



Civic Dialogue: Engaging Students in Difficult Conversations

**Teaching and Learning Institute
May 16, 2022
Blackwell Ballroom
Maugans Alumni Center**

LONGWOOD
U N I V E R S I T Y

Institute Blogsite: <https://blogs.longwood.edu/cafeinstitute2022/>

Civic Dialogue: Engaging Students in Difficult Conversations

Longwood University Teaching and Learning Institute
May 16, 2022
Blackwell Hall

8:30-9:00 a.m. Check-in and Full Breakfast

9:00 a.m. Institute Welcome
Pamela Tracy, Director, Center for Faculty Enrichment (CAFE)
Larissa Smith, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

9:15-10:30 a.m. Concurrent Sessions

Courageous Conversations Begin with You
Marsha Rutledge, Asst. Professor of Counselor Education
Virginia Room

Reading the Room: Learning Context and Building Collaborative Trust
Pam Tracy, Director of CAFÉ & Professor, Communication Studies
Jonathan Page, Director of Multicultural Affairs & Title VI Coordinator
Prince Edward Room

What's Eating at the CORE of Democratic Discussions? Intersecting Social Identities across Disciplines & Learning Context
Erica Brown-Meredith, Asst. Professor of Social Work & Program Coordinator, CLASP
Ronda Walker, Asst. Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders
Blackwell Ballroom

10:30-10:45 a.m. Break

10:45-12:00 noon Concurrent Sessions

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12:00 noon

Lunch

1:00 p.m.

Let's Give Them Something to Talk About

Blackwell Ballroom

Keynote Speaker: Verdis LaVar Robinson

Unlike debate, or a panel of experts, or an airing of grievances, deliberation asks us to begin with what we hold most dear while sharing our personal experiences with a given issue and seeks common ground rather than consensus. In this talk, Verdis will guide us in a journey into deliberative pedagogy and share some of his most memorable experiences in creating brave spaces for difficult dialogues.

2:15 p.m.

Break

Snacks and Beverages Available in Blackwell Foyer

2:30-3:45 p.m.

Deliberative Forum: Free Speech and the Inclusive Campus

Verdis LeVar Robinson

3:45 p.m.

Break

Snacks and Beverages Available in Blackwell Foyer

4:00-5:15 p.m.

Afternoon Concurrent Sessions

Building Multicultural Communities through Problem Solving

*Isabel Fay, Asst. Professor, Communication Studies & Co-Coordinator,
International Studies Minor*

Prince Edward Room

Expanding the Toolkit: Strategies for Navigating Difficult Campus Conversations

Caroline Emmons, Elliott Professor of History & Asst. Dean of the Faculty, Hampden-Sydney College

Eric Hodges, Asst. Professor of Political Science

Blackwell Ballroom

“Let’s Go There”: Engaging Controversial Topics in the Classroom and Beyond

Evan Long, Asst. Professor, Education

David Magill, Professor, Literatures of Diversity & Department Chair, English and Modern Languages

Virginia Room

5:15 p.m.

Reception

Join us in the Blackwell Foyer for good food, drink, and networking

Session Abstracts

Morning Concurrent Sessions

9:15-10:30 a.m.

10:45-12:00 noon

Courageous Conversations Begin with You

Marsha Rutledge, Asst. Professor of Counselor Education

Virginia Room

Educators often expect students to engage in meaningful, relevant, and rich discussions regarding course content and societal issues. As K-12 and higher education curricula continue to focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion and campuses become increasingly diverse, difficult dialogues are sure to happen. How those conversations are structured and facilitated heavily depends on the lead instructor or facilitator. The first step in engaging in critical dialogue is self-awareness. In order to effectively facilitate difficult conversations, conscious intentions must be established. Self-awareness "is the critical skill to creating conscious intentions" (Chism, 2016). This presentation will allow participants to understand how important self-awareness is to having and facilitating critical, or as they are sometimes called courageous, conversations in the learning environment. Attendees will participate in self-reflective activities to support their ability to increase their self-awareness and further promote future dialogues.

Reading the Room: Learning Context and Building Collaborative Trust

Pam Tracy, Director of CAFÉ & Professor, Communication Studies

Jonathan Page, Director of Multicultural Affairs & Title VI Coordinator

Prince Edward Room

How do we create culturally sustainable learning environments? How do we create spaces that value students' ways of knowing and communicating as well as encourage an understanding of others? How do we create communication practices that emphasize the relational components of learning and build trust? In this interactive session, participants will analyze the situational factors that affect dialogue in their learning environments. We will discuss the sociocultural politics of self-disclosure and vulnerability for educators and learners, and use the situational factor analysis framework to design effective communication guidelines that are co-created with learners.

What's Eating at the CORE of Democratic Discussions? Intersecting Social Identities Across Disciplines & Learning Context

Erica Brown-Meredith, Asst. Professor of Social Work/Program Coordinator, CLASP

Ronda Walker, Asst. Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders

Blackwell Ballroom

Social identity distinctions and hierarchical differentiations systemically occupy space in the learning environment and can sabotage educational aims for a democratic society. The saliency of group social membership and the intersectionality of the educator and students' identity formation have a relative impact on academic experiences and campus culture. Studies show that one's sense of belonging, social group membership, and background have an effect on enrollment, retention, and gaps in completion outcomes. This session will explore various forms of identity threat and offer assessment tools and strategies to promote an ideal and deliberate educational space that supports inclusion. The facilitators will moderate activities to assess one's social identity formation (completion of cultural sketch), offer high impact teaching practices, and role-play strategies for healthy difficult dialogues.

Afternoon Concurrent Sessions

4:00-5:15 p.m.

Building Multicultural Communities through Problem Solving

Isabel Fay, Asst. Professor, Communication Studies & Co-Coordinator, International Studies Minor

Prince Edward Room

While identity politics have become the norm in the United States for important emancipatory reasons, they can also threaten the democratic functioning of society by isolating increasingly homogenous groups from one another. This session uses John Dewey's concept of public discourse as problem solving to define the demos around common problems and achieve a more inclusive, multicultural representation of community. Participants will apply this pragmatic lens to their course content and design assignments that exercise students' problem-solving skills in ways that allow for the development of more heterogeneous groups and a more flexible drawing of identities.

Expanding the Toolkit: Strategies for Navigating Difficult Campus Conversations

Caroline Emmons, Elliott Professor of History & Asst. Dean of the Faculty, Hampden-Sydney College
Eric Hodges, Asst. Professor of Political Science

Blackwell Ballroom

In this interactive session, we will put theory into practice by engaging in two activities. The first activity will center on engaging students in difficult conversations. After the first activity, Eric will present on moral reframing, a technique taken from political psychology, and how it can help learners process different perspectives. The second activity will examine how the larger university ecosystem affects faculty decisions to participate in challenging discussions. Caroline will offer resources and strategies for navigating the ways in which external forces, whether it be an event on campus or the influence of campus stakeholders such as alumni, parents, and campus leaders, can shape learning environment dynamics. We will conclude the workshop with a Q&A session that attempts to synthesize the lessons learned from the day.

“Let's Go There”: Engaging Controversial Topics in the Classroom and Beyond

Evan Long, Asst. Professor, Education

David Magill, Professor, Literatures of Diversity & Department Chair, English and Modern Languages
Virginia Room

Participants in this hands-on session will explore turnkey techniques and resources to engage their own students in high quality informed civil discourse on potentially controversial topics. Tapping into research from behavioral sciences, multicultural education, and civics education, participants will learn how to prevent and respond to common challenges associated with leading controversial discussions. Additionally, they will explore techniques and resources to help foster an educational culture conducive to brave discussions, as well as to meet the diverse needs of both reticent and eager students and pedagogical spaces.



We are grateful. Thank you.

Institute Planning Committee

Erica Brown-Meredith

Isabel Fay

Heather Lettner-Rust

Ronda Walker

Kim Wingo and Carol Anderson

for all of your fantastic event planning.

Aramark for catering and your hospitality

**HELP US TO PLAN NEXT YEAR'S INSTITUTE
PLEASE GO TO <https://forms.gle/yy2Cgsn46Qq4bSKv6>
TO COMPLETE AN EVALUATION**

