

# Facilitating Difficult Dialogues

## Remember:

- Practice!
- Expect to make mistakes – No one is an expert
- We are accountable for classroom safety
- Be honest and open – this communicates courage, validates feelings, and legitimizes the dialogue

## Preparing for Difficult Dialogues:

- Mentally prepare – Difficult Dialogues may advance learning objectives, or may emerge spontaneously
- Know yourself – What are your triggers? How can you remain calm? Are you listening?
- Set the tone – Ground rules; establish a respectful & safe learning community
- Statement on syllabus – Expectations for safe & respectful classroom

## Facilitating Difficult Dialogues:

- Don't avoid it – Be aware of the message that avoidance may send
- This is an opportunity to explore differing views and encourage critical thinking
- Do you need to exert your status in the classroom? If so, how?
- Have the students do the work

## Tools for Facilitating Difficult Dialogues:

- **Pause** the conversation periodically
  - Validate the dialogue
  - Reinforce ground rules for respect
  - Ask students what they are learning from the moment
- **“Think / Write / Pair / Share”**
- Organize a **Debate**
  - Have students restate differing perspectives
- **“Five Minute Rule”**
  - Specific discussion about a missing point of view
- **Fishbowl Exercise** – concentric circles
- **Critical Incident Questionnaire** – collect, analyze, and report back to class
- **Connect** with students outside of class
- **Trigger Warnings?**

## Difficult Dialogues References:

- AAUP, (n.d.). On trigger warnings, <http://www.aaup.org/report/trigger-warnings>
- Brookfield, S. D. & Preskill, S. (2005). *Discussion as a way of teaching. Tools and techniques for democratic classrooms* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Center for Research on Learning and Teaching. (n.d.). Responding to difficult moments. University of Michigan. <http://www.crlt.umich.edu/multicultural-teaching/difficult-moments>
- Center for Teaching. (n.d.). Difficult dialogues. Vanderbilt University. <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/difficult-dialogues/>
- Harlap, Y. (2014). Preparing university educators for hot moments: Theater for educational development about difference, power, and privilege. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 19(3), 217-228.
- Hughes, B., Huston, T., Stein, J. (2011). Using case studies to help faculty navigate difficult classroom moments. *College Teaching*, 59, 7-12.
- Manne, K. (September 19, 2015). Why I use trigger warnings. New York Times Sunday Review. [http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/20/opinion/sunday/why-i-use-trigger-warnings.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/20/opinion/sunday/why-i-use-trigger-warnings.html?_r=0)
- Sue, D. Wing, Lin. A. I., Torino, G. C., Capodilupo, C. M., & Rivera, D. P. (2009). Racial microaggressions and difficult dialogues on race in the classroom. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 15(2), 183-190.
- Warren, Lee. (n.d.). Managing hot moments in the classroom. Harvard University: Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning. <http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/html/icb.topic58474/hotmoments.html>

## Website References:

U.S. military's exploitation of Native American languages and simultaneous U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs' attempts to exterminate those same languages:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26963624>

Minnesota's anti-Germanism:

<http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHHistoryMagazine/articles/47/v47i05p170-183.pdf>

NDSU's Bjørnson obelisk, displaying first stanza of Norway's national anthem:

<http://library.ndsu.edu/fargo-history/?q=content/bjornson-monument>

<http://heritagerenewal.org/stone/bjornson.htm>

<http://digitalhorizonsonline.org/cdm/ref/collection/uw/id/1935>

U.S.-Dakota War:

<http://www.usdakotawar.org>