

[When your subject matter becomes inherently "political" in the contemporary context](#)

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I'm currently teaching a class on Women in World History since 1500 and on Modern Europe. As part of these and most of my History courses I have students specialize in one country or world region, report on the latest news from two different news outlets, and--starting in the middle of the semester--start relating the news to what they have already learned in class. Especially in the course on Modern Europe my students are bringing up questions like, "what is fascism, and is it true that the President is fascist?"; "I see the French government is trying to eliminate wage differences between men and women. We don't have wage differences between men and women, do we?", "It seems that when I look at the Greek news outlet's story about the spread of measles that it's sort of blaming the Roma for the spread of disease, but I couldn't think of a nice way to put that."

I was trained in an environment where my responsibility as an instructor included setting my own political views aside in the classroom. I don't hide my own political affiliation, but because I have friends and family in other political parties I have always been able to present multiple points of view when contemporary news from around the world touched on aspects of US politics. But in the current climate in the US I don't really know what to do. It seems like it's become a partisan statement to place a value on critical thinking and on distinguishing among facts, interpretations, mistakes, and lies. Just answering my students' questions truthfully puts me in the position of contradicting the current administration's presentation of "facts". This is new for me; I have had large disagreements with previous administrations, but it was always over interpretations of how to set policy based on available evidence. I never before had to face this problem of flat-out denial of facts, although it's not new to my colleagues in Biology. Although Modern Europe puts me in this position most often, I am finding it a challenge in all my classes, including general education.

How are other people dealing with this? Does anyone have any advice? I'm planning to bring it up in our faculty assembly, because I know it's an issue in multiple disciplines on my campus.