



Graduate Course Description Form

Course Number: IGC 728

Course Name: Navigating Together: Teaching Students to Discuss Sensitive & Controversial Topics Productively

Instructor: TBD

Credits Earned: 3 Graduate Credits / 67.5 PDPs (for courses completed before June 8, 2025) or 22.5 PDPs (for courses completed on or after June 8, 2025)

Credits Issued By: Gordon College

Course Fee: \$675 (\$575 for early bird registration)

Course Description:

This course equips Massachusetts educators in grades 6–12 with the facilitation skills, discussion structures, and professional dispositions needed to lead productive classroom conversations about sensitive and controversial topics — including current events, historical injustices, civic controversies, and ethical dilemmas. Drawing on Parker's democratic education framework and Hess and McAvoy's political classroom research, participants develop a repertoire of discussion protocols, learn to maintain psychological safety, and build the professional confidence to engage with topics that are both educationally essential and professionally challenging. This course is aligned to the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Distinguish between controversial and sensitive topics and apply appropriate discussion structures and facilitation strategies to each.
2. Design and facilitate Socratic Seminar, structured academic controversy, and other evidence-based discussion protocols aligned to Massachusetts curriculum standards.
3. Create and maintain psychological safety in classroom discussions, including strategies for preventing harm, managing disclosure, and responding when discussion breaks down.
4. Apply awareness of teacher positionality, neutrality, and advocacy to make intentional, professionally defensible decisions about how to engage with controversial content.
5. Develop a personal facilitation framework and professional plan for building and sustaining a classroom culture of productive, respectful discourse.

The Denty Connection, LLC.

20 Woodhaven St, Marshfield MA 02050 | www.thedentyconnection.com | registration@thedentyconnection.com