

# **Foundations of Academic Dialogue: Instructor Guidance**

In recognition of the challenging climate and the frequency with which unexpected questions, comments, or critiques in the classroom can lead to potentially sensitive dialogues, there is an imperative to manage these conversations in a way that recenters the academic spirit of inquiry, curiosity, and most importantly, respectful dialogue.

It is impossible to put guardrails up around a conversation once it's veered off, and as such, the guidance provided here is designed to allow instructors to preemptively establish a foundation for effective academic dialogue in their classes, and, crucially, respond to situations in the moment when needed.

While we hope that you will follow the protocol guidance to the best of your ability (including the language in the syllabus text, classroom norms, and question prompts), we recognize the importance of instructors using their own authentic voice and encourage you to copy, paste, and edit any of the content for use in your class provided it adheres to the general spirit and tone.

If you have questions about implementation please contact co-PI,  
Quade French, Ph.D., at [qfrench@usc.edu](mailto:qfrench@usc.edu).

## **I. Foundations of Dialogue** PRIMING

- Leverage the syllabus and use your power effectively
- Set the foundation for effective dialogue

## **II. Responding Effectively** CUEING

- Steps to take “in the moment”
- Intellectualize issues and explore multiple perspectives other than their own
- More effective if Foundations have been set

## The Syllabus - Use what we have

- Include a section on “**Academic Dialogue**” with a description of purpose and goals and take time in your first class to discuss it:
- Sample for instructor to copy:

*The foundations of academic learning are rooted in our **capacity to listen to each other, learn from each other, and respect each other, particularly when we disagree with each other.***

*Academic dialogue is not about winning, but about learning together. To facilitate our building of a robust academic community in this class, we will be creating a living document of norms and expectations of engagement for respectful dialogue.*

## **The Syllabus - Use what we have**

- Optional section noting that academic inquiry is not always comfortable; sample from the biology field you can edit for your discipline:

*"As our understanding in the field is constantly evolving, so are the terms used in discussions. Therefore, there are terms and concepts that may be in the process of being updated by the academic community but remain outdated, and do not reflect current values of equity or inclusivity (e.g., medical language that utilizes a binary dichotomy of men/women).*

*Despite our own personal values and beliefs, such terms and concepts are part of a global dialogue and may emerge in literature and discussion. We acknowledge the fact that terms and concepts are in the process of being updated to better reflect an evolving understanding of science and humanity, and hope that you and your peers will continue to advocate for and build an equitable academic community in your classrooms and beyond."*

*Polidori*

## Lecture 1: Norms of Dialogue

- **Co-create a list of norms of dialogue** with your students.
  - They **will** have suggestions; **add the list below to augment.**
  - Post the finalized list to your Brightspace page
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- **What we strive for:**
    - We are all stewards of this learning space.
    - We seek to learn, not to “win” in dialogue.
    - Learning can be an uncomfortable practice.
    - We work to suspend judgement and listen.
    - We remember that *individual perspectives* are subjective.
    - We challenge and critique ideas, not people.

## Lectures 2 & 3: The norm of norms

- Begin the next two lectures by taking a few moments to **quickly review the norms**. Consider showing the norms in class or on Brightspace.
  - Repetition of the reminder **primes** them as to what to expect of the space, self, and others
  - **Establishing this “norm of norms” is what allows you to point back to the norms when you really and truly need them**

## When you need to respond to a situation in class

### Your primary goals:

- Focus on managing the process
- Keep the emotional temperature down and slow things down
- Lean into your role as a guide/model and leverage the foundation you've already set
- **Intellectualization**
  - Get students to think **academically** about the topic that was raised
  - Intellectualization **shifts people from "I"** and *gets us out of our own emotionally driven value systems*



## Engage

### 1. Respond

- “I hear your views on that, and thanks for sharing your perspective.”

### 2. Cue Norms

- “As we remember from our conversation, as scholars, it’s about **listening and learning even when we might disagree across different perspectives.** We can take this opportunity to practice listening, speaking, and learning about an important social dimension to our field.”

## Engage

You're not asking for their personal opinions, but instead, to actively conceptualize other viewpoints or offer a critical reflection on the issue

### 3. Intellectualize

- "Can you think of how someone else might have a different perspective on the topic, and how they might have gotten there?"
- "What has our **reading or scholarship** offered us as a guide to how to think about this question?"
- "What are ways this issue might emerge as **a topic of research** in our field or in educational settings?"

## Engage

- **Use your power to hit pause whenever you need to.**
- **Remind the students that** the purpose of the classroom space is not to replicate an online message board, but to practice listening to each other, asking questions, and to seek an understanding beyond just stating one's views.
- **Ask students a process question if they're stuck,**

"What about staying in line with our norms of dialogue seems to be the most challenging for us right now?"

**Responding  
Effectively  
CUEING**

## Engage

### 5. Link Back to Scholarship

- **Positive reinforcement and praise** of effective behaviors
- **Connect discussion back to the course, topic, or field with a focus on high level themes**
  - *If difficult to link back, **speak to the value of effective dialogue** in research or higher education*

# Foundations of Academic Dialogue

## Foundations of Academic Dialogue

- Research-based best practices to recenter academic inquiry using *mechanisms of priming/cueing, group dynamics, and dialogue*
- *Field agnostic* via a focus on **process of dialogue**
- Shift the focus **from personalization to intellectualization**
- **Sample language** for syllabus and prompts to respond in real-time classroom situations; can be tailored by instructor

- Araya & Ekehammar (2009). When tolerance leads to intolerance: Accessibility effects on social judgment
- Association for Undergraduate Education at Research Universities (2022). The Boyer 2030 Commission.
- Bargh, (2006). What have we been priming all these years? On the development, mechanisms, and ecology of nonconscious social behavior
- Crisp & Turner (2009). Can Imagined Interactions Produce Positive Perceptions? Reducing Prejudice Through Simulated Social Contact
- David (2007). Equity and diversity: towards a sociology of higher education for the twenty-first century?
- Davis et al. (2011). Psychological Distance and Emotional Experience: What You See Is What You Get
- Dessel et al. (2006). Using Intergroup Dialogue to Promote Social Justice and Change
- Frantell et al. (2019). Intergroup Dialogue: A Review of Recent Empirical Research and Its Implications for Research and Practice
- Genero et al. (1992). Measuring Perceived Mutuality in Close Relationships: Validation of the Mutual Psychological Development Questionnaire
- Gibbs et al. (2014). Biomedical Science Ph.D. Career Interest Patterns by Race/Ethnicity and Gender
- Gibbs et al. Decoupling of the minority PhD talent pool and assistant professor hiring in medical school basic science departments in the US
- Hewstone et al. (2004). Intergroup Contact in a Divided Society: Challenging Segregation in Northern Ireland
- Higgins (1997). Beyond Pleasure and Pain
- Hilliard & Liben (2010). Differing Levels of Gender Salience in Preschool Classrooms: Effects on Children's Gender Attitudes and Intergroup Bias
- Hurtado et al. (2012). A Model for Diverse Learning Environments
- Hurtado et al. (2015). Thinking About Race: The Salience of Racial Identity at Two- and Four-Year Colleges and the Climate for Diversity
- Kent & Taylor (2002). Toward a dialogic theory of public relations
- Moskowitz et al. (1999). Preconscious Control of Stereotype Activation Through Chronic Egalitarian Goals
- Pettigrew (1998). Intergroup Contact Theory
- Pettigrew & Tropp (2006). A Meta-Analytic Test of Intergroup Contact Theory
- Pettigrew & Tropp (2008). How does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? Meta-analytic tests of three mediators
- Plant & Devine (1998). Internal and External Motivation to Respond Without Prejudice
- Plant & Devine (2001). Responses to Other-Imposed Pro-Black Pressure: Acceptance or Backlash?
- Rodriguez et al. (2018). Engaging race and racism for socially just intergroup relations: The impact of intergroup dialogue on college campuses in the US
- Smith & Shonfeld (2000). The benefits of diversity: what the research tells us
- Sorenson (2009). Taking a "Hands On" Approach to Diversity in Higher Education: A Critical-Dialogic Model for Effective Intergroup Interaction
- Stephan & Stephan (2005). Intergroup Relations Program Evaluation
- Steyn & Vanyoro (2023). Critical Diversity Literacy: A framework for multicultural citizenship education
- Style & Powell (1995). In Our Own Hands: Diversity Literacy
- Tatum (2019). Together and Alone? The Challenge of Talking about Racism on Campus
- Tetlock (2002). Social Functionalist Frameworks for Judgment and Choice: Intuitive Politicians, Theologians, and Prosecutors
- Tetlock et al. (2013). Accountability and ideology: When left looks right and right looks left
- Tropp & Wright (2001). Ingroup Identification as the Inclusion of Ingroup in the Self
- Van Boven et al. (2010). Feeling Close: Emotional Intensity Reduces Perceived Psychological Distance
- Vezzali et al., (2016). Improving Intergroup Relations with Extended Contact among Young Children
- Wojcieszak & Warner (2020). Can Interparty Contact Reduce Affective Polarization? A Systematic Test of Different Forms of Intergroup Contact
- Wright et al. (1997). The Extended Contact Effect: Knowledge of Cross-Group Friendships and Prejudice
- Zuniga (2007). Intergroup Dialogue in Higher Education: Definition, Origins, and Practices
- Zuniga & Nagda (2001). Design considerations in intergroup dialogue

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**Closing**