

**Civil Dialogue for Today and Tomorrow:
How to Navigate Troubled Times**

EDUC 2445/URBS 2445/COMM 2445

Fall 2022

This course is part of the Stavros Niarchos Foundation (SNF) Paideia Program, which serves as a hub for civic dialogue in undergraduate education at Penn. SNF Paideia designated courses examine the theory and practice of dialogue across differences from diverse disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. They also explore the interplay among dialogue, citizenship, service, as well as individual and community wellness. Collectively, they are intended to provide students with the scholarly and applied knowledge, skills, ethical orientations, and experiences necessary for integrating their personal, professional, and civic identities – that is, for “educating the whole person.” You can get more involved at <https://snfpaideia.upenn.edu>.

Tuesdays, noon – 2:50pm
TBD

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OVERVIEW

Our goal is for you to learn concepts, tools, dispositions and skills that will help you engage more effectively in the ongoing experiment of American democracy. These will also equip you to hold more productive conversations with family, on campus, online and at work.

This is an experiential seminar driven by discussions about issues that matter to you and by exercises where you and your classmates will test out the concepts you are learning. The seminar will integrate wellness concepts and exercises.

Your capstone project will allow you to design a civic dialogue around an issue that you care about. If you want to try to carry out your capstone idea in the real world, you can apply for money and help to do that.

This nation’s founders created a governmental structure that sets up an ongoing and expansive conversation about how to manage the tensions and tradeoffs between competing values and notions of the public good. Many (not all, but many) of these values are valid and can’t be wholly discarded without doing damage to our understanding and practice of democracy.

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So, these tensions can never be fully resolved or eliminated; they are intrinsic to the American experiment. Every generation must struggle to find its own balance, in no small part because in every era people who previously had been unjustly excluded from the conversation find a way to be heard. That inevitably introduces new values and changes how enduring ones get interpreted.

Over time, Americans have varied in their capacity to conduct this conversation productively. The challenge of each generation is to develop that capacity to its fullest. The goal of this course is to equip you to engage fully in your generation's renewal of the conversation.

Civil dialogue is one of the most misconstrued terms in contemporary political discourse. It is an aspiration, a theory and a practice, and we'll explore all three of these attributes of civil dialogue in this course, including:

- The history of civility in American politics, including the fact that this republic has never experienced a "golden age of civility."
- The roots of the modern practices of civil dialogue and the contemporary critiques of civility as a goal of discourse.
- The approaches, practices and techniques of civil dialogue: ways to frame issues, self-examine biases, convene a diverse group, and guide a dialogue to a productive result.

Class sessions will use a variety of modalities: lecture, discussion, case studies, opportunities to experiment with the tools and techniques of civil dialogue and writing. Each session will include some theory or historical context, a case study, exploration of a key concept of civic dialogue with a related tool or technique, and an interactive exercise.

Throughout the course, our goals include mutual learning by students and faculty and the coproduction of insights and questions. The instructors have content and process expertise and insights to share with the class. We are also aware each of you bring your own knowledge and expertise to the course. We are eager to learn a great deal from you. We also expect to raise many questions that we will hold throughout the class. We are perfectly comfortable with unanswered questions.

To that end: we will work to develop this class into a brave space, more so than a safe space. This course is about learning how to stay productively engaged with people of differing views and values. It's built into the goals of the course that you're going to hear some things with which you don't agree. When that happens, we ask that you not try to paper over, shut down or win the disagreement. Instead, explore it and hold it, so you can understand it better going out than you did coming in. For the success of the class, we implore you to hang in there as

you hear some things that will challenge your views. If that creates undue stress or discomfort for you, we are always willing to talk that out after or between classes.

This course is part of a larger effort by the university (called the Paideia program) to help Penn students build these skills. You will play a key role in one part of the initiative: two evening forums this semester (dates TB) hosted by Penn for students from campuses all over the region. As part of the course, we'll ask you to help us decide how best to promote these forums to get a diverse turnout. You'll be required to take part in at least one, and be invited to serve as facilitators at the final one.

The initiative will also include this semester at least two visiting speaker events, with an innovative, interactive format. (Speakers and dates tbd) You'll be required to attend at least one.

Course Requirements

More specific information about assignments will be provided throughout the semester, always in advance of the due dates.

- **Class participation (25%)**

Since much of the course will focus on discussion – of readings, of case studies, during class activities in which you *experiment* with the skills and practices of civic dialogue and deliberation – class participation is a central aspect of the course. To work well, you must not only do the *short* assigned readings, but also come to class prepared for a lively exchange of ideas about the assigned reading. In addition, we will use some case studies and structured civic dialogues as ways to explore the techniques and practices that the course will cover.

- **Taking part in two “Can We Talk?” events (10%)**

As noted earlier, as part of the course we will hold two (2) Can We Talk? civic dialogues for Penn students along with students from other colleges and universities in the region. These dialogues are scheduled for Dated TBD. Students in the course will be expected to participate in several ways: participating in at least one Can We Talk dialogue with other students, helping organize a session, or (late in the semester) helping facilitate a small group discussion.

The course is also connected to the regional "Red and Blue Exchange" initiative which will include two public "lectures" structured to include civic dialogue. These "lectures" will be held virtually, featuring national speakers from liberal and conservative perspectives, and be structured to foster civil dialogue. We'll talk more about this in class.

- **Weekly on-line reflection journal posts and responses (15%)**

Write one journal post

You will be expected to keep a weekly on-line reflective journal/blog in which you discuss insights gained from readings, class discussions and activities, case studies, public meetings, etc. Each week the instructors will suggest a prompt for your journal entry/blog post.

You should use a concept, theory or skill from the readings, lectures from class discussion as the foundation for your journal entry/blog post. Journal entries/blog posts should be approximately 200-250 words, with sources listed at the end of your post. You do NOT need to use a particular scholarly format. A list of the web addresses and/or titles and authors of printed materials is sufficient. The list of sources is NOT part of your 200-250 word count.

Comment on one classmate's post each week

In addition to your weekly blog post, you are also required to **comment** on one other student's post each week. Your comments should be approximately 100-150 words. Before posting your comment, read all of the other blog posts for that week from the students in the class. Then, select **one** post that you would like to comment on.

Journals Entries and Comments are due at noon Monday, the day before class each week.

- **Find and Analyze a Set of Ground Rules (2%)**

Students will need to select a set of ground rules for discussion put forth by an organization or program, one they think is particularly well expressed. They will be asked to present the set of ground rules they've chosen, and their evaluation of them, to the class. *Due September 20, 2022, class 4*

- **Find and Present of an Online Discourse (5%)**

You will be responsible for finding and analyzing an online discourse (e.g. email, text, social media, comment thread) that went awry. You will need to be able to display the conversation to the class electronically. You will be asked to explain the context, then outline what went wrong in that on-line conversation and how it went wrong - as well as your ideas, drawn from classwork and readings, on how it might have gone better if participants had responded differently, or if outside moderation had occurred. *Due October 25, 2022, class 9*

- **Work Through Interactive Online Platforms (5%)**

- *Open Mind* <https://openmindplatform.org/> - *Due October 12, 2022 (class 7)*
Open Mind is an interactive online program that explores the inner workings of the mind and the psychological roots of our ideological differences. The program will equip you with insights and skills to help you better understand yourself and others. It will empower you to be more in control of your thoughts and feelings so that you can make better decisions, be happier, and navigate challenging conversations more effectively.

You will receive instructions on how to access the platform as well as a special access code but will need to have finished it by the due date. Estimated time on task: two hours.

- **Capstone Project (38%)**

This final project is your opportunity to put into practice the ideas, tools and concepts of the course that are most significant to you. To that end we are looking for you to incorporate the salient ideas from the course readings, guest speakers and discussions to justify and explain each choice you make in your design plan.

The assignment is to conceive, envision and design a dialogue that you could conceivably organize with one or more people from outside your normal bubble(s) – whether social, geographic, economic, political, religious, age- or gender-related. Your design should make clear how your concept and design are making use of concepts, tools and techniques you’ve learned in this course.

You will have two main deliverables to the instructors:

1. **A slide deck, Prezi or similar digital presentation** that you will share with the class during the last two weeks of class to explain your dialogue's goals and design. You will use this opportunity to workshop some of the ideas you are thinking about. Have as much of your blueprint worked out but feel free to raise the ideas and areas where you might want feedback from the class *Due November 29 and December 6, 2022 (Classes 13 & 14)*
2. **A written design plan/blueprint (4-5 pages, double spaced)** that outlines how you would handle each of the elements of design (a rubric spelling these out will be distributed 4 weeks ahead of the due date). This will be handed in to your instructors during Finals period, but you can certainly reference it as it is appropriate in your presentation.
Due December 14, 2022 (midnight of the first day of finals)

Academic Integrity

All students are responsible for adhering to the the University of Pennsylvania Code of Academic Integrity, which can be found by following this link:

www.gse.upenn.edu/policies/academicintegrity. Please spend the time to read the academic integrity policies, as I and all professors take them seriously. If you have questions about what constitutes dishonest activity for this course, please ask.

Students with Disabilities

Please let us know if you anticipate any issues that might affect your performance in the class, or if you need to make any special arrangements or have emergency medical information.

If you require disability-related accommodations, such as a note-taker, extended time on timed writings, or captioning, please register with the Office of Disability Services (ODS). Disabilities may include learning, psychiatric, or physical disabilities. ODS can assist you with finding out if you qualify for Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodations.

Office of Disability Services
Stouffer Commons, Suite 300
3702 Spruce Street
Phone: (215) 573-9235
Email: sds@mail@zimbra.upenn.edu
Monday-Friday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM

For other UPenn resources for students with disabilities
http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/sds/cs_resources.php

Class Schedule

The class will meet in room G09F in College Hall from noon- 2:50 p.m. on Tuesdays, with a substantial break midway through each session.

Lectures and some class discussions will be recorded by the instructors on Zoom, solely for later review by students, upon request. Students should never share or post a class recording on any other medium or platform.

Recall that class participation is a major component of a student's grade. The participation grade of students who miss multiple classes will suffer. We will offer students who miss classes a chance to make up the lost points by completing supplemental writing assignments on the content of classes they miss.

The planned weekly topics and in-class course activities are outlined below. In addition to delving into the history of civility in American politics and the roots, and critiques, of modern practices of civil dialogue, we will focus on a fairly discrete set of approaches, practices and techniques of civic dialogue: ways to frame issues, self-examine biases, convene a diverse group, and guide a dialogue to a productive result, among other things. As the course progresses, we will add (and subtract) readings – theoretical as well as case studies – as needed.

August 30, 2022: Course Introduction

Review syllabus and course requirements

Course overview - key principles and themes, and the national context for the course

Initial discussion of the idea of the class as "a brave space"

Introduction to Can We Talk? format – Principles and Ground Rules.

Activities:

"Learning by Listening"

Multiple Identities

Start of "Can We Talk?" style issue discussion

Read for next class:

- Chinni, Dante; Gimpel, James *Our Patchwork Nation: The Surprising Truth about the "Real" America.*; Introduction and an assigned chapter (distributed in class)

- Haidt, Jonathan, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People Are Divided by Politics and Religion*, Selections.

September 6, 2022: *E Pluribus Unum?* Part I: How America Is Divided Today

Lecture on America's founding ideals and early debates that revealed tensions among those ideals that persist to today.

Discussion of *Our Patchwork Nation*; round robin presentations by students on their assigned chapters.

Activities:

Use *Our Patchwork Nation* and *The Righteous Mind* to understand and reframe current policy divides;

Complete "Can We Talk?" questions

Read for next class:

- Huntington, Samuel. *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony*, Chapter 1
- Madison, James. *Federalist No. 10* (1787). <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/founding-documents/primary-source-documents/thefederalist-papers/federalist-papers-no-10/>
- Trenchard, J and Gordon, T. *Cato #3* (1720-23) <https://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch4s16.html>

September 13, 2022: *E Pluribus Unum?* Part II: Analyzing Social Justice Movements in the U.S.

Lecture on U.S. Constitution: Competing views of power and how they influence U.S. social movements

Activities:

Issue Framing: Social Justice Movements

Start preparation for the first Fall "Can We Talk?" public forum (held September 28, 2022), including student input on topics and issues.

Read for next Class:

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- Yankelovich, D, *The Magic of Dialogue: Transforming Conflict into Cooperation*. Introduction
- [“Nutter hears from citizens on budget,” Philadelphia Daily News, March 5, 2009](https://www.inquirer.com/philly/opinion/20090305_Nutter_hears_from_citizens_on_budget.html)

September 20, 2022: Tools and Concepts of Facilitated Conversation

What is “civil dialogue?”

The three C’s: Compromise, Consensus, Common Ground

The three D’s: Debate, Dialogue and Deliberation

Introducing forum facilitation and moderation

The importance of ground rules

Basics of moderation

Activities:

- City Budget Case Study – Using “the three C’s” and “the three D’s” to identify possible solutions to the problem in the case study.
- Students share sets of ground rules that they found.

Read for next class:

- Serwer, “Civility is Overrated.” *The Atlantic*, December 2019.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/12/adam-serwercivility/600784>
- Applebaum, Anne, “The New Puritans.” *The Atlantic*, August 31, 2022
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2022/10/new-puritans-mob-justice-canceled/619818/>
- Optional:
 - Lukianoff and Haidt, “The Coddling of the American Mind.” *The Atlantic*, September 2015.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356/>

Assignments:

- Go through Open Mind Platform – Due October 12, 2022

September 27, 2022: Understanding and working through obstacles to civil/civic dialogue, Part 1

Re: Serwer reading - The skeptical critique: Is civil dialogue an obstacle to talking honestly and doing something about racism?

Ways to think about Privilege, Fragility and Trauma

Activities:

- Listing and discussion of informal rules on campus (class and social)

Read for next class:

- Stone, D., Patton, B and Heen, S, *Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most*. Chapters 1 and 12
- Four readings to prepare for next class with Dr. Jones
 - “Hearing the Lion’s Story “(2015);
 - Javier Watson “Healing Whiteness: Humanizing the struggle for White racial literacy”
 - R. Anderson and H. Stevenson “RECASTing Racial Stress and Trauma” *American Psychologist* (2019) Vol 74 No. 1 63-75;
 - Interview with Howard Stevenson *Penn Current*

October 4, 2022: Working through obstacles to civil/civic dialogue, Part II (Understanding Racial Dialogue)

Guest Speaker: Dr. Kelsey Jones, Affiliate, Racial Empowerment Collaborative and Assistant Professor in Human Development, California State University, San Marcos

Activities:

Working with “Difficult Conversations”

Dr. Jones’ Activities

Read for next class:

- Daniel Kahneman *Thinking Fast and Slow* (excerpts);

Assignments:

- Find Online Discourse to present In class on October 19 and 26, 2022.
- Complete *Open Mind* platform for October 12th

October 11, 2022: Working the obstacles to civil/civic dialogue, Part III

Possible Guest: Caroline Mehl, Co-founder & Executive Director, Open Mind

Interactive Lecture on Logical Fallacies, Heuristics and the Brain
Insights from neurobiology and behavioral psychology
Preparation for second CWT? on October 19, 2022

Activities: Encounter and try out different logical fallacies, heuristics.

Read for next class:

- Watch RBX video of Haidt and Zimmerman
- John McWhorter, "Even Trigger Warning Is Now Off-Limits." *The Atlantic*, July 4, 2022. <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/07/brandeis-language-police-have-suggestions-you/619347/>

October 18, 2022: Speech on Campus, naming of campus buildings

Guest Speaker: Jonathan Zimmerman - case studies of speech on campus and community

Follow-up discussion of building names and statues on campus.
Introduction to moderating a discussion/forum

Read for next class:

- David French, "Lost Friendships Break Hearts and Nations," *The Dispatch*, July 11, 2022 <https://frenchpress.thedispatch.com/p/lost-friendships-break-hearts-and>
- Participate in RBX event featuring Loretta Ross on October 27, 2022

October. 25, 2022 - Social media - Impact on the health of individuals and democracy

Key concept: Bridging and bonding social capital

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Watch and Critique Video by *The Guardian* — “Three Little Pigs”
<https://tinyurl.com/bjzcay8>

Activities:

- Watch and Critique Video by *The Guardian* — “Three Little Pigs”
- List Pros and Cons of Social Media.
- Share and critique online Discourse Presentations

Preparation for next class:

- Ross, Loretta. “I’m a Black Feminist. I Think Call-Out Culture Is Toxic.” *The New York Times*, August 17, 2019
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/17/opinion/sunday/cancel-culturecallout.html?searchResultPosition=1>
- Gray, Briahna Joy. “The Politics of Shame” *Current Affairs* March 11, 2018
<https://www.currentaffairs.org/2018/03/the-politics-of-shame>;
- McDermott, John. “Those People We Tried to Cancel? They’re All Hanging Out Together”, *The New York Times*. November 2, 2019
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/02/style/what-is-cancelculture.html>
- Participate in RBX event featuring Loretta Ross on October 27, 2022

Nov. 1, 2022: Call Out, Call In, Cancel

Guest Speaker: Loretta Ross

Discuss Ross, Politics of Shame readings and how they affect our understanding of how to respond to microaggressions or instances of implicit or explicit bias

Activities:

- Reasons to call out or cancel/ Review each option: what is gained, what is lost?
- Each student sketches what their “decision tree” will be re: callout, call in, cancel

Read for next class:

- *Civic Engagement Tool Kit* (paying special attention to Friend’s Dilemma, Kitchen Table Question and Story Core)

- Yankelovich Daniel. “How Public Opinion Really Works” (on Canvas)

November 8, 2022: Practicing Techniques and Tools for Dialogue Design

Guest Speaker: Steve Lawrence, Associate Pastor, White Rock Baptist Church, on history and practices of NewCORE (New Conversation on Race and Ethnicity).

Activities:

- Moderating a forum - kinds of questions, etc.
- Sample techniques:
 - Kitchen Table Dialogue
 - Friend’s Dilemma (version of “Force Field Analysis)
 - Story Core
 - Prep for a Public dialogue or a speaker?
- Pitfalls of Problem Framing

Read for next class:

- A Sample Issue Framework: “Ready for Next Time” (on Canvas)
- Carnegie, Andrew “The Gospel of Wealth” *North American Review*, 1889 : <https://www.carnegie.org/about/our-history/gospelofwealth/>
- Addams, Jane. *Twenty Years at Hull House* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014). Read Chapter VII (pp 129-153) on Canvas <https://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/addams/hullhouse/hullhouse.html>
- Watch part of Robert Reich documentary: “Inequality for All” (Available on NetFlix or [for free on YouTube](#))

November 15, 2022: Issue Framing: Economic Inequality

Guest Lecture on Carnegie and Adams: Lia Howard, Ph.D.

Discuss Inequality for All

How to write an issue framework – Part 1:

Frame Economic Inequality Statements and Action Steps

How to identify and grasp divergent perspectives

Activities:

- Small group work: Review common statements about economic inequality
- Place these statements on the Yankelovich curve

- Identify the statements you least understand or most oppose; draft a good dialogue-starting question to ask someone who uttered that statement.
- Prepare for final CWT? forum of semester week of November 30, 2022 -
- Reminder re: final Can We Talk?, November 30, 2022

For next class:

Complete class presentation of capstone.

November 22, 2022 NO CLASS (Thanksgiving)

November 29, 2022. Capstone Presentations

Capstone Presentations

December 6, 2022. Capstone Presentations

Capstone Presentations

Reflections on the course and applications in the future

CLASS RESOURCES

Addams, Jane. *Twenty Years at Hull House* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2014).

_____. 20 by Seventy episode 19. "How to survive holiday dinner (and Uncle George) in the age of Trump. <https://seventy.org/media/20-by-seventy-podcasts/2017/11/17/20-byseventyepisode-186>

Canon, David T; Coleman, John J.; Mayer, Kenneth. *The Enduring Debate 7th edition* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014)

Carnegie, Andrew "The Gospel of Wealth" *North American Review*, 1889 (found : <https://www.carnegie.org/about/our-history/gospelofwealth/>)

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Cialdini, Robert B. *Influence: Science and Practice*. Boston, Pearson Education, 2009 Short article: "Harnessing the Science of Persuasion," *Harvard Business Review*, October 2001, pp. 72-79.

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Summary by Roger Fisher and Hollie Hendrikson Available at:

<https://www.beyondintractability.org/bksum/fisher-beyondreason>

French, David, "Lost Friendships Break Hearts and Nations," *The Dispatch*, July 11, 2022

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Haidt, Jonathan and Rose-Stockwell, Tobias. "The Dark Psychology of Social Networks," *The Atlantic*, December 2019.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/12/socialmedia-democracy/600763/>

Harwood, Richard C. *Stepping Forward: A Positive Practical Path to Transform our Communities and Our Lives.* Greenleaf Book Group Press, 2019

Hayward, Clarissa Rile; Swanstrom, Todd. ed. *Justice and the American Metropolis* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011)

Huntington, Samuel *American Politics: The Promise of Disharmony* (1981)

Kahneman, Daniel. *Thinking Fast and Slow* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).

Katz, Michael. *The Undeserving Poor: America's Enduring Confrontation with Poverty 2nd edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

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<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-americanmind/399356/>

Madison, James. *Federalist No. 10* (1787). <https://billofrightsinsstitute.org/founding-documents/primary-source-documents/thefederalist-papers/federalist-papers-no-10/>

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/02/style/what-iscancelculture.html?searchResultPosition=1>

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<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2022/07/brandeis-language-police-have-suggestions-you/619347/>

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https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Pippa_Norris/publication/240725744_The_Bridging_and_Bonding_Role_of_Online_Communities/links/569153d608aed0aed8148606.pdf

Oluo, Ijeoma. *So You Want To Talk About Race* (Seal Press, 2018)

Palmer, Parker J. *Healing the heart of democracy : the courage to create a politics worthy of the human spirit*. San Francisco, CA : Jossey-Bass, 2011.

Patterson, Kerry. *Crucial Conversations: tools for talking when stakes are high*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012. 2nd ed. Chapters 1 and 2.

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<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2019/12/adam-serwer-civility/600784/>

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Available free at:
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Yudkin, Daniel, Hawkins, Stephen, and Dixon, Tim. *The Perception Gap: How False Impressions are Pulling Americans Apart*. New York, NY, More in Common. 2019 www.moreincommon.com