**Guidelines for Respectful, Constructive, & Inclusive Discussion**

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**Terms to know**:

**Incredulous**: showing disbelief, often in an exaggerated manner

**Succinct**: short and to the point

**Interlocutor**: person whom you are speaking to

**Constructive**: aimed at building ideas or seeking truth together

**Zero-sum game**: a situation in which one can only win if the other loses: 1 (win) + -1 (loss)=0

**Unsophisticated**: naïve; lacking complexity

**Instructions**: Next to each norm, write a self-analysis about how you well you are at the norm: analysis might say such things as ‘I’m usually nice, but I have a hard time on certain topics’, or ‘I need to work on interrupting less’, or ‘I could work on seeing the positive in views I disagree with’, or even ‘I’m pretty good at succinct answers—I might even need to speak a bit more’, etc.

**I. Norms of respect**

1. Be nice:

2. Don’t interrupt:

3. Don’t present objections as flat dismissals: leave open the possibility that there’s a response:

4. Don’t be incredulous:

5. Don’t roll your eyes, make faces, laugh at a participant, etc., especially to others on the side:

6. Don’t start side conversations parallel to the main discussion:

7. Acknowledge your interlocutor’s insights; i.e., reflect back what they’re saying and the parts you think are right:

8. Object to theses/arguments, don’t object to people:

**Notes:**

**II. Norms of constructiveness**

1. Objections are fine, but it’s also always OK to be constructive, building on a speaker’s project or strengthening their position. Even objections can often be cast in a constructive way.

2. Even when an objection is destructive with respect to a position, it often helps to find a positive insight suggested by the objection.

3. If you find yourself thinking that the project is worthless and there is nothing to be learned from it, think twice before asking your question.

4. It’s OK to question the presuppositions of a project or an idea, but discussions in which these questions dominate can be unhelpful.

5. You don’t need to keep pressing the same objection (individually or collectively) until the speaker says uncle.

6. Remember that debate isn’t a zero-sum game.

**Notes:**

**III. Norms of inclusiveness:**

1. Don’t dominate the discussion (partial exception for the teacher here!).

2. Raise one question per question (follow-ups are sometimes OK, but questions on different topics go to the back of the queue).

3. Try not to let your question (or your answer) run on forever.

4. Acknowledge points made by previous questioners.

5. It’s OK to ask a question that you think may be unsophisticated or uninformed.

6. Don’t use unnecessarily offensive examples.

**Notes:**