

Walking on Eggshells:
Teaching Terrorism Studies
in a Politically Correct World

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LIBERTY
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Education

- Ed.D. Candidate - Liberty University
- M.S.S.I. - National Intelligence University
- M.S. - University Southern California
- B.S. - The Citadel

Career

- Retired USAF Intelligence Officer (20 + 7 years)
- Human Intelligence Collection, Intelligence - Surveillance & Reconnaissance (ISR), Special Operations, Indications & Warning Intelligence, Interrogator, International Affairs Officer
- Adjunct Professor of Strategic Intelligence at Liberty University
- Speaker – Terrorism and Intelligence





“Walking on Eggshells”



an Idiom. Generally describes a situation in which people must tread lightly around a sensitive topic, or make every effort not to offend a volatile or hypersensitive person.

“Politically Correct World”

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Terrorism Studies Courses



- Inherently political
- Emotional
- Contemporary
- Existing diverse opinions
- Polar extremes

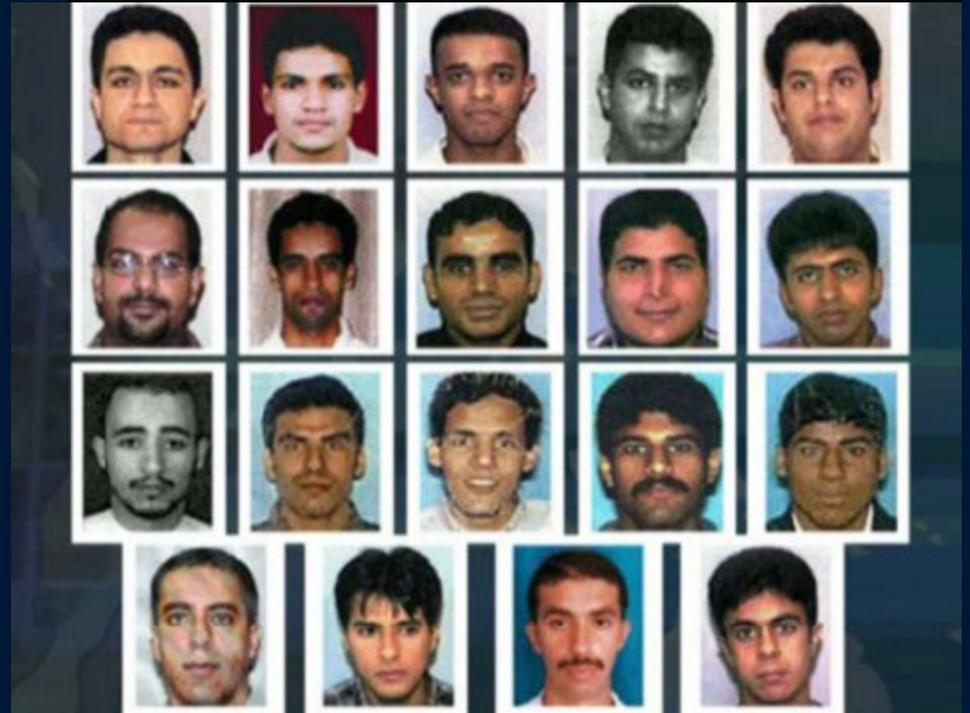
Politically-Charged Classroom
Controversial and Emotive Issues

What is a Controversial and Emotive Issue ?

- A dispute, especially a public one, between sides holding opposing views which may have political, social, environmental or personal impacts on students or the wider community creating any strong agitation of the feelings actuated by experiencing love, hate, fear, etc., and usually accompanied by certain physiological changes, as increased heartbeat or respiration, and often overt manifestation, as crying or shaking.

Controversial and Emotive Issues

- Violence attributed to Islamic teaching
- Use of coercive/enhanced interrogation techniques
- Privacy/ 4th Amendment protections
- Targeting terrorist suspects with UAS attacks
- Profiling based on race/ religion/ethnicity



Concerns with an Politically Charged Classroom

- Job security for faculty member
- Hostile classroom environment
- Disruptions or conflict
- Class participation/discussion
 - Avoiding altogether
 - Dominated by only a few
- Loss of opportunity

Teaching Controversial Issues Helps Students...

- Develop critical thinking skills
- Develop higher-order thinking such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation
- Develop communication and interpersonal skills
- Develop leadership skills
- Develop non-violent strategies for dealing with conflict
- Increase student attention, motivation, achievement, creativity, and self-esteem

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How Do Teachers Deal With Controversial Issues?

Denial	Avoidance
Privilege	Balance

The Disclosure Dilemma

The Disclosure Dilemma

- Maintain “neutral” or “balanced” approach
- Usually unsustainable in the classroom*
- Influence of teacher greater than intended*
- Determine the “if” and “when”



Classroom Incivility

- Decline in the protocols of civil discourse
- Both students and faculty felt that university policies addressing classroom incivility were ineffective.
- Teacher's behavior, interpersonal skills and pedagogical skills had a greater impact on controlling classroom incivility.

Strategy For Success

- Create an open and respectful environment
- Use a method or process
 - Inductive approach
 - Student-centered
 - Minimizes teacher bias
 - Method itself is a demonstration in fair consideration

Establish An Open And Respectful Environment

- Establish ground rules
- Discourse
 - Don't interrupt
 - Be respectful
 - Challenge ideas and not persons
 - Use appropriate language
- Non-attribution
 - No academic freedom with out non-attribution
- Technology
 - Recording and Social Media
- Give everyone a chance to participate

Method

- No one single method is recommended
- Multiple formats
 - Instructor or Student Centered
 - Debate
 - Case Study
 - Panel Discussion
 - Guided Discussion
 - Online

4-Step Method

- What is the issue about?
 - Identify the key question over which there is controversy
 - What is the nature of the controversy?
- What are the arguments?
 - Are the arguments supported by facts?
- What is assumed?
 - What are the assumptions behind the argument?
- How are the arguments manipulated?

Practical Ideas For Any Method

- Encourage active listening
- Focus on issues
 - Distinguish between opinions and facts
- Avoid binaries
- Give students chance to write before speaking
- Have students do research before discussion
- De-escalate when necessary
- End on a positive note. Follow up and reflect

Summary

- We teach in a politically correct world
- Controversy and emotion are systemic to teaching terrorism
- We can use this energy to our advantage if we do it right.
- We have the opportunity to teach critically important skills
- It's your responsibility
- Establish safe and respectful environment
- Use a logical method

Dissertation Subjects Needed

- Teach courses in Terrorism Studies
- Residential
- About 3 hours of your time
- Absolute anonymity
- Stipend

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