Civil Discourse for Citizenship

CENTER FOR ETHICS AND HUMAN VALUES
It seems like we’re losing the ability to talk to each other about our political disagreements or to work together to solve our political problems. Often we are trapped in ideological bubbles where we only hear from people who already agree with us.
When we do try to talk to people who disagree with us, it feels like we’re talking past, rather than to, each other. Too often public discourse is disrespectful, angry, or even threatening. Many of us are tempted to give up on controversial discussions altogether.
WHY Civil Discourse?
Why Civil Discourse?

The capacity for vigorous and respectful discussion across disagreements is fundamental for the health of our democracy.

Expands knowledge and promotes understanding.

Builds civic trust and a sense of community.
Why Civil Discourse?
Civil discourse does not replace other forms of democratic engagement, but it is the aspect of citizenship that a public university is uniquely well-positioned to promote.

Advances Ohio State’s **mission** and **shared values**
Encourages personal **growth** and **social engagement**
Be Curious
Be Charitable
Be Conscientious
Be Constructive

the 4Cs

Civil Discourse for Citizenship
The 4Cs
Be Curious, Charitable, Conscientious, and Constructive

The 4Cs
be Curious

Assume that you have something to learn
The 4Cs
Be **Curious**, Charitable, Conscientious, and Constructive

**Engaging others**

**Humility**
Try to identify conditions under which you would no longer hold your views

**The 4Cs**

**be Curious**
Assume that you have something to learn
The 4Cs
Be **Curious**, Charitable, Conscientious, and Constructive

**Engaging others**

**Humility**
Try to identify conditions under which you would no longer hold your views

**Responding to others**

**be Curious**
Assume that you have something to learn

**Receptivity**
Try to understand how other people’s views might inform your own
The 4Cs
Be Curious, Charitable, Conscientious, and Constructive

Engaging others
- Humility
  Try to identify conditions under which you would no longer hold your views

The 4Cs
- be Curious
  Assume that you have something to learn

Responding to others
- Receptivity
  Try to understand how other people’s views might inform your own

We often disagree about what key concepts mean, how to weigh competing values, and how to evaluate the evidence. Civil discourse requires that we remain open to the possibility that people we disagree with might have something to teach us.
The 4Cs
Be Curious, Charitable, Conscientious, and Constructive

be Charitable
Assume that each participant has good intentions
The 4Cs
Be Curious, Charitable, Conscientious, and Constructive

Engaging others

Empathy
Try to describe other people’s views in a way that they would recognize and accept

The 4Cs
be Charitable

Assume that each participant has good intentions
The 4Cs
Be Curious, Charitable, Conscientious, and Constructive

Engaging others
Empathy
Try to describe other people’s views in a way that they would recognize and accept

The 4Cs
be Charitable
Assume that each participant has good intentions

Responding to others
Forgiveness
If someone offends you, be prepared to accept a sincere apology
The 4Cs
Be Curious, Charitable, Conscientious, and Constructive

Sometimes we look for reasons to dismiss rather than engage those who disagree with us. Civil discourse requires that we try to understand where people are coming from and accept that we all sometimes make mistakes.
The 4Cs
Be Curious, Charitable, **Conscientious**, and Constructive

The 4Cs

**be Conscientious**

Listen carefully and speak thoughtfully
The 4Cs
Be Curious, Charitable, Conscientious, and Constructive

Engaging others

Fairness
Don’t exaggerate the strengths of your views or the flaws of others’

The 4Cs
be Conscientious

Listen carefully and speak thoughtfully
The 4Cs
Be Curious, Charitable, Conscientious, and Constructive

Engaging others

Fairness
Don’t exaggerate the strengths of your views or the flaws of others’

The 4Cs

be Conscientious

Listen carefully and speak thoughtfully

Responding to others

Resilience
Don’t be hostile or defensive when your views are challenged
The 4Cs
Be Curious, Charitable, **Conscientious**, and Constructive

**Engaging others**
- **Fairness**
  Don’t exaggerate the strengths of your views or the flaws of others’

**The 4Cs**

**be Conscientious**
- Listen carefully and speak thoughtfully

**Responding to others**
- **Resilience**
  Don’t be hostile or defensive when your views are challenged

It is sometimes tempting to make claims that we can’t back up with good evidence, and to try to talk over or shut down people who disagree with us. Civil discourse requires that we proportion our claims to the available evidence and allow others to challenge our beliefs and values even when it makes us feel uncomfortable or angry.
The 4Cs
Be Curious, Charitable, Conscientious, and Constructive

Remember that the goal is not to win, but to promote better understanding.
The 4Cs
Be Curious, Charitable, Conscientious, and Constructive

Practicality
Look for opportunities to work toward common ground

Engaging others

The 4Cs
be Constructive

Remember that the goal is not to win, but to promote better understanding
The 4Cs
Be Curious, Charitable, Conscientious, and Constructive

Engaging others

Practicality
Look for opportunities to work toward common ground

Responding to others

Flexibility
Be prepared to change your views

be Constructive
Remember that the goal is not to win, but to promote better understanding
The 4Cs
Be Curious, Charitable, Conscientious, and Constructive

Engaging others

The 4Cs
Responding to others

Practicality
Look for opportunities to work toward common ground

be Constructive
Remember that the goal is not to win, but to promote better understanding

Flexibility
Be prepared to change your views

A democracy whose citizens aren’t able to communicate across lines of disagreement lacks a healthy civic culture.
Civil discourse requires that we remain open-minded and committed to working together to address important problems.
### The 4Cs

**Engaging others**

- **Humility**
  - Try to identify conditions under which you would no longer hold your views.

- **Empathy**
  - Try to describe other people’s views in a way that they would recognize and accept.

- **Fairness**
  - Don’t exaggerate the strengths of your views or the flaws of others’.

- **Practicality**
  - Look for opportunities to work toward common ground.

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**Responding to others**

- **be Curious**
  - Assume that you have something to learn.

- **be Charitable**
  - Assume that each participant has good intentions.

- **be Conscientious**
  - Listen carefully and speak thoughtfully.

- **be Constructive**
  - Remember that the goal is not to win, but to promote better understanding.

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### Taken together, the 4Cs give us a concrete and practical set of guidelines for conducting ourselves in civil discourse, both as we engage with others, and as we respond to them.
CEHV’s work on civil discourse has been pursued with generous support from the Derrow Family Foundation and in partnership with Ohio State’s Civil Discourse Project.

cehv.osu.edu/civil-discourse-initiative