increases tolerance. Even if teachers and their students fall into the dominant ideology, a committed impartiality approach allows teachers to play the devil's advocate in a way that provides the necessary context for them to feel safe raising contradictory opinions, which in turn, would encourage students to consider diverse viewpoints.

There is much to gain, then, from a committed impartiality approach in the classroom. Of course, the line between committed impartiality and exclusive partiality is thin, and research suggests that teachers can vacillate between the two depending on the issue being discussed (Journell, 2011a, 2011b). Many aspects of teaching involve a similar balancing act. Classroom management, for example, is a necessary function of teaching, yet when done improperly, it can have disastrous consequences for students (Gore, 1998). Few, however, would call for teachers to eliminate all forms of behavior management in their classrooms.

Teacher political disclosure seems to be defined only by those who misuse it and not by those who enact it correctly. I would argue, however, that the merits of an instructional technique should not be defined by what might go wrong, but rather by the potential benefits it offers. Disclosing one's political opinions to students involves a certain amount of risk; as McAvoy and Hess (2013) state, "in a time of intense political polarization teachers need to be even more careful about both the reality and perception of a politically fair classroom" (p. 43). Yet, the negative stigma associated with teacher political disclosure has created an environment in which teachers do not even stop to weigh the potential benefits of disclosing one's beliefs against any inherent risks that may be involved.

### **Changing the Stigma of Disclosure**

Shortly before his death, Foucault (2001, 2008a, 2008b) delivered a series of lectures in which he explored the concept of *parrhēsia*, which he described as a willingness to speak the truth, or what one believes to be true, without fear of reproach or judgment of others, even in the face of danger. For Foucault, *parrhēsia* should be considered a virtue since an essential part of the natural relationship between individuals, and individuals and their governments, is to "tell all the truth that is necessary" (2008b, p. 43). In this current educational climate, however, teachers are forced to engage in *parrhēsia* if they choose to disclose their political views in the classroom, and unfortunately, there are too few who are willing to take that risk despite the potential instructional benefits disclosure offers (Journell, in press).

Teachers are criticized for disclosing their political opinions or participating in partisan political activities, even as private citizens, because the historical view of teachers has been one of political passivity (Swalwell, 2015). These conceptions have roots in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the vast majority of teachers were women who were discouraged and legally prohibited from engaging in the political arena (Albisetti, 1993; Enoch, 2008). When teachers today disclose their political views or speak out publicly regarding political issues, even ones that pertain to public education, they are often chastised for doing so because it contradicts with the historical conception of what constitutes a “good” teacher.<sup>5</sup>

The fact that teachers, who have received relevant degrees and are considered content experts, are afraid to voice opinions on issues that fall within their area of expertise is alarming and speaks to the continued deprofessionalization of teachers in the United States. If a social studies teacher with a degree in political science or history feels compelled to tolerantly express his opinion on the political issue of the day, then it should be within his right to do so, the same way a science teacher with a biology degree should be able to respectfully tout the merits of evolution without fear of reproach from parents or administrators. The unfortunate actions of a few have led to the censuring of all, which is characteristic of many educational “reforms” that have been enacted over the past decade. Scripted lessons, high-stakes assessments, and the increasing number of states seeking to eliminate teacher tenure are examples of policies designed to limit teacher agency, often under the guise of “accountability” (Givan, 2014; Milner, 2013; Swalwell, 2014; Swalwell & Apple, 2010; Vaughn, 2013).

From a pedagogical standpoint, when teachers are afraid to broach political issues in their classes for fear of appearing partisan, they are closing opportunities for inquiry within their classrooms. The alternative is too often rote memorization of facts for the purposes of achieving passing scores on a state assessment. This type of pedagogy treats knowledge as separate from ideology, which not only is an inaccurate representation of the formal curriculum (Apple, 2014), it does little to prepare students for life within a pluralistic American society.

It is incumbent, then, on professional organizations and teacher education programs to change the stigma of teacher political disclosure and support teachers who are using a committed impartiality approach in their classrooms. Organizations such as the American Educational Research Association and the National Council for the Social Studies need to do more to educate both teachers and the public about the merits of teacher disclosure. As McAvoy and Hess (2013) note, as long as a majority of the public views teacher political disclosure as a type of indoctrination, the habits of teachers are unlikely to change. Given the media hoopla that occurs each time a teacher is filmed intolerantly proselytizing in the classroom, it is essential that those groups that seek to advocate for teachers provide appropriate counternarratives that highlight the merits of disclosure and reaffirms the professional status of the vast majority of teachers.

Teacher education programs also have a responsibility to offer committed impartiality as an option to preservice teachers. In talking to colleagues, I have found that most admit to advocating a neutrality approach to their preservice teachers even though they acknowledge the futility of such an approach. They have simply chosen to adhere to the dominant narrative that states teachers should avoid disclosing their political beliefs, often in a sincere attempt to prepare their preservice teachers for the “realities” of teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

If, however, we seek to develop reflective practitioners who think critically about their instructional practices, we have a responsibility to provide preservice teachers with a range of options for handling controversial issues in their classrooms. Discouraging them from disclosure because it is too risky only seeks to perpetuate the dominant narrative and contribute to the

deprofessionalization of teachers. As stated previously, the decision whether to disclose one's political beliefs is a personal one, and research suggests that even after being exposed to the merits of disclosure, some teachers are unwilling to take the risk (Miller-Lane, Denton, & May, 2006). Preservice teachers, however, should be presented with a range of thought on disclosure and encouraged to make their decision based on their perceptions of the instructional benefits offered by disclosure, not the stigma associated with it.

## Conclusion

Teacher political disclosure remains controversial, and although I have sought to make a case for disclosure in this essay, I am sure others could make equally compelling cases against it as well. The larger point is that teacher political disclosure is a closed issue for a majority of the American public, as well as many educators, due to an often unwarranted fear of indoctrination that has been fueled by the actions of a small number of unprofessional teachers and subsequent media coverage. Given the potential instructional benefits resulting from teacher political disclosure, I believe that it should become a more open issue that deserves continued research and thought. Preservice and inservice teachers should be made aware of the educational implications of disclosure, and they should be able to make their own choices based on their professional judgment.

As such, teacher political disclosure becomes part of a larger discussion related to the professional status of teachers. Educational stakeholders have a responsibility to defend the actions of teachers who practice a committed impartiality approach in their classrooms and offer a counternarrative to the public's perception that teachers are actively trying to push their personal beliefs onto their students. If teachers are to be considered professionals, then they should be trusted in their role as content experts and encouraged to disclose their own political beliefs in a way that models appropriate civic behavior.

## Note

<sup>1</sup> For an in-depth discussion of "open" versus "closed" issues, see Hess, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> It is not my intention to equate teaching for social justice and the teaching of creationism and/or intelligent design in biology classrooms; the Supreme Court has ruled that the latter is a violation of church and state when taught as part of the science curriculum. Rather, my point is to illustrate that both sides of the political spectrum are prone to raising accusations of indoctrination when teachers' views deviate from their own.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed history of the philosophical debate surrounding neutrality in education, refer to Applebaum, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent discussion of the current state of political polarization in the United States and its impact on classroom deliberation and the teaching of controversial public issues, see McAvoy and Hess, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> An illustrative example can be found in Swalwell & Schweber's (in press) study of Wisconsin teachers in the aftermath of the Act 10 legislation that sought to strip union workers (including teachers) of their collective bargaining rights. The teachers in their study reported feeling concerned about disciplinary actions or parental backlash if they chose to participate in the protests against the legislation, and although none of them could completely escape discussing the issue in their classrooms, nearly all the participants reported feeling anxious about disclosing their views to their students.

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