

Diversity, Disagreement, and Democracy: an Introduction to the Theory and Practice of Dialogue

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PSCI 3084
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Class Description

Diversity and disagreement are unavoidable features of contemporary democratic life. Democracies are shared by people marked by racial, cultural, gender, and sexual differences, and by people with divergent political, religious, and moral views. Given all of these differences, how do we make democracy work?

We will explore answers to this question in political theory and political psychology. First, we will look at studies of political psychology that explain what causes people to be tolerant of differences they find threatening. Under what circumstances are citizens in a democracy more likely to support the rights and liberties of those who are different? Under what circumstances are they more likely to be willing to listen to and learn from divergent positions? Second, we will look at arguments about the justifications for accepting diversity and pluralism as a part of democracy. Why are diversity and disagreement important in democracies? Are there any limits on the kinds of diversity, or the kinds of views that we can tolerate in a democracy?

Research has shown that one of the most effective ways to get people to communicate with each other is to engage in dialogue rather than debate. As a component of this course, students will be trained in practical dialogue skills. We will practice dialogue in the class on a number of controversial issues of diversity and disagreement that are particularly relevant to university life, including affirmative action in college admissions and hate speech on campus. Students will then be asked to identify a controversial issue and write a research paper defending their position given various counterarguments.

Course Requirements and Grading

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Class Participation	25%
Small papers	25%
Final paper	45%
Final oral presentation	5%

Class Participation

Classes will consist primarily of discussion; there will be no formal lectures for this course. Students' participation in class discussion should include demonstrating both speaking and listening skills; in

other words, students are encouraged to speak and to speak often, but also to listen to their peers and to respond thoughtfully to others' comments.

Class Preparation

Responsibility for making this course work rests primarily with you. This means that throughout the semester, you must do the assigned reading **before** coming to class, and you must come to class prepared to discuss that reading critically, imaginatively, and insightfully.

Papers

You will be required to write occasional one page essays that will be due by email. The purpose of the one page essays is to get used to making arguments and counterarguments, finding holes in your argument and being critical of your own opinion.

Your grade on these one page essays will be based on the strength of your counterarguments and the refutations of those counterarguments. Hints: 1) To have good counterarguments, you must choose your argument carefully. 2) The first sentence in the essay should be your argument. **I will count off ten points if the first sentence is not an argument.** 3) Ensure that appropriate evidence is used for your argument.

We will talk about the final paper (worth 50% of your grade with the oral presentation) along the way.

Contacting the Professors

Students are encouraged to drop by during office hours for informal discussion regarding the substance of the course or to discuss concerns about the course or performance on assignments. If office hours do not fit with your schedule, you may request an appointment with me at a time outside of regular office hours. If I am in my office and the door is open, please feel free to drop by.

Academic Integrity

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Additional information on the Honor Code can be found at

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>. We will submit written assignments to <http://turnitin.com> to evaluate them for plagiarism. Enrollment in the course constitutes consent to have written assignments submitted to <http://turnitin.com>.

You will fail the entire course for a single honor code infringement.

Disabled Student Provisions

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services

determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Center for Community N200, and <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices>.

If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see guidelines at <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/go.cgi?select=temporary.html>

Disability Services' letters for students with disabilities indicate legally mandated reasonable accommodations. The syllabus statements and answers to Frequently Asked Questions can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices>

Religious Observance Provisions

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. In this class, if you wish to request accommodations for religious observance, please come and talk to your professors within the first three weeks of the semester. See policy details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html.

Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment (<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/discrimination.html>), the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships applies to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>

Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Students who fail to adhere to behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Faculty have the professional responsibility to treat students with understanding, dignity and respect, to guide classroom discussion and to set reasonable limits on the manner in which they and their students express opinions. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. We will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise us of this preference early in the semester so that we may make appropriate changes to our records. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code

Reading Materials

Diana Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*, (Cambridge, 2006)

Reading Assignments & Course Schedule

I. Introduction

August 23: Introduction to having difficult conversations: 1) be curious and 2) acknowledge

In this first portion of the class, we will explore what makes conversations about politics so difficult. I picked a lecture on privilege specifically for the purpose of listening to something that is confronting. We all experience privilege in one way or another but we often develop our own identities with a narrative to show that we have overcome obstacles. A message that we experience privilege is confronting to our view of ourselves. The substance may be interesting in and of itself but I am looking for you to explore the process of listening to something that confronts you: what about the lecture is confronting, what works, what triggers you, what makes you angry, what makes you feel compassion?

August 25: In-Class Video Lecture: Tim Wise and White Privilege

August 30: What causes disagreement to be such a problem? (Or: Who are we?)

- **In class:** What worked about this lecture and what didn't work? (in terms of being persuasive). What did you find confronting, what made you angry, what made you feel compassion, what made you learn something? What do you think it is about you that made certain things work and other things not work?
- **In class:** Types of arguments and the appropriate evidence used to defend those arguments.

September 1 (NO CLASS): One page essay due by email 5pm Develop an argument about how privilege works in the United States, being careful to evaluate counterarguments to your argument.

II. Diversity and Disagreement: The Problem of Being Human

In the next portion of the class, we will look at the psychology of human beings and how we reason about justice. What happens when we try to deliberate? Why do we get so angry? What makes people more likely to get angry, or feel compassion, than others? How does ethnicity or race affect attitudes about justice?

September 6: What happens when we deliberate?

- **Reading:** What Happened on Deliberation Day?

September 8: Are there solutions to the problem of being human?

- Come to class with an example of a difficult conversation with someone who sees things differently from you: Bonus: have that conversation and report back to class.
- **Reading:** How to Win Friends and Influence People

September 13: What has been the traditional solution to the problem that human beings disagree about justice?

- **Reading:** Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapters 13 and 14

September 15: One page essay due: Is the law a workable solution to the problem that we disagree about what is just?

- **In class:** discussion of whether law is suitable as a solution to problems of disagreement
- **In class:** an introduction to readings that report statistical analysis

September 20: What is the relationship between social identity and perceptions of justice?

- **Reading:** Y.J. Huo, H.J. Smith, T.R. Tyler, & E.A. Lind. "Superordinate identification, subgroup identification, and justice concerns: Is separatism the problem? Is assimilation the answer?"

September 22: What is the relationship between personal identity and perceptions of justice?

- **Reading:** Linda Skitka, "Accessible Identity Model of Justice Reasoning"

September 27: How does diversity affect justice perceptions?

- **Reading:** Blacks and Whites React to Hurricane Katrina

September 29: Why is it important to give voice to those who disagree?

- **Reading:** John Stuart Mill, On Liberty

October 4: Should we give voice to those who disagree?

One page essay due: Find and report on the most offensive *political* speech you can find. Write an essay defending the right to say the thing that you found most offensive. **Ten points extra for being voted by the class as the most offensive.**

III. Diversity and Disagreement: The Problem of Dealing with Others

In this next portion of the class, we will talk about what happens when people talk to one another. Do they become more extreme in their views? Is it possible for people to become more knowledgeable? Do people want to engage in political discussion? How can we engage in political conversations productively?

October 6: What are the advantages to engaging in dialogue with those who are different?

- **Reading:** Diana Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*, chapters 1 and 3

October 11: What are the disadvantages to engaging in dialogue with those who are different? How can we become better social citizens?

- **Reading:** Diana Mutz, *Hearing the Other Side*, chapters 4 and 5

October 13: How do we combine science and deliberation?

- **Reading:** Stern, Deliberative Methods for Understanding Environmental Systems

October 18: Deliberative Polling: an example from China

- **Reading:** Deliberative Democracy in an Unlikely Place: Deliberative Polling in China

One page essay due: Can deliberation lead to the "right" answer?

October 20: What do we want out of politics?

- **Reading:** John R. Hibbing and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, *Stealth Democracy*, chapters 7-8

October 25: Who Wants to Deliberate and why?

- **Reading:** Who Wants to Deliberate and Why?

One page essay due: Do people want to deliberate?

October 27: What is wrong with being right?

- **Reading** Vanessa Baird, What is Wrong with Being Right?

In the next two portions of the class, we will read literature about two topics that are politically charged: affirmative action and hate speech. We will have the chance to engage in dialogue about both of these topics. Using the knowledge we have acquired about human psychology as well as our knowledge of this literature, we will practice dialogue.

November 1: Let's talk about Race: An interview with Beverly Tatum, the author of, Why are all the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?

- **Reading:** An interview with Beverly Tatum

IV. Affirmative Action: The Limits of Diversity

November 3, 8, 10: Affirmative Action

One page essay due: What policy should universities use regarding affirmative action for entrance into public universities?

- **Reading:** Iris Marion Young, "Affirmative Action and the Myth of Merit"
- **Reading:** David A. Strauss, "The Myth of Colorblindness"
- **Reading:** Richard Posner, "The DeFunis Case and the Constitutionality of Preferential Treatment of Racial Minorities"

V. Hate Speech: The Limits of Disagreement

November 15, 17, 29: Hate Speech Regulations on College Campuses

One page essay due: What policy should universities have to curb hate speech on campus?

- **Reading:** Charles R. Lawrence III, "If He Hollers Let Him Go: Regulating Racist Speech on Campus"
- **Reading:** James L. Gibson, "The political freedom of African-Americans: a contextual analysis of racial attitudes, political tolerance, and individual liberty"
- **Reading:** Kent Greenawalt, "Campus Speech Codes and Workplace Harassment"

VI. Paper Presentations

December 1-8

Final paper Due: Monday, December 12th, 5:00 pm, by email