

Addressing Anti-Black Racism and Violence with your Students

1. Consider your own identities and positionality and practice self-care.

Black instructors: Give yourself the grace to cancel class if you feel the need, before or during a class meeting. It is your prerogative to share as much or as little of your personal experience with your students as you choose. Just like your students of color, you should not feel pressured to reveal your personal experiences of racism in order to educate White students.

White and non-Black instructors: Acknowledge what is happening. Don't pretend you or your students live in a vacuum. Not addressing it may protect your majority/White students from discomfort, but it harms your students of color, in particular your Black students, and puts more burden on your Black colleagues to address racism. If you check in with your Black colleagues, offer material support (for example, to cover their class if they need to rest). Go beyond checking in by proactively organizing in your department to ensure Black faculty are compensated for DEI work, advocating for diversity in hiring practices, and evaluating departmental climate for students and faculty of color.

- 2. Be the educator in the room.** Racism and anti-Blackness touch every facet of our lives. Be prepared to educate your students about the ways that racism shape the topics your course is studying, from chemistry to classics. This may involve first educating yourself. Non-Black instructors, you may need to prepare for class by reading Black authors and making sure you're informed about current events. Do not ask Black students or any marginalized group to speak to their experiences or represent for their whole race. Don't put the burden on Black students to educate others about race. Remember that international students may not be aware of the history or persistence of racism in America, so they may need some advice and resources to be informed.
- 3. Start on common ground.** Consider having all students do a reading before conversation to bring everyone to a shared understanding. Provide students with the tools they need to be able to have a productive conversation. Many [reading lists](#) are now available online.
- 4. Check in on students' wellbeing.** A check-in can be as simple as "How are we feeling given what's been going on?" or as complex as retooling a whole unit to address racist violence by police and retaliation against protestors. Consider using polls, surveys, and

other tools that allow for anonymous responses to ensure that students feel comfortable sharing candidly.

5. **Communicate your plans to students ahead of class.** Let students know beforehand that you will be discussing or addressing racism and racial violence—it gives everyone time to prepare. You could even have everyone bring in a poem, a quote, a piece of art that they find speaks to this time and start class with a reading.
6. **Be prepared for uncomfortable moments.** Have a plan for stepping in and preventing the conversation from doing harm to Black students if it moves in an unhelpful direction. Be aware that Carolina is a predominantly White institution (PWI) and as such your classroom may likely be majority White. Have a plan to ensure the conversation does not become only about processing White feelings about racism. Be transparent with your students about this as well. Collaborate with your students on a set of community discussion guidelines and ask them to agree to stick to those guidelines during conversations about racism.
7. **Follow up with resources.** Connect students with additional readings on anti-Black racism, allyship, and writings of Black scholars in your field. Consider instituting these resources and readings permanently in your course design, not only in reaction to instances of violent racism.
8. **Check in with your Black students individually.** Offer flexible deadlines, excused absences, time to process, or other material support. Racism, just like COVID-19, is a global pandemic, and the flexibility that instructors showed in the face of the viral pandemic should also be extended to Black students who have been surviving a pandemic of anti-Blackness for their whole lives. Remember that the intersectional oppression of Black students does compound these effects. Take students' whole identities and needs into consideration as you support them.