

Reasons Students Are Afraid To Speak Out on Challenging Topics

1. They are uncomfortable about conflict.
2. They are concerned with how their peers will perceive them if they voice anything but "middle of the road" views.
3. They expect to receive lower grades if they disagree with professor.
4. They are afraid that they shouldn't voice opinions since they are not an expert.

Lusk, A., & Weinberg, A. (1994). Discussing controversial topics in the classroom: creating a context for learning. *Teaching Sociology*, 22 (4), 301-308.



Safe Space

A place intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations.

An environment in which students are willing and able to participate and honestly struggle with challenging issues.

Brave Space

Respectful but challenging dialogue

"Learning necessarily involves not merely risk, but the pain of giving up a former condition in favor of a new way of seeing things."

Boostrom

Boostrom, R. (1998). Safe spaces: Reflection on an educational metaphor. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 30(4), 397-408.

Holley, L.C. & Steiner, S. (2005). Safe space: Student perspectives on classroom environment. *Journal of social Work Education*, 41(1), 49-64.

Safe Spaces and Brave Spaces Historical Context and Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals (2017) NASPA Policy and Practice Series (Issue 2)

Safe space. (n.d.). Retrieved July 17, 2018, from [https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/safe space](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/safe%20space)

Creating Safe Spaces for Dissenting Views



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Suggestions for Brave Spaces

1. “Controversy with civility,” where varying opinions are accepted.
2. “Owning intentions and impacts,” in which students acknowledge and discuss instances where a dialogue has affected the emotional well-being of another person.
3. “Challenge by choice,” where students have an option to step in and out of challenging conversations.
4. “Respect,” where students show respect for one another’s basic personhood.

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Suggestions for Safe Spaces

Create opportunities to get to know your students.

Engage with your students in respectful and collaborative ways.

Be accessible and encourage students to meet with you during office hours.

Ask students to indicate their preferred name and ask them privately for help with pronunciation.

Ask students to notify you of any accommodation needs by the end of the first week of class (and keep accommodation needs private).

Be aware of, and briefly explain, cultural references you use in class.

Identify the purpose of assignments beforehand and allow time for reflection and closure afterwards.

Mix up groups so that multiple perspectives are heard and students are not left out.

Speak clearly and use a reasonable rate of speed.

Develop classroom materials that explore multiple perspectives on the topic.

Incorporate multicultural examples, materials, and visual aids when possible.

When making up examples use diverse names and cultural references.

Encourage students to make personal connections with the content and share those when appropriate.

Consider alternative ways for students to fulfill participation requirements when appropriate.

Be aware of your own identity and how you portray yourself in class.

Be aware of your own assumptions about students based on surnames or skin tone.

Keep expectations high – hold students accountable while allowing them to be successful!