



Deliberative Pedagogy (DeeP) Collaborative

Integrating Democratic Deliberation into the Classroom

An Introduction to the Collaborative: Building on a Successful First Year

Interested in improving discussions in your classes? By design, many of our classrooms – and especially our seminars – invite students to grapple with matters over which persons, for good reasons, may disagree. In fact, one might say that classroom life at **a college like ours exists partly to promote a culture of good argument** where diverse positions on philosophical, political, interpretive, aesthetic, social, and scientific claims are welcomed as the primary fuel for activating intellectual community.

However, **productive disagreement is a complex and challenging goal** to put into practice. Saturated by debates we witness on mass media, we tend to think of disagreement as an anxious or even distasteful event, leading us to consider everyday argument among the least effective modes of interaction. The public sphere is awash in bitter exchanges that displace real inquiry with sensationalism, causing us to eschew rather than welcome the collaboration of multiple perspectives, contrasting views, and competing claims.

As part of the **Deliberative Pedagogy (DeeP) Collaborative**, 15 faculty members endeavored to integrate such collaboration into their courses in the face of these challenges. These faculty – 9 from Davidson College and 6 from Associated Colleges of the South (ACS) institutions, including Furman University, Morehouse College, Rollins College, Southwestern University, and Spelman College – learned about deliberative pedagogy theories and techniques, embedded them into their own deliberative course plans and syllabi, and then taught these deliberation-involved courses in fall 2021 or spring 2022.

As the year progressed, these faculty members shared their questions, insights, and lessons learned with one another, and then reflected on their experiences in [blog posts](#) on the website of the [Deliberative Citizenship Initiative \(DCI\)](#), which has organized the Collaborative with support from the Associated Colleges of the South (ACS), The Duke Endowment and in collaboration with Davidson's Center for Teaching (CTL) and Learning and Center for Civic Engagement. As **Rachel Pang, Associate Professor of Religion at Davidson College and a member of the Collaborative**, commented, "One of the best things about participating in the DeeP Collaborative was the chance to engage with a group of experienced and creative pedagogues at Davidson and other ACS institutions."

With generous support from the CTL, **the DCI is able to host a second year of the DeeP Collaborative**. ACS faculty will continue to be involved in the Collaborative as well. We welcome applications to join the Collaborative from Davidson faculty who wish to enhance their ability to embed more deliberation about questions and issues involving important disagreements in their classes. Members are eligible for a \$1000 faculty stipend. More on the background, goals, and expectations of the Collaborative is provided below.

Good Argument and the Liberal Arts

Academic life thrives on the ground of difference. In fact, it is difficult to envision how we can continually deepen and expand our knowledge without active challenges to the status quo, reasoned consideration of contrasting analyses, or the delineation of opposed interpretations. We wish to support our students' involvement in constructive disagreements as an expected feature of academic life and a vital disposition for democratic living.

Both in **their professional and public lives**, our students will need to navigate disagreements, either as participants in (often complex and protracted) deliberations and as leaders who help others weigh claims with clarity and fairness. The capacity to engage in civil debate, discriminate among values, and communicate freely with others in the realm of ideas are highlighted as key features of a liberal arts education in Davidson's Statement of Purpose.

Why Deliberation?

Valued since classical times, **deliberation** is the social practice of collectively considering multiple and contrasting positions on a matter of wide interest in order to determine (if possible) agreed-upon ways of thinking or acting in the face of a shared dilemma. Such deliberation is a prized skill in public and intellectual settings and is a sensibility that liberally educated students have long been known for. It embodies an eagerness to approach important questions with equanimity, however thorny and challenging they may be.

Rooted in the Latin term for *weighing*, **deliberation differs from both discussion**, which denotes two or more persons sharing thoughts on a particular topic, **and from debate**, which involves a contest of opposing arguments to determine a winner. Both are important forms of public discourse, but deliberation asks more from its participants than either discussion or debate. Deliberators wish to become deeply familiar with **others' positions**, to locate the **assumptions** upon which others' determinations rest, and to value experiential, methodologic, and technical **evidence** as supports for their claims. It aims for open and honest exchange, mindful of the many ways in which interlocutors can talk past one another or too hastily conclude a conversation that might profitably be sustained.

In academic parlance, our classrooms are characterized either as lecture- or discussion-based, but the dynamism of good discussion tends to be hard-won and its techniques unclear. **How many of us have tried to assemble the necessary ingredients only to have the event fall below our expectations?** Indeed, even the best-planned class discussions may easily devolve, the guiding question on the table dissolving into a proposition for single-minded debate. Or, we find that a discussion becomes more performative than transformative, students rushing past one another's claims with little deep listening taking place and with that few opportunities to reconsider or revise one's initial position.

DCI 2022-2023 Deliberative Pedagogy Collaborative

If you are interested in overcoming these obstacles and learning new ways to improve and deepen the quality of discussions in your classes, we encourage you to apply to **join the DCI's 2022-2023 Deliberative Pedagogy (DeeP) Collaborative**. The Collaborative is designed to make it possible for faculty to explore pedagogical approaches focused on enhancing classroom deliberation in the face of complex, difficult, or seemingly intractable disagreements (what deliberation theorists call “wicked problems”).

The DeeP Collaborative allows faculty members to examine their own practices, to learn new techniques for bringing constructive disagreement into the classroom, and to imagine how deliberation may enliven the learning outcomes of their courses. Specifically, it enables faculty to:

- Design new courses and redesign existing courses so as to sequence reading assignments, writing assignments, and research activities in ways that feature interpretive, analytic, or other epistemic disagreements as objects of study.
- Improve the quality of classroom conversations about public and/or intellectual issues by teaching students deliberative techniques, including how to stage a deliberation as an event that enhances the learning outcomes of a course, how to use deliberation as a way to research a history of claims and evidence about a contestable subject, and how to enact empathetic listening, social reasoning, and ethical argument.
- Bring issues of wide public interest into the classroom so that students may glimpse the vicissitudes of civic debate and identify for themselves the challenges of good argument in the face of ideologic, cultural, and identity-based difference.

Participating faculty can do so by deeply embedding deliberation-related learning outcomes, assignments, readings, and classroom activities into their course. This holistic approach can be highly effective, and we prefer that faculty develop such “deliberation-involved” courses in their work with the Collaborative. However, they might also develop short “deliberation modules” that expose students to the processes and principles of deliberation without integrating it throughout a course. To learn more about these options, please see the DCI’s [Pathways to Deliberation in the Classroom](#).

What is the Deliberative Pedagogy Collaborative?

A community of faculty members dedicated to learning about and utilizing innovative ways that foster productive deliberation in their courses

What are the Collaborative’s goals?

Members of the Collaborative will:

- I. Engage with the deliberative pedagogy literature to understand both broad frameworks and approaches and specific tools and techniques for improving the quality of student deliberations

2. Apply these approaches and techniques by integrating deliberation into one of their courses
3. Engage with one another about introducing deliberation into the classroom
4. Reflect on and share their deliberative pedagogy experiences with their colleagues and the public

What will members of the Collaborative do?

- **Summer Reading:** Collaborative members will read selections related to deliberative pedagogy from several books provided by the DCI
- **Deliberative Pedagogy Orientation Workshop in August 2022:** Members of the Collaborative will attend an interactive and hands-on workshop on **August 19, 2022** from 9 am to 1 pm to review and apply the basic principles and practices of deliberative pedagogy (breakfast and lunch included).
- **Deliberative Pedagogy Skills Workshop:** Members will also attend one additional advanced workshop each semester (approximately one hour long) that will provide a deeper dive into specific pedagogical techniques. Topics will be determined according to members' interests.
- **Deliberation Facilitator Training Program in September 2022:** Members will attend two 4-hour training sessions on **September 11, 2022** and **September 17, 2022** from 1:30 pm to 5:30 pm that will introduce them to the skills and techniques of effective deliberation facilitators.
- **Development of a Deliberation Module or Deliberation-Involved Course (New or Existing):** During Fall 2021, members will incorporate deliberation-related learning outcomes, activities, assignments, and readings into a new or existing course, preferably one that they will offer in Spring 2022.
- **Collaborative Meetings and Readings:** The Collaborative will meet as a group four times (2x each semester) to discuss assigned readings related to deliberative pedagogy and their progress on their course development. Unless alternative times are identified, these meetings will be held during Common Hour (11 am to 12 pm) on the following Thursdays: **October 13 and November 17 in 2022** and **January 12 and April 13 in 2023**.
- **Faculty Partner Meetings:** Members will be meet up with their faculty partner(s) 2x during each semester to discuss their efforts to incorporate deliberation into their courses.
- **Blog Post or Video Blog about Deliberation-Based Course Innovation:** Collaborative members will either write or record a blog post describing their experience developing and teaching deliberation-involved course.

Is there a stipend for participating in the Collaborative?

Members will be eligible for a taxable \$1000 faculty stipend.

Application Process

Faculty interested in joining the Collaborative should apply at the link [here](#) by July 15 at 5 pm. All faculty members are welcome to apply (including those who participated previously), but priority will be given to faculty who are new to the Collaborative. The application form asks applicants to briefly explain their interest in deliberative pedagogy and to identify at least one course they would like to introduce deliberation into (preferably a Spring 2022 course but other courses may be considered). We ask that you describe what aspect of your teaching, course design, or other pedagogic practice you would like to address by examining the theories and techniques associated with deliberation. You are welcome to identify trouble spots or uncertainties in your own professional practice that you believe a renewed attention to the dynamics and theories associated with classroom deliberation may help you address. Visit the DCI's webpage on [Deliberation Across the Curriculum](#) for more information, and please direct any questions to Graham Bullock ([grbullock@davidson.edu](mailto:grbullock@ davidson.edu)), the Faculty Director of the DCI. If you are interested in participating but one or more of the dates above don't work for you, please still apply and let Graham know about the conflict (if other participants agree, we may be able to change the schedule).