**Guidelines for talking about politics in history classes**

Newton history teachers seek to prepare students to engage in meaningful, informed political debate.

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| We Will Strive To… | We Will Strive Not To… |
| * Distinguish between settled controversies and current controversies.
* For **settled controversial issues** (slavery, female suffrage, legal discrimination based on race, gender, religion, etc) teach students about the debate that people in the past had on this issue and the process by which most of society accepted one side as more valid than another.
* For **current controversial issues** (health care, immigration, environmental policies, gun laws), teach students that there are different perspectives and present the reasoning of those who hold those different perspectives.
* Foster and maintain an environment that encourages students to responsibly debate ideas on their merits and to consider views that differ from their own on current controversies.
* Teach students to distinguish between personal attacks and civil political disagreement.
* Teach students to identify facts, opinions and bias in sources.
* When asked outside of class time, talk with students about our personal political views if we so choose.
* Work together as a department to determine how to present particularly difficult current controversial issues in a balanced manner.
 | * Present a current controversial issue as a settled one (health care, immigration, environmental policies, gun laws).
* Present our own personal opinion on a current controversial issue as more right than another viewpoint.
* Present facts or logic that support only one side of a current controversial issue.
* Assume that all students agree with us.
* Assume that all students feel comfortable disagreeing with us.
* Use sarcasm or asides in a lesson that suggest that a specific viewpoint on a current controversial issue is more right than another viewpoint (which may make some students feel less willing to share their views).
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**Sentence starters that may be helpful**

“In the United States we have settled that question. You’re entitled to think we’re wrong in how we’ve settled it, but it’s not open for discussion now.”

“Some people have argued that…[Trump is a fascist, Muslim immigration is dangerous, etc]. Let’s consider the evidence they use to support that claim.”

“We are going to table this now. I am not prepared to lead this discussion.”

“I’d be very surprised if that turned out to be true.”

“What would we have to know in order to check that story?”

“Without verifiable and reputable sources, I don’t think we can admit that story/fact/incident into our class discussion.”

“That story/fact/incident has been debunked by reputable scholars/journalists/researchers.”