

TUTORIAL 12: 12 ANGRY MEN – ACADEMIC CONVERSATIONS

ICONS TO HELP YOU NAVIGATE THE COURSE HANDOUTS



Whole class discussion



Teams/Groups discussion



Take/make notes



Impromptu talk topic
(speak for 1 min)

Learning objectives:

- Recap of key learning points of productive academic conversations
- Strategies for improving discussion skills
- Voicing an opinion and arguing a point effectively
- Leading a discussion

1. 12 ANGRY MEN

- Watch this video clip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lku5BA8Y4Zs>
- Identify as many examples of constructive discussion phrases and non-constructive discussion phrases as you can, and note them in the table below.

Constructive discussion phrases (and why)	Non-constructive discussion phrases

2. RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

- Helpful behaviour includes contributing ideas and using language which builds, adds and elaborates.
- Unhelpful behaviour uses attack strategies such as blocking and stalling.
- It is understood that academic argument is NOT about winning, but about achieving reasoned mutual understanding
- It is the quality of the argument that is important

3. JUGGLING ACADEMIC CONVERSATION BALLS

- First and foremost, academic conversationalists must have content knowledge, there should be no fluff or huff and puff. Solid and substantiated points are expected.
- Language (verbal skills) must be precise and polite.
- Critical thinking skills and dispositions must be seen in quality of utterances and engagement – tolerance of different POVs, intellectual curiosity, intellectual humility for own views, being able to acknowledge new and credible information, open mindedness, being well informed, being respectful, being alert to fallacies but sensitive in how they are called out, skilful in integrating information.
- IPC – interpersonal communication skills should show respect, sensitivity and understanding of the rules of engagement.
- ICC – intercultural communication – shows understanding of how to avoid face threatening or face losing, how to take turns, how to disagree mildly, strongly and very strongly; yet always objective and centred on points or ideas, NOT on person or personality.
- Nonverbal communication skills are used to show confidence, credibility and approachability.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING ACADEMIC CONVERSATION SKILLS

■ **Participate**

■ **Entering the space**

- Agree with what someone has said
- Ask them to expand on their point
- Prepare a question to ask

■ **Settling into the space**

- Answer a question put to the group
- Provide an example for a point under discussion

■ **Owning the space**

- Disagree with a point

VOICING AN OPINION (O-R-E)

■ Have a valid **opinion**

- I believe that...
- I think that...
- From what I understand...
- As I understand it...

■ A **reason** why

- This is due to...
- Because ...
- What I mean by this is ...

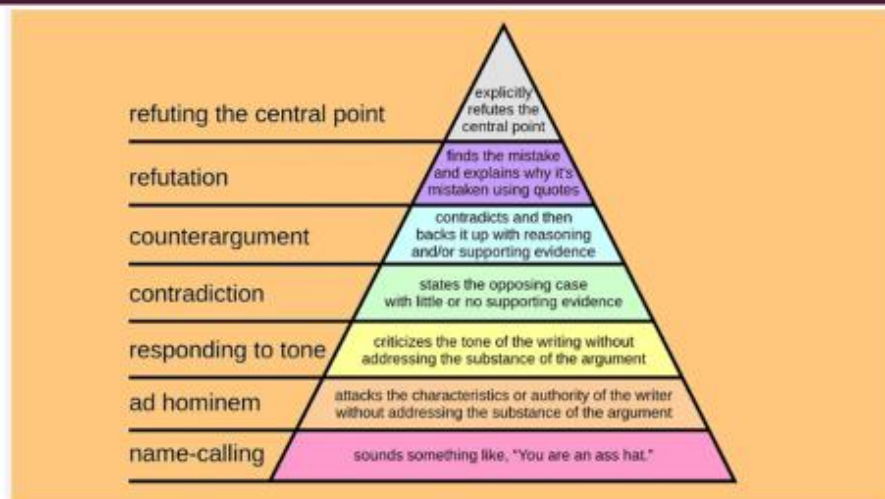
■ **Evidence**

- This can be seen by...
- For instance/example...
- An example can be seen...
- (Author) states that/suggests...
- Statistics from (source) indicate...

HOW TO DISAGREE EFFECTIVELY

- **Acknowledge** speaker's ideas
 - I can see your point. However...
 - That's a good point, but...
 - I see what you're getting at/ where you're coming from, but...
 - I see what you mean. However...
- **Explain** why you disagree
 - That's not always the case because...
 - That's not necessarily true because...
 - This idea isn't supported by statistics/evidence.
 - I thought the author meant that...

HIERARCHY OF DISAGREEMENT



Source: <https://bigthink.com/paul-ratner/how-to-disagree-well-7-of-the-best-and-worst-ways-to-argue> based on a blog post by the Hacker Philosopher, Dr Paul Graham. The bottom four levels are inferior ways of disagreement, whereas the top three are: counterargument, refutation and refuting the central point. What's wrong with disagreeing by name calling, ad hominem, responding in like tone and contradiction?

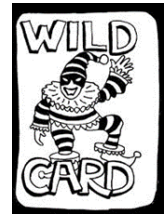
Paul Graham aka Hacker Philosopher saw a trend in the way we communicate online – it's more conversational but also more adversarial and his antidote for poor argumentation – the sort that leads pretty much nowhere - is to understand conversation skills in social media, and he proposed this hierarchy of disagreement. Dr Graham's point is we have to exercise restraint or discipline in how we

disagree online so that we are actively listening to different points of view, and not just trying to see who can shout the loudest or say the most. In the panel discussion and Oxford Essay Tutorial Discussion, what we hope to evidence is you engaging in a lively yet civilized debate in the discussion.

4. WILD CARD PRACTICE #6

You have 15 minutes to jot down your points.

Can you speak for two minutes on articulation and eloquence in speaking?



5. PANEL DISCUSSION

PANEL DISCUSSION (WEEK 8)

Umbrella topic: IT solutions to human problems

- **Team A topic**
 - Your choice (team members should all agree on the problem, the tech solution may be different)
- **Team B topic**
 - Your choice (team members should all agree on the problem, the tech solution may be different)
- **Team C topic**
 - Your choice (team members should all agree on the problem, the tech solution may be different)
- **Team D topic**
 - Your choice (team members should all agree on the problem, the tech solution may be different)

Oxford Essays (week 11) should identify the relationship between specific problems and solutions where there is a technological solution to a human problem.

Be curious, think of a good question to answer, embrace controversy.

Team D Monday, 7 Oct/Tuesday, 8 Oct	Team C Monday, 7 Oct/Tuesday, 8 Oct	6. HOMEWORK Remember to do your reading for the panel discussion.
Team B Thursday, 10 Oct/Friday, 11 Oct	Team A Thursday, 10 Oct/Friday, 11 Oct	



COURSE NOTES

- There are unspoken rules of engagement in academic conversations.
- These rules govern turn taking or space sharing.
- Equal airtime is expected.
- These rules also govern discussion behaviour – building, shaping, challenging or developing another person’s points, not just being intent on saying one’s point.
- There are linguistic frames to signal agreement, building, challenging, developing a conversational point.
- There are also linguistic frames for governing disagreement, partial agreement/disagreement, probing, checking, verifying information or opinions.
- Vigorous debate is expected.
- Ennis’ auxiliaries of sensitivity and respect for different POVs come strongly into play in academic discussions.
- Engage with intellectual points, not on personal foibles.
- Learn the rules of engagement.
- Learn the language of agreement, disagreement, deepening discussion, debate and engagement.
- Speak critically – that is showing open-mindedness, being well-informed, displaying analytical and evaluative skills, intellectual curiosity, and sensitivity and respect for other POVs.
- Identify what makes an utterance articulate.