

GRAND CHALLENGES and OPPORTUNITIES

USC ROSSIER SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

REIMAGINING SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACIES

PART 1

Knowing Otherwise — Systems, Information & Power

Part 1 will begin by examining the architectures of knowledge production and dissemination. Participants will explore systems-thinking as a tool not only to analyze complexity, but to challenge assumptions about neutrality, credibility, and authority.

As emerging technologies—from algorithmic curation to generative AI—reshape how information is created, circulated, and trusted, we will consider their impact on learning, public discourse, and justice. Together, we'll interrogate the construction of "facts," the politically polarizing nature of truth, and the cultural dynamics of misinformation and disinformation.

MODERATOR



Anthony B. Maddox, Professor of Clinical Education and Engineering, USC Rossier

PANELISTS



Corinne Hyde, Professor of Clinical Education, USC Rossier



Robert Medrano, Program Director at Teach Democracy, USC Rossier



Nicole Mirra, Associate Professor and Faculty Director of the Teacher Education Program, UCLA



Robert Medrano

- Sr. Program Director at Teach Democracy
- Project Specialist for the USC Democracy Project
- Former secondary social studies teacher and instructional coach
- USC Rossier EDL graduate in 2020

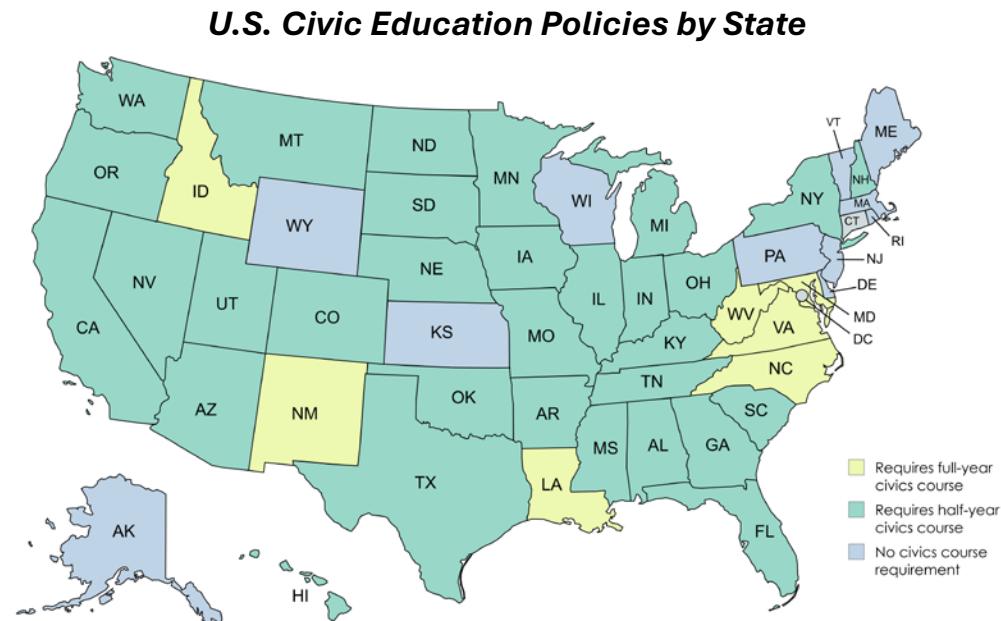


Civic participation begins with civic education

Conventional Approaches to Civic Education

- Focuses on government structures and national observances
- Emphasizes formal acts of citizenship
- Uses normative vocabulary with narrow connotations
- Risks reinforcing a one-size-fits-all model of participation

“The United States invests just 5 cents in civic education for every 50 dollars that goes to education in the STEM subjects.”

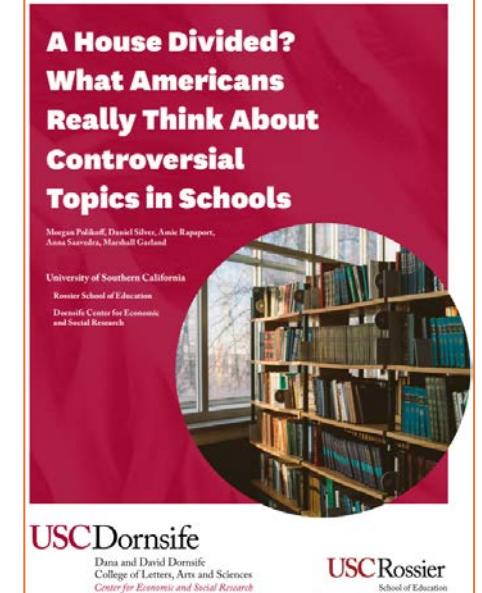
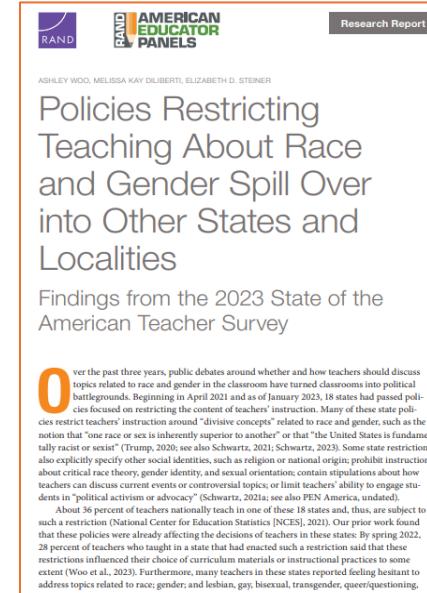


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The Challenge of Teaching Civics

- Topics framed as controversial can discourage open dialogue
- Legislative restrictions create fear of backlash and professional risk for teachers
- Neutrality as silence can legitimize harmful views
- Teachers often lack support to facilitate dialogue on complex social issues and current events

Between 2021 and 2022, government officials across federal, state, and local jurisdictions introduced 563 measures that aimed to prohibit teaching issues that introduce “divisive concepts” about race.



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- Polikoff, M., Silver, D., Rapaport, A., Saavedra, A., & Garland, M. (2022). *A house divided? What Americans really think about controversial topics in schools*. University of Southern California.
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Opportunities for Civic Education

- Move beyond “one-size-fits-all” civics to reflect the lived experiences of students
- Recognize plural forms of participation
- Support schools as spaces to practice critical thinking and civil dialogue
- Develop laboratories of democracy where students engage in complex understandings of the world





Nicole Mirra

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[redacted] posted to **Gun Issues 1**

Feb 19 · 5:49 PM ·

Hello everyone I will be joining you in this debate.

And I quote: "We lose eight children and teenagers to gun violence everyday. If a mysterious virus suddenly started killing eight of our children everyday, America would mobilize teams of doctors and public health officials. We would move heaven and earth until we found a way to protect our children. But not with gun violence."

(<https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/tag/gun-violence>)



[redacted]

Their have been more death in 2017,2018, and 2019 from strokes,Alzheimer's disease,Diabetes,kidney disease.and the number of death per year is 50,046. not from guns

Like • Feb 27, 2019, 12:28 PM

GRAND CHALLENGES  *and*
OPPORTUNITIES

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REIMAGINING SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRACIES

Storytelling: The 4 C's

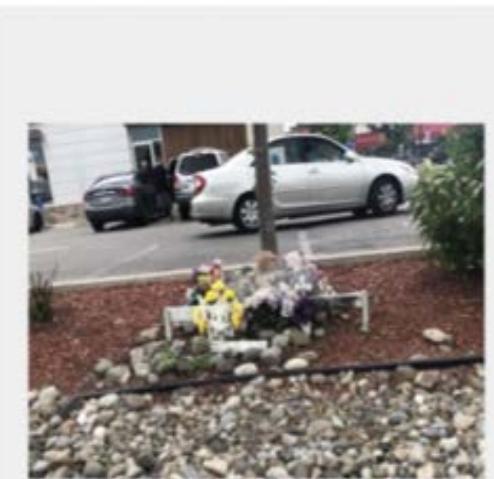
I left my gun on the porch and it didn't kill anybody

By 



Tributes on the streets

This is a spot in my neighborhood where someone was fatally shot one night during the summer of 2017. This was ruled as a cross fire. Someone was trying to kill someone else and accidentally shot someone that had nothing to do anything. This is one reason why I disagree with carrying firearms.



New Architectures of Argument Writing

- Articulation of Needs
- Activation of Empathetic Imagination
- Collective Speculation
- Pragmatic Iteration
- Reflection & Revision

It's kind of surreal because it's kind of like, 'Hey, there are people out there outside of you and there are people that exist, and have lives, and have experiences that aren't you.' And that's kind of weird to think about . . . So seeing these other people and reading about the experiences they've had – it's very eye-opening.



Corinne Hyde EdD (she/her)

Professor of Clinical Education
USC Rossier School of Education

How have our information ecosystems changed?

Challenges

- Lack of regulation or global strategy
- Sociopolitical unrest and polarization
- Economic pressures
- Censorship, intimidation, and disinformation
- Decline of trusted sources
- Algorithmic bias
- AI limitations
- Technological manipulation

Opportunities

- Rapid scientific and computing advances
- Unprecedented access to news and information
- Ability to create and connect globally
- Higher productivity and user-friendly technology
- Transformation of learning and education

What implications do those changes have for democracy?



Photo by Denise Applewhite

“I don't think we have wrapped our heads around how much technology has allowed the manipulation of individuals and democracies.”

- Maria Ressa, journalist and 2021 Nobel Peace Prize winner

“Democracy cannot succeed unless those who express their choice are prepared to choose wisely. The real safeguard of democracy, therefore, is education.”

- Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32nd President of the United States



How can we sustain our democracy in new information ecosystems?

- Limit information intake to what you can process.
- Verify sources and facts before sharing.
- Counter misinformation with credible evidence.
- Foster dialogue and resist polarization.
- Strengthen information and civic literacy.
- Defend free access to information.
- Learn and adapt to AI responsibly.



TECHNOLOGY: LEVERAGING *PHENOMENA** FOR USEFUL PURPOSES

- **PHYSICAL** (e.g. Photoelectric Effect)
- **CHEMICAL** (e.g. Catalysis)
- **GEOLOGICAL** (e.g. Petroleum)
- **BIOLOGICAL** (e.g. Bioengineering)
- **SOCIAL-BEHAVIORAL**
- **ARTIFICIAL** (e.g. Design, Data)

Increasing
complexity



*And combinations of phenomena, including the discovery of new phenomena