

Modern-Day Enlightenment Salon

I am excited to learn about your research and for you to share it with each other! One of my goals in holding a salon is for you to have practice in civil discourse, especially since you may hold differing views on some topics.

Today, you will

- Share your topics
- Summarize what you learned
- Present what information surprised you in your research

You do not have to state your stance, but you can if you choose.

During the discussion, listen for

- Common threads of changes people want in our society right now
- Reasons why these changes might be difficult to achieve

To begin our conversation, here are excerpts from two university web sites about civil discourse.

From American University Project on Civil Discourse

<https://www.american.edu/spa/civildiscourse/what-is-civil-discourse.cfm>

One of the most important educational, political, and social issues of today is how best to have a civil conversation in a democratic society. Our past, present, and future depend on this essential process: citizens gather, listen to each other, debate, make up their minds, and determine a course of action.

Polarization of opinions, coupled with the speed and access of the digital age have made it more difficult to keep our conversations civil in America today. From shouting matches, to opinionated blog posts, to rhetoric-filled political debates, we are confronted every day with uncivil conversation.

CIVIL DISCOURSE IS

- Truthful
- Productive
- Audience-based
- About listening *and* talking
- Each speaker's own responsibility

CIVIL DISCOURSE IS NOT

- Mere politeness
- An exercise in martyrdom
- About telling other people who they are
- Purely performative

From University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching

<http://www.crlt.umich.edu/publinks/generalguidelines>

- Listen respectfully, without interrupting.
- Listen actively and with an ear to understanding others' views. (Don't just think about what you are going to say while someone else is talking.)
- Criticize ideas, not individuals.
- Commit to learning, not debating. Comment in order to share information, not to persuade.
- Avoid blame, speculation, and inflammatory language.
- Allow everyone the chance to speak.
- Avoid assumptions about any member of the class or generalizations about social groups. Do not ask individuals to speak for their (perceived) social group.