

CROWN CENTER FOR TEACHING



From the Director: On Teaching Through Elections

Block three 2016 found me back in the classroom, fresh from my post-third-year-review sabbatical. I was teaching our Music Fundamentals course and felt I had finally hit my stride in the CC classroom. My brisk confidence propelled by the continuation of hope offered by the forthcoming presidential election. But that Tuesday, after the first Monday in November, pushed my teaching in unexpected directions.

The following morning I faced a room full of students—first-time voters—stunned by the results and with nowhere else to turn but my classroom. They looked to me for answers and understanding that I did not have, certainly in the midst of a music theory block. I improvised, literally, a lesson on [Rufus Wainwright's cover of "Hallelujah,"](#) which lyrically announces its harmonic progression in the first verse: "it goes like this / the fourth, the fifth / the minor fall, the major lift..."

But the lesson struck another type of chord. It offered space for contemplation, for reflection. And it provided an opening for conversation that we all needed. That was eight years and a global pandemic ago.

It is important to acknowledge that this election - regardless of individual political beliefs - will evoke a range of emotions within our campus community. This all sits alongside many other deeply challenging realities around the world.

As educators whose work extends beyond academic instruction, we must foster a supportive and inclusive environment for all our students. The intensive nature of the block provides both opportunities and challenges for building and navigating classroom culture during the present moment.

Hour after hour, day after day, we get to know our students in ways not possible on other calendars and at other institutions. Accordingly, we also gain an ability to read the energy of the room and adjust our plans and our own energy as the day requires. Sometimes we can even anticipate the needs of our students before they do.

We don't know what is going to happen on election day in less than two weeks. Likely

uncertainty will remain the day after and perhaps beyond the end of the current block. [Research shows](#) that students benefit from an acknowledgement of challenging moments.

Proactive planning is perhaps the most important work we can do. In addition to establishing a culture of open and inclusive dialogue, consider your core pedagogical values. Think about your own boundaries. Be aware that attentions may be divided and, if possible, avoid scheduling significant assessments (exams, papers, etc.) the days surrounding the election. Revisit your learning outcomes and plan alternate ways you might approach your course given a variety of possible election outcomes. Most of all, take good care of yourselves.

The Dean of the Faculty Office has prepared some [Faculty Resources for the 2024 Elections](#) and the Crown Center has linked some additional teaching-related resources and planned gatherings below.

I welcome the opportunity to talk with anyone about their ideas, concerns, and hopes for navigating the block ahead. [Please email me directly](#) to find time to do so individually or in a group setting.

Sincerely,

Ryan Raul Bañagale

Associate Professor of Music and Director of the Crown Center for Teaching

Election Related Teaching Resources

The Constructive Dialogue Institute has created a guidebook titled [Maintaining Campus Community During the 2024 Election](#) replete with ideas and activities. Of particular note is the exercise on pages 37-38 for “Cocreating Resilient Group Norms.” Even in an open and inclusive classroom, it is important to think about how we might navigate unexpected situations. Page 49 features a quick reference for “When Discussions Get Too Heated.”

Various teaching centers have also prepared specific election-related guidance, including [“Teaching During a Tumultuous Election Year”](#) (Boston College Center for Teaching Excellence). In addition to thinking about what is at stake with regards to teaching and learning, this resource also offers sound advice for teaching after an election.

It is important to remember that not all students will want to participate in conversations about the election – before, during, or after. [“Election and Post-Election Conversations in the Classroom”](#) (Barnard College Center for Engaged Pedagogy), begins with self-reflection and identifies several possible topics that might emerge in the context of an election-related discussion.

Finally, [this NPR piece](#) offers several concrete strategies for dealing with grief, anxiety, and anger surrounding climate change; these exercises can be adapted to address all kinds of contemporary challenges. If you’d like to talk through how to lead one of these exercises in your class or are looking for more ideas, [please contact Crown Faculty Fellow Sofia Fenner](#).

Related Gathering Opportunities

[Building a Multiracial Democracy](#): Part of the Sonderman Presidential Symposium, hear Pulitzer-Prize-winning journalist Wesley Lowery discuss the unique tensions of this moment and how they correspond with similar periods throughout American history.

Tuesday, Oct. 29: 12–2:00 p.m. in Gates Common Room

[Sound Healing](#): Sound can be a powerful tool for our wellbeing and healing. It can help reduce stress, ground us, and center us in our uncertain world. Come explore and experience the wisdom of sound healing in the Zhineng Qigong tradition.

Tuesday, Oct. 29: 4–4:45 p.m. in Shove Chappel

Tuesday, Nov. 5: 4–4:45 p.m. in Shove Chappel

“What do we do today?” Given whatever information we have at that point, colleagues from the Crown Conversation Project will be available for a drop-in discussion on what we might be feeling and facing in the classroom the morning after the election.

Wednesday, Nov. 6: 7:30–8:30 a.m. in Cossitt Commons

[Decoding the 2024 Election](#): Part of the Sondermann Presidential Symposium, a collection of Colorado Front Range scholars with diverse areas of expertise on US elections and politics will gather to analyze and decode the results of the 2024 election cycle.

Thursday, Nov. 7: 12:30–2 p.m. in Gates Common Room

NEH Innovator in Residence Program: Shimul Chowdhury October 7-11

In academic year 2024-25, Creativity & Innovation, The Crown Center for Teaching, and the NEH Professorship are collaborating to amplify the impact of CC visitors by extending the time campus guests are in residence and coordinating class visits, workshops, talks, and other experiences. During the first semester of this year, the program focuses on members of the artist collective Mipsterz (Abbas Rattani, Shimul Chowdhury, and Yusuf Siddiquee) whose exhibition *ALHAMDU / MUSLIM FUTURISM* is on display at the FAC.

Our first resident, Shimul Chowdhury, spent the third week of Block 2 on campus. Chowdhury is a new media artist and Assistant Professor of Immersive Media at Chatham University. She studied Art + Technology at the University of Florida and holds an MFA in Digital Arts and New Media from the University of California, Santa Cruz. Chowdhury is most interested in creating participatory works or experiences that initiate and invite dialogue with the audience in her practice. Her work centers her lived experiences as a

Muslim US American, aiming to create and build community and solidarity with participants and viewers.

In close collaboration with the Crown Center and the Fine Arts Center Museum, Chowdhury worked with students in six classes during her residency: *Sound and Environment* (Iddo Aharony); *Art, Power, and Resistance* (Karen Roybal); *Art and Society* (Paulina Inara Rodis); *Anthropology of Religion* (Yogesh Chandrani); *Philosophies of the Body* (Pallavi Sriram); and *Philosophies of Social Change*, Professor Marion Hourdequin. 126 students participated in sessions with Chowdhury on topics such as the generative power of envisioning equitable futures for marginalized groups, the technical aspects of interactive exhibition installations, the importance of embodied aesthetic experience to build empathy, and how the divine is depicted in Muslim art.

Abbas Rattani will do two short stints as Innovator in Residence on Oct. 25 and Dec. 6, and Yusuf Siddiquee will be in residence Dec. 9-13.

For more information about the Residency program, [contact Jessica Hunter](#).

CCE: Week of Action 2025 Call for Participants

On behalf of the Collaborative for Community Engagement, we invite you and your *team or department* to participate in Week of Action 2025, part of the exciting line up for our Sesquicentennial year!

[Week of Action](#) is a week of opportunities and events that aim to mobilize and inspire **staff and faculty** to engage in local community-based work.

What might this look like? Some examples from last year included meal prep at the Marian House, sorting food at Care and Share food Bank, supporting first grade teachers at Penrose Elementary school, cooking a meal for youth at The Place, organizing donations at the Habitat for Humanity Restore and so much more.

*Is your team/department, or are you individually, interested in doing 2-3 hours of community service during the week of **January 13th-17th 2025**? If yes, [please fill out this form by Oct 25th](#). In **block 3** we will work with you and our community organizations to make sure we have all the details needed to make a match. Then, in **block 4** we will finalize groups with community organizations so that you will be ready to go in January. [Please reach out to Sarah Elsey](#), if you have any questions.*

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