

Elon University Dialogue Experience Guide

The American Dream



What is Dialogue?	What is Dialogue at Elon?
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.	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?

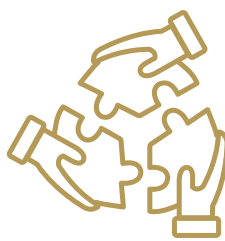
Through participating in a dialogue opportunity, participants will:



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:

The American Dream is a phrase attributed to American historian and businessman James Truslow Adams in his 1931 book *The Epic of America*. Adams defined this ideal as the premise that any person in the United States has the ability to reach their utmost potential, regardless of the situation in which they were born.

In the decades since, the idea of the American Dream has become a key part of our society's vocabulary. Its feasibility is often debated and discussed in the context of whether this reality is achievable for all people, regardless of race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Furthermore, it is often framed as the goal of immigrants and refugees who come to the United States. In this conversation, we invite participants to discuss what the American Dream means to them and to listen to the perspectives of others.

7. Work through the following questions as a group:

- What is your version of the American Dream?
- How might others different from you perceive the American Dream?
- What are some possible challenges to achieving the American Dream?
- What can local, state, and the federal government do to support people in achieving the American Dream?
- What does the future of the American Dream look like?

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?