Reframing Discussion Prompts

Moving beyond a binary agree or disagree question for discussion invites deep listening and promotes the skill of seeking to understand others in a conversation. This is particularly valuable for high-emotion topics such as politics and current events.

Note: Using "could" in place of "should" in many questions below is intentional. Deliberation (coming to consensus) is an important civic skill. Though for high-emotion topics, it's helpful to start with more expansive dialogue or discussion.

Potential Goals and Shifts:

- Critical analysis: Ask about potential impacts or root causes of an issue
- Policy: Narrow the scope to how to address a factual reality
- Identify values: Invite students to name theirs and community values that should inform a policy
- Civic imagination: Invite a brainstorm of alternative policies affirming dignity

Examples of Reframed Prompts:

1. Original: *Is [name of policy] a good immigration policy?*
    a. Critical analysis:
        i. What are the potential impacts of this immigration policy?
        ii. What is causing high rates of immigration?
        iii. How does immigration impact our community?
    b. Policy: This prompt is already policy-driven, but you could adapt the policy frame
        i. What could we do about unaccompanied minors at the border?
        ii. What policies could address underlying causes of forced displacement and economic insecurity?
    c. Values identification:
        i. When you think about the idea of or the impacts of immigration, what is the value that comes to mind?

ii. What values would you want to inform our immigration policy?

d. Civic imagination:

i. How might we creatively illuminate the ways immigration has impacted our community?

ii. How could we generatively engage community members in conversations about immigration?

iii. How could the U.S. support the freedom, safety, and economic opportunity of all of its residents?

2. Original: *Should we restrict free speech?*

a. Critical analysis:

i. What are the potential impacts of unfettered free speech?

ii. What are the potential impacts of heavily restricted speech?

iii. What responsibilities does a government have to its people?

b. Policy:

i. How would we like social media companies to ensure users are psychologically safe on their platforms?

ii. How would we like our school or class community to respond to harmful speech?

c. Identify values:

i. As a thoughtful community member, what are the values that could inform how we express our ideas?

ii. What value is most important to you as you think about how you want to feel in community with others? Why?

d. Civic imagination:

i. What's the most effective way to ensure individuals act with community care?

ii. How can we enable all members of our community to feel their needs of both belonging and freedom are fulfilled?

3. Original: *Should the U.S. send money to Israel?*
    a. Critical analysis:
        i. Why does the U.S. send money to Israel?
        ii. What do the U.S. and Israel have in common?
        iii. What have been the impacts of sending more money to Israel than surrounding Arab countries?
        iv. What are the potential impacts of the U.S. ceasing to send money to Israel?
    b. Policy: This prompt is already policy-driven, but you could adapt the policy frame
        i. How could the United States ensure the safety, health, and security of all people, internationally?
        ii. Which U.S. policy could be enacted or repealed to better support international peace and justice?
    c. Values identification:
        i. What is the primary value that comes up for you as you think about U.S. engagement with Israel?
        ii. What values would you want to inform our international aid?
        iii. How can communities ensure the safety and freedom of all peoples?
    d. Civic imagination:
        i. How can perpetrators and survivors of violence acknowledge the harm done, support healing, and prevent future harm?
        ii. How could the U.S. model truth and reconciliation on a domestic level?
        iii. How can communities advance peace and justice when harm is done?