



COLLEGE
of
CHARLESTON

DEPARTMENT OF
POLITICAL SCIENCE

As the inauguration of the 46th President of the United States approaches, the Department of Political Science and MPA Program issue the following statement to our students, fellow faculty, staff, and to the broader College of Charleston community.

The Department of Political Science and MPA Program condemn in the strongest possible terms the violence, destruction, and insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. On January 6th, extremists promoting a range of populist, ethno-nationalist, white supremacist, anti-Semitic, and anti-democratic ideologies carried out a violent insurrection against the U.S. federal government. The president and his surrogates fomented this insurrection by exhorting the disruption of the constitutionally mandated certification of the Electoral College votes based on false claims of election fraud. This event shocked the nation and raised fears that a similar action may be attempted in the coming days. We, as scholars of the social sciences, want to emphasize that the January 6th attack represents a serious deviation from established democratic norms, from criminal and civil laws, and represents a threat to the United States' tradition of peaceful transfers of power. As teachers and scholars, it is our responsibility to encourage in-class debate of ideas, but also to ensure these debates proceed recognizing shared facts and evidence. A professor's job in a democratic society is to rigorously distinguish fact from fiction, and teach the electorate how to judge evidence for themselves. Towards this effort, we strive to create an open scholarly space, but one that is also bound by basic principles of decency, intellectual honesty, and moral integrity.

Thriving democracies rely not only upon civility, but on productive disagreement based on a commonly understood set of facts. The events of January 6th, however, were not an instance of the "marketplace of ideas" at work, but rather an attempt at shutting down the normal democratic processes embedded in the U.S. Constitution and our political culture. The right to free speech and to nonviolent protest are essential to a strong, robust democracy. Violence and threats to duly elected representatives are antithetical to it, as is the proliferation of disinformation and conspiracies that erodes trust in democratic institutions. Above all, democratic governance requires accountability to the rule of law and all participants who engaged in criminal conduct should be held responsible for their actions. For more than 220 years, the United States has fulfilled its constitutional obligation to a peaceful transition of power. It is the bedrock of our democracy. This year must be no different.

On a hopeful note, we also witnessed acts of courage, selflessness, and civic duty by public servants that day: from the Capitol Police officer Eugene Goodman who stood up alone to the violent mob, to the staffers and elected officials who worked late into the night to carry out their constitutional duty and certify the election results amidst the terror and destruction.

In this spirit, as a Department we commit ourselves to the following: A classroom environment that encourages critical thinking and evidence-based decision making; instilling in our students the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion; and a commitment to democratic governance. Further, we stand against any ideology that foments hate and racial or ethnic bigotry and promotes violence.

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