



2024 Election

Integrating Civil Dialogue In Your Course

Learning objectives

By the end of this workshop, you should be able to:

- Articulate the importance of civil dialogue
- Discuss the difference between debate and dialogue
- Identify ground rules for a civil dialogue
- Provide nonpartisan background information to make sure everyone is on the same page during the civil dialogue
- Facilitate a civil dialogue on the 2024 election



So-so



Why is civil dialogue important?

- According to the Council on Foreign Relations, there is a serious risk of extremist violence around the 2024 U.S. presidential election
- Many of the same sources of instability and grievances that led to the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol remain
- While the risk of far-right election-related violence is high, the risk of far-left extremist violence also exists
 - Former president Donald Trump recently said he may not accept the 2024 election results in Wisconsin, and did not rule out the possibility of political violence if he loses the 2024 election
 - Student protests over the Israel- Hamas war have occurred at many colleges across the country, inspired by demonstrations at Columbia University; hundreds of students have been arrested since arrests at Columbia on April 18
- Civil dialogue can be used to prevent or mitigate political violence and tension on college campuses



Civil dialogue

- Civil dialogue is deliberating about matters of public concern in a way that seeks to expand knowledge and promote understanding
 - It is NOT to persuade or change anyone's opinion
- Civil dialogue is THE aspect of democratic citizenship that universities are designed to promote
- It requires us to consider that humans often get things wrong, and that people of good will often reach different conclusions



1: Discuss the differences between debates and dialogues

- If you plan on facilitating civil dialogue around the election, be sure to begin by explicitly discussing the differences between debates and dialogues

Dialogue:

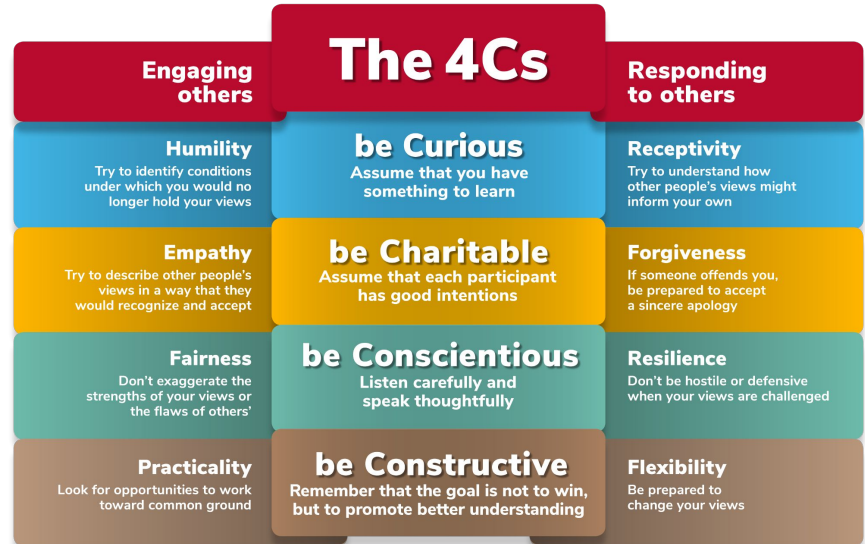
- ✓ Exploring ideas
- ✓ Exchanging ideas
- ✓ Discussing topics
- ✓ Building relationships
- ✓ Understanding other perspectives
- ✓ Reaching across difference
- ✓ Listening to others
- ✓ Clarifying view points
- ✓ Loosely structured
- ✓ Usually slow

Debate:

- X Contesting opinions
- X Competing against others
- X Arguing viewpoints/ arguing against others' viewpoints
- X Promoting opinions
- X Seeking majority/ majoritarian
- X Persuading others
- X Digging in
- X Tightly structured
- X Fast-paced

2: Co-create ground rules

- Next, co-create ground rules so that everyone understands how to appropriately engage in the dialogue
- As the instructor, you can present ground rules and provide students an opportunity to modify them or add to them before the dialogue begins
- Co-creating the ground rules will ensure buy-in from participants
- You could begin creating ground rules using OSU's Center for Ethics and Human Values' 4C's



2: Co-create ground rules

Keith's go-to ground rules for civil dialogue:

1. Commit to learning and not debating
2. Be brief and concise so everyone has the opportunity to participate
3. Practice civil behavior; avoid interrupting, using a loud voice or angry tone, and avoid inflammatory language
4. Be honest and respectful; be careful not to make assumptions about or for other people.
5. Speak from your own experience as much as possible; use language like "In my experience..." and not "I heard that they..."
6. Listen to understand; listen harder when you hold a different view
7. It is OK to disagree, but criticize ideas and not individuals; avoid blaming others and do not try to fix anyone
8. Keep everyone's views confidential; do not gossip about other people's viewpoints after this dialogue is over.

Alone: Brainstorm ground rules that you think would be appropriate for your civil dialogue.

3: Provide nonpartisan background information

- In our polarized society, we tend to engage in debates using information that confirms our viewpoints, much of which is misinformation and editorials
- It is important to provide nonpartisan background information so that everyone can start the dialogue based off of the same nonpartisan, factual information
 - What happened leading up to, during, and immediately after the election?
 - Cite reputable sources only: BBC News, Christian Science Monitor, and Reuters are all great options
 - Do not make comments on or express opinions on what transpired

Small groups: What are your go-to news sources? Are they nonpartisan?

AllSides Media Bias Chart™

Ratings based on online, U.S. political content only – not TV, print, or radio.
Ratings do not reflect accuracy or credibility; they reflect perspective only.



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4: Facilitate the civil dialogue

- You should prepare dialogue questions in advance, but be sure to limit the number of questions to ensure a robust conversation and so that everyone has the chance to speak
- Ask ~3 questions for 30 minutes of dialogue and ~5-6 questions for 60 minutes of dialogue
- Ask questions that encourage students to react to what happened, explore their feelings about what happened/ how it impacts their lives, and express their apprehensions about what is to come
- Ask how you can support your students during this stressful time



4: Facilitate the civil dialogue

Keith's suggested civil dialogue questions:

1. What are your initial reactions to hearing about what happened before, during, and immediately after the election?
2. How has the election season made you feel and why do you think you feel that way?
3. How has the election impacted your academic, personal, and professional lives?
4. What are you most apprehensive or nervous about related to the aftermath of the election?
5. How can I support you while you are navigating your feelings and our political reality?

Small groups: Can you think of any other civil dialogue questions that you might want to ask?

4: Facilitate the civil dialogue

Facilitation tools:

- “Round robin” conversation
 - Arrange the desks or tables so that discussion flows nicely and students can move easily
 - Give each table one discussion question
 - Set a timer for each group, and have them move on to the next table when time is up
 - Could give each student a token so that when it is each students’ turn to talk, they must turn in a token; alternatively you could use a “talking stick” so only folks with the stick can talk
 - Consider giving students 1-3 minutes to think deeply about each question before they are expected to discuss
- Fishbowl discussion
 - Students inside the fishbowl actively discuss a topic, and students outside the fishbowl listen carefully to the conversation
 - They take turns being contributors and listeners
 - Requires a circle of 6-12 chairs (the fishbowl) and enough room outside of the circle for the remaining students to observe what is happening
 - Again, give them a few minutes to prepare ideas in advance
- Quick writes
 - Allow students to write down their thoughts to each question before opening up the conversation so they can process their thinking before speaking

Small groups: Would you prefer to use a structured facilitation method or would it be better for your class to have a more organic dialogue, and why?

4: Facilitate the civil dialogue

If your conversation is getting out of control:

- Step back, let the conversation cool off, and give yourself some time to think
- Acknowledge the tension and redirect the conversation:
 - “Thanks for contributing to the conversation. Does anyone else have a different perspective?”
 - “I’m going to pause this conversation right there. Let’s agree to disagree for now, and let’s take a 5 minute break.”
 - “I’m noticing some tension, so I want to remind us of our ground rules to make sure that we are having an appropriate and effective dialogue.”
- If civil dialogue is not possible, try to reschedule or consider inviting a more experienced facilitator to guide the conversation
 - Keith Lanser, Assistant Director of the Center for Community Engagement
 - Jivanto van Hemert, Associate Ombuds, Office of the University Ombuds

Small groups:

**What are your apprehensions about having a civil dialogue on the election, and why?
What are some things you could do to feel more comfortable having this difficult conversation?**

Other election resources

- TurboVote is our university's online voter registration system
- UC Votes website has a TurboVote widget, key election dates, UC Votes events, student worker request form, how to become ballot-ready, and faculty/ staff resources
- Faculty/ staff resources:
 - Getting ready for the Presidential Election presentation
 - Voting & Athletics guide
 - TurboVote flyer
 - Sample voter registration email
 - Sample syllabus language for voting
- Don't forget: You should not offer extra credit to students in exchange for registering to vote or voting. You may offer extra credit for students who check their voter registration status.



uc.turbovote.org



[UC Votes website](#)

Learning objectives

Are you able to:

- Articulate the importance of civil dialogue?
- Discuss the difference between debate and dialogue?
- Identify ground rules for a civil dialogue?
- Provide nonpartisan background information to make sure everyone is on the same page during the civil dialogue?
- Facilitate a civil dialogue on the 2024 election?



So-so



References & Resources

- **Council on Foreign Relations:** <https://www.cfr.org/report/preventing-us-election-violence-2024>
- **Trump and political violence:**
<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-warns-he-may-not-accept-wisconsin-election-results-2024-05-02/>
- **Hundreds arrested at campuses across the U.S.:**
<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/police-arrest-scores-pro-palestinian-protesters-us-university-campuses-2024-04-27/>
- **4Cs of civil discourse:**
 - <https://cehv.osu.edu/sites/default/files/2022-10/CEHV%20Introducing%20the%204Cs.pdf>
 - <https://cehv.osu.edu/civil-discourse-citizenship/rationale>
 - <https://cehv.osu.edu/civil-discourse-citizenship/4cs-virtues-civil-discourse>
- **Media bias chart:** <https://www.allsides.com/media-bias/media-bias-chart>
- **Round robin conversation:**
https://www.unige.ch/innovations-pedagogiques/application/files/1115/8877/8105/Jorg_Balsiger_SocDur_How_to_Use_the_Round_Robin_Discussion_Teaching_Strategies.pdf
- **Fishbowls:** <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/fishbowl>
- **Bowling Green's Difficult Conversations guide:**
<https://www.bgsu.edu/content/dam/BGSU/center-for-faculty-excellence/docs/ResourcesforManagingClassroomConflict/Difficult-Conversations-Strategies.pdf>
- **Ohio State's Divided Communities Project:**
<https://moritzlaw.osu.edu/faculty-and-research/divided-community-project/virtual-toolkit/campus-leader>
- **National Institute for Civil Discourse's Key Principles and Best Practices guide:**
<https://nicd.arizona.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Engaging-Differences-Key-Concepts-and-Best-Practices.pdf>
- **Project Over Zero:** <https://www.projectoverzero.org/>