

## How to foster effective dialogue and promote civic engagement in the classroom

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### Project Summary

Graduate students, faculty, and lecturers are often undertrained in effective teaching, especially with regard to fostering open dialogue and communication about potentially polarizing topics in the classroom. The goal of this project was to increase the capacity of UC educators to facilitate effective dialogue within their classrooms or discussion sections. This was accomplished through a two-part workshop. We invited two experts in the field to share their experience and answer questions from the participants, and subsequently facilitated a discussion on different scenarios that might arise in their courses and prompt difficult conversations. We planned for instructors – whether new graduate student instructors or tenured professors – to leave the workshop with: 1) new ideas for how to promote classroom dialogue around topics such as political issues, 2) a greater sense of agency for and confidence in being able to incorporate those ideas into the courses they teach, and 3) the resources and materials for executing those ideas.

### Impact

This work had a significant impact on the campus community. The number of instructors that attended the workshop (late in the afternoon during Week 10!) demonstrates how hungry our faculty and graduate students are for training in these skills. Providing attendees with concrete strategies and information from experts has planted the seeds for fostering these skills across many different disciplines. The resources we shared back to attendees will also be useful as they teach their courses. Finally, with challenging events (e.g., the

election) coming up in the near future, the skills discussed in our workshop will be implemented as attendees teach their courses.

We were able to meet the majority of our project objectives through implementing this workshop. We fostered discussion of strategies for handling difficult conversations in the classroom, and provided instructors with a platform to think about the strategies and materials they would want to implement in their classrooms. We had originally wanted to create more discipline-specific materials in collaboration with other faculty members, but we were unable to bring this part of the original proposal to fruition.

25 individuals' total: 15 individuals joined over Zoom, and 10 joined in-person. We had 32 individuals fill out our RSVP indicating interest in the workshop. Faculty, staff, and graduate students attended.