

IDH 3931 Engaging in Respectful and Robust Debate

Spring 2025, Dr. Brian Ray

Purpose & Goals

This course is designed to assist students in developing the skills to engage in respectful and robust debate as well as effectively analyze controversial and divisive issues. Topics include cancel culture, self-censorship, free speech, respectful dissent, rigorously weighing alternatives, aligning on facts, reframing disagreement as a benefit, and breaking down barriers that impact mutual understanding.

Location: 219 Stuzin Hall

Meeting Time & Dates: 3-4 periods on 24 MAR, 26 MAR, 31 MAR, 2 APR, 7 APR

“Young adults who are coming up through the education system are less accustomed to this sort of open debate, this sort of robust exchange of views around issues they feel strongly about than may have been the case in the past. The onus is on the Times to instill values like independence in its employees.”

Joe Kahn, Executive Editor of the New York Times

<https://www.wsj.com/business/media/new-york-times-reporters-rebellion-a6951d91>

THAT TRAINING WILL HAPPEN IN THIS COURSE!

Readings are to be done **BEFORE** class. Come to class prepared or don't come at all. For each of the articles, be prepared to share a few points from each article that you found particularly interesting/insightful/disconcerting/disturbing/shocking/baffling (you choose the adjective 😊)!

Each of you has free access to The New York Times and the Wall Street Journal

<https://news.hr.ufl.edu/worklife/free-subscriptions-to-new-york-times-wall-street-journal/>

24 MAR (Campus Speech....and Reactions to Speech)

Why the Words-are-Violence Argument Needs to Die

<https://greglukianoff.substack.com/p/why-the-words-are-violence-argument>

SLS Letter from Dean - Stanford Law School

<https://law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Next-Steps-on-Protests-and-Free-Speech.pdf>

Saving the Idea of the University

<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2024/09/saving-idea-university-dartmouth/679790/>

Is Pluralism the Next DEI?

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/is-pluralism-the-next-dei>

The Coddling of the American Mind

<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/09/the-coddling-of-the-american-mind/399356/>

When Silicon Valley Stopped Trying to Save the World

<https://www.thefp.com/p/when-silicon-valley-stopped-trying>

Students Aren't the Obstacle to Open Debate at Harvard

<https://www.wsj.com/us-news/education/students-arent-the-obstacle-to-open-debate-at-harvard-e68f2cc2>

Student Activism is Integral to the Mission of the Academe

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/student-activism-is-integral-to-the-mission-of-academe>

Student Protesters Disrupt Conservative Congressman's Campus Speech

<https://www.campusreform.org/article/student-protesters-disrupt-conservative-congressmans-campus-speech-you-criminal/25144>

Most doxxing campaigns only last a few days. But the effects can be felt for months.

<https://www.npr.org/2024/04/11/1231084790/israel-kidnapped-posters-tore-down-doxxed>

26 MAR (Facts Above Rhetoric)

To the Class of 2024: You Are All Diseased

<https://www.thefp.com/p/to-the-class-of-2024-you-are-all-diseased>

Putting Student Loan Forgiveness in Perspective: How costly is it and who benefits?

<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/putting-student-loan-forgiveness-in-perspective-how-costly-is-it-and-who-benefits/>

The Social Security Fix Nobody Wants to Talk About

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/05/31/business/social-security-trust-funds.html>

The Canaries in America's Coal Mine

<https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2024/03/25/the-canaries-in-americas-coal-mine-150695.html>

The U.S. Already Soaks the Rich

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-income-taxes-top-1-percent-irs-tax-foundation-joe-biden-fair-share-3394355b>

Who Pays Corporate Taxes? Look in the Mirror

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/who-pays-corporate-taxes-look-in-the-mirror-economy-cbaef540>

The National Debt Tops \$34 trillion — a record high. How worried should we be?

<https://www.npr.org/2024/01/03/1222600843/the-national-debt-tops-34-trillion-a-record-high-how-worried-should-we-be>

The 'Settler Colonialists' of Palestine

<https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/who-were-the-settler-colonialists-of-palestine/>

The 'Gender Pay Gap' Is a Myth That Won't Go Away

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-gender-pay-gap-is-a-myth-that-wont-go-away-1f0e3841>

J.D. Vance and the Indian-American Dream

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/j-d-vance-and-the-indian-american-dream-2024-election-usha-81ddedd0>

Bari Weiss: They Knew

<https://www.thefp.com/p/bari-weiss-president-biden-debate-june-27>

31 MAR (Engaging in Dialog With “The Other”)

Far From the Protests, Some Students Try to Meet in the Middle

<https://www.wsj.com/us-news/education/gen-z-israel-gaza-college-protests-conversation-cf699896>

When It Comes to Politics, Are Any of Us Really Thinking for Ourselves?

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/03/24/opinion/politics-intellectual-humility.html>

It’s Harder to Hate the Other Side When You Come Face-to-Face

<https://www.thefp.com/p/introducing-ben-meets-america>

Will Gen-Z cancel America?

<https://thehill.com/opinion/4627399-will-gen-z-cancel-america/>

You Can’t Love Your Country If You Hate Half The People In It

<https://www.deseret.com/2024/2/21/24071165/democrats-republicans-finding-ways-to-disagree-better-governor-cox-moore/>

Can We Improve Political Discourse?

<https://www.cato-unbound.org/2019/11/08/arnold-klings-can-we-improve-political-discourse/>

Tackling the Difficult but Urgent Task of Depolarizing America

https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2024/03/30/tackling_the_difficult_but_urgent_task_of_depolarizing_america_150710.html

A Note on “Equity” and Captured Institutions

<https://blog.ioelonsdale.com/p/a-note-on-equity-and-captured-institutions>

2 APR (The Gen Z Frame of Mind)

Why the Gaza War Has Spun Campuses Into Chaos

https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/26/opinions/opinion-the-cause-of-campus-chaos-zakaria?cid=ios_app

The Rough Years That Turned Gen Z Into America’s Most Disillusioned Voters

<https://www.wsj.com/politics/elections/gen-z-voters-election-tiktok-5bc524>

Florida Enacts Social Media Bill Restricting Access for Teens Under the Age of Sixteen

<https://www.insideprivacy.com/uncategorized/florida-enacts-social-media-bill-restricting-access-for-teens-under-the-age-of-sixteen/>

Jonathan Haidt: Smartphones Rewired Childhood. Here’s How to Fix It.

<https://www.thefp.com/p/jonathan-haidt-smartphones-rewired-childhood>

Will the Phone-Free Movement Work?

<https://slate.com/human-interest/2024/03/jonathan-haidt-smartphones-social-media-teens-mental-health.html>

My First Amendment concerns with ‘The Anxious Generation’

<https://greglukianoff.substack.com/p/my-first-amendment-concerns-with>

Why the West Will Refuse to Fight.....Citizens Won't Sacrifice Themselves

<https://unherd.com/2024/04/why-the-west-will-refuse-to-fight/>

7 APR (No readings. Overcoming Fear and Building Courage Presentations)

Key Assignments

- Class Participation and Peer Engagement (30 points)
- 31 MAR “Overcoming Your Fears” Action Plan (15 points)
- 2 APR Lessons from Leaders Paper (20 points)
- 7 APR Overcoming Fear & Building Courage Presentations (35 points)

Grading Scale (out of 100 points)

A 94 or more	B- 80 - 82.99	D+ 67 - 69.99
A- 90 - 93.99	C+ 77 - 79.99	D 63 – 67.99
B+ 87 - 89.99	C 73 - 76.99	D- 60 - 62.99
B 83 - 86.99	C- 70 - 72.99	E < 60.00

Lesson from Leaders

Identify three leaders whom you would like to interview. It is advantageous to interview individuals in your field of interest/future profession (please no relatives). “E-mail” interviews are not acceptable. Telephone interviews are strongly discouraged. Zoom or face-to-face is the way to go!!! Build that network!

Each interview usually takes 30 to 40 minutes. The goal is to “bring to life” some of the concepts and theories presented in the course. The written summary of each interview should be approximately two pages with two-thirds of the content describing the responses to your questions and one third dedicated to your personal insights/best takeaways. Dr. Ray is interested in your big takeaways. You should define at least three.

Example Questions

Name a person who has had a tremendous impact on you as a courageous leader? Maybe someone who has been a mentor to you? Why and how did this person impact your life?

What are the most courageous decisions you make as a leader in your organization?

As an organization gets larger there can be a tendency for the “institution” to dampen the “inspiration.” How do you keep this from happening?

How do you encourage courage and risk taking within your organization? Where do the great ideas come from in your organization?

What is one characteristic that you believe every leader should possess?

What is the biggest challenge facing leaders today?

What is one mistake you witness young leaders frequently making? What are a few behaviors or traits that you have seen derail a person career?

What advice would you give someone going into his/her first leadership position?

Overcome Your Fears

Students will make a list of ten things about which they are fearful/scared. Even though people often mention specific fears, all fears can be placed in one of seven categories:

Pain, Danger, Disgust, Embarrassment, Rejection, Loneliness, Control

The motivation for this assignment comes from the Ted Talk, "100 Days Without Fear" by Michelle Poler. (<https://youtu.be/2dbNRGiqaaM>)

One approach of many in effectively dealing with fear is as follows:

Acknowledge the fear. *Whether it's imagined or real, the first step in overcoming fear is to admit that it exists. We all have fears; it's human nature. Denying or ignoring them doesn't make them go away.*

Analyze it. *Where does it come from? Is it real or imagined? Can it be put in a different context? For instance if you think it through to its logical conclusion, what's the worst that can happen to you? Once you've determined what that might be, ask yourself if you can deal with, or overcome it. More often than not, once you go through the process of analyzing it, the fear isn't as scary as you originally imagined.*

Face it. *Allow yourself to feel it, and then do it anyway. Act in spite of your fear and treat it as a challenge for personal growth and an opportunity to become stronger.*

Be persistent. *Do the thing you fear over and over again. By doing it repeatedly it loses its power over you and you become less vulnerable to it.*

Develop courage. *Sometimes the answer may not be to conquer a particular fear; it may be to develop courage. If you focus too much on any one fear instead of trying to build courage, you may in fact, intensify it. By developing courage you build self-confidence and resilience. You also build a healthy approach towards facing all fear.*

Requirement: Students are required to do three activities. The action plan is due 21 OCT. They will work with another classmate to discuss the "before and after" thoughts, emotions, and lessons learned from each endeavor. The teams of two will make a presentation about their experiences and reflections 28 OCT.

Other Course Issues

Academic Honor Code: By virtue of enrolling in this course, students commit themselves to uphold the Honor Code, which includes the following pledge: "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity." Students are expected to exhibit behavior consistent with this commitment to the UF academic community, and on all work submitted for credit at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." It is assumed that students will complete all work independently in each course unless the instructor provides explicit permission to collaborate on course tasks (e.g. assignments, papers, quizzes, exams). Furthermore, as part of a student's obligation to uphold the Honor Code, s/he should report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. It is each

student's individual responsibility to know and comply with all university policies and procedures regarding academic integrity and the Student Honor Code. Violations of the Honor Code at the University of Florida will not be tolerated. Violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office for consideration of disciplinary action. More information regarding the Student Honor Code can be found at the following URL: www.dso.ufl.edu/SCCR/honorcodes/honorcode.php.

Student Issues: Students registered with the Office for Students With Disabilities should contact Dr. Ray by the second week of class. As a UF student, each member of the class agrees to the following statement: "I understand the University of Florida expects its students to be honest in all their academic work. I agree to adhere to this commitment to academic honesty and understand that my failure to comply with this commitment may result in disciplinary action up to and including expulsion from the University." Suspected violations will be reported to the Dean of Students Office.

In-Class Recording: Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A "class lecture" is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To "publish" means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.