



UCLA'S JOURNAL OF CINEMA AND MEDIA STUDIES

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7. How should media scholars handle their own political perspectives when teaching about media that address political issues? Is self-censorship expected, essential, or detrimental?

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Nichols: It is vital that students discover and articulate their own politics and their own values. Dictatorships and dictation belong in the trash bin. That means that they, like their teachers, need to examine, confront, and articulate why media means what it means, what else it could mean and what meanings hold the greatest value.

Miller: Be honest and straightforward about our own positions; tell students these do not have to be shared in order for them to succeed in classes; ask them only to consider your view in depth, just as you will consider theirs.

Tryon: As I've suggested, I often seek to perform the role of the "classroom contrarian," offering alternative positions in order to sharpen student thought. However, I think there is some risk in engaging too much self-censorship when it comes to addressing political perspectives in the classroom, especially when "wrong" interpretations are introduced. I think we're encountering a similar problem in the so-called Science Wars, where a number of organizations have used postmodernist critiques of scientific knowledge in order to justify the teaching of intelligent design in public schools or to foster skepticism about the existence and causes of global warming. That being said, teachers have some obligation to teach such material tactfully and with the recognition that it will likely challenge the deeply-held beliefs of many of their students.

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