Why Should We Care?
Teaching Emotional Competency to Support Engaged Citizenship

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This paper is part of a larger project that seeks to center political engagement in undergraduate introductory courses on American government and politics. Using insight from a combined 40 years of teaching, our goal is to develop a holistic approach to teaching American government that places less emphasis on what students ought to know, and more emphasis on what students ought to be able to do. Paramount challenges facing American democracy provide our inspiration. Ideological and party polarization, racial injustice, humanitarian and environmental crises linked to climate change, mass gun violence, the January 6 insurrection, a Supreme Court seemingly out of step with majority public opinion—each of these has simultaneously raised the stakes of political science education and, at the same time, made us less certain about what we are doing in our classrooms or why. Longstanding social scientific frameworks that we have relied on in the past to help students *understand* American politics have increasingly fallen short in providing tangible guidance for *acting in* the contemporary political world.

Our approach is rooted in the basic premise that political knowledge, while necessary, is not sufficient for providing an educational experience that will lead our students to political engagement. In addition to political knowledge, democratic citizenship requires a sense of concern and responsibility for collective challenges, the ability to make strategic choices and to set priorities, and the inclination to actually engage in politics through meaningful and appropriate actions. These four components—knowing, caring, choosing, and doing—comprise a framework for democratic citizenship.

Beginning with this framework, we identify five sets of capacities, or competencies—the things that students ought to be able to do. These competencies include the skills and capacities required for holding political institutions accountable (institutional competency); the propensity to think and act strategically across different forms of political participation (participatory competency); the wherewithal to talk to others about politics and to value finding commonalities and points of difference (deliberatively competency); the ability to discern the trustworthiness of information and to use news media responsibility (informational competency); and the dexterity required to understand the affective dimensions of politics while attending to one's own emotional health as a citizen of democracy (emotional competency). Each of these competencies is applied to the democratic citizenship framework in summary in Table 1.

This paper focuses specifically on Chapter 6 which discusses teaching emotional competency in the context of political engagement.

The majority of today's undergraduate college students, the youngest generation of adults, were born between 2004 and 2008. Roberta Katz, a senior research scholar at Stanford University and arguably the world's leading expert on "Gen Z" (or post-millennials) describes them this way:

> A typical Gen Zer is a self-driver who deeply cares about others, strives for a diverse community, is highly collaborative and social, values flexibility, relevance, authenticity and non-hierarchical leadership, and, while dismayed about inherited issues like climate change, has a pragmatic attitude about the work that has to be done to address those issues (as quoted in De Witte 2022).

Others have shown similarly that the current generation of young adults is increasingly more likely to vote than previous young cohorts (CIRCLE 2020) and to believe that government has an obligation to protect the environment, and to provide citizens with things such as education, health care, and retirement income (Pew Research Center 2021). Given this, it might also seem that today's college students view government and politics as positive tools for the

changes they so passionately desire for the country. However, paradoxically, young people are also disaffected and disillusioned. A recent article in *The Atlantic* describes how this generation—more progressive than all other age cohorts and more progressive than previous young cohorts in more than five decades—sees no promise in contemporary politicians or political parties. Young people today see the economy being less welcoming to their needs, and they fret about the failure to act on climate change, stagnation on racial justice, and deteriorating rights for women and LGBTQIA+ individuals (Lowrey 2022).

Simply put, although many of our students enter our classrooms with democratic values and a desire for change on a range of policy problems (and are even willing to accept some personal sacrifice for changes that would benefit the common good), they are not terribly confident in the political process as a positive force for getting us there. In fact, as is the case for Americans of all ages, our students are increasingly likely to identify politics as a source of stress in their lives, contributing to poor mental health, experience with anxiety and depression, and strained personal relationships. Especially troubling, as recent study by Keven Smith, "Politics is Making Us Sick" (2022) found, it is the *most* politically interested and politically engaged young people who report the most negative health consequences from politics.

> Politics is a chronic stressor, saturating popular culture and permeating daily life through social media, various entertainment platforms and a 24-hour news cycle. Politics shapes social networks and individual identity, and is a well-documented source of negative emotions that predict self-reports of decreased psychological and physical well-being. Elections and their associated lengthy campaigns act as cyclical accelerants to what are already high levels of politically-sourced stress (2).

Since emotional investment is a pre-requisite of political engagement, it is difficult to see a way around this circular problem. Increased public disaffection, antipolitical sentiment, expressions of dismay and futility—these feelings are frequently expressed by our students. They are politically stressed out! While these negative feelings may seem especially pronounced by students who also seem uninterested in being in our classes in the first place (e.g., those enrolled to meet a general education requirement), these feelings are also common among students who are passionate about political issues, are active voters, and take our classes by choice, including political science majors. We have struggled to find meaningful ways to respond to our students' (and sometimes our own) collective sense of resignation and political angst.

It is understandable that many instructors work hard to avoid and downplay the more affective aspects of American politics in the classroom. Opening the door to discuss feelings seems like an invitation for additional risk in an already vulnerable teaching environment. Students may feel uncomfortable, pressured, anxious, or prone to emotional outburst, despite carefully written syllabi statements about maintaining respect and civility. Inviting students to discuss their feelings could cause class discussions to become unpredictable or chaotic. Instructors' efforts to remain "neutral," "objective," and professionally-distanced from their students may be more difficult to maintain. This is especially true in introductory courses, where students are more likely to have fewer skills, lower levels of knowledge, and the kinds of pre-existing relationships with instructors that might mitigate negative evaluations toward instructors who appear to have an "agenda." In an era of widespread allegations of bias in higher education, including public attacks on individual faculty and state legislative efforts to regulate course content, these are not unfounded fears. Moreover, as instructors we ourselves are not immune to the psychological toll and social health effects of politics. Institution-specific messaging about

student mental health needs seems vaguely applicable in this context, but in our experience is not accompanied by pedagogical suggestions to help us and our students navigate the intersection of emotional needs and the political environment (inside or outside of the classroom). It is far safer and more comfortable for us to maintain a clinical presentation when teaching about politics. Many of us have developed skillful classroom management strategies to maintain a clear separation between what we are teaching and how we all feel about it.

This approach is increasingly incompatible with cultivating a healthy democratic orientation for our students. Equally as important, our students' affective relationships to politics are themselves a form of cognitive bias that, whether we'd like to admit it or not, shape the learning environment and our students' receptiveness to course material. We believe it is possible to mitigate the risks of inviting emotions into our classrooms. To the extent that the missions of colleges and universities include commitment to fostering inclusion, promoting democracy, or facilitating leadership and citizenship, a clinical, unemotional approach to teaching American politics also limits the extent to which our classes can reasonably further these institutional goals. Finally, it is undeniable that partisan radicalism, emotionally charged forms of political behavior, and their cultivation by political elites, are among the greatest threats facing democracy (Kalmoe and Mason 2022). Ignoring feelings limits the extent to which our students can gain a deeper understanding about what is happening in contemporary politics and what might be required to address these threats.

This chapter introduces the concept of ***emotional competency*** as a core component of democratic citizenship and part of our framework for teaching undergraduate courses on American government and politics**.** We are admittedly on experimental ground in proposing this concept. We see this chapter as an invitation to fellow instructors to join us in discovering ways of fostering students' capacities to recognize, think about, and productively respond to emotions and feelings about politics. We discuss teaching strategies for engaging students in learning about the role of emotions in politics; for encouraging students' reflection about their own processes of political socialization and views of the political world; for developing skills to identify emotional cues in politics and understand the ways that they shape and constrain political action; and for encouraging students to compassionately recognize the feelings of others situated in different corners of the political realm. This chapter also offers tips for guiding students in navigating varied feelings about political events and actors (from fear to anger to joy to hope) and for establishing healthy boundaries between politics and individual well-being. Finally, this chapter propose classroom strategies designed to engage students in emotional-aware forms of political action.

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL COMPETENCY AND HOW CAN WE TEACH AND LEARN IT?

Emotional competency should not be confused with the familiar concept in psychology, "emotional intelligence" (EI), which can be defined as "the ability to identify, understand, and use [one's own] emotions positively" (Drigas and Papoutsi 2018)--although we suspect that there is unexplored overlap between theories of democratic citizenship and EI worthy of future research. Nor is emotional competency the same as political efficacy—although the belief that one can make a difference is definitely related to one's affective relationship to politics. Instead, by "emotional competency," we mean the ability to recognize how, why, and when emotions and feelings matter for political action and behavior. Competency in this area requires one to be both introspective about the links between one's own identity and political interests, as well as cognizant of processes of political socialization and emotions. It also requires individuals to be empathetic in seeking points of commonality and understanding—although not necessarily

agreement or consensus—with others. Perhaps most importantly, students who are emotionally competent are invested in democratic citizenship and choose to engage in politics, even if it is sometimes confusing, uncomfortable, or infuriating.

Disciplinary research on the role of emotion in politics is burgeoning. Although we do not offer a full review of its scope here, a brief discussion of a few highlights is helpful for grounding our strategies for teaching emotional competency in introductory courses. In some ways and despite the overall marginalization of emotion in liberalism, it is possible to link its consideration to the origins of our discipline. For example, as Engelken-Jorge et al. (2011) note, classical authors including Plato and Aristotle discussed the education of emotions as important for virtuous citizens (19). Marcus (2000) suggests that not a single political thinker in the Western tradition is inattentive to the subject of emotions, including Hobbes and Descartes. In sum, the role of emotions in politics is a familiar subject in political theory (e.g., Nussbaum 2013; see Maiz 2011 for a discussion of this literature), including the American political philosophy of the founders--Hamilton's famous line in *The Federalist*, No. 51, that "passion never fails to wrest the sceptre [*sic*] from reason," comes to mind.

More recently, political scientists across disciplinary subfields have explored the role of emotions explaining political behavior, citizen mobilization, elite decision-making, representation, political communication, party development, and political outcomes. Emotions determine how people participate in politics, and whether they participate at all, and this has obvious and significant implications for political outcomes. Katherine Cramer's *Politics of Resentment* (2016) introduced political science to the idea of "rural consciousness," a sense of intense resentment on the part of rural citizens toward urban citizens. Resentment involves deep disagreement about basic democratic principles, "ideas about who gets what, who has power, what people are like, and who is to blame" (Cramer 2016, 5). Importantly, feelings of rural resentment can be (and are) fomented by elites for political gain; indeed, the global rise of populism has been linked to similar feelings of cynicism, anger, and resentment.

In *Uncivil Agreement* (2018), Lillian Mason draws attention to the psychological causes and effects of political and group identities to show that American have not only sorted themselves by party, we have sorted ourselves socially. This kind of affective polarization, following Mason," is "defined by prejudice, anger, and activism on behalf of that prejudice and anger" (4). Ezra Klien's best-selling *Why We're Polarized* (2020) introduced a wider audience to this phenomenon of "political mega-identities," or partisan identities "merged with racial, religious, geographic, ideological, and cultural identities" (70, xxii). These links are so strong that they may matter more than empirical facts in explaining individuals' political judgements. In their most radical form, intense intergroup animosity leads partisans to view opponents as evil and as national threats and to endorse violence (Kalmoe and Mason 2022).

The relationship between how we *feel* about politics and how we *engage* in politics is also the subject of Davin Phoenix's pioneering book, *The Anger Gap* (2020), which documents how "racial differences in emotion translate to racial disparities in political participation" (5). More than simple responses to events, emotions generate motivations for actions (or inaction). Anger is among the most powerful possible motivations to political action, as evidenced by the frequency of rhetorical appeals to anger in the public realm. However, our emotions are not "born of the immediate moment," suggests Phoenix, but rather "anchored in longstanding expectations, goals, and beliefs" that vary between social groups and, therefore, lead to different forms of political action and help explain widening racial participation disparities in American politics (7).

In each of these ways, research on the role of emotions in politics has opened several new paths of scholarly inquiry. Insights from this scholarship, however, have only begun trickling into considerations about how we teach American government and politics, especially introductory courses. To be sure, class discussions about current political events undeniably evoke emotional responses, whether instructors explicitly address them or not. It is impossible, for example, to discuss Florida Governor Ron DeSantis's staged flights of migrants from San Antonio to Martha's Vineyard without *feeling* something; DeSantis himself suggested his actions were both based on frustration and anger and designed to be met with the same. In Chapter 4 on deliberative competency, we discussed strategies for helping students learn to negotiate everyday conversations about these kinds of events—skills that obviously require students to be attuned to their own emotional responses and to empathically anticipate the emotional responses of others.

In the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL), beyond strategies for facilitating conversations about provocative issues, the most prominent high-impact practices attending to students' emotions (and emotional growth) are in the area of experiential learning, especially field-based experiences such as service-learning, community-based research, internships, and study abroad. As Bennion (2015) notes, experiential learning emphasizes critical thinking and problem solving and commitments to social responsibility and democracy—these are hallmarks of emotionally competent and invested citizens. There is good evidence that experiential learning contributes to students' emotional development and situational awareness as well as academic learning. Like any pedagogical approach, experiential learning does not "fit" every situation and course; class size and student interest and faculty resources are major limiting factors in many introductory American government courses.

There are just a handful of additional pedagogical approaches in the political science SoTL that explicitly seek to engage students' emotions in the classroom. Karen Liftin's (2020) use of the "contemplative pause" encourages student-centered reflection as a pedagogical tool that can help students acknowledge and accept their own subjective experience of their objective learning. Vanderhill and Dorroll (2022) advocate using reflective and self-care practices to help mitigate the emotional costs of learning about difficult subjects as well as to acknowledge broader mental health challenges increasingly present in undergraduate classrooms. Both of these approaches are akin to mindfulness training, what Murabai Bush, the founder of the Center for the Contemplative Mind in Society, describes as a process in which "students are encouraged to engage directly in contemplative techniques, including mindfulness, and then step back and appraise their experience for meaning and significance (2011, 183)." We share Litfin's goal of helping students acknowledge and accept their own subjective experiences of politics and draw on some of her suggestions for reflection below. However, we're less interested in mindfulness *per se* than in the insights that can be gleaned by resetting what Bush calls "third person learning"--studying phenomena at a distance, which we suspect is prominent in introductory American government courses—to make room for first person experiences.

Most likely, the vast majority of political science instructors come closest to engaging the role of emotion in politics during class sections on public opinion, parties, voter engagement, and elections (and perhaps less frequently discussions about pluralism). In our experience, however, emotions and feelings are incidental, perhaps even accidental, to teaching content in these areas. Units on public opinion, for instance, quickly pivot from discussions about political socialization to discussions about polling and survey methodology—useful in helping students become critical consumers of public opinion but not terribly helpful in helping them understand their own lived experience of politics. Units on campaigns and elections often touch on the role of media and

messaging, but tend to emphasize the structure of the electoral system and the "facts" surrounding campaign finance. Conventional approaches to teaching about parties fall into the same emotion-avoidance trap, emphasizing the origins and development of the two-party system and the role of parties in organizing government, overcoming fragmentation, and providing structures of accountability. Contemporary ideological polarization is "explained."

Despite our best efforts to avoid inviting emotions into teaching and learning about public opinion, voting, elections, and parties, there are few topics in our courses that are as closely related to the ways that students think about *who they are.* These content areas also reveal the necessity of cultivating emotion for US democracy, although our approach to teaching them rarely emphasizes this fact. No matter how clinically we try to tackle the puzzles of electoral behavior—H*ow could 53% of white women vote for Trump? Why do working class voters seemingly vote against their own self-interest? How can we respond to the significant number of Americans who believe that the 2020 election was stolen? Why do so many college age people hate politics so much? What leads some people to political violence? Will the Republicans and Democrats ever agree on anything?*--we cannot really begin to answer them without paying attention to the role of emotions. Of particular importance, our students' emotions filter their receptiveness to the disciplinary answers we do provide in response to these puzzles.

Our interest is to create strategies for teaching students' *knowledge about how emotions matter in politics*, and teaching in ways that *engage students' emotional reactions to politics*.[1] Absent attention to the affective aspects of politics, an otherwise gloomy picture of deep division across just about every aspect of politics may push students away from, rather than toward, political engagement. Alternatively, students may be motivated toward forms of engagement that only intensify animosity, division, violence, and their own negative emotions. Whether they come to our classrooms feeling optimistic, hopeful, and eager to engage in politics, or feeling pessimistic, resentful, and convinced that engaging in politics is futile, we must support our students in: first, understanding the origins and role of emotions in American government and politics; and second, responding to emotions in productive and practical ways that both advance democratic citizenship and support healthy relationships to politics. These are the challenges guiding this chapter.

INVITING FEELINGS TO THE CLASSROOM: APPLYING EMOTIONAL COMPETENCY TO THE DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP FRAMEWORK

For political scientists concerned with political engagement, the ways that emotions and feelings interact with the cognitive components and motivational forces of citizenship are especially important (Engelken-Jorge et al. 2011). Our *feelings* about politics intersect with what we *know* about politics with important consequences for political action (or inaction) and for forming alliances of collective interest. Smith (2022) notes that a highly fractured political climate rife with ideological polarization is the primary driver of the increasing negative health effects of politics, including poor mental health. He suggests that increased political knowledge is an important route to counteracting the psychological, physical, and emotional toll of politics. Political knowledge is important, of course. Often disappointment in and distrust of politics is driven by a failure to really understand how the political process works. But one of the great challenges when it comes to teaching and learning about emotions in politics is negotiating the inverse relationship between positive emotions and feelings of political efficacy, on one hand, and high expectations for political change, on the other hand. As Gary Stoker has commented, "politics is bound to disappoint" (2006, page 10, quoted in Jenkins 2018). Put differently, the

more we know about politics the more unhappy we are about it and the less we think we can do anything to change it.

As Laura Jenkins's (2018) suggests, feelings about politics have always mattered. She writes, "the way we judge any situation is inherently emotional...any political engagement or disengagement is motivated by feelings." If young people are angry, disillusioned, and resentful about politics it could be, Jenkins suggests, because their feelings have been neglected and ignored. It seems to us that many students do, indeed, feel this way. Therefore, a purposeful approach that helps students identify their emotions and understand the role of emotions in politics is not only an essential foundation to the democratic citizenship framework, but we also suspect it will be validating for students, especially those who struggle to see politics as relevant to their own lives or as a route for achieving social change.

For our purposes, we use "affect," "emotions" and "feelings" interchangeably; we make little effort to wade into the complicated literature differentiating these terms, leaving this to more advanced courses in the discipline. Another quick caveat: we are not psychologists and make no claims about diagnosing or treating the kinds of mental health effects increasingly linked to politics in the 21st century. Nor do we explore the vast literature emerging in neuroscience and psychology about the role of emotion in learning. Our goal is much more modest: to recognize the role of emotions and feelings by being honest about their role in American government and politics, including the ways that emotions both generate and limit possibilities for democratic citizenship, and by inviting our students to acknowledge that their feelings, and other's feelings, matter.

Students who possess *emotional competency* understand why and how emotions matter to politics. They are reflective about processes of political socialization that shape how individuals and groups come to hold political values, attitudes, and beliefs. They see and can identify different choices for responding to emotion-laden messages and communications in the political process. Students who are emotionally competent seek empathy toward others' holding different political views; when points of commonality and understanding cannot be achieved, emotionally competent students remain resilient and engaged in politics, seeking to find ways to use politics to meet social needs, rather than resigning themselves to a world of irreconcilable differences. Students who are emotionally competent know that our own understandings of politics are interdependent with complex and overlapping identities; they value emotions as essential to political change and resist antipolitical sentiment.

In previous chapters of this book, we approached institutional, participatory, informational, and deliberative competencies in the democratic citizenship framework by emphasizing the need to move beyond knowledge-based approaches. Given the relative absence of emotions and feelings from conventional content-based teaching and learning pedagogies, we take a slightly modified approach in this chapter, first discussing what students ought to know about emotions and feelings in introductory American government courses, then moving to consider the other pieces of the democratic framework—caring, choosing, and doing. Table 6.1 summarizes student learning objectives, teaching strategies, and connections between emotions and feelings and conventional content and topics in undergraduate introductory courses.

Knowing: What do students need to know about emotions in politics?

Unlike the other aspects of the pedagogical framework discussed in this book—institutions, participation, deliberation, political information—emotions and feelings are not standard fare in what might be considered the canon of political knowledge in undergraduate American government courses. *Knowing* that emotions and feelings matter to politics and

understanding why, where, and how emotions matter is key to emotional competency. Put differently, before students can identify ways to respond to their feelings about politics, they have to have a better sense of where those feelings come from and how, where, and by whom those feelings are either encouraged or discouraged.

It can be difficult for students to understand their own emotions and feelings about politics as both contextual and social, rather than ahistorical and individual. Emotions are products of political socialization, interactions, institutions, communications, and material experiences. They are not only things that individuals experience but are also collective phenomenon (Pheonix 2020). Units on public opinion may prod students toward this kind of thinking by introducing them to the concept of political socialization. Reflection is a critical pedagogical tool for encouraging students to connect their personal feelings to disciplinary content on public opinion; it is also essential for helping students develop understanding and empathy toward others. Students may be invited to reflect on their own processes of political socialization, gaining insight into their own attitudes on policy issues such as climate change, gun control, or health care, for example. They may even also be prompted to see these preferences as linked to other aspects of their identity, such as their race or ethnicity or gender identity, their relationships to peers, where they grew up, where and whether they attend religious services, whether their parents have college degrees, and so on.

Classroom exercises that ask students to recall their first political memory (*What was it? How old were you? How do you remember feeling? Did you talk about it with your family and friends at the time? How do you think about it now?*) offer a great launching point to get students thinking reflectively about the factors that have influenced their own views of the political world. Sharing political memories—in a class discussion or on a discussion board—can extend the value of this activity further, by giving students insight into significant events that have shaped the views of others. In another variation, Bethany Albertson (political psychologist at UT Austin [@AlbertSonB2]), asks her students to reach out to an individual age 60 or older to ask them about their first political memory, and then to write a brief reflection about what they learned. Whether posed as an individual-level question, developed as a small group assignment, or turned into an interview-type activity, the important point is to show students some of the root causes of their feelings about politics and to reinforce the point that our orientations to politics are consequences of learning processes and interactions. This kind of assignment is also helpful for helping students think of themselves as members of a political community.

Box 6.1 Sample Assignment: Reflecting on Political Socialization and the “Origins” of Political Feelings

The following prompts may be suitable for students' written reflection, small group discussions or discussion boards, or classroom discussion depending on class size and other factors. If assigned in written form, we recommend grading for completion only. Alternatively, faculty could evaluate how well students "apply" knowledge about political socialization in their answers. In either case, perhaps the most important goals of this activity are to validate and demonstrate the value of students' experiences and to provide students with space to think compassionately about others' experiences as these experiences are both cause and effect of political attitudes and actions. For this reason, faculty who adopt a small group or discussion board approach should set out clear guidelines that emphasize the value of identifying and listening to (not evaluating) varied experiences among peers.

- Generate a list of the different social, cultural, political, economic influences that shaped the person you are today. Which factors from this list were most influential in shaping your beliefs about politics—why?
- How often did your family talk about politics when you were growing up? How do you think this shaped your views today?
- What kind of neighborhood did you grow up in (or live in now)? In what ways does your neighborhood reflect the diversity of the country? In what ways does your neighborhood reflect current challenges facing democracy?*
- How involved are you in politics? How about your friends? What kinds of political issues are most important to you and to your friends? What is it about these issues that make them important?
- If you, or your friends, are not interested in politics, why do you think that is? Can you describe common feelings toward politics among your peers?
- What major events—international, national, local—have been significant to you? Are there particular events that you think define your generation? What kind of effects did these events have on the way you think about politics?
- Think about a time when you changed your mind about something, such as a rule or policy issue. What led you to change your mind?

* This question is inspired by one suggested by Terri Givens in *Radical Empathy* (2021).

Campaigns offer one of the most accessible routes for helping students *see* how particular emotions are used in politics. Because campaigns are standard content in introductory courses, and because political advertising is ubiquitous, it's not a heavy lift to be attentive to their affective dimensions. Indeed, the entire point of campaign advertising and messaging hinges on the assumption that how we feel is linked to how we act politically. Linking campaign ads to social polarization (rather than only issue differences or even party differences) is critical for deepening students' understanding about the 21st century interplay between identity and politics and about the ways that emotions are spread through inter-personal influence, that is, conveyed from political elites to the electorate (Stapleton and Dawkins 2022). Klein (2020) showcases this by referencing the infamous Club for Growth 2004 ad, which described "liberals" as a "tax-

hiking, government-expanding, latte-drinking, sushi-eating, Volvo-driving, *New York Times*-reading, body-piercing, Hollywood-loving left-wing freak show (69-70)." Students generally see the power and humor of this ad and are able to articulate why it is so powerful—that is, the transcendence of party by identity. They can also identify the kinds of emotions this ad was designed to evoke, and the kinds of political actions it was meant to encourage.

Many students learn best when their own experiences are the "laboratory," therefore exploring their own emotional responses to campaign messaging can provide a fruitful way to demonstrate the role of emotions. Verhulst and Lizotte (2011) point to how campaigns use music and imagery to provoke emotional responses to information that benefits their candidates; for example, ominous background music paired with an opponent's political record juxtaposed with uplifting background music when an ad turns to their own proposals. These examples may also help students understand how emotions can be manipulated in dangerous and anti-democratic ways, for example, by using dehumanizing rhetoric to sow division or threats to demobilize key segments of the population. Borrowing classroom strategies from the field of political psychology, instructors can ask students to notice and critically discuss examples of dehumanizing language in everyday political discourse. Similarly, it might be valuable to have students analyze how political candidates talk about their opponents on social media or in the context of a debate.

Campaigns are also fertile ground for considering the ways in which emotions are linked in complicated ways to political party, candidate identity, representation, expectations about leadership, and candidate evaluation. The media reaction to Hillary Clinton's infamous "crying" episode during the 2008 New Hampshire primary (which in reality was hardly more than a momentary tearing-up), for instance, highlights the ways that expectations about emotions intersect with gender and race to shape and constrain candidate—and voter—behavior. The Howard Dean "scream" episode similarly highlights how political leaders are constrained by views about the appropriateness of emotion.

Finding instances of emotion in politics is not difficult. Kerstin Maria Pahl's "Feeling Political Through Pictures" showcases the role of presidential portraiture—ranging from portraits of George Washington to memes of Obama and Biden—for both shaping and reflecting our expectations for leadership. Michael Amico offers a similar approach examining President Franklin Roosevelt's "fireside chats"--a model of persuasion and political rhetoric imbibed with confidence and hope. Faculty with interest in pop culture could introduce students to the role of emotions in politics through music or film or art. Patriotism may be the most common of all emotional cues in politics; contemporary political events offer numerous examples foregrounding public emotion in politics including, for example, Colin Kapernick's "taking a knee." The same can be said for political monuments.

Whatever approach is taken, the goal of "knowing" in the context of emotional competency is three-fold: 1) helping students "root" their own attitudes and feelings in a broader social and political context; 2) providing vantage points to identify emotional cues in politics; and 3) thinking critically about the role of emotional cues in shaping political behavior. Emotional competency learning objectives for "knowing" may include:

- Students can explain how political socialization works as a process through which individuals form political attitudes and values, and individual and group orientations to politics, including partisan orientations.

- Students know how, where, and why emotions matter to politics and political behavior; they can identify and think critically about instances of emotional cues in politics.

Caring: Why should students care about emotions—their own and those of others—and how can we inspire them to care?

Knowing that emotions matter to politics only goes so far in convincing us that we should care about their democratic consequences. One of the great challenges to imparting concern for the challenges facing our nation in the 21st century is what Mason (2018) labels "distrust for the other," which is both cause and consequence of ideological and social polarization.

> Well-sorted citizens are broadly emotionally responsive. They get angry at any message of threat, and they get happy at any message of victory...The more sorted we become, the more emotionally we react to normal political events...The more people who feel angry, the less capable we are as a nation of finding common ground on policies, or even of treating our opponents like human beings (100-1).

Although both anger and enthusiasm can have positive consequences for democracy, in the current moment these emotions are increasingly mobilizing citizens for the sake of conflict itself. This is a challenging starting point if our goal is to cultivate students' political engagement and a concern for democracy. Like most Americans, the vast majority of our students report dislike and distrust toward the opposition party, and report having few friends who identify with the opposing party. Students without deep connections to parties report not really caring about politics in the first place. Here we find ourselves: *We are unhappy about politics, we do not like our political opponents, and we don't care about any of it!*

"Caring" it the context of emotional competency requires an assumption of responsibility for thinking critically about the relational qualities of emotions and an acknowledgement that current social and political divides are not benign. Teaching strategies that center "caring" as an element of democratic citizenship and emotional competency do two central things: 1) demonstrate to students that emotions and feelings can change with (good and bad) consequences for individuals, for social groups, and for democracy; and 2) foreground voices of empathy, moderation, and shared commitment to democracy. It's important for us to note that we are deeply aware of the special challenges asymmetrical polarization has created for American democracy. Neither asymmetric polarization nor affective polarization can be "cured" simply by an appeal to empathy, nor do all points of view deserve empathy.[2] Moreover, emergent political science research suggests that empathy itself is not immune to the challenges of contemporary ideological divisions and, in practice, can serve to deepen tribalism rather than foster an understanding of others' feelings and perspectives (Simas et al. 2020). The larger point is, if students are going to be emotionally invested in democracy, many will need help moving past frustration with a political sphere in which anger is the dominant political emotion.

An emphasis on the links between emotions and the social bonds that motivate political action may aid in this process. Phoenix (2021) reminds us that we ought to care about the role of emotions in politics because "emotions can change in nearly an instant" (249).

> The right messaging about a political candidate, platform or issue can animate an immediate and particular emotional reaction, which in turn can influence how—or whether—people choose to act in response. (249).

There are things that we can do to change our emotions and evoke different responses from others. When it comes to the anger gap, following Phoenix, this requires 'remov[ing] the socially

imposed bonds on black anger and craft[ing] political messaging that acknowledges African Americans' political grievances rather than marginalizing them" (249). Stacy Abrams may be an example of a political candidate who did just that, an effort described in *Our Time is Now* (2020). Phoneix's *Anger Gap* and Abram's *Our Time is Now* are both situated in the scholarship of public opinion, electoral behavior, campaigns and elections. We've read selections of both with our own undergraduate students and have found them to be provocative and accessible and extremely useful compliments to conventional textbook chapters on elections and political participation. Abrams infuses her own personal life story into a carefully structured argument about the electoral process. This text dovetails nicely with assignments that position students to reflect on their own political socialization and the links between who they are and how they think—and feel—about their own engagement in democracy. Abram's documentary, *All In: The Fight for Democracy* covers similar ground and is useful for instructors interested in using documentary film in class (film invites another layer to thinking about the power of emotion in politics).

Drawing teaching lessons from this scholarship, we can help our students understand that political attitudes, values, and emotions can change and that those changes matter for collective political behavior and the outcomes of the political process. At the collective level, for example, while some attitudes may be more stubborn, political opinion *can* change and this kind of change is both cause and effect of emotions in politics. Shifting public attitudes on issues related to same-sex marriage and LGBTQI+ rights, reproductive rights, approval ratings for all three branches of government—each provide useful evidence that collective feelings toward political and social issues can and do change in ways that are linked to significant political outcomes.

Moreover, at the individual level, although it is likely that all people experience emotions and feelings related to affective polarization, it is the case that not all Americans are affectively polarized. Not everyone holds animosity toward partisan opponents, even if those who do often speak with the loudest voice. Krupnikov and Ryan's important book *The Other Divide* (2022), convincingly argues that the vast majority of Americans are not affective partisans, but that our media environments make it seem that way (we say more about this in Chapter 5 on informational competency).

Class activities that help students "discover" perspectives on politics that do not fit in the warring camps frame may be useful in this regard, especially for students without intensely held views or who consider themselves "independents" and seek connection outside of the current two-party system. It can be difficult to find examples of "bipartisanship" in 21st century congressional politics. But there are some examples of some cross-party compromise, such as the Respect for Marriage Act of 2022 (H.R. 8404) which received 47 Republican votes in the House and 10 in the Senate; or the Invest in America Act of 2021 (H.R. 3684) which received support of almost 40% of Republicans in the Senate. Additional measures in the 117th Congress include bipartisan bills on semiconductor manufacturing, approving Sweden's and Finland's membership in NATO, (limited) measures on gun safety, and a signature infrastructure bill (Bryant 2022). Admittedly, the degree of bipartisanship on these measures is limited and, in almost every case, was a consequence of a small group of legislators' willingness to cross party lines (the Bipartisan Index is a useful tool for examining which members of Congress are most likely to compromise). The more important point is to provide opportunities for students to see positive change resulting from people working together—a powerful antidote to the constant stream of negative messaging about division and the futility of politics.

Caughell (2018) notes that students are generally ill-quipped "to understand how fellow citizens construct political judgements that differ from their own," signaling an overall lack of empathy and an inability to grasp experiences and values of others (659). Cuaghell has experimented in his classroom by asking students to design campaign websites for candidates who are ideologically different from themselves, an activity that helps them gain insight into how people come to have a range of beliefs and views. Although Mason's purposes in *Uncivil Agreement* do not extend to pedagogy, her book offers similar suggestions for breaking the cycle of conflict-for-its-own sake from which we can derive some ideas for our classrooms. Asking students to develop sympathetic portrayals of partisans on multiple sides of a policy issue (such as, immigration, higher education funding, climate change) using tolerant language, individually or in small groups, may help students think critically about what Mason calls "our emotional relationships with our opponents." For Mason, such thinking is a prerequisite for finding compromises required for governing (101). Less resource intensive class activities can engage students in nuanced readings of current events; for example, before giving into the temptation to simply throw up our hands in disgust, what is the most sympathetic portrayal we can paint of Keven McCarthy's fraught path to the speakership?

Another strategy that has worked remarkably well in counteracting our students' agitation about American politics, is providing opportunities for them to engage directly with elected officials or people working in non-elective positions in politics, such as a city manager or clerk in an office of voter registration (sometimes these folks are college or university alumni which is an added bonus!). Since many students have limited interactions with people working in politics, it can be difficult for them to resist collapsing everyone into the same bucket of "corrupt politicians who don't care about me." Talking to dedicated public servants offers refreshing positivity and evidence that politics can be a tool for problem solving. Perhaps the city or town where your institution is located just passed an anti-discrimination policy. Could the sponsor of that legislation talk to students about how they were motivated by a commitment to civil rights to enhance the protections offered locally? Even better, as Diana Hess (2004) argues, invite a guest speaker to engage with students on an issue in their area of expertise. Forgo the (often) stuffy speech, and put students in groups to examine how municipal anti-discrimination policies vary and have the guest official circulate around discussing what students are discovering. If class visits are not always logistically feasible, students could read about these developments. Even in a contentious political environment, positive things are happening that showcase the value of emotional investment in the political process.

We are not suggesting that anger and disappointment are never warranted in politics, but we do think we have an obligation to help provide our students with tools to resist antipolitical sentiment. We suspect that a lot of our students' disaffectedness from politics is related to unrealistic expectations and impatience with the political process. Some students have no hope; others have a lot of hope but little concrete understanding about how to actually move toward a desired goal, often leading to disappointment. Instructors can support students' emotional competency by grounding their hopes a bit and using the tools of political science to help them identify the best pathways for achieving political change (Civettini 2011). Rebecca Solnit (2022), in her relentless pursuit to amplify evidence of mutual aid and popular power, puts it this way: "change begins in the shadows, not the limelight." Following Solnit, incomplete understanding about how politics works, or how incrementally ideas move from margin to center, breeds defeatism and despair. The long-view of political change, moreover, often begins with state and local government, although students are not primed to look locally to see evidence for

democracy. As we argued in Chapter 2, given the distribution of centers of power in American politics, there are good reasons to engage students with state and local governments, even in classes otherwise organized around the national government.

Emotional competency learning objectives for "caring" may include:

- Students think critically about the positive and negative consequences of different kinds of emotions and know that emotions are changeable at the individual and collective levels.
- Students understand the dangers of antipolitical sentiment and express personal emotional investment in democracy.

Choosing: What kinds of choices do students have in responding to their emotional responses to politics?

Emotions function as a lens through which individuals and groups make sense of the world and, as such, they constrain our options, strategies, and decisions for engaging in the public realm. Emotions and feelings can be useful, or harmful, when it comes to social interactions and to motivating and directing political action (Jenkins 2016; Phoenix 2021). We cannot expect to engage in politics in the absence of emotion, but our emotions and feelings should not be—and are not—the only guide to our political action. We make choices about engaging in politics, whether individually or with others, and these choices often require that we pay attention to, moderate, or modify our emotions a bit, at times, perhaps loosen our allegiances to our party or group identity, if we want our actions to be effective.

To the extent possible given classroom constraints and one's individual comfort level, we think it is crucial for instructors to share their own experiences with complex emotions and feelings about contemporary political events. This does not need to take an ideological bent. For example, in the wake of claims of election fraud following the 2020 election, like many political scientists, we spoke with our students about how worried we were by the deteriorating trust in American institutions and what that might mean for American democracy. The January 6 Capitol insurrection was scary, jaw-dropping, and confusing for us, too, just as it was for our students; we can share with our students what we were feeling, and how we expressed those feelings—in the short term, perhaps by sharing with others through conversation or condemning violence on social media or remaining glued to the TV and, in the longer term, by recommitting ourselves to being political engaged and doing what we can to spread positive support for our democracy. What seems key is for instructors to help students discern the differences between the ways that emotions are elicited (by campaign messaging or media or dramatic events), the experience of an emotion (how one feels in response to emotional cues), and the ways that emotions are expressed through social interactions and, possibly, political action (Doveling et al. 2011).

Emerging research suggests that a lot of the anger characterizing contemporary politics is a function of the public responding to the anger of political elites in ways that reinforces rather than crosses partisan divisions (Stapleton and Sawkings 2022). Anger can be contagious and self-reinforcing. But citizens are not simply passive receptacles of emotional messaging. We do exercise some control over our own emotional experience of politics. We make choices about when to tune-in and when to tune-out, for example. Along these lines, in Chapter 5 we discuss strategies for curating media environments and avoiding propagating dangerous or divisive messages that are corrosive to political trust. We also have choices when it comes to how, where, when, and with whom we express our emotions and feelings. As instructors, we can

provide classroom opportunities for students to notice their own responses to emotional cues in politics and to discern options for expressing those emotions in different ways.

Susan Sivek's (2018) work on emotion and news literacy suggests that Kahneman's (2011) notion of "two systems" in *Thinking, Fast and Slow* is a helpful way to approach this. System 1 guides mostly involuntary reactions; it is fast, almost automatic and is characterized by the quick immediacy of emotions and feelings. System 2, in contrast, is slow, it is the system that engages in more complex and careful critical thinking. Following Sivek's suggestion, one goal of emotional competency is for students to recognize the differences between reacting (thinking fast) and more deliberate responding (thinking slow) to their emotional experiences of politics. Our sense is that most students, when prompted and given opportunity to reflect, can identify how particular political events, messages, or actions made them feel—such as an important Supreme Court decision, an election result, or investigative reporting that reveals political corruption. The more difficult task is helping students understand that their emotions and feelings may be temporary states, but nonetheless have lasting consequence for how they think about information, how they think about likelihood of compromise, or how they appraise the value of different kinds of political action (Verhulst and Lizotte 2011).

Reflective opportunities in the classroom are crucial, especially to the extent that knee-jerk emotional reactions can also limit students' attentiveness to learning and their likelihood of engaging in critical thinking about course material.

For instructors interested in sustained reflection, perhaps even over the course of a semester, journals can encourage students to notice, monitor, and comment on their emotional experiences of politics, whether in the context of social media communications, interpersonal interactions, or discussing of class content. Journals are beneficial because they not only help students notice emotions and feelings, but to "reposition" themselves after evaluating their initial emotional responses (Sivek 2018). Student journals parallel nicely with mindfulness exercises for faculty interested in this approach. If these approaches feel too far afield or impractical given the constraints of class size and instructor resources, a brief moment in class can serve the same goal. We are partial to activities that are integrated with knowledge-based course goals, for example, inviting students to "free write" at the end of a class period about the topics covered that day or perhaps respond to a simple prompt, such as Liftin's (2020) suggestion: "Who am I in relation to this?"

Once students have some practice identifying and reflecting on their emotional reactions to politics, the next step is to help them identify choices for responding. Equally as important is pointing out to our students that they are *already* making these kinds of choices, even if that choice is to "do nothing" or to retreat from politics. Box 6.2 offers a conceptual representation of the links between initial emotions feelings and making deliberate choices about how to respond to them in a variety of ways. Identifying choices for responding to emotions in politics obviously invites consideration about the best options given specific circumstances. Students' identities and personal experiences, cultural context, geography—each of these factors shape choices for expressing and responding to emotions and feelings. DACA students, for example, face a different set of circumstances in making decisions about how to respond to anti-immigrant sentiment then do students with US citizenship. Anger could lead to a recommitment to vote or to seek change in the political process, perhaps by protesting. Alternatively, anger could also lead to a desire to step-back, to take a breath, to regroup, or to engage in self-care by walking away or working to dampen the contagion of anger. It is true that democracy requires

engagement and participation, but it is also the case that reflective forms of non-engagement can serve democratic goals (Hensby 2019). Box 6.2 intentionally omits responses to emotions that involve violence and, although we believe pushing-back or publicly disagreeing to be a meaningful response to a range of feelings in politics, we omit responses such as assigning blame and name-calling (although these are awfully common responses these days). Our goal is to help our students be deliberate in choosing responses that support democracy, that seek moderation, and that are most likely to lead toward meaningful policy solutions to contemporary problems, rather than advancing a simple "need to win."

Box 6.2 Thinking Slow: Recognizing Choices for Responding to Emotions in Politics

Faculty can empower students by helping them see their own agency for responding to individual and collective emotions in politics as illustrated in the figure below.

What am I feeling?

Recognizing initial emotional reactions to politics events, messages, or actions, for example:

Fear
Anger
Joy
Disgust
Hope
Surprise
Anxiety
Happiness
Confusion

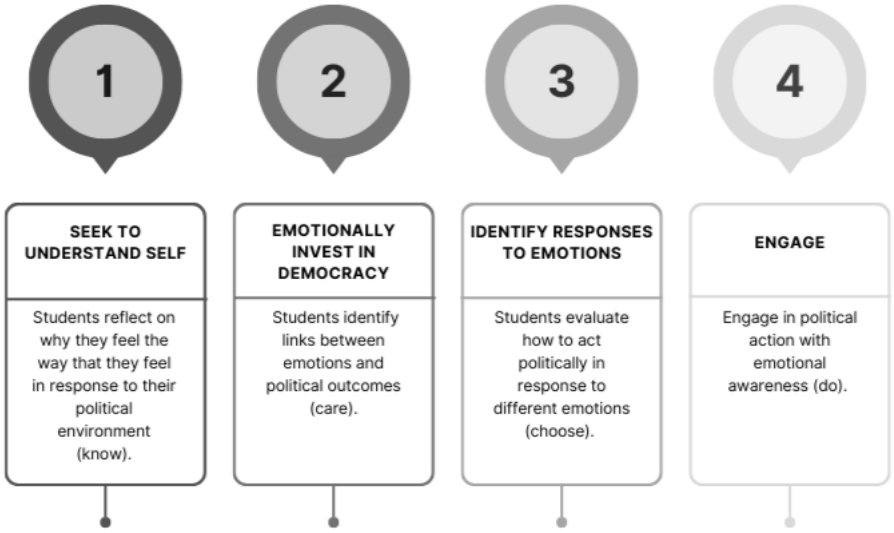
How can I respond to my feelings? What is the *best* way for me to respond?

Identifying possible ways to respond to initial emotions. For example:

- Stepping back, turning off the tv, unfollowing social media accounts, walking way, refocusing energies elsewhere, taking a breath, finding calm
- Identifying connections to previous personal experiences and shared group identities
- Talking, discussing, listening with family, friends, teachers, coworkers
- Seeking deeper understanding, asking questions, gathering information, reading, reconsidering previously held perspectives
- Writing, for oneself in a journal or communicating with others, such as elected officials, newspapers, social media outlets
- Speaking up, pushing back, arguing, debating, amplifying emotions or, alternatively, rejecting others' attempts to amplify emotion
- Forging connections, joining collective actions, such as demonstrations, protests, petition campaigns
- Directly engaging by voting, volunteering, organizing
- Donating money to political or community organizations
- Imaging new futures, setting personal and collective goals, developing strategies for engaging in government and politics

In sum, emotional competent students recognize that they have agency to make choices when it comes to their emotional responses to and investment in politics.
Emotional competency learning objectives for "choosing" may include:

- Students can articulate the differences between experiencing emotions in politics and responding to them.
- Students accept agency and responsibility for responding to emotions in politics in ways that support democracy and their own role as participants in the public realm.



Doing: How can students engage in political action with emotional awareness?

What, exactly, is it that we want our students to *do* when it comes to emotions and feelings in politics? Answering this question is a work in progress for us, but we have settled on two tentative goals: 1) we want our students to successfully navigate their own political emotions in healthy ways; and 2) we want our students to engage in political action with emotional awareness. To make these two goals achievable we, as instructors, can make space for and take seriously our students' complex feeling and emotions about politics, rather than brushing them off or bracketing them as non-deliberative or anti-intellectual. We can get serious with our students about the virtues and pitfalls of hope, as well as the virtues and pitfalls of despair, working to create realistic expectations for change. Finally, we can live by example, sharing the links between our own political emotions and our approach to teaching about politics.

Having a healthy emotional relationship with politics is a balancing act. Although democracy needs some very emotionally invested and highly participatory people--super voters, super volunteers, and political news junkies (we count ourselves among this group)—nonetheless, it is unrealistic to expect this level of commitment from a majority of our students (or a majority of Americans). Moreover, we know from first-hand experience that this level of investment can contribute to stress and anxiety and a sense of helplessness to affect change. As mentioned above, the most politically involved young people are also the most likely to report greater unhappiness and more negative mental health in relation to politics. But, at the same time, "sticking one's head-in-the-sand" and avoiding politics altogether is not a desirable option (although this option seems preferred by many of our students).

There are limits to what individual faculty can do in the classroom to attend to their students' emotional wellbeing, especially in a political environment that makes it difficult to draw clear lines between inclusivity and anti-democratic views. Instructors have varied degrees of autonomy and institutional security to invite consideration of emotionally-sensitive topics into their classrooms. We suspect that many of our colleagues reading this book are aware of circumstances which seem to demand avoiding overly emotional topics as a mechanism to protect vulnerable or marginalized students. Few of us were socialized into the discipline with encouragement to incorporate feelings into our teaching and research—though it is undeniable that emotional discourses effect our desire and approach to teaching (Keegan 2021). Even fewer of us were provided with opportunities to develop the skills to support students' emotional responses to the political world. All this notwithstanding, it is not a stretch to recognize the value in helping our students think about the emotional bases of their own political and civic commitments (Keegan 2021).

Emotions are both cause and effect. Some forms of engagement, such as voting or contacting elected representatives, may go further in contributing to self-esteem when compared to "outsider" forms of engagement, such as talking about politics on social media (Ballard, Ni, and Brocato 2020). Civettini (2011) suggests that because an awful lot of political engagement—voting, signing petitions, raising money—is prospectively oriented, hope is an especially important emotion for encouraging political action. Following Civettini, creating hope requires identifying goals for change, developing reasonable expectations for achieving those goals, and possessing and acting on feelings of political efficacy. Of course, there is a flip side to hope. Our students often seek dramatic action and rapid response—the kind of quick, bold, big action that the American political system was designed to make exceptional. This kind of change rarely happens; citizens' efforts to achieve political change are often thwarted by powerful political obstacles. But few spaces are as well-suited as undergraduate American government classrooms to help our students understand the intentionality and philosophy of or government design or to impart the skills required to both value and critique it—all of which are critical to help students process their disappointment when their hopes for quick change are dashed. We are also well-situated to help our students discover alternative institutional routes for political change, and to see the transformative potential of incremental change. We can help our students draw a line between disappointment and resignation.

We've found Terri Givens' *Radical Empathy: Finding a Path to Bridge Racial Divisions* (2021) to be inspirational in brainstorming ways to engage our students in emotion-aware forms of political action. Givens defines "radical empathy" as more than the ability to see the world from another person's perspective or to understand another person's feelings. Instead, Givens writes, radical empathy encourages us to be motivated to seek the kinds of political, social, and

economic changes that are beneficial to our collective well-being and to racial justice (1). Another way of thinking about this might be to work with students to identify superordinate goals (Mason 2018). Givens uses stories, including her own personal story, as tools for bridging divides—racial divides, as well as other divides, including religion, class, gender, and divides characterizing Americans' relationships to higher education. Stories are not only critical for developing empathy; they can also reveal the context we are living in and help identify goals and strategies for addressing racism and social justice through action (15). Givens identifies several personal strategies for practicing radical empathy, that are similar to those discussed above in "caring," including reflecting on one's own life story, neighborhood, relationships with people from different backgrounds and cultures. More importantly for our purposes, she also identifies several kinds of political actions—ranging from joining community organizations and supporting low-income students in schools—that can help create change by bridging structural and cultural divides. These examples foreground the importance of seeking diverse perspectives as a critical ingredient of emotional-awareness in politics.

Emotional competency learning objectives for "doing" may include:

- Students are interested in "checking-in" with their own emotions; they demonstrate self-awareness of the links between political emotion and civic and political commitments.
- Students seek to respond to political emotion in productive ways, linking the expression of emotion to political goals and concrete political action.

Table 6.1 Emotional Competency Learning Objectives & Teaching Strategies in the Democratic Citizenship Framework

	Learning Objectives	**Teaching Strategies**	**Connections to Conventional Course Content**
Knowing	Students can explain how political socialization works; they know how, where, and why emotions matter to politics and political behavior; they can identify and think critically about instances of emotional cues in politics.	Assignments and activities that connect factual knowledge to students' personal experiences; reflective exercises in which students identify their feelings about the political environment and others in it; activities in which students identify agents of socialization; activities in which students identify emotional cues in politics and reflect on the use of emotion as political strategy	Links to units on public opinion and political socialization; links to content on parties, campaigns and elections (especially campaign advertising), and political leadership and rhetoric (for example, in the presidency)
Caring	Students think critically about the positive and negative consequences of	Assignments/activities that allow students to identify the causes and democratic	Links to course units on public opinion, social movements,

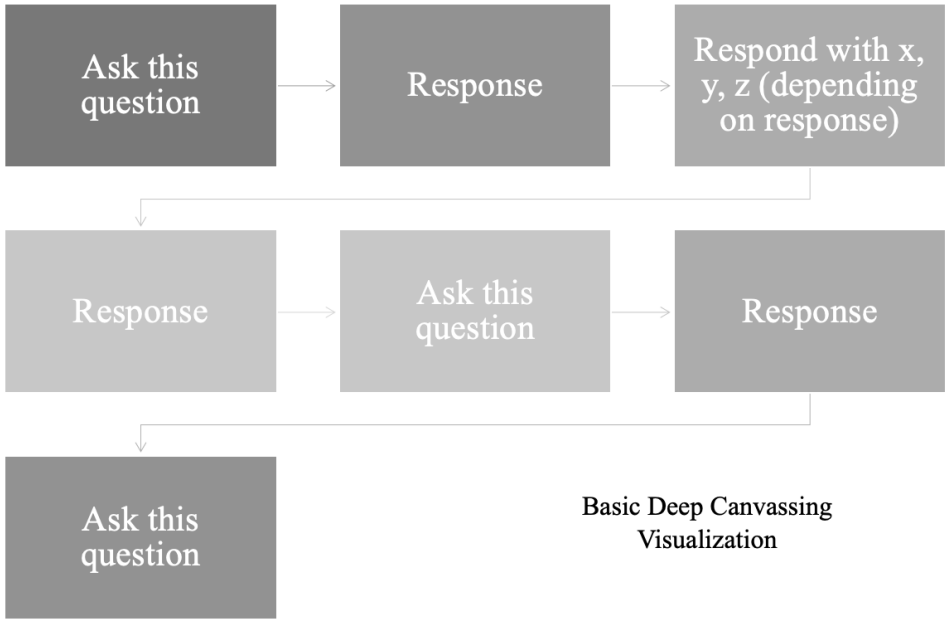
	different kinds of emotions and know that emotions are changeable at the individual and collective levels; they understand the dangers of antipolitical sentiment and express personal emotional investment in democracy.	consequences of mobilizing different emotions in politics; activities that showcase the possibilities of compromise and the use of politics to achieve change	party development; links to current events and to content on the challenges facing democracy (locally, nationally, and globally); links to content on public policymaking and problem-solving
Choosing	Students can articulate the differences between experiencing and responding to political emotions; they accept agency and responsibility for responding to political emotions in ways that support democracy and their own role as participants in the public realm.	Assignments/activities that empower students to identify and evaluate responses to emotions in politics (at the individual and/or social group level)	Links to units on electoral behavior and voting; links to class discussions about the general health of democracy and the challenges of governance; links to current events, including social movement protest, voter mobilization, and election outcomes
Doing	Students are interested in "checking-in" with their own emotions; they demonstrate self-awareness of the links between political emotion and civic and political commitments; they seek to respond to political emotion in productive ways, linking the expression of emotion to political goals and concrete political action.	Activities/lessons that affirm students' political emotions; assignments/activities in which students identify goals and accompanying forms of action for realistically advancing those goals; activities in which students check-in with their own emotions in relation to different forms of political engagement	Links to units on lobbying, interest groups, political parties, and government institutions as these can both block and facilitate political action and change; links to content on voter (de)mobilization and youth political engagement

Box 6.3 Emotional Competency Sample Assignment: Deep Canvassing

Political science is quite adept at diagnosing the conditions that lead citizens to be angry, apathetic, and disenchanted with American politics, but has less to say about interventions that might improve those

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">conditions. One exception that has gained some traction in recent years is deep canvassing. Deep canvassing is a way of approaching others (strangers) to discuss contentious political issues with relatively brief messaging in a way that promotes connection and understanding on both sides of the conversation. This approach, which draws on sincere and empathetic conversations, encourages others to engage in “active, effortful, processing” (Brockman and Kall 2016) that has been shown to aid in lasting opinion change.

This exercise guides students in preparing for a hypothetical experience with deep canvassing.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Knowing</td><td>1. Have students read Brian Resnick’s “How to talk someone out of bigotry. These scientists keep proving that reducing prejudice is possible. It’s just not easy.” in The Atlantic https://www.vox.com/2020/1/29/21065620/broockman-kalla-deep-canvassing, which offers an accessible description of the technique and why and when it has been effective.</td></tr>
<tr><td>2. Pose and instruct students about a specific issue of democratic consequence to students for a hypothetical deep canvassing experience. We recommend rules governing elections, as the right to vote is the very foundation of democratic governance. This could be something specific to the state, such as instituting early voting or simplifying the vote-by-mail process.</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>3. Have students create a deep canvassing plan (see visualization below). This would require students:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Caring</td><td>• Consider the type of emotions their approach would provoke in voters and how those emotions would manifest in the responses they would receive, being prepared for the full range of positive to negative reactions.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Choosing</td><td>• Formalize how they would initially approach voters to discuss the issue, focusing on the need to center empathy and understanding in the conversations.
• Formulate their own carefully considered responses to the range of reactions they may receive from voters.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Doing</td><td>• Craft their own personal narrative to connect with voters.
• Plan ways to end the conversation that leaves the voter with a positive reflection and, if appropriate, an actionable item in support of the cause.</td></tr>
</table>

	 Basic Deep Canvassing Visualization
Assess	4. Have students reflect on how emotional aspects of politics aided and complicated their deep canvassing strategy as well as how they could incorporate aspects of these types of conversations into how they both receive and deliver political messages in their own lives.

Assessment & Classroom Logistics

One could imagine a sustained focus on emotions across an entire course, beginning with the Founding, which is ripe with questions about what political elites and citizens were thinking and feeling when they set out to establish an independent nation with a novel system of government. This is unlikely for the vast majority of introductory instructors, who have an awful lot of ground to cover in a short period of time. We have two primary suggestions for integrating a concern with developing students' emotional competency with a conventional introductory American government course. First, there is great virtue in acknowledging the links between political emotions and political education early at the start of a new course, especially if we want our students to be receptive to what we are trying to teach them. Being upfront about the emotional complexity of 21st century politics can support students' self-affirmation. Second, units on public opinion, campaigns, and elections, including sections of voting and partisan behavior, offer a low-cost high-payoff route for integrating a focus on emotions.

Assessment of emotional competency is tricky terrain. It's easiest to assess what students know about the role of emotions in politics, with questions such as *How do emotions shape public opinion? How and why do political leaders and candidates appeal to emotions to influence supporters and opponents? What is the connection between polarization and emotions?* We caution against evaluation of students' reflections beyond perhaps noting their participation or ability to apply concepts such as political socialization to personal narratives. Instructors in different types of institutions with different student populations will have to make decisions that work best for them even if that means not doing any direct assessment of emotional competency at all. Indirectly, instructors might be able to measure what students are feeling about politics or towards others using a pre-test post-test method, inviting them to share their emotions or to

indicate levels of self-awareness at the start and conclusion of the course. These kinds of questions could easily be combined with items measuring political efficacy, a more familiar and more frequently surveyed concept in political science courses.

CONCLUSION

It is tempting for us, as instructors, to avoid the messy terrain of political emotion, especially when political leaders across the nation use the pretense of "feelings" to criminalize the discussion of specific subjects. Indeed, these political struggles are themselves evidence of affective polarization and the power of emotion to shape elite and partisan behavior at national, state, local, even school board levels. Given the enduring character of partisan orientations to politics, it is also tempting to dismiss our power as instructors to do much about it. Nonetheless, we think it is incontrovertible that what we do in our classrooms can and does shape and modify our students' affective relationships to politics. And, in our minds, whatever the limits of an emotionally-aware pedagogy, the global rise of authoritarianism makes doing nothing far riskier.

It is important for us to reiterate that we do not believe the challenges facing democracy can be solved simply by individuals getting in touch with their feelings or by a simple appeal to finding common ground. Meeting the challenges of our democracy will require institutional change, elite action, a resetting of norms, likely a redesigning of antimajoritarian institutions, etc.—things that citizens cannot do on their own. We are arguing, however, that promoting our students' political engagement is unlikely to happen in the absence of attention to their political emotions. Political scientists have long hung our hats on assumptions about the relationships between political knowledge, efficacy, and action. If our students have a better understanding about how government works, so the theory goes, they will have higher levels of political efficacy and confidence in their ability to engage in the political process, leading to higher rates of engagement. Political emotions complicate this otherwise neat understanding, especially by interrupting the cause-effect relationships between knowledge and efficacy.

This chapter is a collective call to action for instructors to develop a more intentional focus on the role of emotions in politics so that we can also be more intentionally responsive to students' feelings about politics. The foregoing sections offer practical suggestions for creating classroom opportunities for students to pause and reflect on their political emotions—to develop insight into the origins of their feelings about politics and the links between those feelings and their identities, their relationships with others, their propensity to engage in politics. We also offer suggestions to help students make decisions about how they respond, individually or collectively, to their political feelings and emotions, recognizing that not all forms of disagreement can (or should) be solved by rational discussion or compromise. Our classrooms are *already* emotional spaces and we are *already* imparting messages about the relationships between emotion and political participation to our students. A subtle shift in pedagogical approach that leads students to great self-awareness may help our students develop healthier orientations to politics and behavior that supports democracy.

Selected Web Resources to Support Teaching and Learning Emotional Competency

Resources on emotions in campaigns:

- The Living Room Candidate, http://www.livingroomcandidate.org/
- Poiltical TV Ad Archive, http://politicaladarchive.org/data/
- Political Advertising on Google, https://adstransparency.google.com/political?political&region=US
- Meta Ad Library, https://www.facebook.com/ads/library/?active_status=all&ad_type=political_and_issue_ads&country=US&media_type=all

Resources on bipartisanship:

- Bipartisan Policy Center Healthy Congress Index, https://bipartisanpolicy.org/congress/
- Lugar Center Bipartisan Index, https://www.thelugarcenter.org/ourwork-Bipartisan-Index.html

Resources on mindfulness:

- Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education, https://acmhe.org/
- George Lucas Educational Foundation, Edutopia, resources on mindfulness in education, https://www.edutopia.org/article/mindfulness-resources/

Resources on deep canvassing:

- Broockman, David, and Joshua Kalla. "Durably reducing transphobia: A field experiment on door-to-door canvassing." Science 352, no. 6282 (2016): 220-224. https://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~broockma/broockman_kalla_transphobia_canvassing_experiment.pdf
- Hersh, Eitan. Politics is for power: How to move beyond political hobbyism, take action, and make real change. Simon and Schuster, 2020.
- Everything you need to know about deep canvassing. https://callhub.io/deep-canvassing/

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