

FROM: William Stevens (6/4/2020)

I also stand in solidarity.

And, our students want to hear our voices on these issues.

I was struggling yesterday to work through my own sense of overwhelm to share a meaningful statement with my students (excerpted below). Several students, in response, voiced their dismay at not hearing from any of their other faculty about the calamitous events racking our nation.

I was afraid to break the silence. I am really glad that I did not wait until I stopped being afraid, or until I had flawless words, before speaking.

My dear students,

We have so little time together during our weekly check ins that I have elected to focus almost exclusively on course materials. And yet there is so much going on - in our lives and in our world. Please know that when I say "How are you doing?" what I am really expressing is "I care about your well being."

What we are experiencing this quarter is unprecedented on so many levels. We continue to be in the throws of a global pandemic that has killed more than a hundred thousand people in this country alone. We have grieved the death of an SCU student. We are witnessing profound national turmoil as some of the basic tenets of our society are challenged: rights to life, safety, equal protection under the law, freedom from discrimination, freedom of the press, and freedom to protest peacefully.

It is appropriate to be distressed by these events. It is normal to find it challenging to focus on academic work during this time. It is natural to have strong feelings - be they rage, remorse, anxiety, confusion, or numbness. (This list is far from exhaustive.)

If you have not already read Fr. O'Brien's "Message on Racial Injustice" (June 1) - please consider doing so. This is a very considered response to an enormously complex situation from someone whose leadership I deeply respect.

You received a message yesterday from Provost Kloppenberg and

vice-provost Chen outlining resources available to you in support of your academic and personal well being. This message also encouraged faculty to be flexible with respect to administering the remainder of the quarter.

In the spirit of flexibility,

Lastly, please do what you need for practicing self care: reaching out to people you trust; taking some time each day away from news and/or social media; getting some exercise (this can be as low-tech as jogging in place with a stop watch and metronome); eating foods that promote physical and emotional health (more vegetables and less sugar and starch); being still and focusing on your breath... self care looks different for each of us.

One of the unexpected joys of this quarter for me has been the chance to work with each of you. I don't usually get the opportunity for so much one-on-one contact time with my students. This has been a blessing. Thank you for showing up with me for our work together. Please don't hesitate to be in touch if you have any questions or concerns.

All my best,
Prof. Stevens