

The 2009 Teaching Rape Roundtable took the crucial first step in raising awareness about why it is important—to students' personal and intellectual development—to discuss controversial topics, such as rape, in the classroom. The first half of this paper will identify some of the reasons why faculty may be reluctant to introduce controversial contemporary topics (such as rape, slavery, abuse, racism, etc.) into the classroom. These may include, but are not limited to, the following: the fear of doing more harm than good, the possible professional and emotional consequences of negative outcomes, the concern that a contemporary issue may not be relevant to or may take too much time away from the subject matter of the course itself, or the notion that the classics classroom is not the appropriate place for certain topics of discussion. The second half of the paper will discuss ways in which these concerns may be addressed by providing access to pedagogical materials that will assist in the following: justifying the inclusion of such topics within the framework of a course, integrating those topics with course content, anticipating difficult situations that may arise, and developing strategies to deal with them. The goal of this paper is to provide concrete, albeit preliminary, student- and faculty- centered materials that will help alleviate demands on faculty time and energy, which often are the real obstacles for classicists who would like to incorporate discussion of contemporary topics into their classes.

Student-centered materials might include a disclaimer or warning about the course (e.g. that students will be exposed to graphic depictions of sex, sensitive topics such as rape, etc.); a code of conduct; discussion guidelines; a framing statement or course philosophy statement outlining how these discussions will be relevant to the academic content of the course. Teacher-centered materials might include a list of common assumptions that students (or faculty themselves) may bring to the classroom; anticipated scenarios and suggested strategies/scripts that can help defuse a tense situation or move a discussion in a more productive direction; activities and assignments that encourage students to integrate their own experiences or contemporary news items with a rigorous scholarly understanding of ancient texts; considerations that faculty must take into account before embarking on this kind of project (e.g. their own professional circumstances, levels of expected institutional support, the culture of the student body, etc.).

The ultimate goal of this paper is to encourage the revision and sharing of these preliminary documents by posting them online at a central location so that faculty may download and personalize them as well as share their own materials and assignments. Faculty must be able to articulate for themselves, as well as for students and administrators, why and how these issues are relevant to a given course as well as to the larger goals of education itself. Courses that attempt to deal with sensitive, and highly personal, topics must address *both* students' personal well-being *and* their intellectual development. Hopefully, ready access to such materials will assist interested faculty in accomplishing both of these goals.