

Voting Theory Forum: Code of Conduct

Creating a space that is welcoming, inclusive, non-partisan, and productive is at the foundation of building the trust and relationships required for constructive discourse. For this reason we have embraced a Code of Conduct to help set our intentions and solve problems in the event that problems arise. Participation in the forum will be taken as consent to follow the Code of Conduct.

a. Respectful conduct: All Forum meetings will be conducted in a respectful, professional, and positive manner, and all public conduct in an official capacity by team members must also follow the code of conduct.

In debate, please be respectful, try to assume good faith, and exercise patience and compassion as much as possible. Try to be inclusive, and use language that is accessible. Avoid excessive jargon and try to define technical terms and acronyms used. Every conversation is an opportunity to teach what you know, learn something new, and grow the movement.

Insults and personal attacks are not allowed. Please make an effort to stay on topic and to not waste people's time. Keep in mind that this is a volunteer-driven project, and that time contributed by participants and moderators is appreciated and valued. Try to keep all discussions relevant to voting theory and reform efforts. Avoid sweeping generalizations or assumptions.

b. On diversity: Electoral reform, research, and theory are fields that have traditionally and historically been dominated by white males. We strive to transcend these patterns by encouraging and supporting newcomers to the field. Please make a point of being welcoming and inviting, and taking the time to ensure that people of all backgrounds are able to ask questions, get up to speed, and contribute their thoughts and ideas.

We strive to cultivate a space where people with diverse ideas, lived experience, and politics can all be included. The Voting Theory Forum is explicitly non-partisan and seeks to ensure that people with diverse points of view are represented. For that reason, please try to avoid making partisan comments about specific political parties or candidates except in regard to the effects their policies have or would have on representative democracy.

c. On neurodiversity: Electoral reform benefits from having many outside-the-box thinkers, including people who are on the spectrum or who may think differently for a variety of reasons. Many of these individuals have made huge contributions to the field, in part due to their ability to process information in novel ways, or see things from another perspective. Different modes of communicating and missed social cues can manifest as apparent rudeness, condescending tone, or interrupting. Please try to keep in mind that this may be a factor and that it may not be personal. (As always, if negative behavior is excessive or ongoing, follow the guidelines in this code of conduct.)

d. Conflict resolution: Minor personal disagreements or conflicts should be resolved in private between the members involved when possible, and hashing out disagreements publicly should be avoided. If a conversation begins to get heated or if a misunderstanding occurs, reach out to see if talking over the phone or in person is an option instead. Avoid trying to resolve conflicts over text or email when possible.

If a conflict feels serious, if the other person seems unreasonable, or if the people are not comfortable tackling the issue alone, the issue should be brought to the attention of the project leader, or committee chair for facilitation.

e. Personal and professional attacks: Public comments that are or could be reasonably perceived to be a personal or professional threat or attack, or which could be personally or professionally damaging to staff, leadership, volunteers on our team, the Forum itself, or members of other organizations or teams will not be tolerated.

Personal or ad hominem attacks are not to be confused with legitimate or factual criticisms of specific actions made by individuals with citations, though the two may sometimes overlap. Politics can be dirty, but if a member of our team is unfairly attacked, we stick up for each other by providing facts and evidence when possible, and we help mediate rather than staying silent.

f. Hate Speech and discrimination: Abusive, insulting, or threatening speech, or written statements that express prejudice against a particular group, especially on the basis of race, religion, ability, identity, sexual orientation, age, or political affiliation will not be tolerated. Please be respectful and mindful of people's names and pronouns. If you are unclear of how to refer to somebody, ask them politely.

g. Fact Checking: One of the core goals of the forum is community education. We hope that threads will be valuable for future readers and for reference. For this reason we strive to maintain a high level of quality in the content posted by our community.

Cite your sources or explain your logic when possible. Qualify controversial or disputed statements. Present opinions as such. Statements found to be factually incorrect or clearly misleading should be flagged by members or admin and the author should make an edit or correction in a timely manner. Flagged posts not edited in a timely manner may be deleted by moderators.

h. Attendance, commitments, and communications: Most general meetings and events are open to drop-ins, but if you cannot attend a meeting for a committee you have joined, please RSVP to the chair that you won't be able to make it as soon as possible. If your vote or input is needed for quorum or for upcoming decisions, try to be available by phone or text.

If you have volunteered for an action item or position and find that you won't be able to complete it as planned, or if you are going to miss a deadline, please let your committee or team know so that others can step up to help. If you expect to miss multiple meetings, let your committee know that you are stepping down or taking a leave of absence.

For those who have accepted responsibility for projects and action items, please try to keep up on communications. Keeping others looped in is time consuming. Try to stay up to date or get up to date before meetings. If you do fall behind, reach out to someone else on the committee to get caught up in advance, without taking up everyone's time in a meeting when possible.

i. Accountability:

Members of a committee, workgroup, forum, or board who consistently violate the Code of Conduct or who create a toxic environment put the integrity of the team at risk. Organizations without a mechanism for accountability may see positive members regularly stepping down in the face of toxicity while problematic behaviors become normalized, validated, and or even magnified in the remaining membership. For this reason we have created the following mechanism for removing individuals from the community if needed.

If reasonable attempts at conflict resolution fail, if an individual isn't willing to admit that their behavior is problematic or isn't able to make changes, if three or more distinct complaints have been filed, and if three or more members agree that the situation is not likely to be solved by further mediation, then moderators or the Forum Council may reduce the privileges or otherwise remove or ban problematic individuals from the community. In extreme cases, moderators may choose to remove a person from the community without warning and without attempting conflict resolution. In such extreme cases, the individual removed from the community will be afterwards and within a reasonable time frame notified of the

reason or reasons for their removal whenever possible, citing specific evidence and justification from this code of conduct, or from the terms of service and/or privacy policy available on the Website.

Board members, moderators, or elected leaders may be removed by a consensus minus one vote of the Voting Theory Forum Council with no less than 3 individuals voting for removal.