

Courageous Conversations

A sustained dialogue on race/ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, sexuality, ability, and religious issues

Program Overview

What is sustained dialogue?

Sustained dialogue is a process used to transform relationships for the purpose of fostering meaningful change in any community. It enables individuals from various backgrounds and experiences to meet and learn from each others' experiences, examine relevant issues of the day (i.e. communication, gender and the media, immigration, violence, pay equity, sexism and racism), and explore different perspectives and conflicting issues using constructive approaches to dialogue to bridge differences. Courageous Conversations is a sustained dialogue program that seeks to bring people together for structured, on-going dialogues that examine the dynamics of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, sexuality, ability, and religious identity issues.

Objectives

Courageous Conversations is designed to:

1. Develop an awareness of social identities and social group memberships in the US as well as specific issues around race/ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion and ability
2. Establish a knowledge base about the dynamics and selected manifestations of social oppression with sufficient information to allow for continued future learning
3. Apply methods of critical analysis and conceptual frameworks drawn from psychology, history, and sociology to examine the socialization process and the maintenance of systems and structures of oppression and privilege
4. Link new concepts and perspectives to personal observations and experiences
5. Discuss the importance of alliance building and the strategies necessary to interrupt oppression and work toward inclusion and liberation

Logistics

There are three phases to the Courageous Conversations program. The first is to develop and increase your own understanding around issues of race/ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, sexuality, ability, and religious identity. In this phase, there will be two separate Courageous Conversations groups, a student group and a faculty/staff group. In the second phase, both the faculty/staff and student Courageous Conversations groups will converge as one group for dialogue facilitation training to join LEAD (Lawrentians Engaging in Active Dialogue), a student, faculty and staff dialogue facilitation group. After completing the second phase, participants are lifelong members of LEAD (phase 3) and will continue to meet on a regular basis to dialogue on current events of the day, examine issues in the community and to continue to develop their dialogue facilitation skills.

- Phase 1: The Courageous Conversations faculty/staff group for the 2014-2015 academic year will take place on Tuesdays from 6:30-8:30 PM beginning on Tuesday, September 9th.

Courageous Conversations

A sustained dialogue on race/ethnicity, socioeconomic class, gender, sexuality, ability, and religious issues

- Phases 2 & 3: The day of the week and time will be determined by what works best for everyone's schedules.

Expectations

The main expectation is that you attend each session barring unforeseen conflicts and commitments and that you engage with a growth mindset and an open heart and mind. I will assign readings, videos, and other materials for "homework" that you are encouraged to digest at your own pace as your schedule permits.

Common Concerns & Answers

You might be interested in participating in Courageous Conversations but have some concerns. Below are two major concerns that I've heard from folks in passing along with my response. I hope that my answers will address and ease some of your concerns and make it more possible for you to take part. If you have further concerns or do not see your concerns addressed below, please feel free to reach out to me.

1. I want to participate but I don't know a lot about these issues and I'm concerned that I might offend someone or say the wrong thing because I'm not as experienced in talking about these issues.

It does not matter how much you have engaged with these issues previously or how much you know about these issues. We all have something to bring to the table and something to take away regardless of how much we have engaged with these issues in our everyday lives. The format of the sessions is structured in a way that enables everyone to participate regardless of what their experiences have been.

2. I want to participate but I just can't see the future far ahead enough to know what my commitments might be on Tuesday nights. I'm worried that I might need to be out of town or have something come up that will prevent me from making a session here and there.

We recognize that everyone has busy schedules and that conflicts will emerge (I already see some conflicts emerging on my end) and we flex accordingly so please don't let any unforeseen conflicts deter you from taking part.