



# Managing Difficult Dialogues

Faculty Center for Ignatian Pedagogy

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January 9, 2024



Pause

# Why are we addressing difficult dialogues?

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

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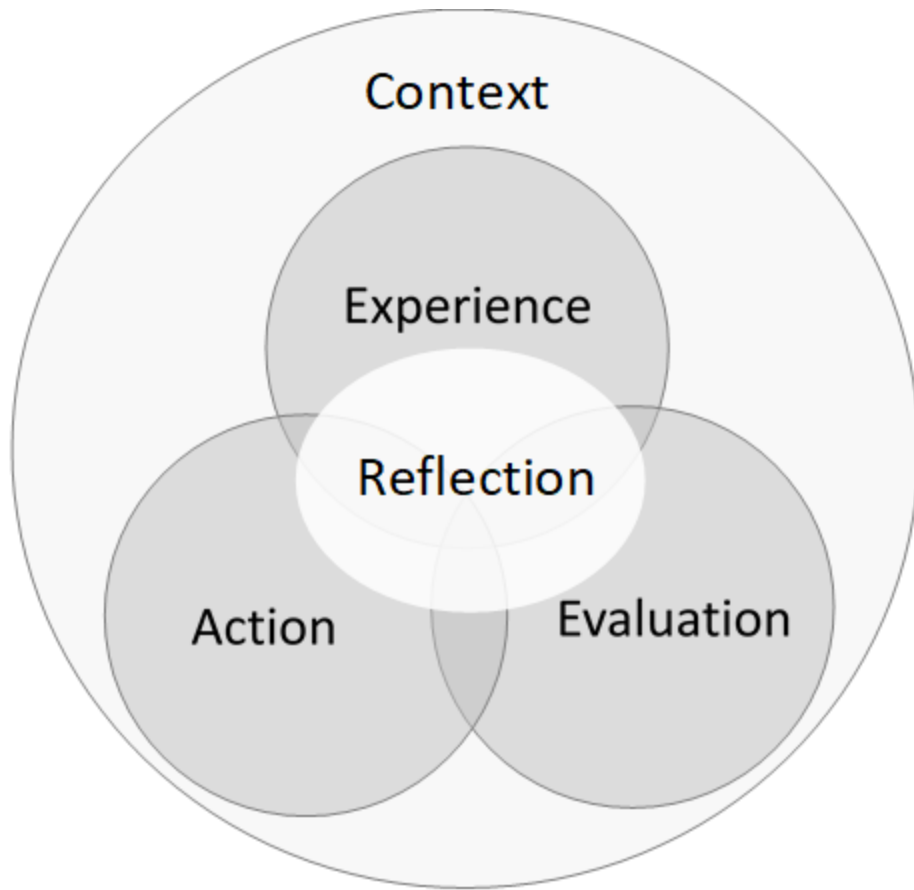
But... the skills we use to navigate one will often work for others.

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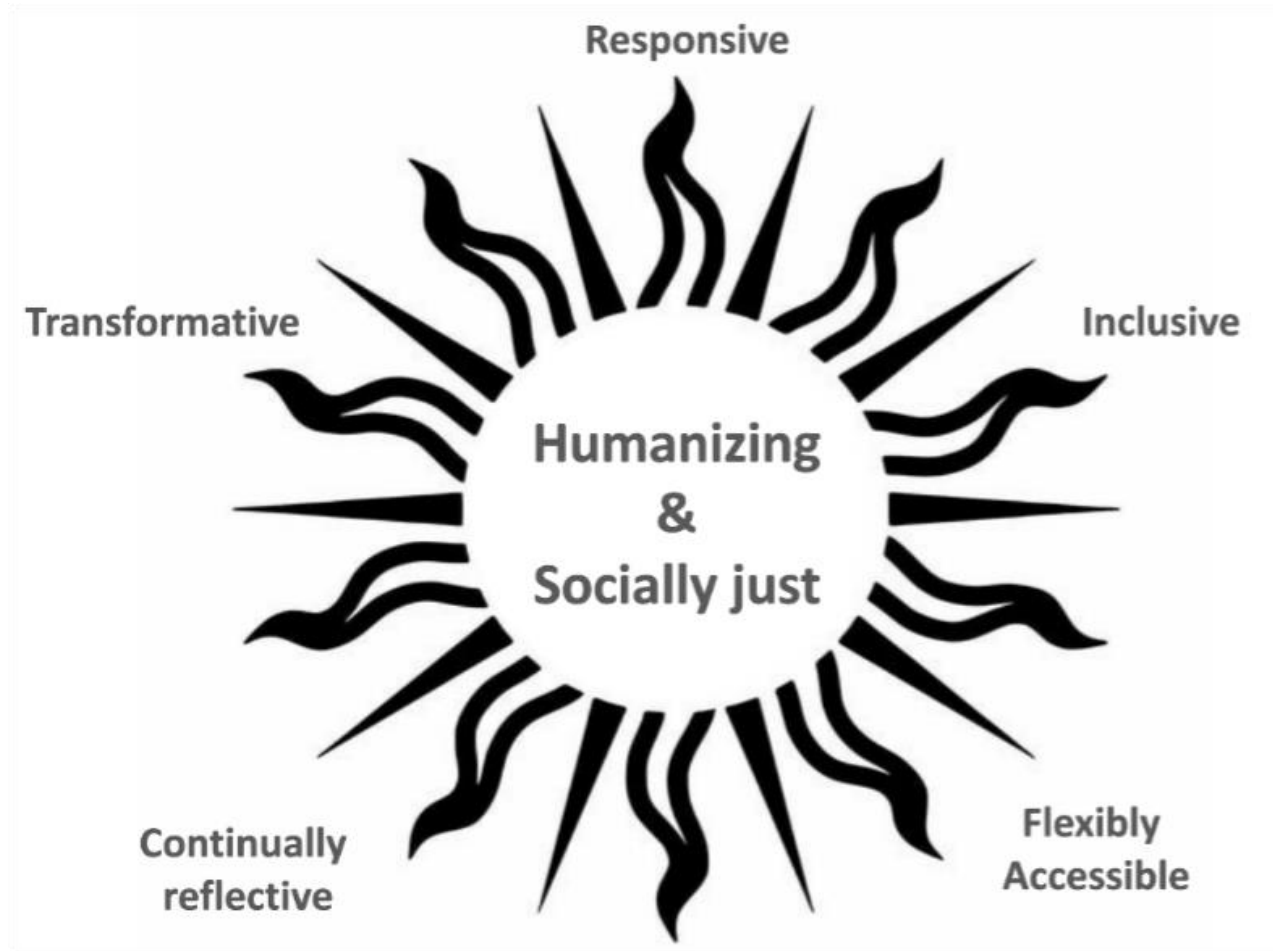
FCIP and our Loyola partners are actively working to increase resources and support for instructors

# 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:

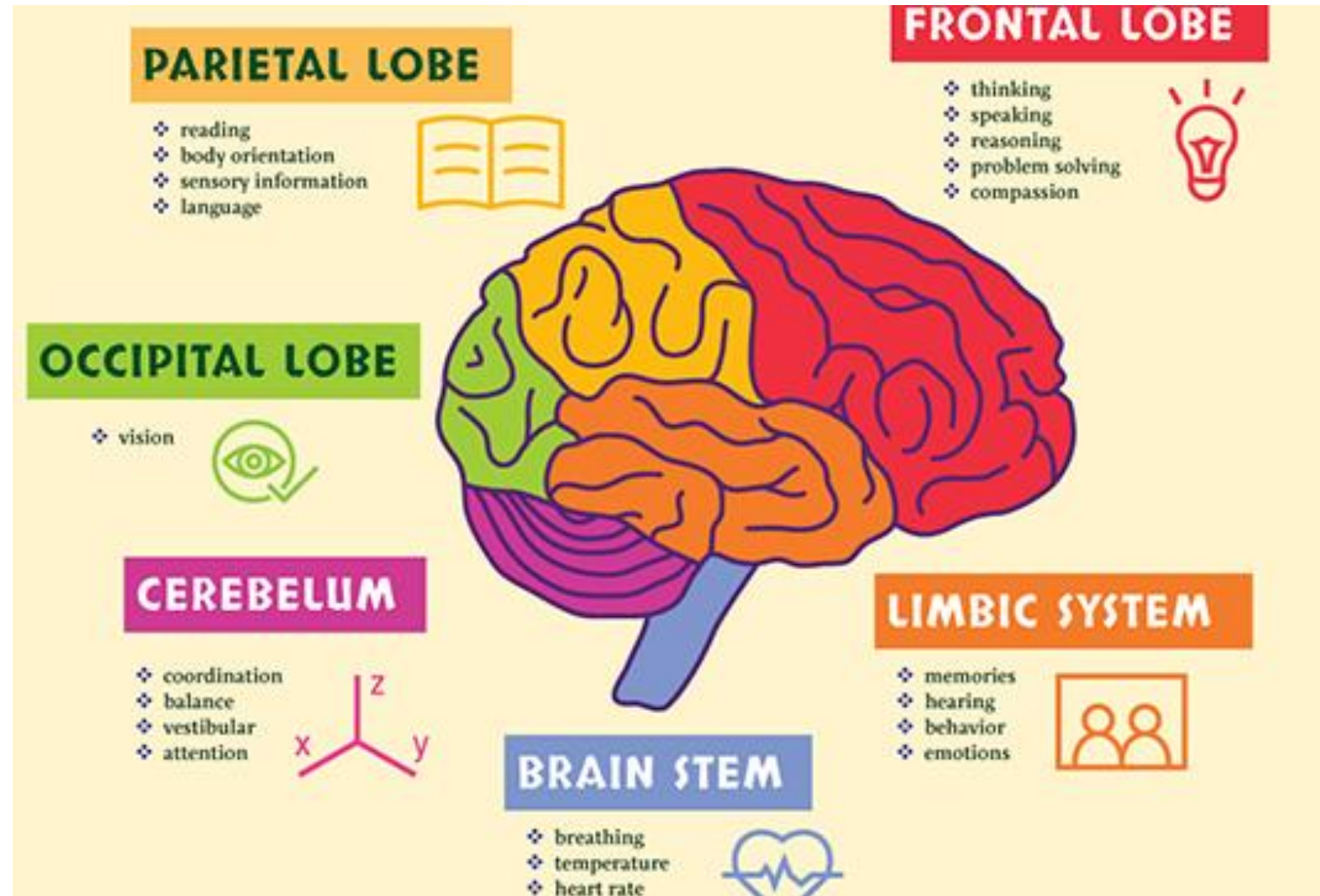
Brain stem & Limbic system

- 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

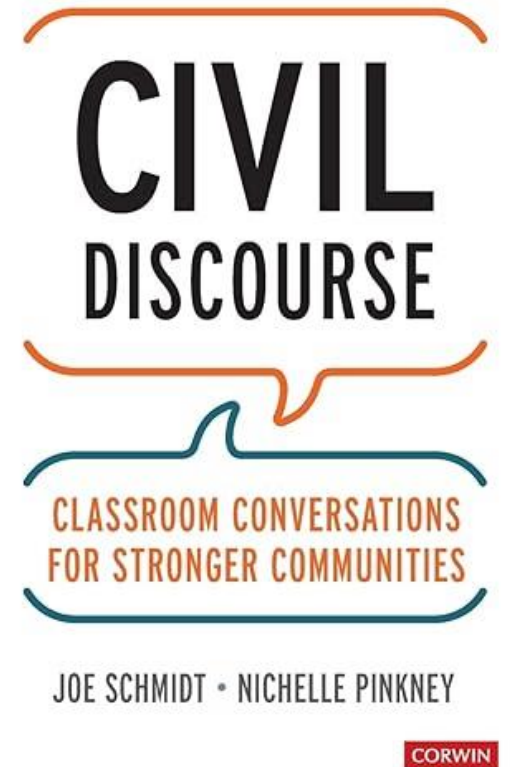
- Take time to acknowledge an issue
- Remind students of **resources** to support them
- Indicate how it will impact the course
  - Not at all
  - Planned discussions might touch on related issues
  - The issue is already on syllabus for consideration
  - The issue will be added to plans for the course



# 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!

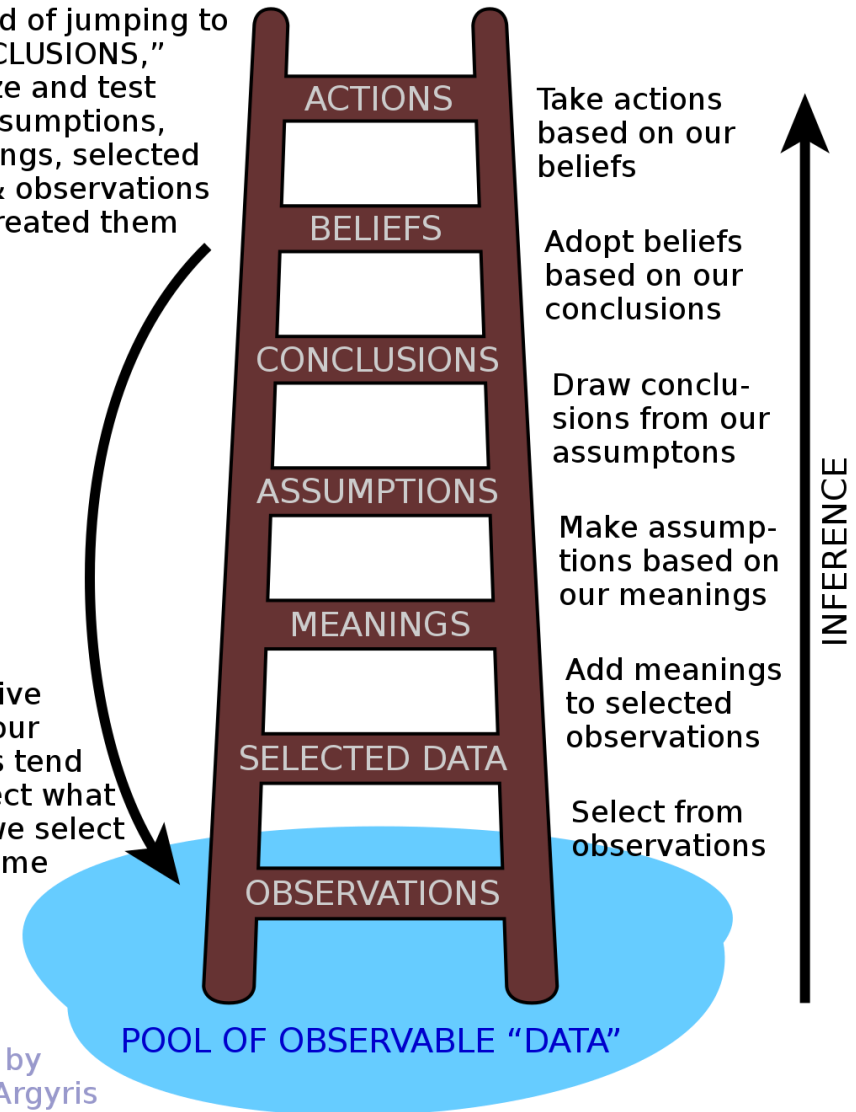
Input into [shared document](#)

- 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.