



SCHOOL of EDUCATION
and HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

**EDLF 3492: Political Dialogue
Leadership, Foundations, and Policy**

**3 Credits
Spring, 2024**

Thursdays, 2:00-4:30pm

Instructor

Dr. Rachel L. Wahl

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Office hours: Please email for an appointment

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Associate Professor

Description

Will civil discourse save democracy or deepen oppression? Why does speech matter so much to contemporary political struggles? What is it like to talk to people across the political spectrum and what would it mean for these conversations to go well? This course integrates theory with practice as students engage in political dialogue using a variety of different approaches. Students then draw on their own experiences, primary source research, the popular press and political theory to analyze the relationship between political dialogue and democratic ideals.

Learning Objectives

The course aims to cultivate students' capacity to do the following:

- Understand the political and philosophical stakes of popular and scholarly debates about political dialogue and apply this understanding to analyses of these debates
- Practice skills to engage in political dialogue using a variety of different models
- Analyze the theoretical premises of different dialogue models
- Develop emergent research skills through qualitative interview analysis and document review
- Develop the capacity to synthesize research from multiple sources and construct an argument orally and in writing based on this synthesis
- Analyze one's own experience in political dialogue in relation to national and scholarly debates on political dialogue

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- Form one's own views on political dialogue, by drawing on one's own experience as well as popular writing and political theory

Course Texts

Most course texts will be accessible through publicly available links or uploaded to Canvas. Books you should access for the course are as follows:

Zimmerman, Jonathan, and Emily Robertson. "The case for contention." In *The Case for Contention*. University of Chicago Press, 2017.

Course Outline

This course integrates practicum experiences utilizing contrasting dialogue models, research and theory on political dialogue, and primary source research. These methods are designed to engage students in contemporary debates on political dialogue as well as to provide students with dialogue skills and experiences. Students will be asked to draw on their own experiences, primary source research, and scholarly research and theory to form judgments on popular debates on the relationship of dialogue to democracy.

In the first part of the course, students will be introduced to the debates over political dialogue in political theory and the popular press. We will then read classic texts in support of deliberation and dialogue as well as key texts that criticize these practices. The course then focuses on deliberative dialogue within educational settings such as schools and universities, including texts that support and criticize deliberative approaches to civic education as well as texts that consider whether, when, and how controversial speakers should be engaged on campuses. Throughout these units, we examine deliberative dialogue in reference to concerns over inequality and justice, such as regarding how race, ethnicity, gender, and social class shape discourse.

****Regular attendance and active participation are especially important in this course.**** This is a course about dialogue and dialogue is at the center of the student experience of the course. Therefore, your attendance and active participation are required. Please see below for a participation rubric.

However, if you are sick, please stay home and rest! If you are well enough to participate via Zoom, you may do so at the below link. Please email me to let me know that you would like to participate in this way. *Please only use this option if you are sick. Otherwise in-person attendance is expected.*

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://virginia.zoom.us/j/94748177898?pwd=OEZ4UkZaUHU1d3BGVVl3dlFwQW1MZz09>

Meeting ID: 947 4817 7898

Passcode: 320633

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Assignments:

Readings: In order to succeed in this course, it is crucial that you complete all of the readings and come to class prepared to discuss them. Please take note of your questions, criticisms, and ideas as you read as a prompt for class discussions.

Political Identity Reflection: Please describe in approximately one paragraph how you understand your own political commitments. You may discuss issues that you care about the most, why you care about those issues, and the questions that most interest you about contemporary politics.

One Small Step Dialogue: You will participate in one conversation facilitated by moderators from “One Small Step,” wherein you will be paired with a community member or student.

One Small Step Reflection: A short reflection paper (approximately one page) is due the week following your Braver Angels event. This is an opportunity for **both** personal reflection and to consider your dialogue experience in connection to class readings and discussions. Personal reflections may include noting anything that surprised, challenged, or moved you, from what you did or did not derive meaning, any questions or concerns that arose for you. You should also discuss connections to course readings, case studies, and class discussions that you identify. For example, you may identify the assumptions that you perceive as underlying the dialogue model and how the authors we have read would support or critique these assumptions. Reflections should be approximately one page in length and include at least one personal reflection and at least one connection to a course reading, at a minimum.

Case Studies: You will consider particular controversies related to political dialogue that have received media attention from the popular press and consider these dilemmas from multiple perspectives. Materials and essay questions will be available on Canvas and you will be given time in class to complete these studies in small groups.

Perspectives Asynchronous and Synchronous Components: You will complete the six-unit curriculum *Perspectives* from the Constructive Dialogue Institute. Each unit is designed to take about 30 minutes. One unit is due each week for the first six weeks of class. You will also complete a peer-to-peer synchronous component in class after units two, four and six. These exercises are intended to be both skill-building and a basis for theoretical examination and critique. You will access these units at:

<https://programs.constructivedialogue.org/register/f9d7fc1f-da12-4b57-a997-e4744174cd34>

Political Interview: For this assignment, you will interview someone whose political views are likely different from your own. This could be a relative, co-worker, friend, or acquaintance – anyone at all. You will devise an interview protocol, take careful notes or request their permission to record and then transcribe the conversation, and turn in your notes/transcription with the below reflection.

Political Interview Reflection: In this reflection, you should consider the relationship between your experience in the political interview and the course readings. Does your experience in the

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conversation confirm or challenge claims made by authors we have read? Do any of the course readings prompt you to analyze, question, or evaluate your conversation in particular ways? Conversely, does your conversation prompt you to question or affirm any aspect of the course readings? In addition, you may also connect your experience to case studies we have used in class and to class discussions. Reflections should be approximately one to three pages in length.

Final Exam: The final exam will take the form of essay questions based on course readings and discussions. Please see the rubric for more information. The exam question will be provided one week before the exam is due.

Can We Talk? Dialogue Event. The University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education will host a dialogue event (in-person and virtually on Zoom) entitled *Can We Talk?* on **Thursday, February 29th from 7pm-9pm**. Participation is required for this class. If you are unable to attend this event due to a schedule conflict, please see below for a Braver Angels make-up event.

Can We Talk Reflection: A short reflection paper (approximately one page) is due the week following the Can We Talk? event. This is an opportunity for **both** personal reflection and to consider your dialogue experience in connection to class readings and discussions. Personal reflections may include noting anything that surprised, challenged, or moved you, from what you did or did not derive meaning, any questions or concerns that arose for you. You should also discuss connections to course readings, case studies, and class discussions that you identify. For example, you may identify the assumptions that you perceive as underlying the dialogue model and how the authors we have read would support or critique these assumptions. Reflections should be approximately one page in length and include at least one personal reflection and at least one connection to a course reading, at a minimum.

Braver Angels Event: If you are unable to attend the Can We Talk Event, you may instead attend a make-up event through Braver Angels. The organization Braver Angels runs virtual dialogue events throughout the year. Select one that fits your calendar and attend. Once you select the event, please inform me over email. A Reflection (as described above in the Can We Talk Reflection assignment) is due in the class following your event. Search the events calendar at <https://braverangels.org/events/>

Participation: This course is a discussion-based course that requires robust participation. Your participation grade will be based on how you engage in both small-group and full-class discussions and in-class projects. Please see the Participation Rubric below for a detailed description.

[Anonymous] Feedback: While not an assignment per se, I encourage you to write to me regarding any concerns that arise for you throughout this course. As we will discuss at length in the course, political dialogue can be an ambivalent and difficult experience. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you are struggling or concerned in any way. If you wish to remain anonymous, please feel free to use the anonymous feedback feature on Canvas. However, if you would like me to follow up, please include enough information so that I can do so.

Date	Topic	Class Activities & Readings Due
1/18	Practicum Experience & Introduction	<p>Practicum experience and introduction to the course.</p> <p>Register for the Intergroup Dialogue Introduction by 1/24: Meeting Registration - Zoom</p>
1/25	Understanding Dialogue and Deliberation	<p>“What is dialogue?” and “What is deliberation?” “Resources” page of the National Center for Dialogue and Deliberation https://www.ncdd.org/rc.html</p> <p>Dobson, Andrew. <i>Listening for democracy: Recognition, representation, reconciliation</i>. Oxford University Press, 2014. Introduction</p> <p>In Class: 2pm-3:30pm THE UNIVERSITY of MICHIGAN INTERGROUP DIALOGUE MODEL: AN INTRODUCTION <i>The Difficult Dialogues National Resource Center and The Program on Intergroup Relations (IGR) at the University of Michigan. Register here:</i></p> <p>Due: Political identity self-description (one paragraph) One Small Step Form Perspectives Lesson One Register for the Intergroup Dialogue Zoom: Meeting Registration - Zoom</p>
2/1	The Fight over Political Dialogue on College Campuses	<p>Lukianoff, G. & Haidt, J. September, 2015, “The Coddling of the American Mind.” <i>The Atlantic Monthly</i>. https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356/</p> <p><i>Listen to audio recording: Can America’s Universities Survive the Cancel Wars? A Discussion with Sigal Ben-Porath</i> https://bipartisanpolicy.org/event/dr-ben-porath-book-event/</p> <p>In Class: Peer To Peer Perspectives Interaction Due: Perspectives Lesson Two</p>
2/8	Dialogue and Safety	<p>Callan, Education in Safe and Unsafe Spaces</p> <p>In Class: Political interview protocol development Due: Perspectives Lesson Three</p>

2/15	Case Studies: Small Group Meetings	In Class: Peer To Peer Interaction & Case Studies Due: Perspectives Lesson Four Case Study Responses Due by the end of class time today
2/22	The Fight over Political Dialogue on College Campuses	<p>“Free Speech Isn’t Free,” <i>The Atlantic Monthly</i> https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2014/02/free-speech-isnt-free/283672/</p> <p>“No I won’t ignore the Alt-Right”, <i>Medium</i> https://medium.com/resist-here/no-i-wont-ignore-the-alt-right-3227c4fc40c8</p> <p>Due: Perspectives Lesson Five</p>
2/29	Case Studies: Small Group Meetings	In Class: Peer to Peer Interaction & Case Studies Due: Perspectives Lesson Six Case Study Responses Due by the end of class time today
3/7	Spring Break 2024	
3/14	Political Interview Discussion	Due: Political Interview notes/transcript and reflection
3/21	Deliberation and Inequality	<p>Young, Iris Marion. <i>Inclusion and democracy</i>. Oxford University press on demand, 2002. Chapter Two: Inclusive Political Communication</p> <p>Mendelberg, Tali, and John Oleske. "Race and public deliberation." <i>Political Communication</i> 17, no. 2 (2000): 169-191.</p> <p>Due: Can we talk? Reflection paper</p>

3/28	Deliberation and Inequality	Curato, Nicole. "Interruptive protests in dysfunctional deliberative systems." <i>Politics</i> 41, no. 3 (2021): 388-403.
4/4	Dialogue in K-12 Schooling	McAvoy, Paula, and Diana Hess. "Classroom deliberation in an era of political polarization." <i>Curriculum Inquiry</i> 43, no. 1 (2013): 14-47. Parker, Walter. "Listening to strangers: Classroom discussion in democratic education." <i>Teachers College Record</i> 112, no. 11 (2010): 2815-2832.
4/11	Dialogue in K-12 Schooling	Zimmerman, Jonathan, and Emily Robertson. "The case for contention." In <i>The Case for Contention</i> . University of Chicago Press, 2017. Chapters 1, 2 & 4
4/18	Dialogue in K-12 Schooling	Ruitenberg, Claudia W. "Educating political adversaries: Chantal Mouffe and radical democratic citizenship education." <i>Studies in Philosophy and Education</i> 28, no. 3 (2009): 269-281. Due: One Small Step experience and reflection <i>Final Exam Prompts Available Today</i>
4/25	Conclusion	Conclusion. Due: Final Exam

Grading

Students are expected to complete all assignments and will be graded according to the following scale:

Participation: 20%*

Political Interview notes and reflection: 15%

Case Study 10%

Case Study 10%

Perspectives Units: 15%

One Small Step Experience and Reflection: 5%

Can We Talk or Braver Angels Experience and Reflection: 5%

Final Exam: 20%

*Participation is important to this course. Please see the participation rubric.

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Due Dates

Political Identity paragraph	Due 1/25
Political Interview reflection, notes, and protocol	Due 3/14
Case Studies	Due at the end of class on the day it is assigned
Can We Talk or Braver Angels Experience & Reflection	Due 3/21
One Small Step Experience & Reflection	Due within one week of attending the event, latest 4/18
Final Exam	Due last class
Perspectives	One Unit due each week for the first six weeks, starting after the first class

Course Communication

Students are expected to activate and then check their official U.Va. email addresses on a frequent and consistent basis to remain informed of University communications, as certain communications may be time sensitive. Students who fail to check their email on a regular basis are responsible for any resulting consequences.

Announcements will be emailed to the account that is connected to your Canvas login or posted in CANVAS on a regular basis. Please make certain to check email and Canvas regularly, as announcements contain any important information about upcoming projects or class concerns.

Attendance

Discussion is at the heart of this course, so your attendance is important. You are expected to attend all class sessions unless you have an excused absence, such as due to illness, as described below.

Excused Absences

The key to an absence being considered excused is timely, clear communication with me.

Absences traditionally excused are those that occur because of a death in the family, important religious holidays, authorized University activities, or illness. If you anticipate absence for cause, please obtain permission from me in advance of the absence. Unforeseen absences resulting from sickness or from other circumstances considered to be emergencies will be excused and you may make arrangements to complete missed assignments. Please note that I will consider pandemic-related absences to be excused.

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Tech Support

For Canvas questions, call Canvas 24/7 Support at 877-404-4098

For student email questions, contact UVA Central IT 434-924-4357

For all other questions, call or email SEHD Online. You will receive a response within 24 hours. curryonline@virginia.edu or 434-924-0839

Regarding Communication with Faculty

Members of the University Faculty are required to report bias and threats made to students or by students. If you disclose information regarding violence or assault to me, whether it be in person or part of an assignment (reflection paper, diary, journal, etc.), I am required to report it to the Title IX Office and the *Just Report It* system. Just Report It.

(JRI) <http://justreportit.virginia.edu/> ([Links to an external site.](#))[Links to an external site.](#) is the University's online system for reporting:

- Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment and Violence
- Bias and Discrimination/Harassment
- Hazing
- Clery Act Compliance (by CSAs)
- Interference with Speech Rights

If a report is made, you will be contacted and offered support if you desire. You are not required at that time to report anything or accept any assistance. The system is designed to support you. You may access [Confidential Resources \(Links to an external site.\)](#) if you wish to discuss a concern or incident without reporting to the University at this time. Information you share with Confidential Resources will not be disclosed to University officials or any other person except in extremely [limited circumstances \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

Late Work Policy

Late work will not be accepted. Assignments will not be available after the deadline. If you have an extenuating circumstance, please contact me before the assignment is due to make alternate arrangements.

University of Virginia Honor System

All work should be pledged in the spirit of the Honor System of the University of Virginia. The instructor will indicate which assignments and activities are to be done individually and which permit collaboration. The following pledge should be written out at the end of all quizzes, examinations, individual assignments and papers: "I pledge that I have neither given nor received help on this examination (quiz, assignment, etc.)". The pledge must be signed by the student. For more information please visit <http://www.virginia.edu/honor/>.

Special Needs

It is the policy of the University of Virginia to accommodate students with disabilities in accordance with federal and state laws. Any student with a disability who needs accommodation (e.g., in arrangements for seating, extended time for examinations, or note taking, etc.), should contact the Student Disability Access Center (SDAC) and provide them with appropriate medical

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or psychological documentation of his/her condition. Once accommodations are approved, it is the student's responsibility to follow up with the instructor about logistics and implementation of accommodations.

If students have difficulty accessing any part of the course materials or activities for this class, they should contact the instructor immediately. Accommodations for test taking should be arranged at least 14 business days in advance of the date of the test(s). Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact the SDAC: 434-243-5180 (Fax - 434-243-5188); Email: SDAC@Virginia.edu; Website: <http://www.virginia.edu/studenthealth/sdac/sdac.html>.

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

The University of Virginia is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students, while acknowledging that a variety of issues, such as strained relationships, increased anxiety, alcohol/drug problems, and depression, directly impacts students' academic performance. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 434-243-5150 Monday-Friday, 8:00am-4:30pm and after-hours including weekends and holidays. For a comprehensive list of services provided by CAPS including individual therapy, group therapy, crisis services, and Outreach and Consultation, visit <https://www.studenthealth.virginia.edu/caps>.

For a list of online resources students may access independently, visit <https://www.studenthealth.virginia.edu/caps-online-resources>.

For a list of mental health resources for students currently living out-of-state and learning exclusively online, visit <https://www.studenthealth.virginia.edu/CAPS-living-outofstate>.

For access to community mental health referrals, visit <https://www.studenthealth.virginia.edu/community-referrals>.

And a new resource: an app that students can use to connect with a counselor 24/7:
<https://timely.md/schools/index.php?school=UVA>

Participation Rubric

Teaching Resource Center, UVa

A-level participation:

- You demonstrate excellent preparation, having taken notes inside or outside the book about what strikes you, your interpretations, your questions.
- Your comments and questions show that you have read the assigned chapters and related historical/literary notes and considered that material thoughtfully.
- Your take-aways demonstrate that you have listened carefully to others' comments and ideas and have engaged with those ideas to reflect on—and perhaps change—your own.
- You analyze readings and synthesize new information with other knowledge (from your experiences, discussions outside class, films, other readings, etc.).

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- You make thoughtful and well-considered *original* points.
- During class, you write notes about others' ideas.
- You synthesize discussion points to develop new approaches that take the class further. You respond thoughtfully to others' comments with ideas and questions.
- You sometimes engage the other students in dialogue, perhaps challenging them to develop their ideas more deeply, perhaps debating with them a different position.
- You build convincing arguments by working with what others say; but you also do not hesitate to question others or the majority view when you have a different understanding or interpretation.
- You stay focused on the topic under discussion.
- You volunteer regularly but do not dominate discussions.
- In group conversations, you stay on topic and work toward balanced participation by all.
- If your supported interpretation is not a popular one, you are able to make a case for your position, rather than yielding to the majority.

B-level participation:

- You demonstrate good preparation, perhaps having written some notes before class.
- You interpret and analyze course material.
- Your take-aways demonstrate that you have sometimes listened carefully to others' comments and ideas.
- You volunteer regularly in class, with interesting ideas.
- You think through your own points, respond to others' ideas, and question others in a constructive way.
- You may occasionally question others' views and/or engage in dialogue with others.
- You raise good questions about readings.
- You stay focused on topic during whole-class discussions and in group conversations.

C-level participation:

- You demonstrate adequate preparation.
- You understand the readings but show little analysis.
- You respond well or moderately well when called upon, but you rarely volunteer; or you talk without advancing the discussion.
- You might not stay consistently focused on topic.
- You do not demonstrate that you have listened well to others' ideas or incorporated them into your analysis or interpretations.

Our GOALS: Our in-class discussions and reflections should help you pursue the goals of practicing and developing . . .

- your ability to listen deeply to others' ideas
- your skill in making an argument, that is, knowing why you hold an opinion and how to find and use reasoning and evidence to support it and convince your listeners
- your facility in sharing your ideas verbally with others
- your skill in helping others work out their ideas

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- your ability to understand others' ideas in conversation and weigh them deliberately, appreciatively
- better appreciation and awareness for how ideas develop, grow, and improve in conversation with others
- your skill in sharing your thoughts and in offering civil, positive, clear comments