

# Managing Hot Topics in the Classroom



Corporal punishment, stem cells, pornography, conservative/liberal politics, divorce, prejudice, cloning, homophobia...What do these topics have in common? Among other things, these topics are considered--even by the most seasoned teachers--to be "hot" topics. Whether intentionally brought up in class as part of a planned discussion or incidentally brought up through broader discussions, such topics often create some uncomfortable moments in the classroom for both the teacher and the students. Making these teaching moments memorable in the positive sense is the topic of this teaching tip.



planned discussion 規劃討論

broader discussion 廣泛討論

體罰、幹細胞、色情圖片、保守或開放式政策、離婚、偏見、生物複製、同性戀...等，以上主題有何共通點？除了有其他原因外，這些主題對老練的老師們來講，是“熱門”的。不管是故意的在規劃討論的課堂上提起，或是在廣泛討論時偶然提到，這些主題通常會對學生或老師在課堂上感到不自在，但是使這些時刻變得難忘並且有正向的幫助是這個教學祕訣的主題

That such hot subjects are value laden is not disputed among faculty. The rightness or wrongness associated with any hot topic is sure to elicit at one extreme heated discussions among students, and at the other extreme a stoney silence that might just be the chill before the heat. Sometimes teachers see both extremes in one class session devoted to hot topics.



stoney silence 鴉雀無聲(石化般的安靜)

如此熱門主題的價值在教師間是不爭的存在，關於這些主題的正確性或是錯誤點的確可以引出個在學生間非常熱烈的討論，但另個極端的鴉雀無聲可能會在熱烈討論前發生，有時候許多老師再使用了熱門的話題後可以在同一課堂上看到兩種極端情形

For some disciplines, hot topics go with the territory. Ethnic studies, psychology, genetics, religion, political science immediately surface as disciplines whose faculty intentionally foster learning environments that promote critical reflection about controversial topics that evoke a wide range of student emotions. Faculty can argue that their jobs as responsible teachers are to bring up controversial and value-laden topics...for the benefit of the students. For sure, discussions about values can evoke critical thinking and positive action among students. Further, it can be argued that such managed learning environments are critical components of a healthy university and it's curriculums. Hot topics also come up in classes unexpectedly--catching the teacher off guard and confused about how to handle a discussion that is driven by such emotions as anger, fear, guilt.



爭議性主題(controversial topics)

對於不同學科，熱門主題也有領域的不同，不管是道德研究、心理學、遺傳學、宗教、政治學等表現出學科特質的主體，教職員們特意的去培養出個學習環境，能使得學生增進對於爭議性主題(controversial topics)的關鍵意見，並且激起不同的情緒。教職員也能理直氣壯的扮演負責任老師的角色：藉由帶起爭議性且具有價值的主題達到為了使學生得益的目的。確定的是，具價值得討論能夠喚起學生的批判性思考能力及正面性的反應。更進一步的是，很值得探討的是這樣規畫過的學習環境在一所健全的大學內的必修課上是極具關鍵的。熱門主題也會在課堂上不經意的出現，使老師不及防備且困惑於如何妥善處理一些討論，這些討論的情形會是在生氣的、害怕的或是罪惡的情緒下進行。

Whether such hot topics come up in class intentionally or not, faculty and students can benefit greatly from the experience of the moment if they keep in mind some practical guidelines that take into consideration both student and

teacher values and perspectives.

Such guidelines have been outlined in two papers (pdf) that are attached to this teaching tip. In the paper "Hitting a Nerve: When Touchy Subjects Come Up in Class," author Retta Poe reminds readers that there are 3 basic challenges that most teachers face when confronting touchy subjects: Loss of Composure, Inappropriate or too Frequent Self Disclosure, and Opinions Students and Faculty Express. Given these challenges we face, the author outlines some strategies for preventing problems...and resolving conflicts:

- Anticipate Problems and Be Prepared. (i.e. find yourself an experienced colleague)
- Respect Student's Feelings. (i.e., be cautious about assigning role playing)
- Remember Your Role and Responsibilities. (i.e., use moment as an experience for growth)



不管這樣的主題是不是在課堂上刻意的帶起，教師及學生假使能遵循些實際的指引，並且在雙方的角度及價值觀進行考量，都能非常大的得到助益。

這些指引已經有在兩頁 PAPER 裡面標明了各項主題，裡面有些教學訣竅。在 PAPER "Hitting a Nerve: When Touchy Subjects Come Up in Class," 裡面，作者 Retta Poe 提醒讀者三個當老師遇到棘手的主題時會面臨的基本挑戰：失去鎮定、過度或不適當的自我表現、學生及老師們提出的意見。這些會面臨的挑戰之下，作者有列出了幾個解決問題及衝突的策略：

- 期待問題並且有所準備(例：找個有經驗的同事隨行)
- 尊重學生的感受(例：非常小心於指派假定角色)
- 記得你的角色及責任(例：把關鍵時刻當作成長進步的關鍵)

In addition to other tips in her paper, Poe also reviews relevant literature about the ethical and practical issues to be considered by instructors when broaching this topic. I recommend both short papers as good quick reads for the faculty member who recognizes her/his responsibility to handle a hot classroom topic in a way that promotes individual growth among all members of the learning environment.

The 2nd paper attached to this tip is "Managing Hot Moments In the Classroom" by Lee Warren.



### 快速閱讀(quick reads)

除了其他 PAPER 中提到的訣竅，Poe 也略述了其他相關於道德及實際的問題的相關文章，攸關於教導者在針對這個議題時必須考慮的。因此我認為這兩篇文章會是很好的快速閱讀(quick reads)，特定對於那些認定了他/她的身為教師責任的教職員，並幫助處理熱門課堂主題且增進所有學習環境內成員的個體成長。

第二個附在這訣竅文章之後的 PAPER 是 Lee Warren 著的 *Managing Hot Moments In the Classroom*