

## Guidelines for talking about politics and current events in history classes

Newton history teachers seek to prepare students to engage in meaningful, informed debate. To do so,

We will make a good faith effort to...	We will make a good faith effort NOT to...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recognize <b>settled value positions</b> (on slavery; female suffrage; climate change science; discrimination based on race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc.) that reflect and inform our values as a school.</li> <li>● Focus on legitimate controversies, supported by factual evidence, that educate and inform our students.</li> <li>● Establish a “bird’s eye view,”* of <b>legitimate current controversial issues</b> (health care, immigration, environmental policies, capital punishment, gun laws, etc.); teach students that there are different perspectives on these issues and present the reasoning of those who hold those different perspectives.</li> <li>● Foster and maintain an environment that encourages students to responsibly debate ideas on their merits and to consider views that differ from their own on current controversies.</li> <li>● Teach students to distinguish between hate speech and civil political disagreement.</li> <li>● Teach students to identify facts, opinions and bias in sources.</li> <li>● Work together as a department to explore best practices for presenting particularly difficult controversial issues.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assume that all students agree with us.</li> <li>● Assume that all students feel comfortable disagreeing with us.</li> <li>● Overshare our personal or political views, or proselytize a particular viewpoint on a legitimate controversy.</li> <li>● Present our own personal opinion on a legitimately controversial issue as more right than another viewpoint.</li> <li>● Entertain conspiracy theories, unsupported by factual evidence, as legitimate positions.</li> </ul>
<p>*Bird’s eye view = “big picture” view of the debate, avoiding false equivalencies by faithfully representing the different viewpoints.</p>	