

# 3 Ways to Address the Ongoing Violence in the Gaza Region and Throughout the Middle East

By [Patty Lamberti](#)

You're smart. That's why you're leading classes at Loyola University Chicago. But just because you know a lot about your area of specialty - whether that's neurology, political science or communication - doesn't mean you necessarily feel comfortable leading a classroom discussion about the ongoing violence and harm in the Gaza region and throughout the Middle East.

It's natural, and human, to be worried that if you start a discussion about the conflict, you'll find yourself:

- In a physical or digital space with students who start screaming at each other
- Sharing your own opinions, which could be recorded, shared, and result in you being "canceled"
- The subject of ridicule or debate on social media, in Loyola hallways, or even on the news
- Panicked if a student says something unintentionally or purposefully that's antisemitic or anti-Muslim
- Awkwardly standing in front of a group of silent students staring at you without expression, either because they are worried their opinions are too different from others in the room (including you - the person who gives them a grade in the class), feel they don't know enough about the situation to speak eloquently or thought your class was a safe space, where they didn't have to think about the troubles of the world

If you don't have any of these concerns, or ones like them, that would be surprising. After all, we live in an extremely polarized world where people are quite hostile about proving their "side" is the "right" side and everyone else is on the "wrong" side. Biden or Trump? Israel or Palestine? To grade or not to grade?

That said, we're professors at Loyola University Chicago. We believe that, enriched by a Jesuit education, our students have the power to change lives and create a more just world. Our work is built on a model of mutual, active engagement with students for their growth and potential. Therefore, many of us want to inspire our students to think critically about the on-going violence and harm in the Gaza region and throughout the Middle East. So here are three activities that you can try out in the classroom.

And remember, if you choose to do any or all of them, it's OK to acknowledge to yourself and to your students that this is hard to talk about. And while opinions may differ, we hopefully all agree that the murders of children and other civilians are simply wrong.

## The No-Talking-Out-Loud Method using Online, Anonymous Forums to Communicate

Ideal for: Professors and students who would rather read and write instead of orally conversing

### Learning outcomes:

- Students learn something about the history of the conflict
- Students demonstrate the ability to think critically about the region
- Students practice writing about their thoughts, questions and feelings about issues related to religion, war, Israel, Gaza, free speech, life and death

### Steps:

1. Have students register for a [one-year free digital membership](#) to The New York Times through Loyola's library.
2. Access will be granted instantly.
3. Direct them to one or all of the following links:
  - A [New York Times summary](#) of the history of the conflict. The first half of the resource is an objective summary. The second half of the page includes opinions from various experts
  - A [page of live updates](#) about the on-going violence and harm in the Gaza region and throughout the Middle East
  - A [timeline of clashes](#)
4. Direct them to [this New York Times online forum](#). This forum is for young adults to share their feelings, questions and opinions about the on-going violence and harm in the Gaza region and throughout the Middle East. The page includes prompts for students to think about. Students will be asked to share their name and city. Remind students that if they are worried classmates will know what they are writing, they don't have to use their real name or city. In addition to writing, they can and should read what their peers across the world have contributed to the conversation.

### Alternative:

If you don't want to spend class time having students sign up to the New York Times, you don't like the New York Times, or you think your students will scoff at the idea of contributing to a forum for "young people," you can give them a summary of the on-going violence and harm in

the Gaza region and throughout the Middle East from a publication of your choice, such as this page from the [BBC](#).

Before class, set up an online forum/discussion in Sakai for your class. The identities of the participants in the discussion can be hidden. But if you want to make the discussion anonymous, you *must* do so when you create the topic. You cannot change the setting afterwards.

Have students post and reply to one another in real time, or as an out-of-class assignment. There is also an option in Sakai to moderate the comments. This means you will have to approve or deny them before students can read them.

**Resources and references:**

[Loyola Library New York Times Access Directions](#)

[The New York Times Learning Network](#)

[Sakai Help for Setting Up an Anonymous Discussion](#)

[Sakai Help for Moderating a Discussion](#)

## The Semester-Long Game Method

Ideal for: Any class, but especially those classes focused on topics that seemingly have nothing to do with the ongoing crisis

**Learning outcomes:**

- Students gain a basic general knowledge about the roots of the ongoing violence and harm in the Gaza region and throughout the Middle East
- Students develop healthy, regular news consumption habits
- Students learn to develop skills to collaborate with peers quickly

**Steps:**

1. Once per week, organize students into small groups.
2. Give them a series of 10-12 questions, half of which are related to the class topic. The other half can be related to the ongoing violence and harm in the Gaza region and throughout the Middle East, or any other news.
3. Give each group 30 seconds to one minute to discuss and agree on an answer.
4. When all of the questions are answered, provide students with the correct answers.
5. Have them grade how many they got right, and how many they get wrong (you may want to double check this later to make sure they didn't change any wrong answers to the correct ones).
6. Switch up the groups weekly, so students get to work with everyone.

7. Keep a tab throughout the semester of the number of questions each student answered correctly.
8. A week before class ends, notify the top students that they are in the “playoffs,” which will take place during the last week of class.
9. During the final week, have those students compete in the playoffs while others act as audience members and/or judges. Students can write their answers on a piece of paper within 30 seconds. Judges (or you) decide who has the best answer. Alternatively, you can purchase inexpensive game-show-like buzzers or bells. The contenders will eventually be narrowed down to two players, who compete in the final. The winner gets a prize or extra credit.

Assistant Professor Ricky Thein teaches sports communication at Sienna College. He sent this in-class activity idea to [Beth McMurtrie](#), who operates the free [Teaching Tips Email Newsletter](#) for the Chronicle of Higher Education. Both agreed to let me share this with Loyola University Chicago professors. “This last day is ultra-competitive, intense, and the students get really into it,” says Thein, who has been playing this game in his classes for the last decade. “There’s a lot of screaming and yelling and joy when you win and frustration when you lose. The emotions are all over the place. It’s amazing to watch.”

#### **Alternative:**

If you don’t want to commit to a weekly game, or track scores throughout the semester, use a free, Jeopardy-style template game maker like [Factile](#) or [Jeopardy Labs](#) for a one-time class. Email students the link and have everyone play independently or in groups. You can create the questions and answers. Alternatively, Jeopardy Labs gives you access to games created by other users, including this one titled “[How much do you know about Israel?](#)” and one titled “[Palestine](#).” Please review any games made by others for accuracy and other issues.

#### **Resources and References:**

- [Ricky Thein](#), an assistant professor of sports communications at Siena College
- [Beth McMurtrie](#), Teaching Tips Newsletter Creator for the Chronicle of Higher Education
- [Factile](#)
- [Jeopardy Labs](#)

## The Do-This-On-Your-Own-Time Method

Ideal for: Professors who don’t have the time or comfort level to discuss the conflict in class

#### **Learning outcomes:**

- Students gain general knowledge about the roots of the current situation
- Students learn how to research issues independently

**Steps:**

1. Provide students with a list of videos, articles, podcasts and other resources about the ongoing violence and harm in the Gaza region and throughout the Middle East.
2. In class, tell them to explore these resources as much as they'd like independently, or give them some time in class to do so.
3. If you want to ensure they utilize some of these resources, offer extra credit.
4. Proof they've engaged with the materials can range from them writing a short reflection to taking a screenshot of something they watch/read/listen to.

**Resources and References:**

- Contact Dr. Michael Schumacher, lecturer in Criminal Justice and Global Studies at Loyola University Chicago and faculty scholar in Civil Academic Discourse, for a list of resources
- [The Israel-Palestine Conflict](#), a brief video by Vox
- A [PDF](#) on avoiding Hate Speech when discussing Israel and Palestine by Solutions not Sides
- Readings listed throughout this document
- [Hotline for Israel Palestine](#), a hotline created by Harvard students for students everywhere with questions about Israel-Palestine
- [Unsettled](#), a podcast series featuring diverse voices and opinions on Israel-Palestine

If you have any other suggestions or feedback on these ideas, please email me, [Patty Lamberti](#), Program Director for Multimedia Journalism in the School of Communication and Faculty Scholar in Civil Academic Discourse