

SOC 300

Syllabus and Course Manual

Spring 2010

Monday or Tuesday, 3:35-6:35 pm

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SOC 300 OVERVIEW

By joining this class, you have chosen to explore the power and potential of conversation while, at the same time, helping others to do the same. However, there is something deeper that has brought you to this work, something important and personal that you are in this class to realize. Only you know what that might be. And only you can enliven this semester-long experience in ways that will make the learning “yours” and illuminate what brought you here in the first place. My sincere hope is that you will feel inspired and encouraged to do just that.

MISSION:

The mission of SOC 300 is to prepare you to create an *ideologically neutral environment* for dialogue so that participants can recognize and voice their true concerns about race relations—and begin to address these concerns in a productive, meaningful way.

PHILOSOPHY:

The expression of one's viewpoint on an issue is the beginning of greater understanding and knowledge of that issue. And the experience of doing so in a group setting creates a kind of synergy that advances critical thinking, bridge building, and self-understanding.

METHOD:

We employ a version of the Socratic Method to enable group members to excavate their personal stories, experiences, and views.

FACILITATOR GOALS:

The goal of a facilitator is to use their intuition, honest curiosity and skills to invite participants into conversations that are “live” and uncharted.

BEING YOURSELF:

You were chosen to be a group facilitator because of who you are. So you will be most successful this semester if you can allow yourself to *be* that person, to allow that person to have a clear voice, and to share that person with the students in your discussion sections, as well as the other facilitators in SOC 300. This is the most important idea to remember as you try out the skills of group facilitation because the concepts are meant to provide a vision of how to lead a group, not to encourage you to act like someone else.

WHAT YOU NEED TO SUCCEED:

You were not chosen to be a group facilitator because you are free of racism or classism, or sexism, or heterosexism, or whatever other biases you can imagine. You were chosen because you recognize the potential that exists in *live* conversation. Moreover, you understand the value of giving voice to divergent perspectives and you want to be a part of that process. But you still have a lot to learn—and you will make mistakes. That is the nature of this work. That is the nature of learning. That is the nature of living. The good news is that the most effective facilitators are the ones who are simply willing to admit to their blind spots and start from there; just like the most effective learners are the ones who are willing to make mistakes and learn from them. So if you approach this work with humility, as well as a commitment to being real, to making mistakes, to learning, to exploring, and even to playing, you will have all you need.

DUAL ROLES:

In SOC 300, you will be fulfilling two different roles—student and “employee.” You were chosen to perform the job of facilitator. (That’s the part that makes you an employee.) At the same time, you have to learn how to do that job—as well as a great deal of other things—in order to accomplish the responsibilities of the position. (That’s the part that makes you a student.) This distinction will be important for how the class is run, how your grade is determined and what is expected from your work.

SOC 300 STAFF (contact information above):

Laurie is obviously the course instructor—and the co-director of the Race Relations Project. She will act primarily as a facilitator of dialogue in class (and you should consider this a model for your work). She will also co-create the skills training component with Will and Danna Jayne.

Will and Danna Jayne are seasoned Facilitator Trainers. We are lucky to have them sharing their energy, their insight, and their skills with SOC 300. They will be the ones who will help you to acquire skills to become facilitators—and who will provide many related experiences to help you to grow.

is currently a graduate student in the Department of Communications—and (interesting fact) he took SOC 119 *the first time Sam taught it!* He was also a teaching assistant way back in the day too. He will co-facilitate the dialogue portion of the class with Laurie.

Assistants. There are several undergraduate assistants who work “behind the scenes” with SOC 300. They are responsible for observing the discussion groups and monitoring the SOC 119 grading. Because these assistants observe multiple groups and monitor many journals per week, their insights are particularly helpful to all of us as we seek better

ways to engage students throughout the semester. If you have any questions or concerns about their work, please discuss them with Danna Jayne.

Note: When the discussion group assistants visit your sections, they will not act as facilitators. Instead, they will mostly *participate* in the conversation like the other group members so that no one feels “watched.” As such, please be sure to introduce them at the beginning of the meeting so your students are not wondering who these additional group members are and why they are present. That confusion can get in the way of the discussion. You can simply say, “This is Fernanda. She is a former SOC 119 TA and she will be joining our group several times this semester.”

YOUR GRADE:

Unlike some classes in which the instructor can award only a small percentage of A’s, it is possible for you and every other teaching assistant in the course to receive an A. Why? Because that means that you have done everything necessary to make the SOC 119 discussion groups work. And that is what we want. But as you think about your grade, remember that a single score cannot come close to reflecting how much you will have learned or achieved through your experience this semester. In fact, the more you learn, the less your grade will be a relevant measure of what you have gained. So I hope that you will only see your grade as an indicator of how well you followed the rules that must be in place in order to make our work most effective. Beyond that, how you live with what you have learned is the best indicator of your “success”—not your letter grade.

QUIZ– 25 points (1 point per question)

There will be a quiz on the required readings. The quiz will consist of mostly multiple choice questions intended to ensure that you’ve done the reading. So, as long as you have, you will choose the correct answer.

OUT OF CLASS ASSIGNMENTS – 10 points (2 points per assignment)

Required reading: The Four Agreements (available at the PSU Bookstore) and the Course Manual (a PDF file that you can download and print from www.racerelationsproject.org).

Self work: There will be a total of five assignments to be completed outside of class throughout the semester. Each will focus on you and your development. (That is why they are called “self work.”) The assignments will range from reflective writing to some other kind of expressive work. Due dates and details will be given by Will and Danna Jayne as the assignment becomes relevant to your training. Each assignment will be worth two points. And two points will be earned if the assignment is completed. Simple as that. ☺

CLASS ATTENDANCE – 40 points (3 points per class)

Because you have not received training prior to becoming a facilitator, it is essential that you are present for **every class** throughout the semester. It is a commitment necessary for you to acquire the knowledge and practice to effectively lead your groups. You will lose three points toward your grade for each class that you fail to attend. Moreover, you must be in class and ready to begin on time. Once class begins, you will lose one attendance point if you arrive late. **Note:** **There is ONE “free absence” (but if you don’t use it, we will add a point to your final grade).**

If you are sick, do NOT come to class; we will send you home anyway. So use your free absence wisely.

Special Penn State Flu Protocols [in compliance with *Pennsylvania Department of Health and Centers for Disease Control* recommendations]: It is very important that individuals avoid spreading the flu to others. Students should NOT attend class or any public gatherings while ill with influenza. Those with flu symptoms will be asked to leave campus if possible and to return home during recovery. The illness and self-isolation period will usually be about a week.

PREPARATION FOR DISCUSSION GROUPS – 25 points

A Group Assistant will visit each of your discussion sections at least three times throughout the semester. Mostly, they will be present to observe group process and to keep me briefed on what is happening *in the groups*. However, they will also be responsible for checking to see that you are present and punctual, that you begin and end the group on time, and that you notify your co-facilitator (and me) in the event that you must miss class. In addition, the ANGEL supervisor will be monitoring the journal grading all semester. As with the group assistants, the ANGEL supervisor will provide feedback to me about the common journal themes and specific reactions of SOC 119 students to the class material. However, they will also be responsible for determining if your grades are up-to-date each week and deducting points from your grade if they are not.

Below is the way point losses are coded for your preparation grade:

- 1 Discussion group does not begin/end on time (-1)
- 2 TA is absent without notifying co-facilitator and Danna Jayne (-3)
- 3 TA is late to discussion group (-1)
- 4 Mistake with grades (-1) (after one warning)
- 5 Grades not completed on time (-2)

GRADING SCALE FOR SOC 300

92-100 points	A
90-91 points	A-
87-89 points	B+
82-86 points	B
80-81 points	B-
78-79 points	C+
70-77 points	C
61-69 points	D

For your comparison: While individual instructors determine the methods of evaluation for their courses, here is a suggested grading scale from the College of the Liberal Arts: A = 95 to 100; A- = 90 to 94.9; B+ = 87.9 to 89.9; B = 83.33 to 87.8; B- = 80 to 83.32; C+ = 75 to 79.9 C = 70 to 74.9; D = 60 to 69.9 and F = 59.9 and below.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY STATEMENT

The Pennsylvania State University defines academic integrity as the pursuit of scholarly activity in an open, honest and responsible manner. All students should act with personal integrity, respect other students' dignity, rights and property, and help create and maintain an environment in which all can succeed through the fruits of their efforts (Faculty Senate Policy 49-20). Dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions and will be reported to the University's Judicial Affairs office for possible further disciplinary sanction.

DISABILITY ACCESS STATEMENT

The Pennsylvania State University encourages qualified people with disabilities to participate in its programs and activities and is committed to the policy that all people shall have equal access to programs, facilities, and admissions without regard to personal characteristics not related to ability, performance, or qualifications as determined by University policy or by state or federal authorities. If you anticipate needing any type of accommodation in this course or have questions about physical access, please tell the instructor as soon as possible.

SOC 119 DISCUSSION GROUPS

GUIDELINES FOR FACILITATORS:

1. NEVER CANCEL CLASS. If there is some reason why you cannot attend your group, CALL your co-facilitator to let them know—AND call your Group Assistant to see if they can substitute for you. If they cannot, call Danna Jayne to determine how the group will be conducted that day. Do not just send an email and expect that someone will read it before your section begins.
2. ARRIVE EARLY. The facilitators should be present to greet students as they arrive and to address any student concerns about class or assignments. You should NEVER be late. In fact, “on time” for you is five minutes early.
3. DO NOT PERMIT A CLOSE FRIEND TO JOIN YOUR DISCUSSION SECTION. You should not have hidden alliances with any group member. It alters *your* effectiveness as a facilitator and *their* experience as a group member. If this happens to occur, tell your friend that they will need to switch to a different section—and then talk to Laurie so we can work out the details.
4. DO NOT “CUT BREAKS.” As you get to know your group members, the natural tendency is to relax the rules if someone misses a class, shows up late, or turns in unsatisfactory assignments. All students should receive the same treatment so they have an equal chance when receiving grades. If one of your group members has a chronic illness (or other serious problem), talk to me about whether they should be exempted from any course policies. But do not make any policy decisions on your own.
5. DO NOT SHOW FILMS (OR MEET SOCIALLY) DURING GROUP TIME. The group is created as an opportunity for students to speak to one another. Conversation cannot happen if they are watching a DVD or meeting at The Diner. A 2-minute You Tube video or clip from a film can work as a conversation *starter*, but ninety-five percent of the session should be devoted to face-to-face interaction.
6. DO NOT MEET OUTSIDE. Group discussions cannot be productive when the members are distracted by the activity and noise of a public place. So stay in the classroom...no matter how "nice" the weather is.
7. KEEP TRACK OF TIME. Group members should not have to pay attention to their watches. Start on time. End on time. And let students know that you will be vigilant, so they do not pack their things early. This means you will have to tactfully cut off a person who happens to be speaking when class time has ended. It also means that you should never end class early.
8. DO NOT SET YOUR OWN POLICY. If you are unclear or confused about what is expected of you or other students in your group, ask! We need absolute consistency between facilitators.
9. BE CAREFUL ABOUT ESTABLISHING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH GROUP MEMBERS DURING THE SEMESTER. Because you are responsible for grading and facilitating in a classroom setting, you have an asymmetric relationship with the students in your group. As such, you must be careful about engaging in certain activities with students who would otherwise be your peers. So here are some simple guidelines: Do not “party” with them, allow them to buy you drinks, or have a sexual relationship with them during the semester. For the rest, use your best judgment. And if you still have questions about what is appropriate, talk to me.
10. ALL QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS REGARDING YOUR YOUR DISCUSSION GROUPS SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO WILL AND DANNA JAYNE. Otherwise, we wind up duplicating work—or giving you different answers. That is not only confusing to you, but a poor use of time for us.
11. ALL QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS REGARDING GRADING AND ANGEL ISSUES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO THE ANGEL ASSISTANT.

12. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO RESPOND TO ANY ELECTRONIC MAIL THAT IS SENT FROM STUDENTS VIA THE ANGEL SYSTEM. Though many SOC 119 students send ANGEL emails to "all faculty," **you** are responsible for responding to their emails—or forwarding it to the appropriate person. If a student is having a technical problem, forward their message to the ANGEL assistant.

WEEKLY GROUP RESPONSIBILITIES:

The following is a brief listing of tasks that must be completed every group session. You should decide with your co-facilitator who will do what so that neither of you is more "in charge"—and all the jobs are completed. **(Remember, you must touch base with one another before each group meeting to plan how to initiate the discussion.)**

- ~Nametags (collect them and pass them out)
- ~Record attendance and lateness
- ~Put chairs in a circle (and return them to their original placement)
- ~Keep time
- ~Erase the board and throw away trash when leaving

By the way, if your group meeting must run slightly over time, inform the next instructor that you will be finishing shortly; but NEVER cut into time for the next class.

THE BASIC WORK OF A GROUP FACILITATOR:

The central part of your job as a facilitator is to help to bring the conversation to life. Think about it. There are so many conversations that *almost* begin between friends, family members, colleagues, people on the street, but they often do not "go anywhere" because proper attention is not given to the seedlings of possibility that exist in the beginning communications. By contrast, this semester, you will pay great attention to small details for the purpose of supporting and encouraging conversation. When that occurs, the deeper connections can evolve more naturally from the interactions that follow. This means that the discussion groups are not forums for you to teach or to preach, but rather for you to assist in removing impediments to openhearted and intellectually searching dialogue.

CREATING THE ATMOSPHERE

The seating arrangement matters. So it should be deliberately set up so that everyone can see everyone else *easily* and, thus, everyone is equally included in the conversation. That means you should make a good circle every time, a circle where no one has to strain to participate fully. Remember, one of the surest ways to shut someone out of a conversation is to have them seated on the fringe of the circle where they must strain to make eye contact with some of the group members. Avoid that problem from the beginning by making the circle tight, but comfortable.

Facilitators should not sit together, and you should not sit in the "teacher spot." In other words, you should not be seated in a position in the circle that is in the front of the room—near the traditional place where lectures are given. Moreover, it is a good idea to ask people to sit in different seats every week so they get to know every group member (and so they don't sit with friends who are in the same section).

If you are lucky enough to have a room where the lights are on a dimmer, turn down the brightness a little. If you don't have that luxury in your meeting room, try turning off one set of lights to create a softer atmosphere.

Make nametags so that group members can refer to each other by name and use them for the first few weeks. So be sure to bring a large magic marker to the first group session so they can write their names largely enough on a sheet of paper to be easily read across the room. However, group members should not be relying on nametags after the first few weeks. If you notice that group members are not addressing one another by name, challenge them, talk about it (you may find that they do not want to mispronounce some unfamiliar names). Remember, the goal is to have each participant to be in practice of addressing one another in every discussion; to get them to talk to each other rather than just throw comments into the circle.

If your group needs help with names after a few weeks, you can play a “name game.” A simple game is to have each individual say their name and a word that starts with the same letter—like “Laughing Laurie.” As they go around the circle, each person has to remember the name and descriptor of every other person in the circle before them. This is a silly, but very effective, way to get people to remember names!

Avoid saying “we will not judge one another.” This is a noble goal when trying to create a trusting atmosphere, but unfortunately, it is an unrealistic one. We are all judging one another every minute—even in benign ways like “she looks like she doesn’t feel well.” Instead, encourage group members to simply “own” their judgments, and even to risk giving those judgments a voice. It is “deadly” to group development (and human relationships) when we feel we must pretend that we are not judging one another. We need to learn to *accept* judgment (our own and others’) and to find ways to build relationships between one another anyway.

ASKING OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS ****This could be your most important skill!!**

The art of facilitating is based on the ability to ask open-ended, generous questions. These are the kinds of questions that cannot be answered with a short “yes” or “no.” Instead, they call forth a broader response from the person asked. For example, rather than ask, “Reni, do you agree with what Darren is saying?” (to which he could simply answer “yes” or “no”), you might say, “Reni, *what do you think about* what Darren just said?” Or “*How does it make you feel to hear* what Darren just said?” These questions require responses with greater depth and complexity. And this is exactly what we want to encourage. Here are some additional examples:

Instead of saying “Does that make you [angry, sad, confused]?” say “***What is your reaction to that viewpoint?***”
 Instead of saying “Does anyone agree with what [Arturo] is saying?” say “***Let’s hear someone else’s view of this issue.***”
 Instead of saying “Would you ever [do a certain thing]?” say “***How do you see yourself responding in that situation?***”

What you should notice about open-ended questions is that they NEVER begin with “why.” And that is because, in a subtle way, when you ask “why,” you are asking someone to defend a position or to justify a conclusion. Think about it: “Why do you hang out with that group of people?” implicitly asks someone for their conclusion about or justification for that choice. By contrast, when you ask “how” or “what” questions, you are asking them to describe the process. For example, “How did you choose that group of friends?” is a much broader question that seeks an understanding of the process that occurred (and the story involved) rather than a simple and narrow reason.

Asking for *stories* leads to a much richer conversation than asking for *reasons*. Think about it...

As you begin to acquire the very positive habit of asking open-ended questions, you will naturally want to expand your repertoire and create even better ones. The section below provides the basis for composing the kinds of questions that are not only open-ended and varied, but also unique and full of possibility. These are the kinds of questions that can make a difference to the person who is asked. And this is the basis of the best work you can do as a group facilitator.

Remember: The following questions are intended to be *model questions*. In other words, in their current state, they are “sterile” questions. But there are designed to be sterile so that you can apply them to any situation or issue. You will have to find ways to put them into your own words—and into words that will fit the context. That will give “life” to the questions and make them “work.” But trust me, once you can do this effectively, you will never go back to the lazy way of asking questions because you will discover how much more interesting a conversation can be.

EXPLORING AN ISSUE

1. **How do you imagine [the issue] to be? What aspects of [the issue] concern you?**
2. **What do you see when you think about [the issue]? What information do you have about [the issue]? What have you heard about [the issue]?**
3. **How do you interpret [the issue]? What do you think are the reasons for [the issue]? What is the relationship of [this issue] to [that issue]?**
4. **What are the results of [the issue] for you? How does [the issue] make you feel?**

DIGGING DEEPER

1. **How would you like [the issue] to be? How *could* it be?**
2. **How can [the issue] be changed? What needs to change? What can make a difference? What will it take to make the changes?**
3. **What are all the different ways this could be accomplished?**
4. **How would [that idea] affect other people, other programs, other issues, etc?**
5. **What keeps you from doing [that]? What keeps [this issue] from being solved?**
6. **What could you add to [this]? What would it take for you to participate in [this]? What aspects of [this] interest you most?**
7. **What do you need to do? Who could you join? How can you get others involved with you?**

Adapted from Strategic Questioning: An Approach to Creating Personal and Social Change by Fran Peavey

ACTIVE LISTENING

Active listening is more than taking in information. Active listening is a powerful skill that is the foundation for changing the world—and changing ourselves. How so? Well, active listening is a posture of being fully in the moment—and taking in *everything* that is there. This is a rare kind of listening—listening with your whole being. In fact, when you are truly present, you are listening with your mind and your heart; and you are listening with the intent to understand, rather than to uncover the flaws in someone’s perspective, or the clues that will prove that they are the type of person you have already judged them to be.

But active listening can only occur when you are being yourself, when you do not withdraw, when you stay with what is happening in the interaction and what is happening within you. None of this is easy. It will challenge all of your weak spots, all of the techniques you have learned to avoid things that hurt you and to attack things that threaten who you think you are. Nonetheless, this is the posture you should be seeking this semester to do the best work you can do as a facilitator (and more importantly, as a human being).

Active listening is actually a radical thing. Yet it is a *necessary skill* that must be acquired for effective group facilitation. Still, most people don’t even think that they need to *learn* how to listen, let alone *improve* their listening skills at all. So you are faced with quite a task this semester as you are challenged to listen more fully. Remember, active listening has the power to stop wars (interpersonal and even international) because war is fundamentally the result of not listening—and not wanting to listen for fear of hearing things that you don’t want to hear. That may be a huge statement, but think about it. Think about the ways your friends and family members listen (or do not listen). Better yet, pay attention to how often you feel deeply “heard.” Then pay attention to yourself and how well you are listening.

On a practical note, the more active, more attuned is your listening, the more “material” you have to work with in a group setting (and the better and more authentic your questions will be). Often this means listening to more than just the words, but listening to what is behind the words. *In fact, if you listen for the themes and core messages behind what someone is saying, you will never be at a loss for a way to respond to them.*

Start to notice the specific obstacles that keep you from listening actively to others (as well as those that have the same effect in your discussion groups). Then think about what is keeping you from giving more of yourself to the conversation. This may be an important part of your personal work this semester, and it will help your facilitation skills.

When you are truly listening in a group setting, it helps if you have some paper on which you can unobtrusively mark down notes indicating ideas or questions to return to when the speaker finishes or the conversation evolves to a certain place. Taking brief notes in this way suggests to the participants that you are actively engaged with what they are saying. I am not suggesting that you “take notes,” just that you do not let your thoughts and inspirations slip away in the busy-ness of the group.

CREATING SOCRATIC DIALOGUE

In a nutshell, the Socratic Method is a method of dialogue that allows a group of individuals to discern what they think about a topic through a process of asking and responding to one another's inquiries. When an individual finds that they have views that cannot stand up to constructive critique, these views are then revised and reshaped. This dynamic process helps people to "discover" their opinions. And we want to encourage this type of discovery in the discussion sections because most opinions are more akin to knee-jerk reactions than to conclusions based on critical exploration. Here are some "rules of thumb" for creating Socratic dialogue:

1. Follow the argument wherever it leads. In other words, do not try to instruct or persuade one another, but think together and trust the argument to lead to insight, sometimes to very unexpected insights.
2. No subject is off-limits if it is relevant and interruptions are necessary to guide and deepen the exchange.
3. Democracy occurs because everyone listens, not because everyone has equal time to talk. When a good basketball team is on the offensive, its members do not snatch the ball from each other but support the player who has it, who in turn passes it to a teammate whenever a pass is called for by the common purpose of the team.
4. In the early stages of a dialogue, a wild idea is often more fruitful than a prematurely prudent one. The imaginative and the unexpected were frequent ingredients in Socrates' own style—and should be encouraged in our circles.

**adapted from a collection of "Notes on Dialogue" for students taking a course with J. Cutsinger, Dept of Religious Studies, University of S. Carolina
<http://www.cutsinger.net/socratic.html>

ENCOURAGING CONSTRUCTIVE PARTICIPATION

The following are some questions that participants should be encouraged to ask one another when engaged in open dialogue. They allow the group members to begin to explore their different perspectives *together* without slipping into the mode of debate (where participants are trying to persuade and convince and win). Experiment with these in SOC 300 when you are the participant.

*Here is my view and how I arrived at it. How does it sound to you?
 Do you see gaps in my reasoning? What are they?
 Do you have different data? What are they?
 Do you have different conclusions? What are they?
 How did you arrive at your view?
 Are you taking into account something different from what I have considered? What is it?*

**adapted from <http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/schools/wjhs/depts/socialst/ams/Skills/SocraticSeminar/SocraticSeminarIntro.html>

SOME SIMPLE FACILITATION TECHNIQUES:

RAPPORT BUILDING It is essential to interact with group members in a welcoming and friendly way (especially in the beginning). Learning names, interacting directly with individuals and encouraging them to interact with one another are all helpful ways to accomplish this. In addition, communicating interest in and openness to group members is important aid in the process of developing a sense of group identity and cohesiveness. Good rapport is characterized by a feeling in the group of togetherness and common goals. By building good rapport, a you can take more risks as a facilitator to "go deeper" because you will have the support of the group.

STARTING-OFF Good start-off questions will make the entrance into dialogue as smooth as possible by taking a firm step toward meaningful conversation without going faster than participants are ready. An example of a question that may

be too-abrupt is, "So, how do you feel you are affected by racial stereotypes?" By contrast, start off questions that have proven effective include: "So, when was the last time you thought/talked about race?" "Who has a recent race-related thought or experience that they would like to share?" "What have you seen on campus in regards to race?"

HELPFUL PHRASES Sometimes all you need to move a discussion forward is a simple phrase. Below are a few common ones that can help. It is a good idea to get familiar with them before you begin facilitating because—as you will quickly discover—simply “having the words” is an essential tool in this work. They can be useful in smoothly shifting the discussion or tactfully asking a pointed question in a tense moment.

“I am curious about what is keeping [Jenae] so quiet today.”

“Who has a different way of seeing this?”

“[Greta], what is it like when no one agrees with your viewpoint?”

“[Marco] looks like he disagrees/agrees. Who else is wondering about his view on this?”

“[Shawna] clearly feels very passionately about this. We need to hear from someone else on this topic.”

“I’m wondering what is keeping the group so quiet today. Who has a thought about that?”

“[Deanna], let me stop you for a moment and open the floor to some alternate views.”

RETURNING TO A TOPIC Very often, a group just begins to discuss an important topic and (for various reasons) the subject gets changed by the group or by an individual member. Often facilitators sit by in disappointed silence, wishing the group could have continued on that issue. But already, the group is involved in another discussion and they feel that they should just follow the flow of the conversation. I disagree! If you feel that an “abandoned” topic is worth discussing further, simply direct the group back to that topic. This is your prerogative—and your responsibility. If you’re lost for words, say something like, “I want to go back to what we were just saying about....” or “We got off [that topic] a little too quickly. Let’s go back to our previous discussion....” or “What just happened? We were talking about [affirmative action] and now we’re on to [television]. We’ve got to back up.”

MAKE ROOM FOR VOICES FROM ALL ENDS OF THE SPECTRUM That means challenge yourself to ask questions from viewpoints that are not necessarily yours and to support individuals with whom you do not necessarily agree—and see how surprisingly the conversation evolves.

SLOW DOWN Go deeper into each topic that comes up. Find out more about what each person has to offer on the topic. Don’t rush from one thing to the next. There is no hurry. Revelation and reconciliation come with the simplest shift of perspectives about the tiniest things.

FOLLOW UP When someone says something like, “I don’t have a problem with it; that’s not a big deal to me,” this is not the end of the conversation! You can encourage them to say more. Don’t just stop there. You could continue with questions like: “What would it mean to have a problem with ‘x?’” “What would indicate to you that something *is* a big deal?” “Who do you think makes this a big deal?” “How do you interpret the difference between your life and the life of someone who thinks this is a big deal?”

UNCOVER INDIVIDUAL STORIES Getting someone to describe something about their life is more engaging to the group and more meaningful to them than hearing their opinion on an issue. Opinions are often superficial and categorical; but personal stories offer much more in the way of building relationships and understanding differing kinds of people. So we need to get to the stories underneath opinions. So, “what personal experience(s) have you had with that” is a simple re-direct to this more meaningful realm.

USE “HOW” INSTEAD OF “WHY”.

How did you make that choice?

How do you know what will hurt someone?

How can you tell you are open to other people?

USE “TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE”. This helps participants to get specific and can be a very vivid means for helping someone to express the way they perceive something.

USE UNPREDICTABLE QUESTIONS. We have to offer questions that participants will not anticipate. For example, in response to someone talking about people “all being created equal,” a facilitator asked, “How would it be if you found out that wasn’t true?” The group member didn’t have a ready answer. She had never thought about this. It forced her to think, explore, and express herself *in the moment*. Her response was fresh and candid and unrehearsed. Those are the kinds of responses we want to encourage.

GET SPECIFIC...GET DETAILS. Don’t simply accept the terms that participants use. Ask them to clarify. For example, what is a “bad neighborhood?” What is a “racist?” What does a person mean when they say something like “my mom/aunt doesn’t really mean what she says about ‘x’ people?” And “how did you learn that she meant something else?”

LIMIT THE HYPOTHETICAL (“WHAT IFS”). Focus more on what actually happens when x occurred in someone’s family/with their friends rather than “what if” it happened.

MORE ADVANCED FACILITATION SKILLS:

WEB-BUILDING Conversation can be thought of as creating an invisible web that stretches between individuals, connecting them to one another. Facilitators should keep an eye on where the web is being strung. Is the main focus of conversation jumping between facilitators and participants, and back to facilitators? Or is everyone in the room an equal participant? The *strongest conversations* have threads that are strung between participants, not just between facilitators and participants. Signs of really good web-building include: participants making direct statements to one another, participants asking one another questions, participants asking facilitators questions, participants making eye contact with one another, participants using each other's names, participants making statements that address the way in which their experiences relate to those of other people in the group.

Here are some techniques for web-building that have worked for RRP facilitators:

- Learning and *using* the names of participants
- Asking participants to respond to one another
- Making connective statements that relate the participants' experiences

GETTING PERSONAL It is the tendency of many groups to discuss race relations as a *topic*, something that we can all have ideas and opinions about, but that does not necessarily affect us on a real level. By contrast, you should always be guiding participants to express themselves in a way that is personal. By being able to voice their personal feelings and concerns, participants will get more out of the conversation experience as a whole. You can help participants to “get personal” by asking them to relate their own lives to what is being said in the conversation. Some questions that work include:

- “How do you *feel* about what so and so is saying about...?”
- “How do you see that being true for you in your life?”
- “What do you see in your daily life that would lead you to that?”
- “Can you give us an example of a time when you remember having that thought or experience?”

MIRRORING One of the most important roles that a facilitator can play is that of a mirror. It is the job of the facilitator, not to tell participants what to think, but to show them what they already think by making reflective statements. By hearing the facilitator summarize or reflect what they hear going on in the conversation, participants are empowered to draw their own conclusions and decide for themselves how to shape their own opinions. Here are some good examples:

- "I hear you saying..."
- "Earlier, when I asked X, we came up with these possible answers."
- "I saw that you had a reaction to what so and so said about..."

“STAYING IN THE ROOM” The best facilitators know how to keep the conversation “real.” For example, as participants sit together and discuss the dynamics of race relations, they are actually experiencing and expressing these very dynamics. To keep conversation “in the room,” you should gently guide the participants to discuss how race affects

them *in the moment*. So, if a participant is talking about how he/she feels interacting with someone of a different race, you can ask how the person feels talking about it with the people in the room who are of that race. Shifting the focus to the “here and now” is much more powerful and productive.

“STEERING INTO THE CURVE” “The curve” refers to an uncomfortable or awkward moment when something comes up or something happens, and there is some trepidation in addressing the issue directly. This may be a moment when the racial dynamics in the room become immediately apparent (but it could be anything). You can “steer into the curve” by directing the conversation *toward* the awkward issue (rather than away from it). For example, during a group where the discussion has focused on Latinos and immigration, a Korean participant says something like, “I always feel left out of conversations like this. I am always forgotten.” Steering into the curve would be to directly address this statement by asking the other participants to respond to his feelings and to share some of their impressions about why they may have limited their discussion of immigration to Latinos.

SEEKING ALTERNATIVE VIEWS Often, there will be a dominant opinion with which many participants in the group agree. Your goal is to help participants to see all of the facets of an issue, whether or not you agree with what participants are saying. By proactively seeking alternate or unspoken perspectives on an issue, you challenge participants to think for themselves in unfamiliar ways (instead of relying on what they have been told to think or what they think they are supposed to think). This is essential to critical thinking! Here are a few phrases that can help:

- "I am hearing _____. What might be another side of that?"
- "Who has a different way of seeing this?"
- "What do you think would be a _____ person's take on this?"
- "How might your life be different if you held a different view?"

SUPPORTING/CHALLENGING ALL VIEWS You must be committed to creating a venue where issues can be explored without participants feeling that you have an agenda (even if you do). Your ability to support and challenge all viewpoints that arise will determine how effective you are at creating an *ideologically neutral environment*—and this is what we want. This means that within the larger culture of bias and bigotry, the dialogue is unfolding in a space in which all perspectives can be explored equally.

CLARIFYING It is important to ask participants *what they really mean* when they are speaking. Sometimes, this can be as simple as asking them to expand on what they are saying if you are either confused or think the participants may be confused. You can also ask participants to give their explanation of a word they are using a lot. This happens a lot with pronouns: “I don’t have a problem with *it*,” “When I interact with *them*,” “Sometimes, *you* just make stereotypes.” It also happens with words that are used commonly in the race dialogue such as “diversity,” “racism,” and “issue” (as in “making race an issue”). By asking participants, “What do you/we mean when you/we say _____,” you can prevent yourself and other participants from making assumptions about what is being said and create a space for more in-depth exploration.

WHEN DIALOGUE GETS DIFFICULT:

Whenever you are faced with a difficult situation in your group, take a few deep breaths. This will relax you. And if you are relaxed, you will act with more clarity and calm than if you allow yourself to become anxious. It sounds simple, but it is a powerful tool. After you have taken a few breaths, you will need to act. The following sections will provide guidelines to help you to respond to predictable difficulties that occur in the discussion groups. These guidelines are intended to encourage learning among the group members and to maintain the community of your group when a difficult situation arises. As to unpredictable situations, you will have to take a deep breath and use your best judgment from all that you have learned.

WHEN SOMEONE CRIES Tears are not tragic. They are an expression of who we are—just like the timing of our laughter. Still, it is important to know how to respond when someone cries during a group meeting. There are no clear answers. This is a judgment call. The only “rule” is that you respond without fear. If you are afraid (i.e., uncomfortable, uncertain, etc.), take a deep breath and wait a moment. Then try to reach that fearless place in yourself so that you can respond from there.

And remember, sometimes people need to cry. They don't need to talk about it. They just need the space. Sometimes people need to talk through their tears. They need to tell their story and they need others to listen. It is probably best if you, as the facilitator, could simply state, "Carlos, I see that you're crying. Would you like the floor or would you prefer for us to come back to you?" Then follow the person's wishes. And if they do not want to speak at this time, remember that you can ask again a bit later if you feel so moved. By that time, they may be ready to share. If not, that's okay too.

WHEN SOMEONE "MONOPOLIZES" There are many reasons why certain people seem to regularly talk more than their "appropriate" share. Sometimes it may be nervousness. Sometimes it may be insensitivity to others' needs. Sometimes the person just has a lot to say. Whatever the reason, it is important for a group facilitator to address "monopolizing" straightforwardly. The more you let one or two people dominate the conversation, the more it will happen (and the more difficult it will be to address), and the more other group members will begin to lose interest in the group—and lose faith in your ability to set limits. I hope you can see how "deadly" this is for group process.

If you FEEL that someone is going on for too long (and yes, it is based on your feelings!), say something like: "I think you may be getting bogged down with details. What do you want us to know about [how that experience affected you]?" or "I'm getting a little lost. What was most bothersome/troubling/exciting about that experience?" If the person continues to monopolize, you could try something like: "I have to ask you to limit yourself to one [point] so that others have a chance to contribute."

But mostly, you just have to interrupt someone who is taking up too much time—any way you can! You should worry less about how tactful you are being with the monopolizer and more about how effectively you are working to give all the group members the opportunity to share their thoughts. So wave your hands or call "time" or do whatever works for you. But do it! And be persistent. This is a significant part of your job as a facilitator. (If you continue to have difficulty, bring it up in class. This is always an important topic for all of us to discuss.)

WHEN SOMEONE IS "SCAPEGOATED" Sometimes (for various reasons), a single person or subgroup will appear to receive all the frustration, confusion, hostility or disapproval of the group—disproportionate to the actions or attitude that they have displayed in the group. This person does not "deserve" all this attention. But somehow, they represent an issue or obstacle or type of person with which the group members find themselves struggling. And so, they receive "the wrath."

If you see this happening (i.e., the group members keep returning to a single individual and/or this person is becoming disturbed by the negative attention), you need to re-focus the discussion. Direct the group members to look at themselves, to explore *their* pain, *their* fear, *their* anger and even how this person has brought them to it. But the scapegoat should no longer be the focus of their discussion. The focus should be on what the other group members are feeling.

Here's another way to re-direct the subsequent discussion: "This is not all about [Maxine]. But you talk like you think you have met [her] before. So let's explore when that was, and where that was. And let's talk about who you think she is." Then have the "scapegoaters" tell their stories of the "Maxines" they know or others in their lives have known.

Let them know that the group will return to [Maxine] at a later session because they may have specific things they need to say to her, but that they must first get at the issues in themselves before they can go any further. Then talk to me about how to proceed.

WHEN THERE ARE SIDE CONVERSATIONS It is very disruptive for a group when the members are not all focusing on the speaker who "has the floor." Obviously, there will be times when a person can unobtrusively lean to their right or left and quietly make a comment such as, "Could you pass me that bag of candy?" But, for the most part, group members should realize that anything that they need to say during the group meeting should be expressed to the entire group—or not at all.

This is an issue that must be addressed immediately when it happens—or it will grow too large for you to handle. So when you recognize that a group member is making side comments, you must interrupt by saying, "Jodi, I notice you

have something to say. Why don't you hold off until Kendra is finished and then share it with the group." Or you could try something simple like, "Ernesto, Renata has the floor."

****If you have an ongoing problem with someone who engages in side conversations, talk to them privately. If that doesn't help, talk to me about what to do next.**

WHEN SOMEONE COMES LATE Group members should know that they are not to come to group more than five minutes late. This is meant to maximize the time in which people are engaged in an open discussion. Thus, it is important to establish in the beginning that you will keep track of lateness. Here is what you should do: When the first person comes late, wait until the group member who is currently speaking finishes. Then, say something like, "I just want to remind you guys that you only receive half credit for the attendance if you're late. From now on we won't mention it aloud, but we will be recording it." Then fill in the late person on what is happening in the group and proceed. Remember, it is not necessary to appear angry or disappointed about their lateness. You are simply following the rules yourself. So do not act coldly toward the latecomer or subtly exclude them from the conversation. In other words, do not take it as a personal offense. It is not. Just let them know what the topic is and then continue the discussion.

Finally, if some group member is regularly coming late to group, ask them privately what is preventing them from arriving on time. If there are extenuating circumstances, talk to me about it.

WHEN CONFLICT OCCURS Generally, when conflict occurs, you should pause the "back and forth" and ask each of the conflicting parties to share their view of what is happening. When that has happened, ask what each party thinks the others are missing. And finally, ask each party what the others could do or say that would let them know they were being "heard." This can take awhile and it does not always resolve the issue for every party, but it usually changes the dynamic of the conflict and creates an opening for conversation and greater understanding.

On another note, we DO NOT ask participants to leave the group when they are annoying us, derailing the group, or demonstrating that they do not want to be in the conversation. We think that everyone's opinions and methods of communicating should be dealt with in the circle. In fact, we think that this provides the opportunity to get better at handling ourselves as facilitators in difficult situations, and to work with people who do not see things like us, or act in the same ways we do.

HOWEVER, if you feel *threatened* by someone's behavior, that is another story. The phone number for the PSU police is 863-1111.

HANDLING DIRECT QUESTIONS You are not expected to have solutions or answers. You are simply facilitating conversation between participants. So if a participant is pressing you to provide one, you could say, "I don't really know. What do YOU think?" If you are a member of an underrepresented group, you will have more questions directed to you. It is best to tell the group that you will share your view after some of the group members respond to "what you think I think about that" or "what led you to ask me that?" Sounds a bit cryptic, but the point is to get them talking, not for you to be the teacher. After giving the participants a chance to explore some of their own perspectives regarding the question being asked, it may be time to build group trust by simply answering the question. You'll have to play it by ear. You shouldn't be the center of the conversation on a regular basis.

WHEN INTENT DOES NOT MATCH IMPACT Individuals often need to be made aware of the difference between the **intent** of what they have said and its **impact** on another person. For example, saying "I don't see color" may be intended by one person to indicate their openness to people of other groups. But this same comment may impact negatively on another person whose life experience has painfully taught them that their color could not be overlooked. To them, the comment may seem insensitive and cavalier, like it is minimizing their experience. When these different meanings are discussed, the speaker may be able to make their original intention more clear and the "impacted" party may be able to release some of their hurt and/or anger when they recognize how much different the intent of the comment may have been from the personal impact.

This is important for you to point out with your group members as you see it occur because conflicts can often be traced to this distinction between intent and impact. In addition, conflicts can often be resolved when this distinction is recognized. So pay attention!

WHEN SOMEONE “PUTS DOWN” SOMEONE ELSE Conflict can be good. It gives everyone an opportunity to examine their own values and beliefs—and to push them to see something from a new perspective. So, as a facilitator, you do not want to inhibit conflict. At the same time, you do not want to support aggressive or destructive behavior between group members. So if group members disagree, that is fine. However, if a group member calls another person “an asshole” or “a stupid Pollock,” then you must step in.

To the victim [Raymond] you might say something like, “Often anger is a misdirected emotion. So hold your response until we find out what is going on with [Leo, the “aggressor”]?” To [Leo] you might say something like, “You have a lot of emotion around this topic. But let’s assume you’re not really angry with [Raymond]. Let’s talk about what is so troubling to you about *the topic*.” After you receive [Leo’s] response, you might say: “Sometimes when someone is so angry, they are expressing a deep hurt or fear. Would you be willing to say what has hurt or scared you so much?” If the aggressor is willing to go deeper like this, you will get to the bottom of the issue pretty quickly and will be able to sort out what happened according to the “When Conflict Occurs” section. Furthermore, the victim will probably understand—*especially* if they get an apology. However, if the aggressor is unwilling, you should not hold it against them. Just ask that they not add to this part of the conversation until you’ve had a chance to talk with them after class. Then discuss with the rest of the group how they are feeling about what happened. (Even if the two parties *can* resolve their differences, it would still be a good idea to let the rest of the group member’s talk about how they feel about what they saw.)

Note: If the “aggressor” and the “victim” cannot resolve their differences, they should meet sometime with the facilitators and Laurie.

WHEN SOMEONE LEAVES There are times when someone gets so upset in the middle of a conversation that they feel that they must leave the room. If this occurs during one of your group sessions, it is the responsibility of either you or your co-facilitator to follow this person and to talk to them one-on-one about what they are feeling. Assure them that you understand that they needed to leave, and that you will stay with them until they feel that they can return to the group (or until the session is over). They may say that they will not return. But talk to them about what they might need in order to be able to do so. (In my experience, most group members have been able to return to the session within a few minutes. So don’t give up too easily.) Meanwhile, the co-facilitator who remains in the group should let the students talk about what just happened (as long as needed)—and then return to the discussion topic if time permits. Also, when the individual returns, it is important that they have the opportunity to say something to the group—if they can—about what motivated them to leave. This kind of sharing can often be a turning point toward greater intimacy and trust in a group.

WHEN A FACILITATOR GETS UPSET OR CRIES There are times when topics reach close enough to the hearts of facilitators that they get caught up in their own emotions. For the moment, they cannot maintain their role and they get lost in the discussion as a group member. Technically, they are paying more attention to the “content” of the discussion than the “process.” This is not uncommon. But sometimes, the emotions are too intense to put aside and the facilitator gets visibly upset and cries.

When this occurs, the co-facilitator should simply take over the responsibility for facilitating the group alone—and give their co-facilitator a chance to do whatever they need to do to continue (either to talk about what happened or to take some time to breathe before moving on). The important role of the co-facilitator who is not upset is to take charge, and to acknowledge that something touched their partner in a personal way that temporarily prevents them from facilitating. Tell the group that this is not unusual; it often happens when dealing with sensitive subjects. And most importantly, do not treat the incident as if it were a huge mistake. Treat it matter-of-factly—as you would if any group member were to cry. Then, sometime after the class session, contact me to discuss how to proceed with the group in the following session.

WHEN “THE SPOKESPERSON” DILEMMA OCCURS Individuals of all colors often speak (implicitly or explicitly) for their racial, ethnic or cultural group when they are underrepresented in a social setting. Sometimes this can actually be a helpful beginning in getting to know one another. But this dynamic is ultimately flawed. So, when you see it occurring, remind the group that individuals are only speaking *as individuals*, and that their views are not based on a population survey, but on *individual* experience (as a white person, as a police officer, as a Hispanic person, as a lesbian,

as an immigrant, as a “stay-at-home” mom, etc.). In other words, be sure to encourage your group to recognize their tendency to seek easy generalizations. If they really want to know more about a certain group of people, they need to spend time with varied members of that group and come to their own conclusions.

WHEN DIFFERENT CULTURAL GROUPS CANNOT TRUST ONE ANOTHER Developing trust is a basic issue to be addressed by any group of individuals who come together—formally or informally. But it is particularly significant when the individuals come from different cultural groups (whether those groups are different racially, regionally, ethnically, socio-economically or otherwise). So it is essential that we acknowledge the nature of the distrust that is often the foundation upon which members of different cultural groups are trying to talk to one another. In fact, this is a conversation that should be considered *central* to your work, not parenthetical.

Moreover, it is essential to acknowledge that each individual has their own way of expressing distrust. So, you must be sensitive to the fact that some people express distrust through a defensive posture, while other’s express distrust as anger or silence or withdrawal—or even a superficial pleasantness. And oftentimes, individuals who are acting on their distrust may not even be conscious of it. So pay attention to the undercurrent of distrust and how it may emerge in your group; and be prepared to address this theme (because if it doesn’t surface directly, you should bring it up at least once during the semester).

WHEN MOST OF THE GROUP MEMBERS ARE “WHITE” Some of the SOC 119 groups are relatively homogenous, comprised predominantly of white middle class young adults from Pennsylvania. As a result, facilitators often need to help these group members to explore the less obvious differences that exist beneath their apparent similarities (e.g., family values, sense of home, connection to roots, and relationship to the environment, travel experiences, and faith, as well as particular skills and talents). This will encourage deeper understanding of the issues of “diversity.” By contrast, in a particularly heterogeneous group, your job, as facilitator would be to help the group members to discover more of the similarities that exist beneath their apparent differences. The following sections will give you some ideas for working with your group if ALL of the students happen to be white.

1. DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

How does being white affect your life in the U.S.? at Penn State? in this class? when traveling abroad?
What is it like to “blend in?” What happens when you don’t blend in?

What might make it difficult for you to discuss “race” (or being white, or oppression, or inequality) without the voices of students of color? What might make it easier?

What seems “wrong” to you when you are asked to discuss the fact that you are white? What part of the question makes you feel that way? What do you assume you are “really” being asked?
How much do you feel—or not feel—responsible for the oppression of people of color today?

To what degree is “race” or inequality a part of your everyday life? How often is it discussed in your family among your friends? What is your estimate of how much it may be a part of the lives of students of color?

What comes to mind when you hear the term “white supremacy”—and the conversation is not about hate groups?
What comes to mind when you hear the term “white privilege”—and the conversation is not about rich people?

How would you describe “white guilt”? What are its causes? How can it be alleviated? How much have you felt it?

How do you interpret the sentiment of those people of color who say that they do not want the “sympathy” of white people? What do you think they are saying to someone like you?

What do you think makes race such an enduring problem in the U.S.? What do you think continues to be so troubling for many people of color? What do you think white people could do *on their own* to help alleviate the problem of race in the U.S.

2. REACHING FOR DIVERSITY

Explore diversity in your group in terms of **class** instead of race/ethnicity. For example, what are the different family rules, opportunities and customs of students from different classes/ethnicities/regions of the state or country? What are the differing beliefs about others, about society, about money and about life of students from these different backgrounds?

Explore diversity in terms of **religious/spiritual beliefs**. For example, what is your image of the creator, of your purpose on the earth, of the essence of human behavior (i.e., good or evil)? How can you know what is “the truth?”

3. GENERATING QUESTIONS

The group could identify questions throughout the semester (recorded by TAs) to be posed to students of color (or students of another underrepresented group) could respond during the Question and Answer periods in the SOC 119 lectures—or you could invite some other TAs to class to speak as “guest group members.”

4. FISHBOWL EXERCISE

In this exercise, a subgroup of white students (e.g., gay/lesbian/bisexual students, men, women, rural or city students, etc) forms a circle and discusses any issue or question that is relevant to their particular group or sub-group. (The topic could come from the other group members or the class or your own imagination...) Other students in the group would not participate in the discussion (while the subgroup is talking). They would just form an outer circle during the conversation and would write out further questions/observations/comments to be explored afterward. This becomes a “fishbowl” for the non-participating members to observe the ideas and interactions of the subgroup members. At some point, the fishbowl conversation could be stopped and the outer circle could pose questions to the individuals in the inner circle. Or, the group members could switch places and the outer circle could become the inner circle and have their own conversation in response to what they heard from the initial inner circle. The point is to deepen the understanding of these differing subgroups so that they begin to identify the ways in which the other group thinks, acts, behaves or believes differently.

5. ROLE REVERSAL EXERCISE

Ask white students to behave or talk in a way that would mirror the behavior of another group (e.g., Puerto Ricans born in New York, African Americans from Philadelphia, Chinese immigrants) and then discuss what they notice from each other’s portrayals. (Make sure to ask students if the behavior/walk they demonstrated was convincing, as well as *how* convincing, and what may have been missing from their portrayal.) This is an activity that can only “work” if the students have developed a level of trust between them.

SOME GENERAL GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

In x years, what do you think your friendship network will look like? (Think race, gender, class, sexual orientation, etc)

What draws you to people? How do you choose your friends?

What makes you, a white person, think you have to be more conscious/more “PC” than someone from another group?

How do you break out of believing in stereotypes?

In response to “racism is a thing of the past”: In what ways do YOU still carry the ideologies of the past?

How diverse does the university/the workplace/a neighborhood have to be for you to feel comfortable?

When do you begin thinking for yourself and not strictly going by what friends and family think?

What makes you think everyone is equal?

What makes it awkward for YOU to talk about race?

What do you bring to the race dialogue as a person of your particular background?

If someone asks you “What are you,” how do you respond?

How much pride do you feel with respect to your heritage/race?

How do your parents talk to you about other races?

What are your boundaries of comfort/discomfort when talking about race?

What does it feel like to “blend in?”

How does it feel when people are looking at you/noticing you (not because you’re “hot”)?

How often do you think “I’m white/black/Asian/Hispanic/etc?”

To those folks who went to a diverse high school and race is still not an issue: How can it NOT be an issue?

What would it take for you to teach in a city school?

How are minorities going to receive you as a white teacher?

To people of color: To what degree do you think your grandparents and parents are more close-minded than you or your generation?

If you or your partner had to use a sperm donor, what race would you choose and why?

For participants of color in a mostly white group:

What do you think you’ll hear from this group? What gives you that impression?

How do your friends/family think about this issue? How different is it from what you’re hearing?

How different is your view from your friends and family? How did you arrive at your views?

What is it like to be of your ancestry and participating in this particular dialogue?

How easy is it for you to join this conversation as “yourself” and not as a person of “x” ancestry?

What allows/prevents that?

Following-up on stereotypes:

When have you broken/fulfilled a stereotype yourself?

What affects do stereotypes have on you (on your feelings/behavior)?

What would it mean to “act on” stereotypes? Who do you see “acting on” stereotypes?

When someone asks you a direct question:

“First, let’s see what other people think.”

“The bigger question you’re asking is...”

When the responses sound “politically correct”:

“What kinds of things do you think about when you see people protesting about this, or when you hear them talking about something you disagree with, or when you read letters to the editor about segregation or racism?”

“What kinds of thing DO you care about? What makes them important to you?”

“What do you see when you say your parents would accept someone of another race...what would they do/not do? What would you imagine would happen if they didn’t accept someone?”

When someone tells you “That’s just the way I was brought up” ask “What specifically were you told?”

If someone says, “I have no idea [what to make of the issue],” ask them, “How does that affect your relationships to people of other races, to friends, to your family, to the issue, etc?”

If folks are saying that race is not an issue, get them to talk about where/when it IS an issue or what they think about other people “making it” an issue.

When participants act like “experts”:

“How did you come to your conclusions about this issue because other experts have arrived at different conclusions?”

“We’re interested in hearing your *personal* experience with this. Tell us more about *that*.”

Instead of using data:

“What would it take to convince you that...”
 “Some people are saying x. What do you think?”
 “What would be the effect if x were true?”

When a participant has “extreme” views:

Ask the other participants in the group questions like:

“How common is this view?”
 “How familiar are you with this particular view (in your family and friendship groups)?”
 “How similar is this view to your own?”
 “In what ways is your view different from this one?”
 “How did you arrive at a different conclusion?”

ONE MORE THING

I am always seeking to improve our work. So I welcome your ideas and your insights. In fact, that is how the entire SOC 119/SOC 300 enterprise has been built over the years. That means I would love to hear from you when you see a new way to do something or an angle that has been missed or a technique that works for you that could work for others. Whatever it is, talk to me about it!

IF A CRISIS OCCURS IN YOUR GROUP

If something occurs that is outside your ability to handle and demands immediate, urgent assistance, here are important numbers to call for help. In fact, you should put these numbers into your cell phone right now.

Penn State Police Services: 814-863-1111 (24 hours)

Call this number if you or someone else is threatened in some way or someone becomes seriously ill.

Penn State’s Counseling and Psychological Services: 814-863-0395 (8am-5pm)

Call this number if it and someone becomes hysterical, emotionally inconsolable or you are under the impression that they are severely depressed, homicidal or suicidal.

Centre County Helpline: 800-643-5432 (after 5 pm)

Call this number if someone becomes hysterical, emotionally inconsolable or you are under the impression that they are severely depressed, homicidal or suicidal. The phones are staffed with counselors who will talk you through a crisis. A mobile team is available if necessary

*Many thanks to Sarah Chelius for her help in describing the facilitator skills.