

Peacemaking Goals for American Studies

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American Studies 304 already feels like it is going to be a productive and enjoyable semester. Day one focused on introductions and gaining a sense of who was in the class and what we are going to be studying. Day two led to our first group project, and I appreciated how quickly it turned into actual collaboration. When we were trying to settle on our angle for the project, I saw that our group became more efficient and made more progress when everyone listened. Professor Taylor's approach, knowledge, and tone make it easier to think out loud without feeling like you have to perform. I read President Russell M. Nelson's "Peacemakers Needed" with that classroom in mind. His line, "Contention is a choice. Peacemaking is a choice," made me stop because it puts the responsibility right on me (Nelson, 2023). It is not about waiting for someone else to set the mood. It is about what I choose to contribute.

This semester, I feel prompted to be a steady, calming presence in discussion. If a conversation starts getting tense, I want to slow down and choose a better response instead of reacting fast. That might look like lowering my voice, listening longer than I think I need to, and answering in a way that shows I understood the other person. President Nelson says, "Anger never persuades. Hostility builds no one. Contention never leads to inspired solutions" (Nelson, 2023). I do not expect hostility in this class, but I do know that people can get sharp without meaning to, especially when topics matter. My goal is to maintain a respectful, clear tone and, when I disagree, to aim for understanding instead of trying to win.

I also feel prompted to use my curiosity for good. I am naturally curious, and I love "more," so I want my questions to invite depth, not pressure. When someone shares an idea, I want to ask a follow-up question that helps them explain it better: What led you to that conclusion? What part of the reading or discussion led you there? What else does that connect to? President Nelson teaches that we can "literally change the world, one person and one interaction at a time" through "mutual respect and dignified dialogue" (Nelson, 2023). That feels realistic in a classroom. If I can make small moments in American Studies 304 more thoughtful, more generous, and a little more peaceful, then I am accomplishing what President Nelson has asked us to do.

Reference

Nelson, R. M. (2023, April). Peacemakers needed. In General Conference of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.