

# Engaging Diversity and Culture in the Classroom: How to Get the Conversation Started

diversity  
starts here



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## **Before Beginning the Discussion:**

**We need students to understand why we are having this discussion. Here is a list of outcomes:**

- To understand and respect differing viewpoints
- To develop the ability to explore and experience diverse world views, experiences, and viewpoints
- To understand how others have developed very strong opinions based on personal experience, family history, and culture
- To value diverse perspectives and to change our own perceptions and/or pre-conceived notions
- To create meaningful and productive discussions of controversial topics

**These conversations are not only important in specifically discussing diversity, but they are essential in teaching students how to understand different opinions, viewpoints, and experiences. Critical thinking skills are developed by encouraging students to discuss real world situations.**

## **How to Begin the Discussion:**

### **Brainstorming:**

- Discuss words that come to mind when you hear the word, "diversity."
- Was race the first thing you thought about? If so, why?
- After looking at the list of words that you associate with diversity, what is missing from the list?

### **Freewriting and/ or Discussion Suggestions:**

- Why do you suppose that people are generally afraid to start discussions about diversity?
- In your own words, define diversity.
- Are we influenced by upbringing, by society, or both?
- The best way to develop tolerance is to take time to understand the people around you. What are some opportunities on campus that have allowed you to develop more tolerance? Are there some opportunities available that you have yet to take advantage of?

### **Short Essay Suggestions:**

1. Describe how discrimination has specifically affected your life, either in the past or in the present.
2. Describe the community in which you grew up in terms of race, culture, religion, and social class. How would you be a different person if you grew up elsewhere?
3. Discuss a situation in which you have witnessed intolerance. Discuss the effects on the offender and the victim.
4. Discuss a situation in which you have witnessed tolerance. How was the situation properly handled, and what was the outcome?
5. How has your view of diversity changed over the years? Do you think it will change or develop during your time in college? What are some possible situations that will cause the changes?

## **Some Key Words for Diversity:**

- Equity
- Non-discrimination
- Anti-racism
- Social justice
- Culture
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Gender and sexism
- Sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression
- Ageism
- Social class/classism/poverty
- Disability/Ableism
- Religious background
- Language
- Inclusion/Exclusion
- Perception
- Stigma
- Body image
- Tolerance/Intolerance

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA AND CURRENT EVENTS:

- **Discussions about social media are inherently important because it is important for our students to realize that MOST of the information they are receiving in their everyday lives is derived from social media. This is a huge problem because social media is a contributor to the age of misinformation. This discussion of social media is extremely relevant when engaging in topics of diversity since the recent election has created so much controversy and fear in terms of marginalization.**
  - **I formed 3 questions this week that have opened up the discussion of the recent election by keeping it open-ended. I framed the questions around marginalization, opposing viewpoints (also a diversity issue), and misinformation.**
  - **Each question presents a problem while asking students to develop a solution to the problem. When we think of problems and solutions, we must think together as a group of policymakers in the classroom. This collective reason helps to break down barriers between diverse thinkers, at least in a classroom setting.**
- 1) How will wearing a safety pin help out marginalized groups in this country? Is wearing a safety pin a promotion of anti-Trump rhetoric? If so, will the safety pin peacefully raise awareness or cause further political arguments between Trump supporters and non-Trump supporters? Is there a better solution to this problem? If so, what would be a better solution?
  - 2) How has misinformation from social media sources affected people's decisions before, during, and after this past election? How could problems have been avoided? Obviously we can't ignore our temptation to read articles that others post on Facebook, and we can't ignore what we see on our friends' twitter feeds. What can we do to improve upon how we're informed?
  - 3) Why are we as a society more likely to believe negative information about a political candidate or any other public figure than we are to believe positive information about that individual? Is there a solution to this problem? If so, what is a good solution?

**Next, I presented them with an article that unintentionally fell into my lap last night. This article is amazing because it teaches our students about the root of the problem by simply not believing everything they read!! If the rest of our society would take the time to do their research, we may actually have productive discussions from diverse populations instead of so much opposition and hatred!**

CONTRIBUTOR

# Bernie Sanders Could Replace President Trump With Little-Known Loophole

11/14/2016 01:05 pm ET | Updated 10 hours ago

Matt Masur Entrepreneur, New Media Personality & Progressive Activist



MATTHEW MASUR

Bernie Sanders in Syracuse, N.Y., 2016

Here is exactly what we need to do to save our great society. The information here is what we've all been waiting for. By doing this we can make Bernie the president on Inauguration day rather than President-elect Donald Trump.

Actually, no we can't. There is no loophole that allows a random person to assume the office of president. That's pretty basic common sense but yet you clicked or even shared this article anyway. Now that right there is the real point of this post...

Our social media sites have been flooded with misinformation in the past few months. While this has always been a problem, it now appears to have exploded over this election season. We are seeing post after post stating just plain illogical things and this is not a problem unique to any one side.

Even more dangerous are the posts that don't appear to be far-fetched until you dig into the details. The big problem with that... People don't dig for the details.

***There will be many people who clicked share on this post because of its headline. They may not even click to open the story. They will never actually read these words. Ironically these are the folks who need to hear it the most.***

As John Oliver correctly pointed out Sunday night, folks are being fed what they want to hear and they're eating it up like a starving person. The most important thing in a functional society is a well-informed public. What we have now is not only uninformed but misinformed masses. That's something that should scare us all.

***“The most important thing in a functional society is a well-informed public. What we have now is not only uninformed but misinformed masses.”***

How do we combat this problem? Easy, we have to do some work. While I could give a long dissertation on what exactly that means, no one has the patience to read it all, so here are five quick steps that'll fit in a meme...

- 1. Read first. Then share.** I myself am guilty of basing comments or even clicking share based on the headline. This is the worst thing any of us could do. Stop being lazy.
- 2. Check the source (and their sources).** In the age of new media true and valid information comes from non-traditional sources but so does a lot of garbage. Any article that posts facts, figures or quotes should provide a source for that information. If there is no backup for their claims, move on.
- 3. Watch out for recycled stories.** One thing that seems to be feeding into the misinformation problem is when old stories are being presented as happening now. Check the date on the story before you read on. You'll be shocked to see how many are from another time and aren't applicable to the current event you thought they were talking about.
- 4. If you care about facts, ignore the blatantly slanted.** Having a slant or taking a position on a story is not wrong in itself. What is wrong is when these ideas are taken as unbiased fact. You can avoid all of this by simply avoiding those sites to start with. Any website with the words: Conservative, Liberal, Democrat, Republican, etc. in the title are just advertising how slanted they are. That's ok if you choose to live in your side's bubble but please don't have any delusions that these stories reflect the whole picture.

- 5. Google it.** God (and Sergey) gave us Google for a reason. If you see a story that's unbelievable or has no sources or even if it does, verify. See if the same facts are reported across multiple outlets. See if anyone disputes these facts. Read these pieces and then make up your mind.

If we could all take these simple steps our society would be a better place. We all have opinions and leanings. There is nothing wrong with that but could we at least all come from a starting point based on facts and reality?

The truth is, sharing illogical things begins to erode YOUR credibility and it makes you look foolish. Trust me, I speak from experience.

Now go share this, please.