

## Introducing Course Terms

By Alisa Sánchez

In this activity, you'll articulate and interrogate your own conceptions of key terms we'll be using during the course – terms which also appear in everyday conversation and many serious debates. At the same time, you'll begin to engage with others' conceptions through an attempt to arrive at a common definition for each term. This activity helps illuminate the assumptions or preconceptions we have about terms; see alternative ways that we could think of these terms; and come to more solid grounding about how we choose to define a term.<sup>11</sup>

### *Discovering your definitions*

1. Sit for five minutes and define these terms for yourself:
  - a. Globalization
  - b. Free trade
  - c. Nationalism
  - d. Human Rights

### *Finding group consensus*

2. In your group, share your definitions for all the terms, in order to hear others' renderings.
3. Next, work together as if you were representatives from or working on behalf of the United Nations. At the UN, when drafting documents such as conventions (like the Convention on Rights of the Child), all participants must come to a consensus. Discuss together so that you arrive at one definition for your group's term. Write out the definition on the provided sheet.
4. Now pass the term to another group, and you'll receive another group's term. Read their definition. Evaluate, discuss, critique, and consider how you think it should be revised. Come to a consensus about the changes and write down your group's new definition of the term.
5. Continue passing around definitions and revising them as a group until you receive your



original term again.

*Interrogating terms and how we understand them*

In small group discussion and then as a class, consider the changes made to your group's original definition. What do you think or how do you feel about these changes?

What was the process like of coming to consensus? What is gained or lost in working towards a common definition; to what extent is a common definition necessary (to what ends/for what purpose)?

How do you now understand these terms?

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[↗](#) This activity is adapted from the original by Professor DeAnna Rivera, USC Writing Program