Notes from Group discussions:

How do I keep students curious and open minded and from drawing conclusions too early?

* Use the dialectic in the classroom. If you throw in more questions when they think they’ve reached The answer. They have to think more. This becomes the norm.
* Assignments: trying to get people to think about past positions and how positions have changed based conversations in class and on assignments (pre/post reflections).
* Talk about how context really matters. Be curious IN the conversation, Throughout the course, and Beyond the course.
* Monica Guzman’s book: I never thought of it that way. Students don’t really listen, so an exercise that adds on to the previous speaker’s point is a good practice. Can’t talk over each other.
* Start with easy conversations first. Low risk. Ex: Is a taco a sandwich?
* Asking students to discuss / articulate counter positions. Play devil’s advocate. Understand the opposite side.
* Include aspect of civic engagement.
* Students from STEM have always been rewarded for having the Right Answers. Teach them to value curiosity in a robust way. Reward them for asking good questions. Framing new uncertainties and complexities. Think beyond the right answer.
* When students are reacting to something that is new to them (art, politics), going beyond the “I like this” or “I dislike this”. Ask them to care about the thing, not just like/dislike. Teach them the skill of figuring out why you should care about something. Debate can be generative, but not always. Sometimes they can’t see the value in actually having a debate in the first place.
* Can these be framed as “discourse” not “debate”. What can I learn about the other perspectives? What values are behind the arguments? “Discourse” tries to frame things around shared values. It’s not about being right or wrong the way debates tend to be.
* Let’s acknowledge, the adults in the room are not great role models. We have faculty, staff and post docs who can’t model flexibility themselves. When things are tied in people’s self-identity, it’s even harder to engage in an effective/empowered way.
* One way to address these challenges, but by revealing our own vulnerability. It can be helpful. “I’m good at some things, but not everything.” Own our own limitations. We can’t solve every problem that we discuss in the classroom.
* Let people know that we are going to disagree sometimes. It’s not ok to attack someone, even if you disagree. We want to encourage Informed perspectives. We don’t necessarily want to change our students, but to get them to see other views. “I want students to interrogate their own ideas”.
* It’s interesting to consider how our students have changed over the years. Less likely to share my expectations about what an “appropriate conversation” is. I don’t know what they think is “appropriate” anymore. Having hard conversations in some students’ views is ‘inappropriate’ in itself.
* Talking about how our own views as instructors have changed over time can be insightful to our students. Model our own vulnerability and thoughtful shifting over time.
* First year course that moved into 2nd year course (or 2nd semester). We have a scaffolded way to approach this over time. Warm them up slowly to the harder conversations.
* Hard to push the discourse model when the approach is forensics/debate driven.
* Interesting line between humility and hubris.