WORKING WITH TEAMS OR GROUPS: CIVILITY

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These two interactive exercises are the culmination of a one-week training module in civility at the start of Joyce Johnston's English 302 (Advanced Composition) classes. Further activities include four online readings from the viewpoint of a philosopher, journalist, psychologist and teacher on issues of incivility. Students view and, in groups, discuss current cases of rampant incivility (politics excluded) in an effort to determine what causes such behavior and how individuals could/should react appropriately. The following week, students begin a group project; at the end, they not only produce a deliverable on researched writing, but individually evaluate the group's interactions and effectiveness.

CLASS BLOG QUESTIONS ON ONLINE CIVILITY

Describe your experience with online interactions in different venues that are important to you: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, email, etc. How do users respond differently in these different online environments? In what ways do you adjust your own persona and responses to accommodate the medium? Describe your experience with online interactions in different venues that are important to you: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, email, etc. How do users respond differently in these different online environments? In what ways do you adjust your own persona and responses to accommodate the medium?

Are there particular issues for which you have no realistic expectation that it's possible to discuss them civilly (either online, offline, or both)? What are they, and why do you think discussing them civilly is so frackin' hard?

What does it mean to be "on the same team," or members of the same "community," at least from the point of view of feeling like we're entitled to expect a certain level of regard or kind of treatment from each other?

What are the prospects for successful coalition building across fairly significant differences (which might include differences in preferred level of "politeness" or "civility")?

What are the prospects for successful coalition building when the differences include not respecting other people's feelings and/or prioritizing one's own insulation against feeling bad above everything else?

Are calls to be civil, discussions of tone, etc., primarily about hurt feelings? Is casting them this way dismissive, marginalizing, and/or factually incorrect?

NOTE: Questions #2-7 were derived from Stemwedel, J. D. (2006-2012) #scio10 preparation: Is there a special problem of online civility? Adventures in ethics and science. Available: http://scienceblogs.com/ethicsandscience/2010/01/03/scio10-is-there-a-special-prob/

ELEMENTS OF CLASS INTERACTION SURVEY ITEMS.

Using Blackboard's survey tool, students are instructed to choose the top 3 behaviors they most want to receive from others in return for practicing them themselves.

Show respect

Be a good friend

Have a positive attitude

Be polite

Keep an open mind

Offer constructive criticism

Do not accuse or blame other

Critique kindly

Value everyone's opinions and experience

Praise others when deserved

Do not tolerate offensive, nonconstructive comments

Do not use slang or abbreviations found in text messages

Keep a professional attitude

Avoid sarcasm

Don't overreact to others' comments

Make helpful, productive suggestions

Encourage knowledge

Think before you type

Consider your audience

Be the person you want others to be

NOTE: The 20 desirable traits above were generated by students in an English 302 class in Fall of 2012.