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In *Why Are Professors Liberal and Why Do Conservatives Care?*, Neil Gross introduces research that suggests fifty to sixty percent of college professors are leftist or liberal, a much higher proportion than the seventeen percent of Americans in general (7). He posits the conservative fear that "bias" in higher education is a "very serious" problem (Gross 5). April Kelly-Woessner and Matthew Woessner examine studies that also show that college students are more ideologically diverse than the professoriate (498) and, further, that students tend to discredit information presented by biased professors and consider them untrustworthy sources (499). If the majority of faculty placing emphasis on social justice education (SJE) are liberal, how do we nullify the apparent conflict with the essential honors mission, as defined by the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), to develop critical-thinking skills? The answer lies in the fallacy that correlation equals causation. The fact that faculty are liberal does not mean that SJE must be taught with an ideological agenda. I contend that we can and must teach social justice from

a non-partisan perspective and will offer recommendations for best practices for SJE in the context of an honors program.

To the question of appropriateness of SJE for honors, the NCHC goals of helping students explore "enduring questions" and teaching skills for "leadership" and "engaged citizenship" parallel objectives of SJE. Also, the LEAP Initiative of the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U), a "national public advocacy and campus action initiative," suggests nine principles of excellence for universities, at least three of which are relevant to SJE: "to engage students in the 'big questions,'" "to foster civic, intercultural, and ethical learning," and to "connect knowledge with action." Teaching SJE is thus in line with recommendations for best practices from two recognized pedagogical authorities.

The University of New Mexico wants to make social justice a "pillar" of the program partially because we are a minority majority university in a soon-to-be minority majority state, and social justice issues of minority students are especially prevalent on our campus. A clear definition of social justice is thus vital to the future of the college, but, of course, definitions of SJE are numerous and diverse. Lauren Bialystok offers an overview stemming from a survey of definitions, concluding that they promote "anti-oppression politics, anti-colonialism, environmentalism, and a critique of corporate globalization, with more or less overt sympathy of the welfare state" (418). SJE scholar Heather Hackman explains, "to be most effective, social justice education requires an examination of systems of power and oppression combined with a prolonged emphasis on social change and student agency in and outside of the classroom" (104). The NCHC's definition and recommended "modes of learning" are less involved than the definitions for SJE, but the two agendas have significant overlap, especially with Hackman's definition of SJE. Although the NCHC does not elaborate on what is meant by "engaged citizenship," it surely includes developing enough knowledge of social systems and advocacy tactics for addressing the real-world problems that it cites as essential to an honors education.

In "Theory and Resistance in Honors Education," Aaron Stoller argues that infusing an honors program with SJE requires a "creative resistance" to the standard curriculum (10). He implies that educators must consciously challenge a university that has been "seduced and co-opted by a kind of technocratic and utilitarian rationality devoid of concern for the human condition" (14). I take issue with Stoller's argument in that many of us are already teaching topics of social justice and concern for the human condition, but we

might still need to become more critical of our methods. We must first teach the facts of social injustice and then engage students in exploration about the causes of and possible solutions to injustices in all their complexity and nuance.

Some aspects of teaching are necessarily political. For example, some syllabi in the humanities, social sciences, and fine arts are political in that they explore in the classroom political issues that faculty deem important for students, e.g., the ugly realities of inequality and human wrongdoing, but the presentation need not and should not be partisan. My hope is that faculty members are guided by the desire to expose students to important topics and not just to sway opinions on topics they find personally compelling.

The Oxford dictionary defines a "partisan" as an "unreasoning supporter of a cause" (572). Educators should not be this kind of partisan in the classroom; they should never present only one perspective, even on matters of clear injustice. Teaching students the facts of a judicial system that imprisons Blacks at a much higher rate than Whites or the facts of the Bush administration's policy of torture leading up to and during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars is not partisan; it would only become so if faculty exposed students only to opinions and perspectives they personally endorse.

An example from my own classroom might further elucidate my argument. My Solutions to Human Rights Problems class analyzes the major actors in human rights, such as the U.S. government, the United Nations, NGOs, and multinational corporations. Every entity we examine is responsible for acts of both human rights protection and violation. To achieve a rich and balanced understanding of the government's role in human rights, we first analyze U.S. leadership in democracy and individual rights since the country's founding, including leadership in the creation of the United Nations and the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We then examine the rights violations that have taken place since the country's inception, from treatment of indigenous peoples to chattel slavery to torture of foreigners by the U.S. military during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Students are reminded of 9/11 and the fear and anger Americans felt, and they consider arguments justifying enhanced interrogation. Many students sympathize or identify with a substantial portion of citizens who supported torture in a 2011 poll (Bradley 233). We also study the Convention Against Torture and the Geneva Conventions, which are international laws the U.S. has ratified. The students learn about the numerous innocent people who were tortured at the hands of Americans because of poor military leadership and inexperienced

interrogators. We discuss torture in particular contexts, and I do not push them to come to the same conclusions that I have about torture in general. I do not teach it from an ideological perspective.

Students learn the fact that torture is now illegal, but they struggle with the question of whether it is ever justified. My job is not to tell them what to think; learning does not work that way. As Woessner observes, students "do not passively accept . . . political messages" (24). Moreover, I agree with the NCHC enjoinder that faculty should encourage students to "dig deep without a prescribed result." My goal is to teach them how to think, not what to think.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To avoid teaching from their own bias, faculty members can center the normative values of our nation as embodied in the United States Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and the human rights treaties and declarations that the U.S. government has supported. This approach avoids partisanship because these documents constitute the binding agreements of our society. Understanding the controversies surrounding our laws, including the difference between the rhetoric of equal justice for all and the reality of injustices, for instance, and analysis of these phenomena are critical to SJE.

I adapted this strategy for my classes from the work of Lauren Bialystok, who writes about teaching social justice in Canada, but obviously her advice is applicable to any democratic society. She also suggests that faculty avoid requiring classroom activities rooted "in partisan politics or political activism that students do not choose" (415). An example counter to this recommendation occurred after the 2016 election when a fine arts faculty member at my university wanted to create for display—in a window facing a busy boulevard—a visual arts class project proclaiming "RESIST!" Because of the ideological diversity in any class and because we want to avoid hegemony, instructors should not require whole classes to engage in any single activist initiative. Faculty must also take care to avoid the pitfall of group-think that can occur when students who hold similar political positions are the loudest voices in the room, especially because students with minority points of view often just remain quiet, rendering helpful diversity of thought invisible.

Other brief suggestions for teaching SJE include Hackman's argument for "five essential components of a social justice education," which I maintain are perfectly suited to the mission of honors programs: "content mastery, tools for critical analysis, tools for social change, tools for personal reflection," and

"awareness of multicultural group dynamics" (104). She provides a clear set of objectives for faculty who are committed to teaching the skills prized in honors—critical thinking and critical analysis—while preventing a partisan ideological agenda from dominating or controlling the classroom dynamics.

Just as we can improve students' thinking skills, we can also influence empathy for others, which is an arguably important objective in the promotion of social justice. Having empathy for those suffering injustice helps motivate action. The research of David Kidd and Emanuele Castano demonstrates that empathy can be nurtured through stories. No one text evokes the same reaction in all students, so we cannot dictate or manipulate how and what students will feel, but we can create the conditions for getting them to understand some of the injustices others suffer through the activation of neural circuits that occurs when experiencing the emotions of others (Jackson et al.).

According to a new study by Parissa Ballard, Lindsay Hoyt, and Mark Pachucki, civic engagement is another aspect of SJE that has many benefits for young people, including improved health and well-being, in addition to being a powerful teaching tool. We should encourage it, but we cannot dictate when and for what cause our students engage. Considering all of the potential good SJE can offer students and society, we should be teaching it, but we must adopt best practices for the way we guide students through the material, embracing the normative rather than the partisan or ideological. Social justice education in this way becomes an unquestionably suitable agenda for honors education.

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