

Ground Rules for In-Class Discussions:

1. In order to create a climate for open and honest dialogue and to encourage the broadest range of viewpoints, it is important for class participants to treat each other with respect. Name calling, accusations, verbal attacks, sarcasm, and other negative exchanges are counter productive to successful teaching and learning about topics and won't be tolerated.
2. The purpose of class discussions is to generate greater understanding about different topics. The expression of the broadest range of ideas, including dissenting views, accomplishes this goal. However, in expressing viewpoints, students should try to raise questions and comments in way that will promote learning, rather than defensiveness and conflict in other students. Thus, questions and comments should be asked or stated in such a way that will promote greater insight into and awareness of topics as opposed to anger and conflict.
 - a. Example of a question that may put students on the defensive: Why do you insist on saying you are against GMOs when in actuality that is wrong? You are not against them when the technology is used to stop human suffering. This seems hypocritical to me.
 - b. Example of a non-defensive question: Would it be correct to summarize your viewpoint as being anti-GM technology as it relates to food crops? I would like to understand your view more completely.
3. Learning is both about sharing different views and actively listening to those with different views. Students in this class are expected to do both. Learning is maximized when many different viewpoints are expressed in the classroom.
4. Keep the discussion and comments on the topic, not on the individual. Don't personalize the dialogue. Rather than personalizing the dialogue, please direct challenging comments or questions to the instructor or the entire class.
5. Remember that it is OK to disagree with each other. Let's agree to disagree. The purpose of dialogue and discussion is not to reach a consensus, nor to convince each other of different viewpoints. Rather, the purpose of dialogue in the classroom is to reach higher levels of learning by examining different viewpoints and opinions.
6. Everyone is expected to share. Keep in mind that the role of the instructor is to make sure that everyone's voice is heard in class.

(FROM: Intergroup Relations Center Classroom resources (Arizona State University) -- DISCUSSION GROUND RULES; Available on-line at:
<http://www.asu.edu/provost/intergroup/resources/classgroundrules.html>)