

GENOCIDE & MASS ATROCITY: CONSIDERATIONS FOR TEACHING ETHICALLY & EFFECTIVELY

These principles draw upon guidelines from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, and the Advocates for Human Rights. They have been synthesized and expanded into guidelines for teaching about difficult topics related to gross human rights violations in history.

- Center learning on students.
- Integrate human rights and history.
- Avoid comparisons of pain; there is no hierarchy of suffering and each genocide is unique and tragic.
- Acknowledge the sensitive nature of the topic. Plan for a variety of emotional responses from your students.
- Complicate thinking and avoid oversimplification by avoiding stereotypes and asking students to be precise with their language.
- Avoid simulation or role play activities which encourage students to imagine that they were directly involved in genocide.
- Genocide is a process than can be stopped; it is not inescapable. Genocide occurs because of the decisions and actions of individuals and institutions.
- Emphasize personal agency. Encourage students to consider both the actions taken and not taken by people before, during, and after the genocide.
- Promote student activism and action.
- Allow time to process the material. Provide space for reflection.
- Graphic text or images can trigger trauma and may be degrading to victims, so be sure to question whether the educational outcomes are served by using certain materials. Preview all materials before sharing with students.
- Support students to work critically with source material, particularly on the internet. Recommend authoritative sources with factual, archival content.
- Discuss the relevance of genocide history on contemporary issues, such as policies toward refugees, consequences of human rights violations, state violence, etc.