



Managing Difficult Dialogues

Faculty Center for Ignatian Pedagogy

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Pause

Why are we addressing difficult dialogues?

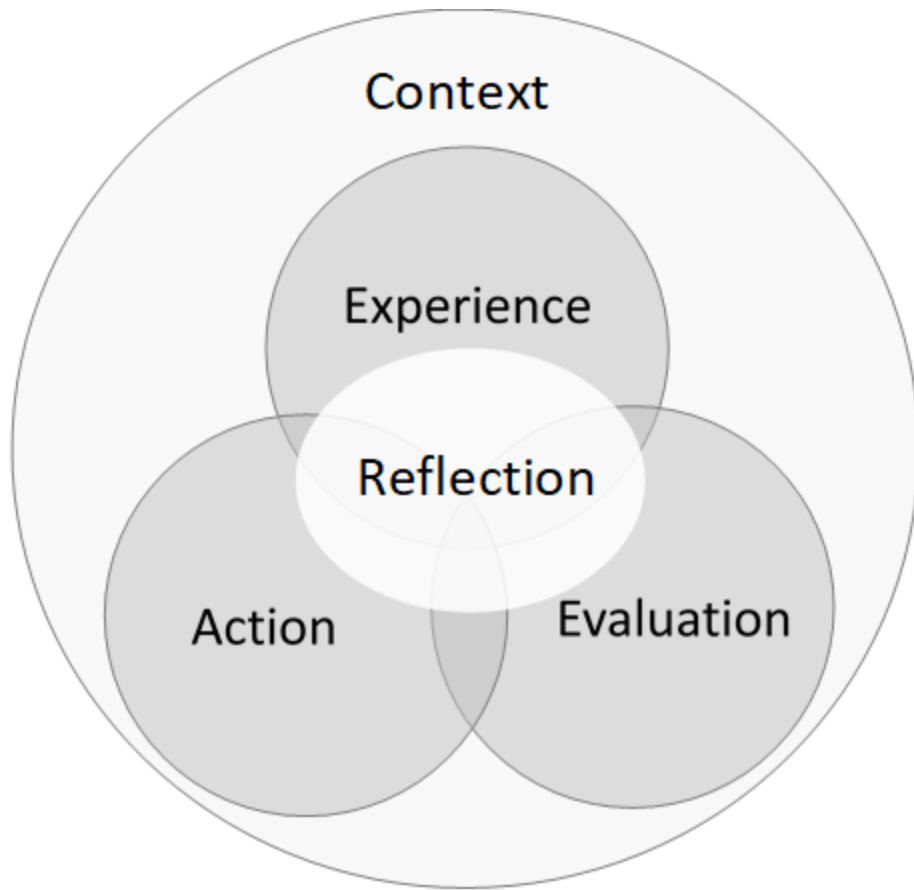
Difficult societal issues will continue to disturb us, our students, and the educational setting.

But... the skills we use to navigate one will often work for others.

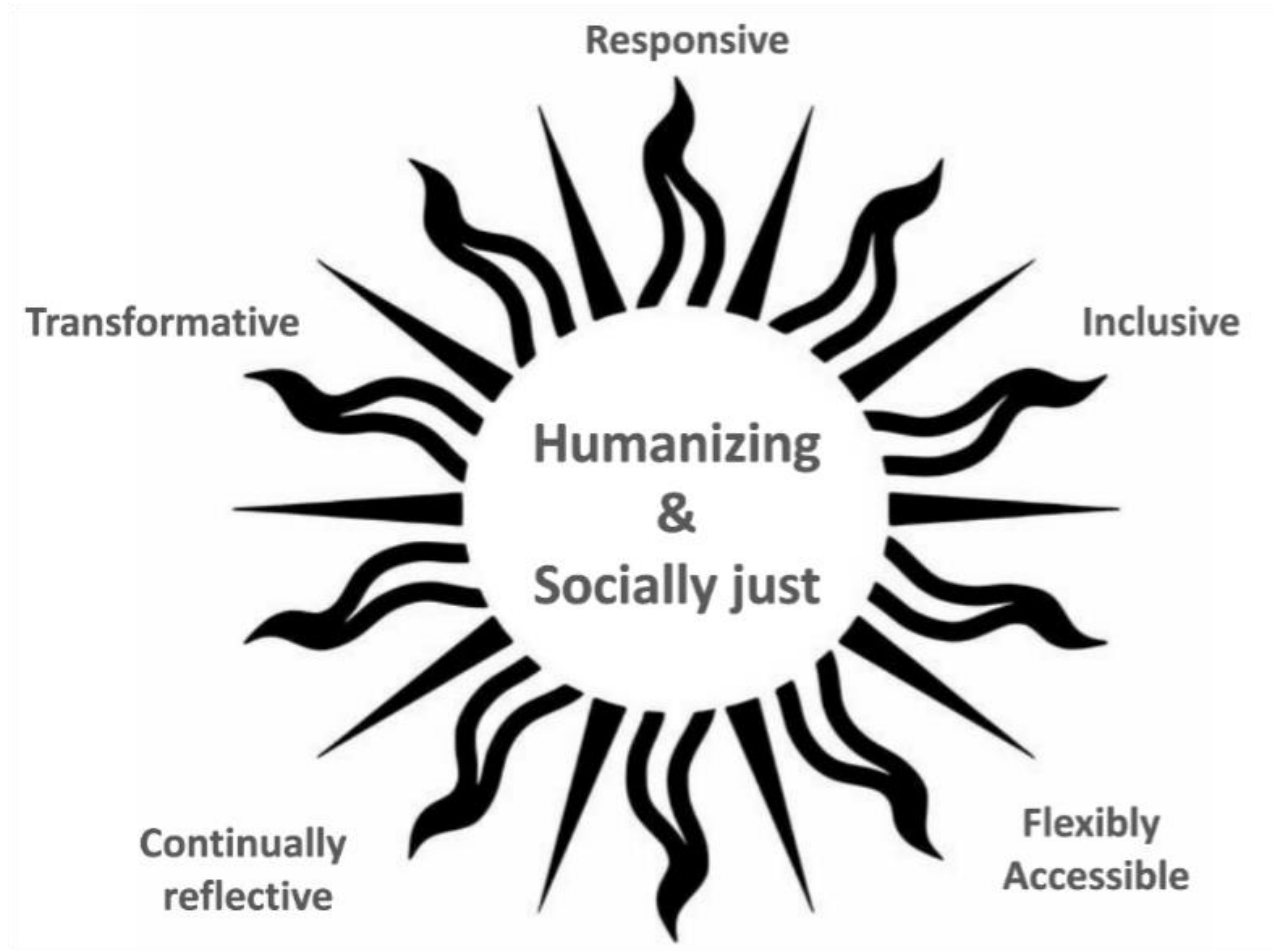
FCIP and our Loyola partners are actively working to increase resources and support for instructors

Pedagogical anchors

Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm



Per Viam Loyola





Acknowledging this
moment

Consulting our Teaching & Learning Colleagues

- [Difficult Dialogues National Resource Center](#)
- Harvard University's [Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning](#)
- University of Michigan's [Center for Research on Teaching and Learning](#)
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's [Center for Faculty Excellence](#)
- Vanderbilt University's [Center for Teaching](#)
- ["Start Talking: A Handbook for Engaging Difficult Dialogues in Higher Education."](#) by Kay Landis (editor). (2008). Full text online.

Approaching difficult dialogues

- **Before** course begins: prepare for the inevitable
- **During** class: connect, slow down, foster regulation and get back to critical thinking and the intended content
- **After** a difficult dialogue or semester: reflect, evaluate and improve for next time

Main objective

Moving from:

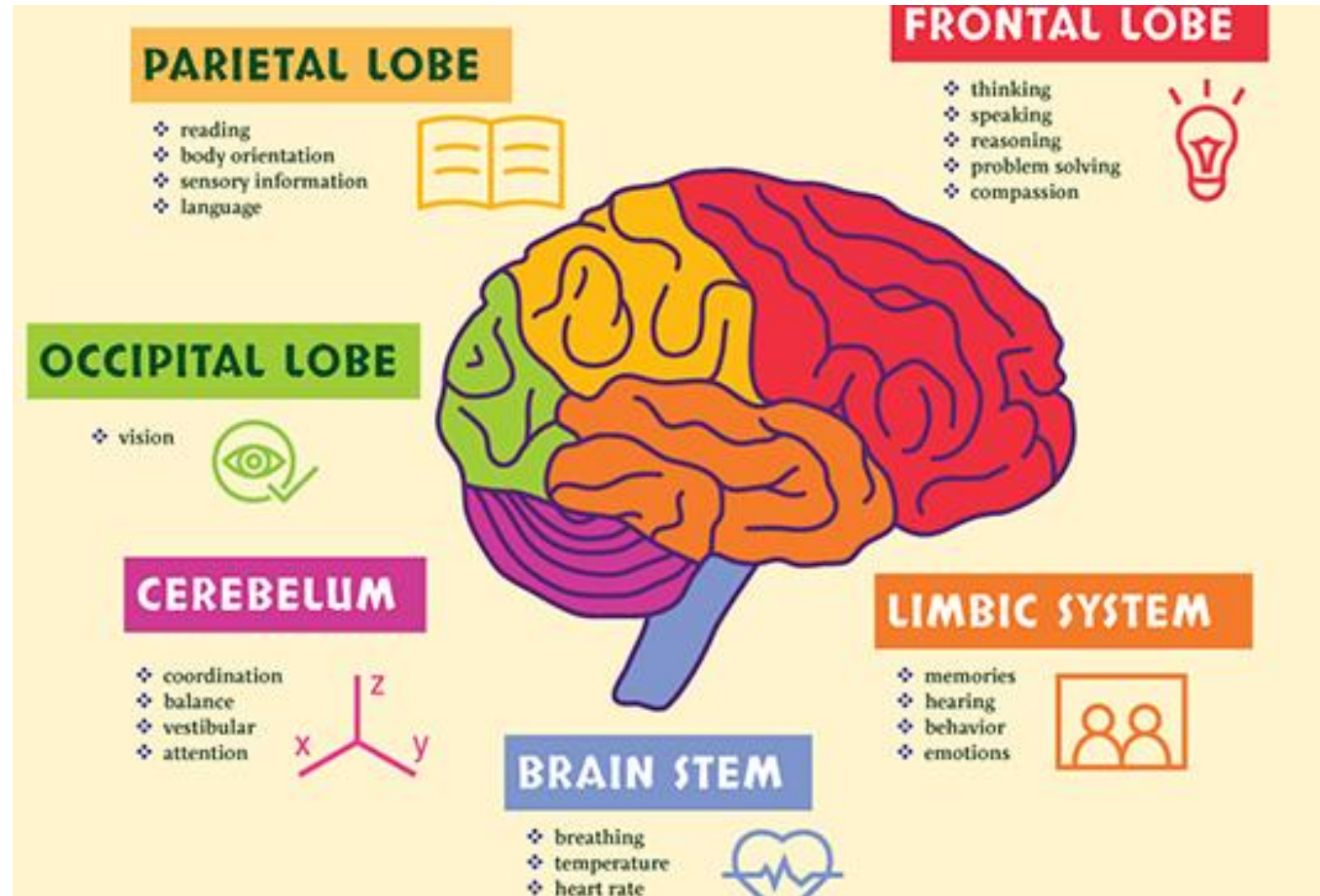
Brain stem & Limbic system

- Fight, flight, freeze, fawn

To:

Parietal & Frontal lobes

- Openness to learn
- Critical thinking



Before course begins

Start with **yourself**

- Reflect
 - What are my thoughts and feelings about this situation? What perspectives might students hold that would challenge my own perspectives?
- Understand biases
 - What are my biases? Where do they stem from? How might my biases influence my interactions with students and/or with the course content?
- Improve emotional regulation
 - Rituals, mindfulness, breathing
- Practice not having all the answers
 - How do I navigate the tension between being a subject matter expert on the one hand, and knowing that I do not have all the answers on the other hand?
- Confer with colleagues



Before course begins

Anticipate challenging topics during [course design](#)



- **Plan** that difficult issues will arise, from local/global issues or course content
- Name [learning outcomes](#) and create aligned activities and assignments that will help (a) keep course content clearly on-topic and/or (b) approach difficult issues with thoughtful intent
- Include language in [syllabus](#) regarding difficult dialogues, microaggressions, diversity statement, etc.
- Determine and articulate your departmental/school/college protocols for reporting concerns or harm

Before course begins

Have '**intervention practices**' in mind and on hand that connects to your learning objectives for the course

- [Breathe together](#)
- Stand up and change seats
- Pause to write for 3 minutes
 - How are you feeling right now?
 - Describe your perspective in 2 sentences. What do you understand about the perspective of someone who disagrees with you?
 - How is this connected to what we are learning in class right now?
- Small groups: puzzles, SAQs (summary, analysis, questions), +/- resource hunt
- [Fishbowl activity](#)
- Questions/activities to draw students back to your content



During class

Set up a [learning community](#) that can handle tough conversations



- Create group norms together
 - Prompt students to consider "what will we do when there is a disagreement or a hot button moment?"
- Facilitate activities and assignments aimed at getting to know each other and building trust
- Focus on using content of course to develop as whole, caring human beings and global citizens

During class

Acknowledge big societal or global issues as they arise

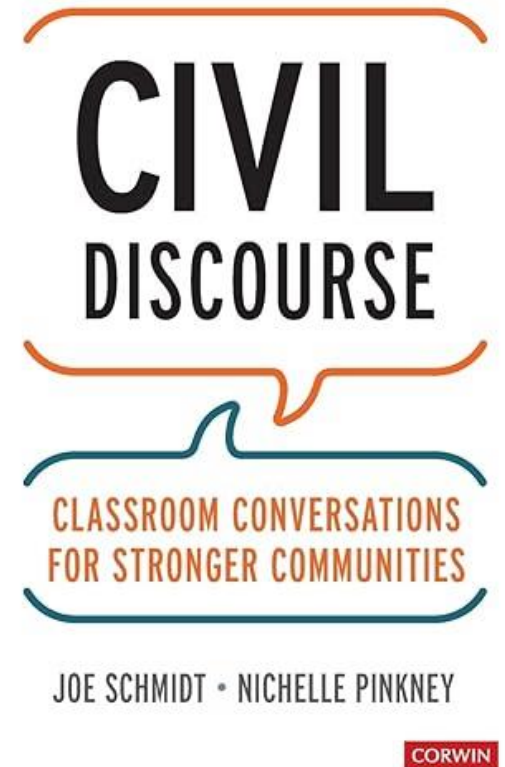
- Take time to acknowledge an issue
- Remind students of **resources** to support them
- Indicate how it will impact the course
 - Not at all
 - Planned discussions might touch on related issues
 - The issue is already on syllabus for consideration
 - The issue will be added to plans for the course



During class

Continually foster **classroom respect and civil discourse**

- Cultivate (by **modelling**) humility, curiosity, transparency, and care
- **Narrate** your process
- Use the intervention practices your prepared before class started
- **Address harm** (consider an adapted framework for managing social aggressions)
- Collect **formative feedback** from students



After class

Reflect on the experience:

- What happened?
- How did you feel about it?
- What was the impact on students/classroom dynamic?
- How did you/they respond?
- What would you like to do differently next time?

Keep learning by

- Talking to colleagues
- Exploring resources on pedagogy and on issues of the day
- Paying attention to yourself and your students
- Trying strategies and learning from what works and what doesn't



Review

- **Before:** spend time reflecting on yourself, anticipate challenges and design your course and choose intervention strategies accordingly
- **During:** intentionally craft your learning community with your students, acknowledge difficulties in the world, invest in culture of respect through your actions
- **After:** reflect and keep learning

Do you have ideas to share? Please do!

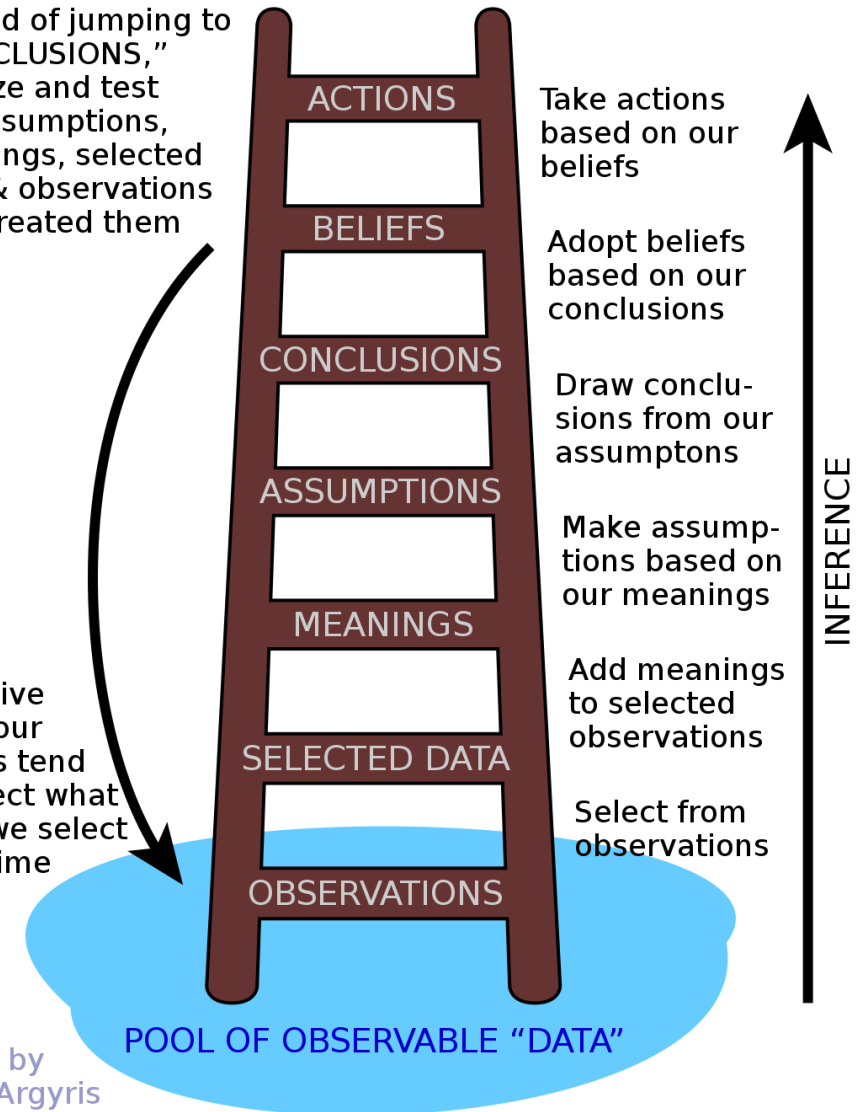
Input into [shared document](#)

- Questions
- Tools
- Suggestions
- Activities
- Assignments

LADDER OF INFERENCE

Instead of jumping to "CONCLUSIONS," analyze and test the assumptions, meanings, selected data & observations that created them

Reflexive loop: our beliefs tend to affect what data we select next time



Model by
Chris Argyris
(1923-2013)

Thank you, Janis Noone

More to come...

- Opportunities to connect & learn more
 - New Faculty Scholar in FCIP
 - Peer pedagogical support (learning lab, Pedagogy of Justice Circles)
 - Focus on Teaching and Learning (FOTL) conference tomorrow! And August 2024
- Asynchronous content/resources
 - Syllabus statements
 - Suggested class activities
 - Strategies for managing social aggressions and active conflict
 - Recommended readings on managing difficult dialogues
 - See FCIP website

Questions?

*Please use the chat to
direct your questions to
FCIP staff*



Managing social aggressions

"ACTION"

- **A**sk clarifying questions to assist with understanding intentions.
- **C**ome from curiosity not judgment.
- **T**ell what you observed as problematic in a factual manner.
- **I**mpact exploration: ask for, and/or state, the potential impact of such a statement or action on others.
- **O**wn your own thoughts and feelings around the impact.
- **N**ext steps: Request appropriate action be taken.