



## Academic Freedom and Classroom Discussion

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### Syllabus Statement

Academic freedom is a cornerstone of the University. Academic freedom in its teaching aspect is fundamental for the protection of the rights of the teacher in teaching and of the student to freedom in learning.

- 1) Each faculty member is entitled to full freedom in the classroom discussing the subject which the faculty member teaches.
- 2) Texas A&M will not penalize or discipline members of the faculty because of their exercise of academic freedom.

Along with this freedom comes responsibility. It is the responsibility of faculty members to ensure that topics discussed are related to the classroom subject. Students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled.

- 3) It is not the proper role of the university or any outside agency to attempt to shield individuals from ideas and opinions they find unwelcome, disagreeable, or even deeply offensive.
- 4) Engaging with new ideas and perspectives helps students grow intellectually and is beneficial to the educational process.

### Classroom Discussion and Engagement Guidelines

This class embraces academic freedom to support learning objectives and promote educational excellence. Throughout this semester, we will explore new and sometimes controversial ideas. It is possible that discussions of these topics will reveal diverse but legitimate differences of opinion. Such differences are not only likely but can be desirable, as they can be essential to the promotion of a dynamic and informative learning environment for us all. As we embark on a journey of learning with and from one another, it is important to remember that the introduction of challenging topics is not only a faculty responsibility but a crucial component of your education. Discussions that reveal divergence of opinion are not introduced in this course to influence your



values and beliefs but to provoke thought and foster a deeper understanding of complex subjects.

Here are discussion guidelines embraced in this course to help us all engage one another respectfully and productively, honoring the Aggie Core Values of respect and excellence. These guidelines apply equally to students and the instructor:

1. **Listen Actively and Respectfully:** Understanding begins with listening. Whether it's a peer's comment or an instructor's lecture, strive to comprehend the rationale behind differing viewpoints. This mutual respect for dialogue enhances our collective learning.
2. **Engage One Another Constructively:** Focus your responses on the arguments, not the individuals presenting them, whether these ideas come from classmates or the instructor. This approach ensures our discussions remain respectful and centered on educational growth.
3. **Base Arguments on Evidence:** Support your viewpoints with reasoned analysis and be open to considering the validity of responses you receive. This practice not only deepens your grasp of the subjects but also upholds the academic integrity of our debates.
4. **Embrace Diversity of Thought and Experiences:** A variety of perspectives not only enriches our discussions but also deepens our collective understanding. Challenge your own preconceptions by engaging with the diverse ideas presented in this classroom and expect the same openness from others.
5. **Maintain Civility:** Respect, an Aggie Core Value, must anchor our interactions, especially during passionate debates. Upholding standards of civility and composure ensures that our class promotes a supportive environment for open and honest discourse.
6. **Embrace Challenge as a Learning Tool:** Encountering ideas that challenge your perspectives can be a crucial part of education. Respectful engagement with difficult concepts, whether they originate from you or others, can lead to significant personal and intellectual development. View these moments as opportunities to critically assess and refine your perspectives.