

Is Civil Discourse Dead?

TOPIC: ETHICS

GRADES: 9-12

LESSON DURATION: N/A

SOFT SKILLS: CRITICAL THINKING, COMMUNICATION, ANALYSIS

Introduction:

- This lesson uses an opinion piece from the LA Times to prompt student thought. Students will respond to the argument presented that the internet has broken civil discourse in the US. Through this activity students will recognize the need to think before they post and that actions online are just as important as those that do not involve a screen.

Learning Outcomes:

- Students will read and analyze an opinion piece in order to define civil discourse and understand technology's impact on this foundation of democracy.
- Students will be able to identify both positive and negative examples of modern day civil discourse.

Materials:

- The editorial from the LA times: [Trump didn't birth American intolerance...](#)
- [Readers response](#)
- [Student worksheet](#)
- Internet access

Activities:

1. This digital citizenship activity can be done in English, social studies, technology, or a life skills class.
2. Each student should access or be provided a copy of the LA Times editorial from June 3, 2017. The student should spend some time reading the piece.
3. After one read, have the students re-read the editorial, this time completing the [worksheet](#) provided above.
4. The last task is that students should write a response to the editorial. The teacher may choose to let them look at the sample responses first (as is on the worksheet) or remove that question and let students respond without any examples.
5. This activity can then be used to facilitate an in-class discussion regarding online behavior and etiquette. Allow students to voice their opinions. Do not allow the conversation to turn into a political debate but instead focus on the ability to engage in civil discourse regarding civil discourse. If done in a government class, the justices of the Supreme Court could be

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highlighted as a positive example of civil discourse. Although the justices do not always agree, they do not “badmouth” or degrade each other publicly but instead recognize the intelligence of each other’s decision (even while thinking they may be wrong).

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