

Facilitator Training
Workshop Guide

Facilitating Political Discussions

Nancy Thomas, Director, Institute
for Democracy & Higher Education,
Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic
Life, Tufts University

Mark Brimhall-Vargas, Chief
Diversity Officer and Associate
Provost, Tufts University

Higher Education's Democratic Purpose

To fulfill their research, teaching, and civic missions effectively, American colleges and university need to provide students with opportunities to study and deliberate the most difficult and politically charged issues facing communities, the nation, and the world. We envision campus communities that achieve those objectives as places where uncomfortable and controversial topics can be named and discussed freely, without the threat of unreasonable suppression and in ways that preserve collegial learning environments. We believe that dissent and conflict can be transformative catalysts and present the proverbial “teachable moment” for student reflection, study, growth, and change.

The current national context for political conversations has been characterized as divisive and ineffective. At the same time, hate speech and repeated, offensive language directed at people because of their gender, race, or other legally protected status can create toxic and discriminatory learning environments that cannot be ignored by institutional leaders. There is a dire need for students – and faculty and staff – to learn to create new norms that value both free expression *and* inclusion. We suspect that, because this balancing act is hard to do, professors and staff avoid doing it. Avoiding politically charged topics is bad for student learning and, ultimately, bad for democracy.

Facilitating Politically Charged Dialogues and Deliberations

“Planner, host, moderator, devil’s advocate, fellow-student, and judge – a potentially confusing set of roles. Even the most seasoned group leader must be content with uncertainty, because discussion teaching is the art of managing spontaneity.”

—Chris Christensen

This quote aptly describes the role of a facilitator, as well as a collaborative leader and effective discussion-based teacher. Yet doing dialogue well does not come naturally to most people, particularly when the dialogues involve perspectives linked to political ideology, social identity, and power.

This packet of workshop materials is designed to assist experienced facilitators in training others to facilitate politically charged conversations. To many on campuses, the scenarios within will look familiar. The materials are broken down into “modules” and facilitation trainers can use some or all of them to suit their needs.

Those who want to run all of these modules will need two seven-hour days. The early modules address basic skills: active listening, framing conversations, mapping the trajectory of an effective dialogue, the facilitator’s “job description,” and troubleshooting. The later modules address the richness and challenges of facilitating groups of people with diverse perspectives, social identities, and lived experiences. Participants will gain the tools for immediate application for better conversations, leadership, and teaching.

Nancy Thomas and Mark Brimhall-Vargas

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Permissions

Photocopying these materials is allowed and encouraged for the purpose of training facilitators, teachers, faculty, administrators, and others.

Reproducing these materials to conduct a fee-for-service workshop or publication requires written permission. Address inquiries to:

Institute for Democracy & Higher Education
Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life
Tufts University
(617) 627-4802
idhe@tufts.edu

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to express their gratitude to all individuals who contributed in some form to this facilitation training guide. In particular:

- **Diana Hess** (University of Wisconsin), **David Schoem** (U. Michigan), **Windy Lawrence** (University of Houston-Downtown), **Margaret Brower** (IDHE, Tufts University), and **Adam Gismondi** (IDHE, Tufts University)—for reviewing drafts of these materials
- **Sherri Sklarwitz** (Tisch College, Tufts University)—for organizing a successful pilot workshop
- The **24 pilot workshop participants**, for their enthusiasm and feedback

Credits

Both authors have been trained by the “best in the business,” including Everyday Democracy, the Public Conversations Project, the Interactive Institute for Social Change, the National Issues Forums, the Social Justice Training Institute, and the United States Institute of Peace. Along the way, we have picked up exercises and tools that we adapt and use repeatedly but may not remember, exactly, where we got them. If you recognize an exercise as belonging to a specific organization, let us know and we will give that organization the proper credit. Where we know the source, we provide a footnote with a link.

Table of Contents

Sample Agenda (for a two-day workshop)¹

Day 1 (9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.)

- I. Welcome and overview, “Why are we here?” (20 minutes)
- II. Identifying Opportunities and Challenges (20 minutes)
- III. Introductions and Building Relationships (1 hour)
- IV. Establishing ground rules (30 minutes)
- V. Active listening (20 minutes)
- VI. Facilitator’s job description (30 minutes)
- VII. Asking good questions (30 minutes)
- VIII. Dialogue sequencing (20-30 minutes)
- IX. Troubleshooting (1-2 hour module that can be broken up between Day 1 and Day 2)

Day 2 (9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.)

- X. Offensive statements (1 hour)
- XI. Perspective-taking (45 minutes)
- XII. Managing power dynamics (45 minutes)
- XIII. The neutrality challenge (1 hour)
- XIV. Return to troubleshooting (1 hour)²
- XV. Opportunities and challenges in today’s political context (90 minutes)³

¹ This schedule does not include time to practice, which is important. All of the exercises have been designed to be interactive and many include vignettes for “practice,” but that is not as good as actually practicing, which takes about 2.5 hours.

² You may choose to revisit troubleshooting at this point in the schedule, if deemed helpful.

³ This activity is meant to allow facilitators/participants to debrief the workshop and catch any final concerns.

Identifying Opportunities and Challenges

Time needed: 10 to 15 minutes

When to do this: At the very beginning of the training

Rationale/Description: Facilitation trainers must balance the need to cover a certain amount of material within the time allotted, with the desire to address the needs of the group. This balancing act can be harder if you are working with people with varying levels of experience, from the novice to the veteran facilitator and trainer. While you want to be nimble and responsive to the needs of everyone in the room, the facilitation trainer needs to be practical about meeting expectations. We recommend that you take some time at the very beginning of the workshop to identify and manage expectations. You need to be transparent about what you can and will cover.

Goals

To identify expectations among the group and to provide information for tailoring the workshop to align with the needs and interests of the group.

Setup

Two easels with newsprint, one page labeled “Opportunities” and the other “Challenges.” You will need a third sheet of paper labeled “Parking Lot.”

Exercise: Conduct a “90-second brainstorm” in which the group is asked a question and directed to respond with one word or short phrases. The responses get captured on newsprint but do not, generally, get discussed. The goal here is to find out what’s on everyone’s mind, not *to discuss* what’s on their minds. DO pause to clarify language to ensure that you have captured the individual’s concern or

Participants need to respond to a specific question. We suggest:

“What challenges and opportunities do you see concerning your role as the facilitator of politically charged dialogues this election season?”

Capture the ideas on newsprint, one for challenges and one for opportunities. Try to get the group to focus on *facilitation* challenges, not challenges to *organizing* dialogues (which is more appropriate for another workshop).

From our experience, the following kinds of “challenges” will emerge in your brainstorm:

- ❖ When deeply held religious or philosophic values are at stake, it’s hard to keep the group together and moving. How do we handle the *emotional* and deeply *personal* perspectives of the participants?

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

- ❖ The two-party system has created such polarizing positions that it is hard to imagine a constructive conversation.
- ❖ The levels of vitriolic and hateful discourse in this election have crossed boundaries that have not been crossed before; seemingly no statement is “out of bounds.”
- ❖ The issues are complex and too few Americans, in general, and perhaps too few on this campus, know enough factual information to hold an informed opinion. How can we as facilitators possibly know enough to refute misinformation?
- ❖ The very process of clarifying or correcting misinformation, or addressing a hurtful statement, is likely to be experienced as alienating or one-sided, so people might simply disengage.
- ❖ So far, this election seems to concern personalities, not positions and policies. It’s hard to get beyond concerns about temperament and honesty.
- ❖ How do we engage international students or others on campus who cannot vote, such as undocumented students or formerly incarcerated students?

Debrief: Explain to the group that the goals of the workshop are to address these and other concerns, but that we are not going to discuss them right now.

Now is a good time to set up and explain a **Parking Lot**, a sheet of paper that captures ideas and concerns raised throughout the workshop but that won’t be addressed at the time they are raised. Explain to the group that the challenges will be placed in a parking lot.

Note

You will return to the “Challenges” during the “Troubleshooting” exercises and to the “Opportunities and Challenges” at the end of the workshop.

Introductions and Building Relationships

Time needed: 20 to 90 minutes

When to do this: This should come before anything else, including ground rules.

Rationale/Description: Both the welcome and introductions are very important, particularly if your dialogue is designed to lead to problem-solving and action. The goal is to create an environment in which people can disagree—even vehemently—yet remain friends (or at least friendly) afterwards. The introductions and relationship-building also set a tone for the entire dialogue.

Trust is the foundation for all social and organizational change efforts. Solutions to public problems are only possible if relationships are strong. We need to take the time to build relationships: team-building at the beginning of meetings, sharing at the beginning of a dialogue, introductions at the beginning of a class.

Introductions take a lot of time. A typical short introduction asks for people to quickly say their name, position or field of study, where they are from, their preferred pronoun, and why they are at this dialogue—what about this topic has made you take time to do this? But then groups should do something more meaningful, such as exchange stories. A question might be, “What is your personal connection with this topic?”

The following instructions are for a fun exercise that takes about 20 minutes. It’s called **Building a Story**.

Exercise: Tell the group to get into small groups of four people, preferably with others they do not know well. Have everyone introduce themselves. Each group needs to identify one person who will keep track of the number of statements made. One person needs to say a sentence (or two) to start a “story,” such as, “This morning, my cat woke me up at 4 a.m.” The next person adds to the story with another piece of the story—based on truth—that is connected to the first statement, such as “I love cats. Mine are indoor cats that always want to get out.” The next person then adds, “My favorite part of the great outdoors is how the seasons change.” And so forth. At the end of 10 minutes, ask the groups to describe their stories and what things they found in common.

Debrief: Discuss the *pros* and *cons* of small- and large-group relationship-building. Ask the group, what do you imagine are the *pros* and *cons* of small and large group relationship-building exercises? Discuss the risks associated with *not* taking enough time to establish relationships.

Note

Other ice breakers can be suitable at this point in the workshop. The point is to spend enough time for people to engage with one another and start the relationship-building process.

Establishing Ground Rules

Time needed: 30 minutes

When to do this: After introductions and identifying challenges, but before any relationship-building or other exercises.

Rationale/discussion: Ground rules (also known as “agreements,” “norms,” and “guidelines”) help groups participate in productive, candid, civil conversations. Each group should set its own ground rules at the beginning—before much conversation occurs. These should be captured on newsprint and hung in a visible part of the room.

Some ground rules, such as “speak for yourself, not others” are familiar to many people. Others, such as “share air time” will need discussion and explanation.

Exercise: Begin by asking: How many of you have had experience with ground rules, norms of engagement, or agreements? (Most people on campuses will say yes.)

Ask people to pair up and discuss for a few minutes this question, “What norms could we create that would maximize your ability to participate?” See attached list for sample ground rules.

Ask for volunteers to share what they discussed. Make sure that the suggestions are concrete:

- ❖ What would that look like? What would I hear?
- ❖ What is important about that suggestion to you?
- ❖ What does it mean if we do not have this norm?

Direct the participants to the challenges they identified at the beginning of the day. Ask: Can you imagine needing particular ground rules to address these challenges?

Some ground rules might get missed. Consider proposing a few:

- ❖ **Silence**, making space for reflection “As a facilitator, I am comfortable with silence. No need to always fill the air.”
- ❖ **Confidentiality** – get a special agreement on this. Themes and broad ideas can be shared outside of this room; personal stories and statements stay in this room.
- ❖ The idea of “safe spaces” can chill speech and probably isn’t enforceable. Find out why the group wants this ground rule and talk through what it actually means. Give some examples. Encourage the group to adopt a “**brave space**” alternative, one in which people can take risks and speak candidly, but also one in which people who need to say “that hurt my feelings” can also say so.
- ❖ We all **share responsibility** for the group’s success and experience.

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Ask about enforcement of these ground rules.

- ❖ What should we do if our community norms are breached?
- ❖ What should I/we as facilitators do?
- ❖ What can we expect from you as the group?

Another issue worthy of special discussion is the tension between free speech, which is a normative value on all college campuses, and “triggers,” words or phrases that stimulate an emotional response because they tap into patterns of inequality and oppression. Examples might be, “I don’t see color. People are all the same to me.” Or “I think men are more suited to certain roles than women.” Invite participants to create a process for naming triggers without discouraging participation and candor. Encourage them to consider that they are in an academic setting and that no one promised them that they would be “comfortable.” College is a time when students can expect to be challenged to learn new knowledge and perspectives, even views that are unpopular or contrary to their life experiences.

You will also need to address the inevitability that the ground rules will eventually be breached. Probe into how to recover from this moment. Consider asking: “When the ground rules eventually are breached, what do we need to do to welcome that person back into the conversation?”

Debrief: Before concluding, ask for visual confirmation (e.g., thumbs up) that the group will own the norms.

Takeaways: It’s important that groups come to understand why ground rules are important and how they will be used.

Note

As the facilitator, you will need to be able to refer to the ground rules periodically. Once established, ground rules can be amended by the group. Tell the group that they will be asked to reaffirm or tweak the ground rules as the dialogue continues.

Typical Ground Rules

- **Everyone has an equal voice.**
- **Listen for understanding.**
- **Assume good will.**
- **Suspend judgment.**
- **Create a brave space for candid conversations.**
- **Seek first to understand, then to be understood.**
- **Share air time.**
- **Ask questions.**
- **If you are offended or uncomfortable, say so, and say why.**
- **It’s OK to disagree, but don’t personalize.**
- **No name calling or stereotyping.**
- **Speak for yourself, not for others.**
- **What’s said here stays here other than broad themes—protect identities and people’s stories.**
- **Share responsibility for making this dialogue work.**
- **Phones off!**

Active Listening

Time needed: 10 to 20 minutes, depending on whether you do one or two exercises

When to do this: Early in the process, perhaps after establishing ground rules

Rationale/Description: Americans simply are not in the habit of listening—deeply—to each other. And when the topics are politically and emotionally charged, it's all the more important. People may disagree, but if they feel heard, they are less likely to leave a conversation angry or frustrated.

Setup

Move the furniture around, if necessary, so that everyone can stand in a circle with nothing in between them (e.g., not around a table). If you have participants with physical disabilities that would prevent them from standing for 15 minutes, consider using a circle of chairs. It's important that everyone be able to see each other's faces and body language.

Exercise: This exercise is called **Zen Numbers**.⁴ Instruct the group to count as high as possible without verbally stepping on each other's toes. If two people speak at the same time, the group has to start over at the number one. The facilitator will always start with the number one, and it is up to the rest of the group, one at a time, to keep the numbers going (2, 3, 4, etc.).

Allow the group to go through the first round without a lot of coaching. Simply tell them the basic instructions. The first time, the group might do something like count in order around the circle. If that happens, ask whether this is a good way to have a dialogue? Should dialogue have a distinct order? The answer is no, so start them again. Invariably, people will stumble over each other. Often groups have a tendency to speed up (as though going faster will get them to a higher number).

Ask:

- ❖ What did you notice? How successful were you in accomplishing the task of counting together?
- ❖ Did you develop any strategies to help the group or personal strategies for success?
What are they?
- ❖ What did 'participation' look like?

Next, you can give them a hint: groups tend to do better (count to higher numbers) when the process is slowed down (elongated) and people are more attentive to listening and non-verbal cues than to speaking. Ask the group to start again now that they have this information.

⁴ This exercise was adapted by Mark Brimhall-Vargas based on an exercise he learned during a working at the Social Justice Training Institute under the leadership of Drs. Jamie Washington, Vernon Wall, and Kathy Obear.

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Ask: Now what do you notice? What was different or new? How successful were you?

Debrief: Connect this experience with the way dialogue works generally. In other words, dialogues tend to work better when people are focused more on listening and creating room for others to speak than when they are focused on their own need to jump in and participate!

Note

This exercise is designed to get dialogue participants to experience what good active listening can do. It only takes 5-10 minutes and requires some follow up discussion.

Alternate Exercise

Many facilitators train using another active listening exercise, developed by Everyday Democracy (see [A Guide for Training Public Dialogue Facilitators](#), page 32 in that document; instructions below).

Both are good exercises, but they tend to raise awareness about the importance of listening a little differently. **Zen Numbers** is attentive to the group dynamics; **Listening a Different Way** raises individual understanding and empathy.

Listening in a Different Way

Trainees will take turns with a partner for this exercise. The first speaker will have 3 minutes to answer the question, “Why do you think it is important for people in our community to talk about _____ in the upcoming public dialogue program?”

The partner will listen actively, noting content and feelings, and taking care not to interrupt. After 3 minutes, the listener will reflect, clarify, and summarize the key points, and ask follow-up questions.

When the trainer calls time, the partners switch roles. When each person has had a turn as both speaker and listener, the pair will debrief.

Put these debriefing questions on a flip chart where everyone can see:

- ❖ How did it go?
- ❖ What did you notice in particular?
- ❖ Did you find any part of this exercise especially challenging?
- ❖ Did the speaker feel listened to?
- ❖ What did you notice about body language?

The Facilitator's Job Description

Time needed: 20 minutes

When to do this: Some time after ground rules and active listening

Rationale/Discussion: People do not really know just how complex and challenging it can be to facilitate a dialogue, much less a politically charged dialogue. Best to spell it out to prospective facilitators.

Setup

1. **Copy the handout on pages 13-15.**
2. **Prepare two slides in advance. One should have a list of facilitator roles:**
 - Help the group stay on track
 - Help the group see different points of view
 - Effectively manage cultural differences
 - Reflect
 - Clarify
 - Synthesize ideas
 - Summarize
 - Shift the focus
 - Ask probing questions
 - Use silence
 - Use body language
 - Manage conflict
 - Troubleshoot
 - Prioritize ideas
 - Lead a brainstorm
 - Record
 - Create newsprint in advance that identifies the choices and has a vertical line and columns for pros and cons
 - Record on the newsprint people's views, pros and cons
 - Keep track of the values at stake for each choice

The second slide should have this quote by Chris Christensen (developer of case method teaching and discussion leadership teaching at Harvard, first at the Business School, then the medical school, and then institution-wide.)

*"Planner, host, moderator, devil's advocate, fellow-student, and judge —a potentially confusing set of roles. Even the most seasoned group leader must be content with uncertainty, because discussion teaching is the art of managing spontaneity."*⁵

⁵C. Roland Christensen. 1991. "Premises and Practices of Discussion Teaching," in *Education for Judgment: the Artistry of Discussion Leadership*, by C. Roland Christensen, David A. Garvin, and Ann Sweet. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School. pp 15-34, 16.

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Exercise: Do not post either slide just yet. Ask the group: What do you imagine is the role of a facilitator? It's important to allow people time to reflect and collect their thoughts. Tell everyone to take one minute to jot down some ideas.

Lead a brainstorm using that question. Tell the group to come up with as many different ideas as possible in a short time, that all ideas are OK, but that we won't stop and discuss any of them. Anyone can offer an idea. They should just shout out single words or phrases. Get the group started by offering up, "Keep the group on track." Capture the ideas on newsprint.

Next, post the Facilitator Job Description slide and compare it with the tasks that they identified.

Answer any questions about the role. Distribute the handout and allow people to read it for a few minutes. While they do, post the slide with the Chris Christensen quote. Note the "art of managing spontaneity." Answer questions about the handout.

Debrief: Inevitably, someone will ask about neutrality. Neutrality is a complicated issue. On one hand, facilitators must be nonpartisan and appear unbiased to the members of the group they are facilitating. On the other hand, no one is truly neutral, and there is a good argument that "neutrality" is not even possible – that those who are neutral really want to maintain the status quo. Explain to the group that we will spend more time on the neutrality challenge the next day.

Note

Don't let the group get stuck on this module. Their role will become clear as the workshop proceeds.

Facilitation Tips Handout⁶

Be prepared: You don't need to be an expert on a topic, but you should have a road map in mind for the direction the conversation should go. Know the issue, any written materials that the group will have to consider, and follow (at some times more closely than at others) a discussion guide for the entire dialogue (all sessions). You simply can't get away with "just showing up" to facilitate a dialogue, even if you have a co-facilitator.

Use probing, open-ended questions that do not lead to yes or no answers: Ask participants to think about the values that underlie their opinions or to clarify a point or paraphrase someone else's point. Here are some others to consider:

- ❖ What do we value regarding this issue?
- ❖ Where are the conflicts in this issue that we have to work through?
- ❖ What seems to be the key point here?
- ❖ Can we get to the crux of the disagreement here?
- ❖ Can you give an example to illustrate that point?
- ❖ How does that point relate back to what _____ said earlier?
- ❖ What would be a strong case *against* what you just said?
- ❖ Does anyone want to raise a point that we may have missed?
- ❖ Do you think that others share your view?
- ❖ Do we need to do some "homework" on this issue, to find more information on the point just raised?
- ❖ Why is this issue so difficult?
- ❖ What have you heard the group saying so far about this issue?
- ❖ How does this make you feel?
- ❖ What values or concerns underlie your views?

Set the right tone, energy, and pace: You are the keeper of the pace and tone of the dialogue. Gauge the level of energy in the room, how distracted people are. Check in with everyone at the beginning ("How's everybody doing today?") even if it is not about the issue under consideration. Stand if you need to generate energy; sit down if the group is moving right along and needs little intervention. Don't hesitate to have everyone stand up and wiggle a bit if the energy level is low. (We've even asked groups to do some 30-second thumb-wrestling.)

Establish clear ground rules – discuss each and get an agreement from the group to abide by the ground rules: If you have time, let the group craft the ground rules, but if you don't, make sure they review and approve a standard set. Revisit them at the beginning of each session. Encourage people to speak to each other and not you. Discuss how people will participate, by talking spontaneously, by raising a hand, by holding a talking stick or other item, by tipping a name tag if interested in talks. If the group is large, perhaps participants will have to signal to be recognized, but generally the discussion will flow more smoothly if participants respond spontaneously to each other.

⁶ This memorandum was written in preparation for facilitator training. It draws from many sources, but primarily facilitator training materials published by Everyday Democracy, available at www.everyday-democracy.org.

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

For controversial political issue discussions, it is a good idea to give the group some examples of the kinds of things they may hear and what the group norms should be. Tell the group, for example, if you are going to insist on factually accurate statements rather than opinions. Tell the group if you want them to take risks with language, framing, or problem-solving, but that you expect them to be open to suggestions and new ideas.

Monitor the progress of the group: Loosely keep track of who is talking and who hasn't had a fair share of the air. Keep track of comments that are glossed over or ignored completely, and come back to those points. If you need to, ask someone on a break or after a session why she or he may not be participating or is otherwise disengaged from the group. Work with that individual to solve any problems with the group process. Remember, this is not a debate. If participants forget this, don't hesitate to ask the group to revise the ground rules.

Help the group look at different points of view: Good discussion materials help. But sometimes things come up during conversations that call for the consideration of another perspective. Ask participants to consider a point of view that hasn't come up so far.

Get comfortable with silence: Silence is not a bad thing – it allows time for reflection. Explain to the group up front that you are comfortable with silence and will not be intervening to stop what many might view as an awkward silence.

Be aware of cultural dynamics and personality differences: Different people communicate with different styles. Some speak their mind while others listen and keep their thoughts to themselves. As facilitator, it is your job to understand these dynamics and help everyone in the group feel appreciated.

Err on the side on nonintervention: You want people to talk to each other, and a good facilitator is often invisible. You should make that clear from the beginning that they should not always be looking to you to ask the questions and guide the discussion. Encourage them to ask questions of each other. Resist the urge to respond to each comment.

That said, know when and how to intervene: It is important to have the group pause so that you can capture the major points of a discussion, clarify a position, or move a discussion forward. Know when a topic has been talked through thoroughly and then move on.

If you can, practice: At home with your family, or in conversations with your friends or at work, practice the arts of clarifying, active listening, paraphrasing, reflecting back, linking ideas, and summarizing.

Or better yet, ask someone in the group to summarize: This can be difficult and you don't want to put someone on the spot. But you also want the group—not you as facilitator—do the talking.

Know when the group is talking about the nature of the problem, a vision of the problem solved, solutions, or something else: Groups get frustrated when they bounce around from issue-identification to solution wars. People feel that their views are being discounted if they express a concern and someone instantly responds, "Oh, that's easy to fix. Just do this. Now the real problem is..." Keep loosely to the discussion guide, which should be written to guide conversations on the topic, definitions, what is being done, and action.

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Keep track of the time: If you need to move the group along, do so. If a conversation is animated but will get the group completely off track in terms of time, then pause the conversation for a “process check” and ask the group to decide: should we continue with this conversation and possibly need to add more sessions? Should we move on? Leave plenty of time at the end to identify things that were left open-ended and to debrief (plus/delta) the session.

Know how to use a “parking lot”: A parking lot (or “bin”) is a nifty tool for getting groups back on track without insulting someone who is talking or has moved the conversation off track. Using either a sheet of newsprint paper or a section of a board, write “Parking Lot.” Explain that when participants feel like they have an idea, question, or comment that is off-topic, or causes the conversation to turn in another direction, that they are encouraged to write their point on the board. Do not forget to return to your parking lot, however, even if to say, “We may not be able to get to this...”

Be prepared for common facilitation challenges: You know them: the shy, or dominant, or angry, or unfocused, or longwinded, or inaccurate, or confrontational participant (see **Troubleshooting** for suggestions).

End gracefully: Ask for final comments. Evaluate the session. Thank everyone for participating.

Get together and share experiences and tips: Get together with other facilitators, share stories, and brainstorm responses to problems.

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Job Descriptions for Facilitators, Leaders, and Teachers Handout⁷

A Facilitator's Job Description	A Collaborative Leader's Job Description	A Discussion-Based Teacher's Job Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Prepare! Don't just wing it. ✓ Work from prepared reading materials, framing paper, or discussion guide ✓ Help the group frame the problem ✓ Remain impartial but establish process goals and objectives (e.g., all voices count) ✓ Establish ground rules for the discussion ✓ Solicit and draw from personal stories and draw from the resources in the group ✓ Help the group stay on track ✓ Help the group see different points of view ✓ Help the group find relevant data and information, if needed ✓ Help the group formulate their own viewpoints and alternative solutions ✓ Help the group identify the underlying principles driving their views ✓ Effectively manage cultural differences ✓ Reflect ✓ Clarify ✓ Synthesize ideas ✓ Summarize ✓ Shift the focus ✓ Ask probing questions ✓ Use silence ✓ Use body language ✓ Manage conflict ✓ Troubleshoot ✓ Prioritize ideas ✓ Use humor ✓ Lead a brainstorm ✓ Record – keep track of personal stories, perspectives on the nature of the problem, possible solutions, a vision of success, and action ✓ Solicit feedback/evaluate the process ✓ Collect personal commitments for change ✓ Document changes in viewpoints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Prepare! Don't just wing it. ✓ Identify the facts, the strategic moment, your decision making options, and your image of success. ✓ Help the employees frame the problem ✓ Understand the impartiality challenge ✓ Establish objectives or desired outcomes for the project or task ✓ Establish ground rules for the workplace, project, or task ✓ Solicit and draw from personal stories and draw from the resources among the students ✓ Help the employees stay on track ✓ Help the employees see different points of view ✓ Help the employees find relevant data and information, if needed ✓ Help the employees formulate their own viewpoints and alternative solutions ✓ Help the employees identify the underlying principles driving their views ✓ Effectively manage cultural differences ✓ Reflect ✓ Clarify ✓ Synthesize ideas ✓ Summarize ✓ Shift the focus ✓ Ask probing questions ✓ Use silence ✓ Use body language ✓ Manage conflict ✓ Troubleshoot ✓ Prioritize ideas ✓ Use humor ✓ Record - keep track of personal stories, perspectives on the nature of the problem, possible solutions, a vision of success, and action ✓ Solicit feedback/evaluate the process ✓ Collect personal commitments for change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Prepare! Don't just wing it. ✓ Work from classroom reading and a prepared discussion outline—three hours of prep for one hour of discussion ✓ Help the students frame the problem ✓ Understand the impartiality challenge ✓ Establish objectives or learning outcomes for that session and course ✓ Establish ground rules for the learning community ✓ Solicit and draw from personal stories and draw from the resources among the students ✓ Help the students stay on track ✓ Help the students see different points of view ✓ Help the students find relevant data and information, if needed ✓ Help the students formulate their own viewpoints and alternative solutions ✓ Help the students identify the underlying principles driving their views ✓ Effectively manage cultural differences ✓ Reflect ✓ Clarify ✓ Synthesize ideas ✓ Summarize ✓ Shift the focus ✓ Ask probing questions ✓ Use silence ✓ Use body language ✓ Manage conflict ✓ Troubleshoot ✓ Prioritize ideas ✓ Use humor ✓ Record – keep track of personal stories, perspectives, ideas, and conclusions ✓ Solicit feedback/evaluate the process ✓ Document learning

⁷ © 2013 Nancy L. Thomas. Partially drawn from Facilitation Training materials for Everyday Democracy.

Asking Good Questions

Time needed: 30 minutes

When to do this: Early in the workshop, after establishing ground rules and the active listening exercises

Rationale/Description: Questions play multiple roles on a dialogue. They can seek clarification, solicit information or facts, invite more participation or new perspectives, change the tone of a dialogue, question assumptions, redirect to get the group back on track, diffuse tension, provoke creative ideas, and reinforce ground rules. They can also derail a conversation, particularly if they contain trigger statements or reflect bias. It's important to learn how to ask questions. Perhaps the most effective use of questions is to probe a topic further, to get at the problem underlying the problem. A facilitator should think through the questions.

It's also possible that the response from the facilitator does not require a question. It might require some body language, a pause or silence, or simply eye contact with others in the group.

The worksheet can be used to train facilitators, but it can also be replicated with groups as part of their preparation for engaging in a dialogue.

Exercise: Hand out the worksheet (page 19) containing a series of questions. Ask participants to work individually to reword the questions on the sheet. Then, have them pair up and compare answers. Debrief in the large group by asking people if they have any examples of questions that were reworded very differently. If there are none, ask for volunteers to share some of their reworded questions.

In the large group, try role-playing to demonstrate how difficult formulating questions can be on the spur of the moment. Provide a couple of scenarios, and then ask for volunteers to ask the next question. Solicit multiple suggestions and discuss as a large group the pros and cons of the suggested questions. This needs to move pretty quickly – use this time as a real simulation, not allowing much time for formulating a question.

Scenario 1: The group is trying to identify multiple viewpoints on immigration, and someone in the group says, "I know this is unpopular, but I really like the idea of building a wall between the U.S. and Mexico. There's really no better solution."

Scenario 2: The group is discussing the candidates' views on marriage equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. One participant says, "I don't want people to be mistreated, but they really should not be allowed to marry. It just feels wrong to me."

Scenario 3: The group is discussing voting laws in the state and one of the participants launches into a long, but heartfelt, story of his great uncle's drive to the polling place, which wasn't far away, but the car broke down and it needed service and he called home for a ride but no one was there and the polls were closing in two hours and...

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Questions you might consider:

- ❖ In what direction might your question move the group?
- ❖ How might your question affect the energy level in the room?
- ❖ Is your question open-ended enough to invite more participation?
- ❖ In redirecting the conversation, did you hurt anyone's feelings?

Debrief: There's no substitute for practice! Facilitators might consider co-facilitating, and asking their partner to jot down questions that either worked well or didn't work well, and to discuss them after the dialogue.

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Asking Good Questions Worksheet

Read the following questions and imagine asking them as a facilitator. Remember that people are entering a dialogue with a keen ear that may be predisposed to hearing insult or exaggeration. You don't want to fuel the fire. There are certain words to avoid: *just*, *only*, *still*, *but*, *wrong*, and *why*. Also avoid leading and rhetorical questions, as well as questions that solicit simply a *yes* or *no*.

Take your time and reflect on these questions, then rewrite them. When you are done, find someone else who is done and compare your re-written questions. Consider your concerns with the first version, what the original conversation might provoke, and how changing the way the question is asked might shift the focus.

- Why did you come here?
- You made an excellent case, but how can you improve it?
- What do others think about what Tiffany just said?
- Can you please just stick to the facts?
- Wouldn't your answer be different if you had actually experienced the problem?
- Can you understand where Jacob is coming from?
- How can you say that the candidates are equally guilty of lying?
- Just what do you think the purpose of this conversation is?
- It seems like we have two different perspectives here. Would anyone like to side with Phillip?
- Fine, but I am not sure we've gotten to what really matters.
- I can see this group lacks diversity in perspective. What should we do about that?
- Why would you say that?
- That's statement is wrong. Does anyone have any other ideas?

Dialogue and Planning Sequencing

Time Needed: 20 minutes

When to do this: After skill-building

Rationale/Description: In dialogues, sometimes people think they're talking about the same thing, but are actually not. A meaningful and effective dialogue follows as trajectory of several stages:

- ❖ **Planning** how the dialogue will go
- ❖ Understanding the **problem**, the terms used to define it, its nature, and scope
- ❖ Crafting a **vision** of the ideal (e.g., an educated citizenry, equal opportunity, a campus that values diversity and inclusion)
- ❖ Identifying **solutions**
- ❖ Moving to **action**

Politically charged dialogues, in particular, tend to have a pattern in which groups (or committees, organizations, and communities) attempt to move to action without fully understanding the broad range of perspectives on the problem, a vision for an ideal future, or possible solutions. Facilitators need to have this road map in mind as they facilitate dialogues, and to spot when participants are starting in different places or talking about different things at the same time.

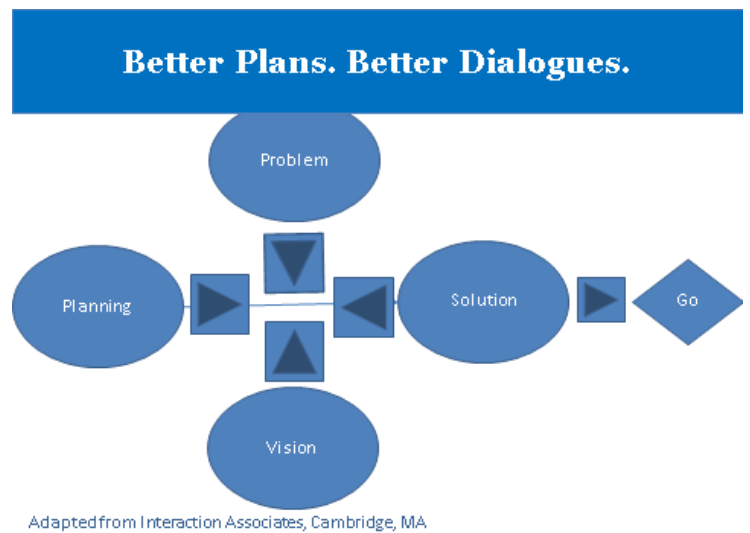
Goals
To prevent misunderstandings and do the requisite work necessary for effecting solutions or action.

Setup

1. Make copies of the worksheet on page 22. On five separate sheets of paper, print in large print, one per page, the following statements:

- “Decide where I’ll go, what I’ll do, and how I’ll get there”
- “Consider all the things that could prevent me from going”
- “Pack and go”
- “Envision the perfect two-day break”
- “Schedule time to plan this vacation”

2. Create a slide with an image of an ideal dialogue trajectory (see right)



FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Exercise: Distribute the worksheet and ask people to take two minutes to fill it out. While they do that, place the printed “Pack and go” and other pieces of paper on the walls around the room. Space them so that there is plenty of room around each.

When people have completed their worksheets, ask them to go to the sign that is the step that they identified as their #1 step. People will be all over the room. One or two will be under “pack and go.” Many will be under the sign, “Consider all the things that could prevent me from going.” Very few will have scheduled a time to plan. Engage people in a short discussion, “what do you notice?” Then ask people to go to their second step. Ask, “What do you see now?” Repeat to the third step, and then have them return to their seats.

Debrief: Imagine that exercise for a group, all of you going on vacation together. How well do you think that would work?

Speak about the importance of mapping out a plan, whether it’s for a community change initiative, a project, or a dialogue, and that plan needs to bring everyone along at the same time.

Introduce the slide with the different “spaces” in which people approach an issue. Break down the steps; be aware of who is in what “space” at what time.

- ❖ “Decide where I’ll go, what I’ll do, and how I’ll get there.” (# 4 –SOLUTION)
- ❖ “Consider all the things that could prevent me from going.” (#3 – PROBLEM)
- ❖ “Pack and go.” (#5 – IMPLEMENT)
- ❖ “Envision the perfect two-day break.” (#2 – VISION)
- ❖ “Schedule time to plan this vacation.” (#1 – PLAN)

Takeaways: It’s important to design a course for the dialogue, start to finish, which brings everyone along at the same time. Remember to set aside time for planning. Don’t move to action too quickly.

Note

This exercise is adapted from an exercise developed by the Interaction Institute for Social Change in Cambridge, MA. <http://interactioninstitute.org> Be sure to credit that organization.

Planning your Two-day Vacation Worksheet⁸

You have two days off with your family and you want to do something other than hang around at home. Of the steps below, which would you take and in what order? Order these 1-5, although you can ignore any steps you would probably skip. Have some fun with this, and be honest!

_____ Decide where I'll go, what I'll do, and how I will get there

_____ Consider all the things that could keep me from taking these two days off.

_____ Schedule a time when I can plan my vacation.

_____ Pack and go

_____ Envision the perfect vacation

⁸ Adapted from an exercise created by the Interaction Institute for Social Change, <http://interactioninstitute.org/>.

Troubleshooting Exercise

Time needed: 90 minutes

When to do this: We recommend starting this at the end of Day I and finishing on Day II after the skill building exercises.

Rationale/Description: In this session, you are working through the “challenges” identified at the beginning of the workshop, as well as challenges we’ve identified. Even experienced facilitators get stumped by some reactions and behaviors in a group, and it’s impossible to anticipate every facilitation challenge, but with politically charged conversations, some things are inevitable. Best to be prepared! This is also an efficient way of “practicing.”

Goals

To give facilitators an opportunity to imagine and plan ahead for the inevitable challenges they will face facilitating politically charged dialogues.

Setup

- 1. Before the workshop, review the “challenges” from the first day of training and compare them with the sample vignettes (see next page). If the identified challenges are not reflected in the vignettes below, consider writing one or more. If you cannot think of an example, you can ask the group, at some point, “Can someone think of an example of this particular challenge?” You do not need to use all of these vignettes. Select those that match your group’s interests and needs.**
- 2. Print the sample vignettes in advance, in large font (80 to 100), one per page. Hang them around the room, at least 10 feet apart, and place newsprint below each. The number of vignettes you use will depend on the number of people in the room and the amount of time you have (see notes below). Give everyone markers, ideally of the same color. Have participants work in groups of three. Consider people with physical disadvantages when you set this up and adapt to meet the needs of the group.**

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Sample Vignettes

1. A participant pulls you, the facilitator, aside and says, “Everyone here is so liberal, there is absolutely no way that I can say what I am thinking.”
2. The [Muslim or Jewish] participant expresses support for [Palestinians or Israel] to which a [Jewish or Muslim] participant responds, “I have to leave. This is no longer a safe space for me.”
3. In a discussion about religion in politics, a student discloses, “In my hometown, homosexuality is a sin and people who sin are destined to go to hell.”
4. A participant arrives wearing a t-shirt that reads, “Why I like my dog better than my girlfriend...” followed by a list of negative statements (e.g., “At least my dog cooks for me.”) When questioned, the student says, “Why can’t women take a joke?”
5. A participant says that people “of a certain faith” are responsible for mass shootings and the U.S. should prohibit people who practice that faith from entering the country.
6. The subject of immigration comes up and one participant says, “This subject is really hard for me. I have never told anyone before, but I am undocumented.”
7. During introductions, a participant warns that in his culture he cannot address women directly and he will not do so in this dialogue either.
8. A participant in the group does nothing but knit—she seems to be listening attentively, but she does not contribute one word.
9. During the early, relationship-building part of the dialogue, a White participant asks a person of color, “What *are* you?”
10. The night before the dialogue, another violent, politically charged incident has occurred across the country (e.g., a police officer shoots a Black man, or there is a mass shooting on a campus).
11. A first-year, international student for whom English is a second language approaches you during a break and says she is having trouble following the conversation.
12. Before the dialogue starts, several participants are having a not-so-quiet conversation and one is overheard laughing and saying, “I agree with him, we would all be better off if Hillary were assassinated.”
13. One participant says in the group, “[Republicans or Democrats] are misinformed liars who aren’t patriotic. They will ruin this country. I wouldn’t allow my child to marry one!”

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Exercise: Instruct each group of three to circulate around the room. They should strive to get to all of the vignettes, so they need to self-monitor their pace. They should discuss the vignette as a group and write down a recommended intervention or action by the facilitator. Then they should move to the next vignette. If they agree with a suggestion made by a prior group, they should place a checkmark next to that idea. They should also add other suggestions they may have. You will need to keep the group moving—remind them that they only have so much time and that they need to get to all the vignettes. When they are done, they can return to their seats.

Discussion: Ask for volunteers to read each vignette and the notes underneath. Ask the group:

- ❖ What do others think of this response by the facilitator?
- ❖ Can you think of other responses?
- ❖ Who is willing to roll play this one? Ask for volunteers to try to craft an actual response and discuss that. Have multiple people role-play on the same vignette.

Takeaways: It's important that people not ignore these kinds of behaviors, comments, or concerns—they need to be identified, named, and addressed. This is where carefully crafted ground rules will make a big difference. Invoke these: “If you are offended, say so, say why, and we’ll talk about it,” “everyone shares responsibility for the group’s experience,” “suspend judgment,” and “create brave spaces.”

But don't be afraid to pause the group for reflection or take a break. Don't be bashful about saying, “I am not sure how we should proceed.” Consider asking the group for ideas on how to manage a situation.

Notes

On the amount of time this takes, for a group of 24, use approximately eight vignettes and expect participants to average about 3 minutes on each. The first ones will take longer (at least five minutes) but they will move faster as they read vignettes with some responses already suggested by others. When you debrief, you will not get through all vignettes. For the large group discussion, try to select the vignettes that seemed to give people the most trouble.

Troubleshooting Handout

When facilitating group discussions, there are common challenges that instructors face. These scenarios present some common problems and suggestions for troubleshooting that may serve as a starting point for instructors to respond constructively.

Problem: People don't participate, they just listen or watch.

Possible responses: Try to draw out quiet participants, but don't put them on the spot. Make eye contact—it reminds them that you'd like to hear from them. Watch body language—sometimes you can tell if someone is actively listening. If others seem to be uncomfortable, then you can talk with the person informally during a break and ask why they are not participating. Make sure that the problem isn't that they can't hear well from that seat or something that can be changed fairly easily. Sometimes people will tell the facilitator what they are thinking, and the facilitator can ask for permission to ask that person to repeat it to the group.

Problem: A talkative person dominates the discussion.

Possible responses: As the facilitator, it is your responsibility to handle domineering participants. Once it becomes clear what this person is doing, you must intervene and set limits. Start by limiting your eye contact with the speaker. Remind the group that everyone is invited to participate. Say, "Let's hear from some folks who haven't had a chance to speak yet" or "I want to be sure that everyone has a say." If necessary, you can talk with the person informally on a break. Sometimes, the problem is the pace – the talkative person doesn't pause. You can ask people to take a few minutes to write down their thoughts before inviting the discussion, and then start with those who haven't talked as much. If it becomes too difficult to manage, consider using a "talking stick" or other signal so that people can take turns.

Problem: Participants wander away from the topic.

Possible responses: Responding to this takes judgment and intuition. It is the facilitator's role to help move the discussion along, but it is not always clear why the conversation is drifting. Sometimes, people are simply talking about different things—some might want to jump ahead to solutions and actions, while others still want to understand the problem better. You can always say, "We're a little off topic right now. Would you like to stay with this, or move on to the next question?" If a participant goes into a lengthy digression, you may have to say: "We are wandering off the subject, and I'd like to give others a chance to speak."

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Problem: Someone puts forth information that you know to be false. Or, participants get hung up in a dispute about facts but no one present knows the answer.

Possible responses: In public spaces, the strategy might be to move off of the fact and get to the underlying concern (e.g., fear). But on a college campus, facts and truth matter. You can start by asking, “Has anyone heard conflicting information?” If no one offers a correction, offer one yourself. And if no one knows the facts and the point is not essential, put it aside and move on. If the point is central to the discussion, encourage members to look up the information before the next meeting. False information is not uncommon in dialogues about politically charged issues. Be prepared to say that misinformation cannot stand unchallenged.

Problem: Lack of interest, no excitement, no one wants to talk, only a few people participating.

Possible responses: The group may need a break—consider doing some yoga or other energizing activity. Or break the group into smaller groups, such as pairs, where they will be more able to engagement. It may also occur if the facilitator talks too much or does not give participants enough time to respond to questions. People need time to think, reflect, and get ready to speak up. Occasionally, you might have a lack of excitement in the discussion because the group seems to be in agreement and isn’t working with tensions underlying an issue. In this case, try to bring other views into the discussion, especially if no one in the group holds them. “Do you know people who hold other views? What would they say about our conversation?” or “What views seem to be missing from the room?”

Problem: Tension or open conflict in the group. Perhaps two participants argue or get confrontational.

Possible responses: Address tension directly. Remind participants that disagreement and conflict are natural and that diverse political perspectives are to be expected. Explain that, for conflict to be productive, it must be focused on the issue: it is acceptable to challenge someone’s ideas, but personal attacks are not acceptable. You must interrupt personal attacks, name-calling, or putdowns as soon as they occur. You will be better able to do so if you have established ground rules that disallow such behaviors and that encourage respect for all views. Don’t hesitate to appeal to the group for help; if group members bought into the ground rules, they will support you. As a last resort, consider taking a break to change the energy in the room. You can take the opportunity to talk one-on-one with the participants in question.

Problem: Everyone in the group is talking to you, not to each other.

Possible responses: This is natural, particularly at the beginning of a dialogue. But if, over time, the group continues this pattern, then consider talking less and resisting the urge to respond when someone directs a comment to you, looking somewhere else or at another person else when someone talks directly to you, openly inviting the group to talk to each other, not to you, and reviewing the role of the facilitator in order to clarify that it is your responsibility to guide things along but not be part of the conversation.

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Problem: Someone in the group says something insulting or demeaning about women, people of color, or other protected groups, but not to any one individual.

Possible responses: You can wait to see if people in the group respond, and if there is a ground rule about “say if you are offended and say why,” that is more likely to happen. But if no one says anything, you as the facilitator can also call out the insult as inappropriate. You may need to exercise judgment in knowing whether something is intentional or unintentional, but lack of intent doesn’t mean you should let it go. This is a delicate situation because you don’t want to lose the individual who made the comment, but in a learning environment, it is appropriate for the group to engage. You can say that you are offended, and say why, or you can ask: “How might that be interpreted by others not in this group?” You can try to probe for meaning or the emotion behind the statement. If enough trust has been built up in the group, then participants are more likely to be open to suggestions about how to phrase a comment. If the group has not adequately built up trust, consider taking a break and pulling the person aside and talking about the statement.

Problem: Someone in the group responds to a microaggression (or receives an innocent statement as a microaggression) by noisily packing up and announcing that the group is no longer a “safe space.”

Possible responses: Ask for clarification, and suggest the person use the “if you are offended, say so and say why” ground rule. Invite the person to stay in the group and work it out. Stress to the participant that you want to ensure the dialogue is inclusive and an environment in which you can have productive conversations, especially around offensive speech. Do not pry or require that the offended participants share why they are offended—invite that explanation, but do not mandate it. Consider taking break to diffuse tensions, but do not let the conflict go unaddressed. Name it and discuss it.

Suggestions for all kinds of problems

- ❖ Refer back to your ground rules. Usually, there’s something in there that will apply to a given situation. If not, revisit the ground rules. Consider saying, “It feels to me as if we’ve gotten into a rut (or whatever the problem is) and this problem is not addressed in our ground rules. Can anyone make a suggestion for how to manage this?”
- ❖ Kick it back to the group. Ask, “What just happened here?” or name the problem (don’t dance around it—name it) and say, “What should we do about this?”
- ❖ Set up a “plus/delta” exercise. Say to the group that you want to pause to make sure everyone is having a good experience. Ask, “What are we doing well as a group?” and then, “How can we do better? What changes do we need to make in order to function better as a group?”
- ❖ If you missed something—ignored something that you shouldn’t have ignored, for example—and it’s important or seems to have affected the group or an individual, take a break. After the break, go back to it. Say, “I am feeling a little bad that I let something go earlier, and I want to take a minute to revisit it...”

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Questions to use when there is disagreement

- ❑ What do you think he is saying?
- ❑ What bothers you most about this?
- ❑ What is at the heart of the disagreement?
- ❑ How does this make you feel?
- ❑ What experiences or beliefs might lead a person to support that point of view?
- ❑ What do you think is really important to people who hold that opinion?
- ❑ What is blocking the discussion?
- ❑ What don't you agree with?
- ❑ What do you find most convincing about that point of view?
- ❑ What is it about that position that you just cannot live with?
- ❑ Could you say more about what you think?
- ❑ What makes this topic hard?
- ❑ What have we missed that we need to talk about?

Questions to use when people are feeling discouraged

- ❑ How does that make you feel?
- ❑ What gives you hope?
- ❑ How can we make progress on these problems? What haven't we considered yet?

Offensive Speech

Time needed: 1 hour

When to do this: Anytime after basic skill-building (establishing ground rules, active listening, asking the right questions, perspective taking, and planning).

Rationale/Description: College and university faculty and staff have long been debating how to balance the need (and legal mandate) to provide all students with learning environments that are welcoming to all students while simultaneously encouraging free expression. In the 1990s, in the context of the so-called “culture wars,” the debate was framed as “free speech v. group defamation.” Free speech remains on the forefront of the conversation, particularly for watchdog groups such as the [Foundation for Individual Rights in Education](#) (FIRE), which argues that individuals may say just about anything, except words that are accompanied by violence or that incite dangerous conditions. On the other hand, the Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s and 1970s, including Title VI and IX, prohibit conduct and hate speech that creates hostile working and learning conditions for women, people of color, and others protected by law—often groups historically marginalized in American higher education. The academy has been accused of being overly “politically correct” and “coddling” students in the name of supporting their emotional well-being and “creating a culture in which everyone must think twice before speaking up, lest they face charges of insensitivity, aggression, or worse.”⁹ These competing interests create a difficult balancing act for educators.

Goals

To introduce the concepts and give participants a chance to grapple with scenarios and discuss how, as facilitators, to manage offensive speech in a group setting.

Setup

1. Create a slide that contains a definition of offensive speech. Consider this one:

“Everyday verbal or nonverbal assumptions or claims that directly or implicitly communicate a demeaning, negative, or hostile message to target a person or group of people based solely upon their marginalized group membership.”

2. Bring a hat! See the list of statements below that are, or might be interpreted as, offensive. Print this list (14-16 font) and cut each statement into a strip. Put all the strips in the hat.

⁹ Greg Lukianoff and Jonathan Haidt (2015) “The Coddling of the American Mind” *Atlantic Monthly*. At <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356/>.

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Sample Questions for Hat

People who support the Republicans just don't know the facts.

What *are* you?

Are you still a teacher?

Your political views make me feel like I am not in a safe space.

This assignment is so simple, even Jim can do it.

May I touch your hair?

No, where are you really from?

You speak English pretty well, considering ...

I don't see color when I talk with someone who isn't White.

How can you vote for that candidate, considering your race and all that?

I didn't think that Black people listen to that music.

You're not really Latina. I can't believe it!

I thought all Hispanics opposed Donald Trump's wall.

I don't know. She just doesn't *look* like a leader.

Some people are just so sensitive!

I wish that people would keep their religious views to themselves.

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Exercise: Pair up. Pick a statement out of the hat and discuss it with your partner for a few minutes. Instruct the pairs to consider these questions: Is this a trigger? If someone said this in your group, how would you, as the facilitator, respond? If a pair completes one conversation, suggest they pick another and discuss.

Large group, popcorn-style discussion: Ask if anyone would like to read their statement and share their facilitation strategy?

Large group discussion: Say to the group, “Much of the conversation centers on concerns over ‘intent’ vs. ‘impact.’ Consider the statement, ‘What *are* you?’ spoken to a person who is not obviously White.”

- ❖ Is this statement malicious or naive? Does it matter? Who decides?
- ❖ Should the speaker of that statement be reprimanded, become the subject of discussion, or ignored? Can the *statement* be uncoupled from the *speaker*?
- ❖ A typical ground rule is, “Assume good will,” but does that always work? What if the person on the receiving end has already been asked that question three times that day?
- ❖ What if the person who asked the question does, actually, mean it to be derogatory?
- ❖ Do we all agree that free speech is a normative value in American society, a legal requirement—at least at publicly funded institution—and something to be protected on this campus?
- ❖ Is it chilling to free speech that people need to “think twice” before speaking up?
- ❖ Are there ground rules that could address this challenge (e.g., If you are offended, say so and say why)?
- ❖ Say you have an “ouch” rule (a rule that when someone is offended, he or she can communicate “ouch” to the group) and someone says “ouch,” to which another person in the group rolls her or his eyes and sighs loudly. What do you do?
- ❖ What do you do if the group has not established a ground rule that applies?

Debrief: These are interesting academic conversations that can have a real impact on some students’ well-being, their learning environments, and their preparation for life beyond college. A hostile learning environment can undermine confidence.¹⁰ Yet it is important to realize that offensive speech is often not intentional. Therefore, spaces need to be created and fostered to address this speech productively in a way that builds understanding and community. Establishing an environment where students feel comfortable addressing these different types of speech is foundational for engaging in other types of contentious and difficult dialogue, which in turn

¹⁰ Kawashima-Ginsberg, K. and Thomas, N. (2013) “Civic Engagement and Political Leadership among Women – A Call for Solutions.” CIRCLE Fact Sheet. Medford, MA: The Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life, Tufts University. At <http://www.civicyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Gender-and-Political-Leadership-Fact-Sheet-3.pdf>.

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

undermines equitable participation and representation. According to the Who Leads Us initiative,¹¹ White men account for 31% of the U.S. population, yet they hold:

- ❖ 58% of full professorships (tenured positions) in higher education¹²
- ❖ 65% of all elected offices
- ❖ 80% of the House of Representatives
- ❖ 80-85% of the U. S. Senate

And 90% of the nation's 42,000 elected officials are White.

The New York Times offers an interactive exercise¹³ in which students first identify statements as true or false, and then they discuss the real answers.

Notes

There is a lot more that can be said about the tension between the First Amendment right to free expression and creating a learning environment conducive to learning for all students. You won't solve the problem, but perhaps you can identify a fair balance for this particular group, if not the campus. The point is that campuses cannot, and probably should not try to, create "safe spaces" for students, and that the response to offensive speech is more speech. Read more about this tension in the Fall 2015 issue of *Diversity & Democracy* (Association of American Colleges and Universities).¹⁴

¹¹ <http://wholeads.us/#>

¹² <http://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Documents/Higher-Ed-Spotlight-Pipelines-Pathways-and-Institutional-Leadership-Status-of-Women.pdf>

¹³ http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/02/26/us/race-of-american-power.html?smid=fb-nytimes&smtyp=cur&_r=2

¹⁴ Thomas, Nancy (2015) "The Politics of Learning for Democracy," *Diversity & Democracy*. Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, pp. 4-8. At <https://www.aacu.org/diversitydemocracy/2015/fall/thomas>.

Perspective Taking

Time Needed: 45 minutes

When to do this: In the middle of the training; not too early, not too late

Rationale/Description: It's human nature to see things through the lens of our own backgrounds and lived experiences, and while students may gain empathy while in college by doing community service, for example, they may not necessarily develop the skills needed to understand someone else's viewpoint. This exercise is designed to help participants imagine and study the perspectives of others.

Setup

This is a two-part exercise. First, participants will work in small groups from a worksheet (pages 36-37) to learn to craft a perspective on an issue; in this case, the role of religion in American public life. In the second part, participants will work with a set of perspectives, weighing the pros and cons as if they are participating in a real dialogue.

1. **We like to use the image on the right¹⁵ for Part I. Print the worksheets in advance and distribute them. Do not distribute the second document, the set of perspectives from the *One Nation, Many Beliefs* discussion guide (Everyday Democracy).¹⁶ You will also need a sheet of newsprint and markers for each group of four or five.**
2. **For Part II of the exercise, you will need a slide that reads:**
 - Which viewpoint(s) are closest to your own?
 - Why do you hold the viewpoint that you hold?
 - Are there other views that are missing? Which ones?
 - Choose a viewpoint that you don't hold. Discuss why you think someone might hold that viewpoint.



¹⁵ Malcolm Evans cartoon, <http://www.evanscartoons.com/image.php?id=1294733061>. January 6, 2011.

¹⁶ Everyday Democracy (2011) One Nation, Many Beliefs. A discussion guide at <https://www.everyday-democracy.org/resources/one-nation-many-beliefs-talking-about-religion-diverse-democracy>. Portions reprinted with permission.

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Exercise

Part I: Tell the group to read and follow the instructions on the worksheet. They can work as a group for about 20 minutes. As a group, discuss for another 20 minutes or so and write one perspective on newsprint for a large-group discussion in which you have each group read the perspective they wrote on newsprint.

Part II: Distribute the *One Nation, Many Beliefs* handout. Explain that they are to simulate a dialogue in which they have a set of perspectives that they should discuss pursuant to the questions on the slide.

Debrief: Ask...

- ❖ How difficult is it to write perspectives on an issue?
- ❖ Did any of you experience writing a perspective that is not your own? How did that feel?
- ❖ Why do we do it this way? What are the advantages?
- ❖ What do you do if the group lacks the diversity needed to create a broad range of perspectives on an issue?
- ❖ Can you think of other ways to capture multiple perspectives on an issue?
- ❖ Which did you like better – crafting perspectives from scratch or using a set that had been written out in advance? What are the pros and cons of each approach?

Takeaways: This is a nice way to take the burden off of anyone who is the “only” in a room. And it’s a good way to get people to see new perspectives without attaching them to a particular individual in the group.

Notes

Exploring perspectives works best when the participants are diverse enough to hold a broad range of perspectives. If that isn’t likely, then a steering or planning group should plan ahead and research and write out the perspectives on an issue.

There are other ways to do this, for example, asking people to “take a stand” on a range of statements (e.g., I believe Americans do not know enough about their own faith, much less that of others.) For an example of “take a stand,” see the exercise on neutrality.

Perspective Taking Worksheet

Why Should We Talk About the Role of Religion in U.S. Society?

The connection between religion and public life is important everywhere in the world. In the United States, we have always paid attention to this connection, because religious freedom has a special place in our history. The freedom of (and from) religion is even in our Constitution, and has always been a subject of much discussion. This country includes people with many kinds of beliefs—religious, spiritual, and secular—and there is a greater diversity of beliefs than ever before. Often, stereotypes or lack of knowledge make it hard for people to understand and trust each other. Since many complex public problems have religious and philosophical aspects, it can be challenging to know how to work on those problems. As a result of greater diversity, misunderstanding, and complex tensions, discussions about religion and public life are becoming more divisive, making it even harder to tackle important issues. More people are experiencing discrimination because of their beliefs. More communities are experiencing conflict and even violence about issues of religion and public life. That is what prompted us to write this guide.

Community tensions tend to fall into two separate but related categories. The first has to do with relationships among various faith groups and, at times, between faith groups and secular groups. The second has to do with the role that religion plays in public decisions, particularly at the community level. Both of these categories are reflected in this guide.¹⁷

Imagine that you are in a group of 4 -5 people having a facilitated conversation about this topic. You are at the part of the dialogue where you are trying to grasp the nature of the problem (the “problem” space).

Discuss this question:

Why are there tensions among different religious and philosophical groups?

Identify “perspectives” answering this question. Here’s an example:

Viewpoint 1: We lack interfaith knowledge and understanding. Most Americans don’t know enough about religion. We often don’t have information about our own individual faith and beliefs, much less those of others, nor do we have enough opportunities to learn. Our schools don’t offer comparative religion. Faith communities focus on their own traditions and belief systems. There are not enough opportunities for people to come together and learn about their common and different beliefs.

¹⁷ From One Nation, Many Beliefs, Everyday Democracy at https://www.everyday-democracy.org/sites/default/files/attachments/One-Nation-Many-Beliefs_Everyday-Democracy.pdf

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Perspective Taking Worksheet (cont.)

As a group, come up with at least one other perspective and write it out on newsprint for others to see. You need to write a short statement (like, “we lack interfaith knowledge and understanding”), followed by an explanation. You don’t need to write extensively—bullet points after the header are fine.

You will be asked to share your group’s chosen perspective.

Power Dynamics

Time needed: 45 minutes

When to do this: Later in the workshop

Rationale/Description: Inevitably, there are power issues and dynamics in a group. Formal power can be related to a person's title or position in an organization. Informal power refers to power that can influence people, consciously or unconsciously, and is not connected with positional authority (e.g., physical size, gender, wealth, etc.). It's important to be able to spot the power dynamics, and anticipate what to do if you see a problem.

The biggest challenge having to do with power is that the people who have it do not want to relinquish it, and some do not actually see that they have it in any given setting. While it would be nice if those with power created opportunities for those without it to raise concerns or suggest alternative dynamics, the reality is they do not; or worse, they think they do, but do not. A facilitated dialogue, however, provides an opportunity to level the playing field. It is the responsibility of the facilitator to intervene and prevent or address power dynamics that affect a group.

Setup

Print the Power Dynamics worksheet (page 39) and distribute it to the group at the beginning of this module.

Exercise: Have the participants read the worksheet and then work in small groups at their tables. Suggest that they read all scenarios on the worksheet, but select one to discuss as a group. Note that the scenarios concern different settings, not necessarily a dialogue. Give them about 20 minutes. Then, bring them back together as a large group and ask each table to say what they discussed in their scenario. You can follow the probes on the worksheet and ask, for each of the scenarios:

- ❖ What is the power dynamic that is being observed or exercised?
- ❖ What is the impact of the exertion of this power?
- ❖ Ideally, who would intervene to address this power dynamic?
- ❖ Realistically, who is in a position to name this power dynamic?

Ask the group to imagine that they are facilitating a dialogue with groups where these dynamics persist:

- ❖ Are you in a position to address power imbalances?
- ❖ How might you do so?
- ❖ Are there things that could have been done to prevent power imbalances?

Takeaways: Some groups create a ground rule such as “check your positional authority at the door,” or the like. That would give people permission to raise concerns, but it is probably unrealistic for a student to challenge a professor or an employee to challenge the boss. You can suggest affinity group conversations so that concerns about power can be raised without attribution to a specific individuals.

Power Dynamics Worksheet

Instructions: Below are scenarios that raise issues related to formal and informal power in facilitated settings. Formal power refers to the kind of power that is related to a person's title or position in an organization or group of people. Informal power refers to other forms of power that can influence people, but may not be official or connected to a position of authority (e.g., physical size, gender, wealth, etc.).

For each of these scenarios, consider the following questions:

- What is the power dynamic that is being observed or exercised?
- What is the impact of the exertion of this power?
- Ideally, who would intervene to address this power dynamic?
- Realistically, who is in a position to name this power dynamic?
- What might you suggest to address it?

Scenario 1: A Classroom

In a lecture classroom, a male student named Tom sits in the front of the class and regularly participates. He frequently raises his hand when the instructor asks for feedback or questions. As a result, the male instructor regularly calls on him. Lourdes, a Latina student in the class, occasionally raises her hand but is usually not as fast as Tom. Annoyed by this pattern, she makes a snide remark about Tom the next time he raises his hand. A few students overhear the comment and openly laugh.

Scenario 2: The Staff Retreat

The director of an organization decides to have a staff retreat to solicit ideas about what the organization could do differently to meet its future goals. Staff members spend hours going through a process of coming up with ideas. Toward the end of the retreat, the director unrolls a piece of chart paper with ideas of his own and asks people to select the best ideas among their own and his. The staff quietly select his ideas.

Scenario 3: The Town Hall Forum

After a racist incident at a sorority party, the campus holds a town hall event to discuss Greek life on campus and the way it engages students of color. Two sorority sisters (Jillian, who identifies as white and cisgender, and Tanya, who identifies as black and cisgender) attend the forum to defend Greek organizations against what they perceive to be overgeneralizations. They say that their sorority is open to students of all races as long as they adhere to their values, pay their dues, and uphold the reputation of the sorority. Another student, Soo Jin, who identifies as Asian American and queer, calls Tanya a "token" and accuses the sorority of homophobia.

Scenario 4: Election Season

An administrative assistant in the Dean's office has a reputation of being fairly open about her conservative social views. She has worked on campus for many years and knows to avoid having any paraphernalia indicating the candidate she is supporting. However, she regularly listens to conservative talk radio while at work and talks about her favorite candidates. The dean asks her to "tone it down a bit" to avoid offending people who come to the office. She says she is not advocating anything to anyone, and is offended that he would imply something was wrong.

The Neutrality Challenge

Time needed: 1 hour

When to do this: Middle of the workshop

Rationale/Description: In 2009, about 250 academics and practitioners who shared an interest in the practice and teaching of deliberative democracy got together for a conference at the University of New Hampshire. Some of the most animated discussions concerned the tension between advocacy work and deliberative democracy; and, in particular, social justice as a designed outcome of public dialogue and deliberation, vis-à-vis “inclusion” as a process goal. The primary concern was this: a strong democracy requires significantly more egalitarian social, political, and economic conditions than currently exist in society. How do we ensure that a deliberative *process* that is “inclusive but neutral” does not simply perpetuate an unequal status quo? Even the term “inclusion” is suspect, since it implies ownership by a dominant group with an invitation to others to participate. The decision was made to continue the conversation, which we did in 2011 at the first **Frontiers of Democracy** conference at Tufts University’s Tisch College of Civic Life. This workshop resulted from that day-long discussion of this challenge.

Setup

- 1. Make copies of the worksheet (pages 42-43) for all participants.**
- 2. Create a slide with the words “neutral,” “nonpartisan,” “fair,” “impartial,” and “open-minded.” Leave this slide up until the very end of the exercise.**
- 3. Create a second slide that reads:**
 - Be mindful of our choice of language, as potentially exclusive and/or compelling.
 - Be clear, explicit and transparent about goals, and design the process to match those goals. The process flows from the purpose.
 - Processes should be grounded in the words and perspectives of the community.
 - Focus on inclusion at multiple points of a process (topic selection, process design, framing, facilitation, convening, etc.).
 - Include multiple, diverse perspectives throughout.
 - Part of the task is building capacity and skills to wrestle with values tensions.
 - Study the issues, including facts, history, context, and data.
 - Good skilled facilitation and convening can mitigate some tensions.

4. Create a third slide with this quote:

“The basis of neutrality is not indifference; it is not self-interest. The basis of neutrality is sympathy for mankind. It is fairness; it is good will at bottom. It is impartiality of spirit and of judgment” (Woodrow Wilson, 1915)

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

Setup (cont.)

5. Create four different signs that read:

- 1) Social justice *is* the work.
- 2) Intentionally examine power and privilege.
- 3) Passionate impartiality, without predetermined outcomes
- 4) Trust a democratic process to have just results

6. Hang the signs along a wall, in order, with as much space in between as possible.

Exercise: At your tables, review the four perspectives on the role of dialogue in a democracy and its desired outcomes. Get in pairs and discuss:

- ❖ As a facilitator, which (#1-4) best reflects what you perceive to be your role?
- ❖ Prepare to take a stand behind one of these perspectives.

Ask people to stand next to the perspective that most matches their own. They can stand on a continuum, for example, in between “passionate impartiality” and “trust the process.” Ask:

- ❖ Why did you choose to stand where you did?
- ❖ Who will volunteer to try to persuade someone at the other end of the spectrum to move?
- ❖ Can you think of a dialogue where you would stand somewhere else? For example, assume that the dialogue is on creating resilient infrastructure (e.g., bridges that are strong, cyber security). Where would you stand for that dialogue? Are you in the same place for a dialogue on homelessness? Why or why not?
- ❖ As facilitators, do we need to know where we stand before we assume the role?
- ❖ Why is this important?

Debrief: Show the slide with the Woodrow Wilson quote.

Dialogue and deliberation practitioners do not always agree on where they “stand” with respect to the goals of the work; specifically, whether social justice should be identified as a stated outcome of all dialogues or a likely outcome of a democratic, well-planned dialogue. Some worry that if social justice is identified as a desired outcome, people with more conservative perspectives will not view the process as legitimate. Others feel that a “neutral” or even “impartial” process simply preserves an unequal status quo. The goal of this exercise is to identify this tension and to have facilitators reflect on where they, personally, stand.

Note

To see the original exercise, visit: <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/wp-Content/uploads/ReportNeutralityChallenge2011.pdf>

The Neutrality Challenge Worksheet

Why are there tensions? What are some perspectives on neutrality and impartiality?

#1: Social justice is the work. Dialogue practitioners need to acknowledge that structural inequalities exist in society; these inequalities are detrimental to a strong democracy; and social, political, and economic justice are goals of the work. Achieving a more equitable and just society is a bipartisan objective. The recession has significantly and disproportionately affected poor Americans, Blacks, and Hispanics, and people without college degrees. We can all agree that, when inequalities grow large enough, they undercut and threaten the fragile foundation of our democracy, which should be unacceptable to all. When civic organizations, policy makers, and deliberation practitioners work for “neutral” processes, where all voices and perspectives matter equally, they may be preserving the process at the expense of the outcome and ultimately reinforcing existing disparities in power, access, and opportunity. Less powerful voices are often silenced in the name of “neutrality” or “civility.” Equity and justice should be the explicitly stated goals of any person or organization working to strengthen democracy, including deliberation practitioners.

#2: We need to be more intentional. What’s missing is an industry-wide commitment to a purposeful, explicit examination of patterns of power, privilege, and structural inequality underlying any public problem. We must always examine “the problems underneath the problems,” particularly patterns of power, privilege, racism, and disparity. It’s easier to seek diversity in social identity and then assume that the conversation about underlying inequalities will flow from having “the right people” in the room. It’s time we go beyond “inclusive convening.” What’s called for is a high level of vigilance—so that we are examining, discussing, and working to resolve power dynamics and equity considerations at every step of an engagement and political process: issue naming and framing, process design, facilitation, action planning, reporting, and action.

#3: It’s possible to be passionate about a topic—after all, we usually draw attention to an issue because we see something that concerns us—yet avoid seeking a pre-determined end. We can be simultaneously *impartial* about a topic and avoid directing any process to a pre-determined or partisan end—in order to take advantage of the positive impacts of neutrality—and *passionate* about related things, such as strengthening democracy, being inclusive, and solving public problems. “Passionate impartiality”¹⁸ takes seriously the criticisms of deliberative democracy and attempts to mitigate those concerns through their processes (from beginning to end). The apparent oxymoron of “passionate impartiality” thus serves to highlight the inherent tension in the work of deliberative democracy and ideally provides the practitioner with both the authority to bring people together across differences as well as the charge to do it in a way that honors the particular normative values underlying democracy.

¹⁸ Martin Carcasson at Colorado State University uses this language. See The Neutrality Challenge, <http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/wp-content/uploads/ReportNeutralityChallenge2011.pdf>.

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

The Neutrality Challenge Worksheet (cont.)

#4: Trust the process. Neutral deliberation, if it is done right, will foster social justice. An explicit focus on equity and social justice will brand the work as partisan, taking away some of the important advantages neutrality can bring to the table. In our hyper-partisan political culture, neutral conveners and facilitators can be critical to moving conversations forward and undoing some of the negative consequences of polarization. If we define our work as focused on equity and justice, we will likely lose our legitimacy as the neutral convener, and will likely be less successful in bringing together a broad audience. We hold equity and justice in high regard – and “inclusion” is a well-established tenet of the work – but we’re in this for long term impact. Let’s first seek to change the nature of the conversations—and move away from partisanship and polarization. Such a move will then positively impact many concerns, including those tied to social justice.

Discuss in pairs: Which of these perspectives most closely matches your own?
(Be prepared to take a stand!)

Resources

General Facilitation Tools

Everyday Democracy, *Facilitator Training Manual*

<http://www.intergroupresources.com/rc/A%20Guide%20for%20Training%20Public%20Dialogue%20Facilitators.pdf>

Landis, Kay (ed.)(2008) *Start Talking, A Handbook for Engaging Difficult Dialogues in Higher Education*, University of Alaska, Anchorage.

<http://www.difficultdialoguesuaa.org/images/uploads/Start Talking full book pdf.pdf>

National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, “Best of the Best Resources”

<http://ncdd.org/rc/best-of-the-best-resources>

National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, *Engagement Streams Framework*

<http://ncdd.org/rc/item/2142>

National Issues Forum, *Moderating Deliberative Forums – An Introduction*, National Issues Forums PowerPoint Presentation, <https://www.nifi.org/en/catalog/product/powerpoint-presentation-moderating-deliberative-forums-introduction>

Public Conversations Project , *Dialogue: A Virtual Workshop*

<http://www.publicconversations.org/resources>

Racial Equity Tools, <https://www.racialequitytools.org/home>.

The Right Question Institute, “Question Formulation Techniques”

<http://rightquestion.org/about/strategy/>

Books or articles you may have missed

Adams, M., Bell, L. A., & Griffin, P. (Eds.) (1997) *Teaching for diversity and social justice: A sourcebook*. New York: Routledge.

Bohm, D., & Nichol, L. (2004). *On dialogue*. New York: Routledge.

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum. (Original work published 1970).

Hess, D. E. (2009) *Controversy in the classroom: the democratic power of discussion*. New York: Routledge.

Hess D., McAvoy P. (2014). *The political classroom: Evidence and ethics in democratic education*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Institute for Democracy & Higher Education and the Association of American Colleges and Universities, (2015) Student and Institutional Engagement in Political Life, special issue of Diversity & Democracy, vol. 18, no. 4, 2015. At <https://www.aacu.org/diversitydemocracy/2015/fall>.

FACILITATING POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS

- Maxwell, K. E., Nagda, B. A., & Thompson, M. C. (Eds.) (2010) *Facilitating intergroup dialogues: Bridging differences, catalyzing change*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing
- Moon, D. (2004). *God, sex, and politics: Homosexuality and everyday theologies*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Nash, R. J., Bradley, D. L., & Chickering, A. W. (2008) *How to talk about hot topics on campus: From polarization to moral conversation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Schoem, D., & Hurtado, S. (Eds.). (2001) *Intergroup dialogue: Deliberative democracy in school, college, community, and workplace*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Tatum, B. D. (2003) *"Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?" and other conversations about race*. New York: Basic Books.
- Wuthnow, R. (2007). *America and the challenges of religious diversity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (Original work published 2005).