

Elon University Dialogue Experience Guide

What's Next, America?



What is Dialogue?

Dialogue is a process that brings people together to share their perspectives and lived experiences around meaningful and sometimes challenging social issues. Through open and respectful conversation, participants are invited to explore different viewpoints, deepen understanding, and strengthen their ability to live, learn, and work collaboratively across difference.

What is Dialogue at Elon?

At Elon, dialogue reflects our commitment to fostering an inclusive community where every voice is valued, and learning extends beyond the classroom. It helps dispel stereotypes, cultivate empathy, and inspire both personal growth and collective action for a more just and connected world. Dialogue encourages participants to engage thoughtfully, challenge ideas without dismissing others' beliefs, and build trust across diverse backgrounds.

What Will Participants Experience During a Dialogue?

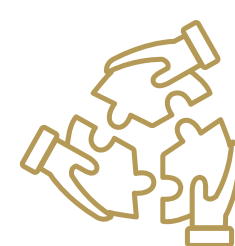
Through participating in a dialogue opportunity, participants will:



Listen and communicate with openness and respect



Reflect critically on personal and social identities



Collaborate effectively across difference



Transform understanding into action

Dialogue Ground Rules

Dialogue participants are asked to consider utilizing these ground rules:

- Listen with curiosity to better understand
- Speak to each other and not just the moderator
- Treat participants in this dialogue as equal, regardless of position
- Learn from one another by asking questions
- Respect the views of others
- Speak from your own experiences
- Approach ideas through a lens of curiosity instead of hostility
- Critique ideas and not individuals
- Remember that stories stay and lessons leave
- Give permission to allow everyone to “speak in draft”

Dialogue Process

1. Each participant should introduce themselves to the group by sharing their first name.
2. Ask one participant to read the ***What is Dialogue?*** text aloud to the group.
3. Ask one participant to read the ***What is Dialogue at Elon?*** text aloud to the group.
4. Ask one or two participants to read the ***Dialogue Ground Rules*** text aloud to the group. Ask if there are any questions or recommended changes.
5. One participant should read this paragraph aloud to frame the conversation:

2026 marks the 250th anniversary of signing the Declaration of Independence. It is important to remember that the history of the United States is not a single, linear narrative, but a series of experiences and stories that chronicle both successes and struggles.

Entitled *What's Next, America?*, this dialogue is one of many that will take place across the country this year and is designed to bring people together to reflect on the past and discuss what kind of future we want to create for generations to come. Many Americans believe that the time is right for conversations that connect people who might not usually interact, conversations that will encourage fresh, innovative thinking and actions to emerge.

7. Work through the following questions as a group:

- Looking back on the last 250 years of the United States, where did people of this nation come together?
- Looking back on American history, where did we experience struggle and disagreement?
- How would we describe our nation today? What factors have led to where we are now?
- Looking ahead to the next 250 years, what is one change you would like to see in this country and why?
- Thinking about the ideas shared for the future, how can we work together with people who think differently than we do to make these things a reality?
- Thinking about these ideas, how can we move from talking to taking action?

8. Each participant should answer one of these concluding questions:

As a result of this dialogue, what is one insight that you are taking away or one action that you can commit to?

As a result of this dialogue, are you currently optimistic or pessimistic about the topic and why?