

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVERSATION ROLES AND NORMS

ROLES

Before engaging in a “constitutional conversation,” it is important to make sure that everyone understands their role, and how they will be expected to participate. You, as a student, will be expected to:

- Help establish the norms of a successful “constitutional conversation.”
- Participate in the discussion, working as a team to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to share.
- Reflect on your own performance, noting helpful contributions and areas for improvement.
- Reflect on your new understanding of constitutional texts.

Your teacher will be expected to:

- Help establish the norms of a successful “constitutional conversation.”
- Model the skills associated with the conversation throughout the class.
- Observe and **record** the flow of the discussion and the credit earned by the students.

NORMS AND NON-NEGOTIABLES

In addition to understanding their roles, all participants work together to create a list of norms—or guidelines for the conversation—that everyone then agrees to follow. Creating norms is a great first step in preparing for your constitutional conversation, and the norms you create together can even be used for all classroom activities throughout the year.

- **Practical Guidelines:** Some norms will be more practical, meant to better facilitate the conversation in your classroom. An example of this could be that everyone must speak once before anyone can speak twice.
- **Non-Negotiable Habits:** Other norms will be non-negotiable. We call that a rule. These are essential habits needed to build effective discussions and learning in any classroom. For example, at the NCC, we choose to always focus on a constitutional question, examining what the government may do and what it may not do. These parameters are defined by the Constitution but are sometimes open to reasonable debate from different

CONSTITUTION 101

Module 1: Constitutional Conversations and Civil Dialogue

1.8 Info Brief

perspectives. As we engage with this course, we must agree that our non-negotiable is that we will use constitutional questions to frame our discussions and ask what the government *may* do and not what it *should* do. A “should” question is typically a political question.