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The past two decades are fraught with changes in higher education that affect what we do as political scientists, both inside and outside of the classroom. An almost universal move to a profit-driven business model with corresponding cuts to public funding of higher education and the proliferation of for-profit online schools means that we often are not responding to the discipline in our classes so much as we are responding to market forces. We are continually asked to demonstrate the value of our programs in a changing job market and ensure that our students are provided with transferable skills, not just knowledge about specific academic content. Changes in information technology have also produced pressures for more online or blended learning models, and they have increased the availability of tools for us to draw from. However, these web-based tools have important implications for the information literacy of our students and how they perceive the credibility of authorities. These changes have also introduced more distractions into classroom. Political clashes and norm changes have been positive and negative but in both cases have constrained what we cover and how we cover it with an increasingly sensitive student body.

But the news isn’t all bad. The opportunities and methods we have to expand our engagement with students have also increased. Our opportunities to pull outside resources into the classroom have been made easier, as has the variety of materials and experts we can use. The array of possibilities open to us now is vast, and with that array comes the opportunity to engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning so that we can advance our understanding as educators as well as the quality of what we bring into the classroom.

These changes have produced challenges to political science teachers that many of us were not trained to face. The articles in this issue take up solutions to many of these problems. Authors present evidence and suggestions about how political theory courses can be used to enhance critical thinking while diminishing the impacts of motivated reasoning, the use of storytelling and fiction for grabbing and holding student attention and improving retention of abstract concepts, assignments to engage students in current political events and leaders, and a review of a book on integrating technology into the classroom.

We also include pieces that address the need to demonstrate the value of the education we are providing. One article presents a collaborative course model with campus-based career centers to demonstrate the utility of our degrees for public service jobs. Another provides advice for building in transferable skills into substantive courses by writing briefing notes that can be used in an array of careers. We also have a review of a book on the role of community colleges and their changing face in society.

Perhaps most critically, this issue includes a number of pieces that address critical conversations in society and campuses today. We include three reflective essays on race and sexual harassment both in and out of the classroom, some that emanate from the Black Lives Matter and #MeToo movements. These pieces directly address sensitive challenges that all of us face as educators in one way or another. Following this theme, we include a piece on how to address problems associated with talking about and studying terrorism in political science courses, a subject that often evokes strong and emotional responses from students.

As a whole, we hope that these and other articles included in this issue will allow readers to thoughtfully consider what we are experiencing in and out of the classroom as political science professors and how to creatively and positively address these challenges.