

Report of the Classroom Social Compact Committee

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Members

Maya Jasanoff (co-chair), Coolidge Professor of History

David Laibson (co-chair), Robert I. Goldman Professor of Economics

David Charbonneau, Fred Kavli Professor of Astrophysics

Amanda Claybaugh (*ex officio*), Dean of Undergraduate Education; Samuel Zemurray Jr. and Doris Zemurray Stone Professor of English

Na Li, Winokur Family Professor of Electrical Engineering and Applied Mathematics

Khaled El-Rouayheb, James Richard Jewett Professor of Arabic and Islamic Intellectual History

Nina Zipser (*ex officio*), Dean of Faculty Affairs and Planning

Preamble

What's the purpose of a Harvard education? Never in living memory has a wider range of people pressed the institution for compelling answers, from within the university and without. At Harvard, as nationwide, the question of whether people can express their political opinions without fear of social or institutional sanction has attracted particular attention, accompanied by worries about explicit and implicit censorship, including self-censorship. The Harvard community expresses near-universal support for the principle of free speech but disagrees about how best the institution can support open expression in practice. Whatever the causes of explicit and implicit censorship on campus, it is clear that Harvard hasn't found a way to address them robustly. In the spring of 2024, only 33% of graduating Harvard College seniors reported that they agree with the statement: "I feel free to express personal feelings and beliefs about controversial topics."

Our findings reveal, moreover, that concerns about the extent to which students and instructors feel free to express their opinions in the classroom represent only one among a broader set of questions about the nature of student academic engagement at Harvard. Many Harvard College students [do not prioritize their courses](#) and some view extensive extracurricular commitments as a more fulfilling, meaningful, and useful allocation of their time; most faculty view student curricular disengagement with alarm. The FAS seeks to provide "a transformative educational experience," but instructors' and students' expectations about the centrality of the classroom are unaligned.

A successful education requires a substantial commitment from students, including a considerable investment of time and deep intellectual focus. Education should lead learners to cultivate many tastes: a spirit of intellectual exploration, a willingness to exchange ideas openly with others, an appreciation for the value of in-depth learning, curiosity to pursue knowledge that

might challenge preconceptions, and a willingness to change one's point of view based on new knowledge. A successful education is only possible when teachers make important pedagogical commitments by modeling many habits of mind: how to identify robust, unbiased insights; how effectively to deploy that knowledge; how to discuss ideas in thoughtful, critical, rigorous, and open-minded ways; and how to change their own mind as new evidence becomes available. Finally, a successful education is only possible when academic leaders, administrators, and other societal decision-makers foster the institutional conditions that enable students and teachers to flourish.

What's the purpose of a Harvard education? To build a community of academically excellent, curious, and engaged students who are eager to learn; to expose them to the most informed, rigorous, and enriching academic experiences; to equip them with knowledge, critical tools, and habits of mind to support constructive, fulfilling lives and careers; and to prepare them for a lifetime of ongoing, independent learning. As the AAUP wrote in its 1915 Declaration of Principles, the point of an education is “not to provide... students with ready-made conclusions, but to train them to think for themselves, and to provide them access to those materials which they need if they are to think intelligently.”¹

The report that follows provides a description of the problems that currently exist in Harvard's classrooms and a set of recommendations for addressing them. We support recentering academics at Harvard and propose steps to create a classroom environment marked by informed engagement, in which instructors and students may actively exchange diverse views and in which self-censorship ends.

1. Charge and Process

The Classroom Social Compact Committee (CSCC) was charged by FAS Dean Hopi Hoekstra in February 2024 to “describe the nature and purpose of the FAS classroom,” and to develop statements to guide students and instructors on “their role in contributing to a vibrant learning environment.” We were additionally charged to “develop practical recommendations for engendering a vibrant learning environment in the classroom.”

We interpret “the classroom” in the manner proposed by the 2023 EPC Subcommittee on Classroom Conduct chaired by Professors Louis Menand and Danielle Allen, “to mean elements of a course (including assignments, exams, class activities, grading, and student-student and student-teacher interactions) in all locations where the course takes place.”

We held more than thirty listening sessions, Town Halls, and meetings—and engaged in hundreds of other informal conversations—with communities across the FAS: undergraduates; graduate students and graduate student workers; faculty at all ranks; and groups including the Educational Policy Committee, the Graduate Policy Committee, the General Education Committee, Faculty Council and the Council of Chairs. We collected and analyzed numerous

¹ American Association of University Professors. “Declaration of Principles on Academic Freedom and Academic Tenure.” *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors* 1, pt. 1 (December 1915): pp. 17-39.

data sets including (anonymous) surveys of Harvard College students, GSAS students, faculty at all ranks, and College and GSAS alumni. We also added two questions to the Q Course Evaluation Guide to gauge course-level perceptions about open inquiry. The appendix provides a detailed list of these surveys, including statistical summaries of the survey results. A summary of key quantitative findings appears in Section 3 of this report.

We pursued our research alongside that of the Open Inquiry and Constructive Dialogue Working Group, set up by President Alan Garber and Provost John Manning in April 2024, and chaired by Professor Eric Beerbohm and Dean Tomiko Brown-Nagin; Our report builds on the recommendation of that Working Group in its [October 2024 report](#) that each Harvard school develop norms, policies, and tools for promoting “open and constructive learning environments.”

2. Findings

The CSCC addressed the concept of a “classroom social compact” (rather than phrases like “civil discourse” or “intellectual vitality”) because we wanted to hear from students and instructors about a broader range of ways in which they approach the classroom learning environment. Our findings suggest that, while the issues of disagreement and free exchange of ideas in the classroom are real, concerns about open inquiry nest within a larger set of challenges that faculty and students encounter in Harvard’s classrooms.

Our outreach and data analysis revealed that undergraduates report that:

- they may hesitate to speak up in class because someone will disapprove of their opinions and, as a consequence, that they may be shunned socially (inside and/or outside the class).
- they may hesitate to speak up in class because they may be embarrassed by giving the wrong answer to a factual question (e.g., “what is the derivative of $\sin(x)$?”) or by revealing a lack of understanding by asking a clarifying question.
- they may write to align with the perceived political/ideological preferences of their instructors in order to get a desired grade.
- they may pick classes or sections that align with their pre-existing opinions.
- they may pick classes more on the basis of perceived easiness, both in terms of the hours of work and the likelihood of receiving a high grade, than on intellectual interest.
- some view college as an opportunity to refine defenses of their existing political viewpoints, rather than as an opportunity to explore new perspectives, derived from interactions with peers and instructors.
- they may shy away from difficult conversations, both inside and outside classrooms, and do not see even a dining hall or a rooming group as necessarily a setting in which they can have conversations across political differences.
- they may tend to segregate into social groups with like-minded opinions.

Graduate students said that:

- they sometimes feel pressure to appear knowledgeable, which deters them from asking clarifying questions in classroom settings for fear of seeming unprepared or less informed than their peers.
- faculty sometimes create a classroom culture that implicitly discourages clarifying questions by (often unintentionally) establishing a norm of questions that are highly sophisticated and likely to reveal that the student asking the question has already mastered the material being taught.
- a small group of students may sometimes come to play an outsized role in asking questions in class and answering the professor's questions.
- adapting to classroom participation norms can be challenging for international students, due to lack of familiarity with the educational culture.
- they sometimes worry about inadvertently causing offense in using terminology related to race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality or gender identity.
- in their role as teaching fellows (TFs), they worry that their undergraduate students misattribute lower grades to TF bias rather than the quality of the work being done.
- they are very concerned, as TFs, about their teaching evaluations. They sometimes feel that they can't give candid feedback to their students without jeopardizing their scores.
- they may worry, as TFs, that covering controversial topics in class will lead to negative student feedback and allegations of bias.

Instructors noted that:

- undergraduates often don't attend class.
- students often don't do many of the assigned readings.
- students seek out classes that are reputed to be particularly easy ("gems").
- students are often overwhelmed by the commitments they make to non-academic activities, including athletics, pre-professional organizations, social clubs, and myriad other extra-curricular activities/commitments.
- students are hungry for pre-professional guidance and seek it outside the classroom and curriculum (e.g. from peers, extra-curricular organizations, and from employers).
- many students have come to expect more flexibility about attendance requirements and coursework than was typical pre-COVID.
- students have rising expectations for high grades, but falling expectations for effort.
- some students are uncomfortable with curricular content that is not aligned with the student's moral framework.
- some teaching fellows grade too easily because they fear negative student feedback.
- some teaching fellows either consciously or unconsciously allow their political ideology to play a role in the way they evaluate students or present course material.

These issues are undermining the effectiveness of classroom teaching and learning. Student self-censorship has at least four adverse consequences. First, students are not learning and practicing how to speak about topics that are fraught, politically or otherwise. Second, students are not learning how to ask clarifying questions (including the important ability to acknowledge that they are confused about something). Third, students are missing opportunities to hear the perspectives of other students with different viewpoints. Fourth, faculty are not hearing from

students who are lost or confused, potentially giving faculty the false impression that classroom comprehension is higher than it actually is, and impeding instructors' ability to identify the specific concepts, materials, or methods that students are struggling with. Some of these problems are amplified when students come to class unprepared, because they are then even more likely to be concerned about asking questions that might reveal their confusion or lack of preparation.

A majority of students and faculty we heard from agree that Harvard College students do not prioritize their academic experience. For students who are focused primarily on extracurricular activities, this can be a feature; for faculty, it is generally a bug.

Existing incentive structures pull in contrary directions. Many faculty wish that students placed a higher priority on their coursework. But the perceived connection between course enrollment numbers and course evaluation scores with workload and grading forbearance leads faculty to assign less work and grade more leniently. Some departments feel particular pressure to keep course enrollments high in order to make the case for new tenure-track positions, graduate students, and other resources.

Many students report high levels of anxiety and stress. The perception—real or imagined—that routes to professional success come in large part via activities outside the classroom encourages heavy extracurricular commitments and less engagement with coursework. Grade inflation and compression heightens student wariness about taking courses in which they risk getting lower grades.

3. Survey Results:

Our committee analyzed quantitative and qualitative (open text) responses from eleven surveys:

Undergraduates (Harvard College)

1. Senior Survey (graduating seniors)
2. Residential Life Survey (Sophomores, Juniors, and Seniors)
3. Advising Network Survey (First Year students)
4. Undergraduate Survey (written by the CSCC; all undergraduates)
5. Q Course Evaluation Survey of students in undergraduate courses (two new questions written by the CSCC relating to classroom speech; all undergraduates)

Graduate students (Kenneth C. Griffin Graduate School of Arts and Sciences)

6. GSAS Exit Survey
7. GSAS Student Survey (written by the CSCC)
8. Q Course Evaluation Survey of students in courses primarily for graduate students (two new questions written by the CSCC relating to classroom speech)

Faculty (Faculty of Arts and Sciences)

9. Faculty Survey (written by the Open Inquiry and Constructive Dialogue Working Group)

Alumni (Harvard College and Kenneth C. Griffin Graduate School of Arts and Sciences)

10. Harvard College Alumni Survey (written by the CSCC and fielded to College Alumni)
11. GSAS Alumni Survey (written by the CSCC and fielded to GSAS Alumni)

All of the questions from the surveys above are provided with response tabulations in the data appendix of this report. In the body of the report, we focus on selected, representative results. We focus first on the Senior Survey, fielded each May to graduating Harvard College students. This survey has an 89% response rate (2024 survey; $N = 1682$), which is a higher response rate than the other surveys listed above. We report results from both the classes of 2023 and 2024 in cases where the same questions were asked of both classes; and from the class of 2024 only for those that were new. Responses to the six questions that are relevant to the work of the CSCC are presented in Table 1 below. (The analysis was conducted by the FAS Institutional Research Office.) Note that some of these questions involve speech outside of the classroom. Our work revealed that this out-of-the-classroom speech has strong implications for classroom speech

Table 1. Relevant questions from the Class of 2023 and 2024 Senior Surveys

Question Text	Year	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel free to express personal feelings and beliefs about controversial topics	2024	10%	14%	15%	28%	24%	9%
	2023	6%	10%	12%	26%	31%	15%
I feel comfortable expressing opposing views on controversial topics IN MY COURSES	2024	8%	13%	17%	27%	25%	10%
	2023	7%	13%	19%	26%	24%	12%
I feel comfortable expressing opposing views on controversial topics IN MY RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY	2024	9%	12%	17%	27%	26%	10%
I only like to engage SOCIALLY with individuals who share political or social viewpoints similar to mine.	2024	8%	21%	20%	25%	19%	7%
I would attend a talk by A CONTROVERSIAL SPEAKER WHOSE VIEWPOINT IS DIFFERENT THAN MINE on a topic that is important to me.	2024	4%	7%	12%	23%	33%	21%
I have expressed opposing views on controversial topics WHEN I FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO DO SO	2024	3%	5%	11%	29%	37%	15%
	2023	3%	9%	13%	31%	30%	13%

Source: FAS Institutional Research, Harvard University.

The Senior Survey also asks some demographic questions and merges the survey results with other pre-existing administrative records that contain demographic information. Table 2 reports the distribution of political viewpoints for those respondents who provided them (first row), and within each surveyed demographic group in subsequent rows. (Each row sums to 100% when rounding is eliminated.)

Table 2. Political viewpoints of Class of 2024 Senior Survey

	Liberal or Very Liberal	Moderate/ Middle of the Road	Conservative or Very Conservative	Something else/ Haven't thought about it/ Missing	Total Responses
All Seniors	56%	26%	9%	10%	1682
LGBTQ	76%	15%	2%	7%	389
First Gen	59%	26%	6%	10%	289
Low Income	59%	26%	4%	11%	322
Rec Athletes	31%	38%	21%	9%	213
URM	62%	20%	5%	11%	363
White	52%	26%	13%	9%	602
International	45%	32%	11%	10%	173

Source: FAS Institutional Research, Harvard University

Table 3 presents answers to the speech questions on the 2024 Senior Survey. The percentages shown represent the fraction of respondents that “Agree” or “Strongly Agree” with the relevant statement. This table reveals that students who identify as “Liberal” are statistically significantly more comfortable discussing controversial topics on campus than either “Moderate” or “Conservative” students. (Note that the category “Liberal” combines “Liberal” and “Very Liberal” and the category “Conservative” combines “Conservative” and “Very Conservative”.)

Table 3. Senior Survey (2024): Percentage of respondents answering “Agree” or “Strongly Agree”

	I feel free to express personal feelings and belief about controversial topics	I feel comfortable expressing opposing views about controversial topics in my classes	I feel comfortable expressing opposing views about controversial topics in my residential communities	I have expressed opposing views about controversial topics when I felt it was important to do so
All Seniors	33%	35%	35%	52%
Male	32%	35%	34%	51%
Female	34%	34%	36%	53%
LGBTQ	43%	45%	43%	63%
URM	31%	30%	33%	51%
First Gen	34%	40%	38%	53%
Low Income	33%	34%	35%	52%
International	34%	42%	38%	55%
Liberal	41%	40%	41%	56%
Moderate	25%	29%	29%	47%
Conservative	17%	18%	19%	51%

Source: FAS Institutional Research, Harvard University

We next turn to the data from the Q Course Evaluation Guide (spring 2024). The CSCC added two new questions to the survey in consultation with the Educational Policy Committee (EPC). Table 4 demonstrates the percentage breakdown among the five categories of responses that were used in this survey. To construct Table 4, every student response is weighted equally.

Table 4. Q Course Evaluation questions about classroom climate (spring 2024)

Question Text	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
In this course, most students listen attentively with an open mind and a willingness to change their point of view as they learn more about the topic.	1%	2%	8%	31%	59%
In this course (including sections), I feel comfortable expressing my views on controversial topics.	1%	3%	11%	29%	56%

The data in Table 4 presents a more positive picture than the data from the Senior Survey. At least two hypotheses merit further research. First, the questions on the Senior Survey are vague. It is possible that a small number of bad experiences lead respondents to give negative answers to the Senior Survey because respondents are interpreting the Senior Survey questions to mean “have you had” an adverse experience while at Harvard College. If so, and if bad experiences are relatively rare, more granular questions (like the ones asked on the Q Survey) would yield less negative answers.

On the other hand, questions on the Q may reflect the effects of self-selection into viewpoint-aligned curricula. Specifically, students frequently told us that they selected courses that align with their political beliefs because they are afraid of being shunned or graded adversely in courses where their beliefs are unaligned with those of peers and instructors. To the extent this is true, we expect to find that students will rate positively the specific courses that they’ve chosen to take, even if students might view the educational environment as *broadly* problematic. Some suggestive support for this hypothesis comes from regression analysis of the Q data. Specifically, students evaluating courses that they take as *electives* rate those courses on average 0.12 units higher on the first question in Table 4 and 0.10 units higher on the second question in Table 4 (on a scale that runs from 1 to 5, where 1 is mapped to “strongly disagree” and 5 is mapped to “strongly agree”).

Whatever the explanation for the differences in responses between the Senior Survey questions and the Q questions, we recommend that instructors look at the answers provided by students to these questions in their own courses, which also include revealing open text responses.

Variation across courses also reveals useful information. One source of variation that adversely predicted higher ratings is course size. Specifically, the regression is run at the course level with $\ln(\text{enrollment})$ on the right-hand-side; the estimated regression coefficients for $\ln(\text{enrollment})$ are -0.143 on the first question and -0.134 on the second question. These coefficients imply that a z percent increase in course size is associated (approximately) with a reduction in the mean 5-point numerical score by $-0.143\left(\frac{z}{100}\right)$ units on the first question and $-0.134\left(\frac{z}{100}\right)$ units on the second.

Once we controlled for course size, we found that a course's academic domain (i.e., Arts and Humanities, Sciences, SEAS, Social Sciences, as well as Expos, General Education, and First-Year Seminars) tended not to predict variation on these new Q questions—with one exception. Courses in SEAS tended to score lower on the first question, by 0.10 of a point on average (statistically significant with $p = 0.025$).

4. Classroom Norms and Recommendations

Based on the qualitative and quantitative information we gathered, the committee recommends the following approaches, interventions, and expectations “for engendering a vibrant learning environment.” We suggest that the FAS Dean task relevant experts and entities at Harvard, such as the Bok Center, with implementing these objectives as appropriate. The proposals below are intended to facilitate open discourse in our classrooms; these principles provide context for the interpretation of an instructor's obligations with respect to Harvard's [Non-Discrimination, Anti-Bullying](#), & Other Professional Conduct Policies.

Classroom Principles

- **Student classroom learning:** Students should come to class and approach their assignments with curiosity and openness, ready to learn from and listen to others, including peers, and to share their own ideas in turn. Instructors should convey the principle that an evolving point of view is not a weakness, but instead a marker of intellectual growth. More generally, the frontiers of knowledge and scholarship change, requiring teachers and students to be willing to adapt their interpretations and change their own minds. An ability to engage with intellectual content, analyses, and viewpoints that challenge one's presuppositions or beliefs forms a critical part of a successful college education.
- **Student assessment:** Student speech, assignments, and exams can be evaluated by instructors as factually incorrect or poorly argued, for example—but a student's status in a course, including their grades, should not be affected by their political or ethical point of view.

- **Faculty classroom speech:** Course heads are free to present a curriculum and points of view, including their own views, that reflect the intellectual objectives of their subject and discipline. Faculty have the responsibility to create a classroom environment in which students may participate in a thoughtful, candid, and free exchange of ideas. Faculty should encourage students to engage with diverse viewpoints in class discussion and select course materials and topics that acknowledge the range of perspectives present in the field. Faculty should never select students to enroll in courses specifically to exclude actual or perceived viewpoints.
- **Faculty extramural speech:** A faculty member will not be denied the ability to propose and teach courses on the basis of the content of the opinions and viewpoints they express outside the classroom. Course heads have the right to share their personal views inside and outside of Harvard (e.g. on social media, in an interview, in a publication), consistent with the FAS's guarantees of freedom of speech and academic freedom and subject to Harvard's Non-Discrimination and Anti-Bullying Policy.
- **Transparency and power dynamics:** Instructors at all ranks should be mindful of their power in the classroom as perceived by students. For example, instructors should be aware that their public opinions about issues—whether expressed in a book or a social media post or a sticker on their laptop—may cause students to worry about unequal treatment. It is therefore incumbent on instructors to explain and abide by the principle that students are free to hold and express political opinions that differ from those of their instructors, without fear of negative consequences.
- **Confidentiality:** In order for students to feel that they can explore and openly express developing or controversial ideas in class, student classroom speech should not be treated as public. The confidentiality policy for courses should be that, while students may (and indeed are encouraged to) discuss classroom conversations outside of class, they may not attribute ideas to a specific student without that student's consent. This is a version of the "Chatham House Rule" for students taking a class. Such a framework is in place at Harvard Kennedy School and Harvard Law School, and was recommended for adoption across Harvard by the Open Inquiry and Constructive Dialogue Working Group. Instructors are bound by federal law (FERPA) not to disclose outside Harvard personally identifiable information about students. Violations of class confidentiality policies should be reviewed by the Harvard College Honor Council, which should also determine sanctions.
- **Social media:** In keeping with these confidentiality principles, no member of a course—instructors or students—should post (or share information that enables others to post) personally identifiable student classroom statements on social media or other on-line platforms. The only exceptions should be when a student provides written consent. Violations of social media policies should be reviewed by the Harvard College Honor Council, which should also determine sanctions.

Centering Academics

- **Student attendance:** In-class attendance in lectures, sections, seminars, labs, and studios (including arriving on time and staying until the end of class) should be the norm, with the exception only of those rare classes for which asynchronous enrollment is allowed. Reasonable accommodations of a documented disability will be made. Instructors are under no obligation to provide make-up opportunities for students who miss class due to extracurricular commitments (including job interviews and travel to athletic events).
- **Assessment:** Departments, divisions, or the entire FAS should discuss and consider regularizing approaches to grading scales and workload. This would increase transparency, limit perceived incentives to grade generously to generate high enrollments or Q scores, and reduce the extent to which grading and workload influence students' course choices.
- **Q course evaluation:** End-of-semester surveys should ask questions about a course's overall climate with respect to intellectual openness and should ask about how each member of the instructional team, including teaching fellows, contributes to a climate of open inquiry. (Such questions were added to the Q Guide for spring and fall 2024.)
- **Search technologies:** In order to facilitate authentic course choices and true exploration of the curriculum, the FAS Registrar should create new search and chatbot tools that enable students to find courses, course syllabi, and course evaluations more easily.
- **Classroom infrastructure:** The FAS should invest resources where necessary to support basic classroom infrastructure. This may include increasing or updating available classrooms to accommodate courses of varying sizes at busy times of day, updating classroom technology, and supporting optimal section sizes.
- **Digital device policy:** Students must never use cell phones in class, except when authorized by the instructor for pedagogical purposes, or for reasonable accommodations of a documented disability. Students should also expect not to use other internet-enabled devices in class unless explicitly permitted by the instructor, or, again, for reasonable accommodations of a documented disability. Instructors should provide a classroom technology policy on their syllabus, and students should read and follow it. The Bok Center should provide templates that instructors can adapt to their needs.

Preparing Instructors and Students

- **Onboarding new students:** New students in both Harvard College and the GSAS should receive training about the practices that can prepare them to thrive intellectually at Harvard. Such training should teach new students skills such as how to make authentic

course selections, what to expect from classroom discussion, and where to find key learning resources. It should also include understanding Harvard's norms about academic expectations such as classroom attendance, academic honesty, and confidentiality.

- **Onboarding new instructors:** The FAS should provide training for new teaching fellows and other new instructors, including a module on the importance of creating a classroom environment that encourages students to express their opinions openly and to ask clarifying questions. Additionally, instructors should understand that they may share their own opinions in the classroom, but they should take care to ensure that they do not explicitly or implicitly require students in their classes to share those viewpoints in order to succeed. Students should recognize that an instructor may have a political viewpoint, but should not feel obliged or incentivized to adopt it.
- **Aligning expectations between course head and course staff:** Course heads are responsible for overseeing course policies, assessment, lesson planning, and other pedagogical content, and for communicating their expectations with their instructional staff (TFs/TAs/CAs) on a regular basis, e.g. weekly. Similarly, it is the responsibility of instructional staff to follow the expectations and guidance set by course heads with respect to all pedagogical content, including topics and materials covered, learning objectives, and assessment of student work.
- **Aligning expectations between instructors and students:** We recommend that instructors devote class time at the start of the semester (and/or throughout the semester) to discuss their pedagogical expectations, goals, and practices with students. These may include: explaining one's approach to calling on students in class; describing one's approach to managing in-class disagreement; or creating a shared classroom agreement for the semester in collaboration with students. The Bok Center should be a resource for instructors seeking ways to articulate and share their expectations.
- **Fostering engaged discussion throughout the curriculum:** The FAS should incentivize courses and course modules that promote reflective thinking and constructive discussion across differences. Students should be encouraged to learn—and faculty to teach—how to think rigorously and critically about evidence; how to assess and distinguish between assertions, interpretations, and assumptions; and how to listen and respond to competing perspectives in good faith.
- **Using the Bok Center:** The Bok Center should be a resource for implementing many of the recommendations outlined here. This should include helping to on-board new instructors; offering guidance for instructors seeking ways to articulate and share their expectations with students; and providing templates for course-specific policies about the use of digital devices, generative AI, etc.. The Bok Center should also provide training and support for instructors in creating an environment of open inquiry in the classroom.

Proposed Text for the Harvard College Handbook:

A Harvard College education is defined by the pursuit of knowledge. The classroom forms the center of a Harvard College education, and students are expected to prioritize their coursework.

Academic excellence requires students to participate in a thoughtful, candid, and free exchange of ideas. A successful classroom depends on student attendance, attentiveness, and active intellectual engagement. Students should approach learning with curiosity, intellectual openness, respect for new ideas and for other people's perspectives. Students should expect regularly to encounter evidence, analysis, interpretations, and opinions that challenge their point of view. Student speech, assignments, and exams can be evaluated by instructors as factually incorrect or poorly argued, for example—but a student's status in a course, including their grades, will not be affected by their political or ethical point of view.

As a default, no member of a course—instructors or students—should post on social media (or share information that enables others to post) identifiable student classroom statements without written consent. Likewise, class participants should assume that, while they may discuss classroom conversations outside of class, they may not attribute ideas to a specific student without that student's written consent. Confidentiality policies do not override Harvard's [Non-Discrimination, Anti-Bullying, & Other Professional Conduct Policies](#).

Explanatory Note:

Violations of social media and course confidentiality policies will be directed to the Office of Academic Integrity and Student Conduct, which acts as a clearinghouse for violations of College policies.

Proposed text for the Faculty Handbook:

Teaching forms a core part of a faculty member's work at Harvard. A faculty member will not be denied the ability to propose and teach courses on the basis of the content of the opinions and viewpoints they express outside the classroom. Course heads are free to present a curriculum and points of view, including their own views, that reflect the intellectual objectives of their subject and discipline. Course heads have the right to share their personal views inside and outside of Harvard (e.g. on social media, in an interview, in a publication), consistent with the FAS's guarantees of freedom of speech and academic freedom and subject to Harvard's Non-Discrimination and Anti-Bullying Policy.

Faculty also have the responsibility to create a classroom environment in which students may participate in a thoughtful, candid, and free exchange of ideas. Faculty should encourage students to engage with diverse viewpoints in class discussion and select course materials and topics that acknowledge the range of perspectives present in the field. Faculty should never select students to enroll in courses specifically to exclude actual or perceived viewpoints. Student speech, assignments, and exams can be evaluated by instructors as factually incorrect or poorly argued, for example—but a student's status in a course, including their grades, will not be affected by their political or ethical point of view.

As a default, no member of a course—instructors or students—should post on social media (or share information that enables others to post) identifiable student classroom statements without written consent. Likewise, class participants should assume that, while they may discuss classroom conversations outside of class, they may not attribute ideas to a specific student without that student's written consent.

These principles provide guidance for the application of Harvard's [Non-Discrimination, Anti-Bullying](#), & Other Professional Conduct Policies.

Appendix A: Undergraduate Surveys

1. Senior Survey

- 2023: Graduating Seniors (Nov, March, May & Walkers), Total N=1918, Responded N=1701, Response Rate: 88.7%
- 2024: Graduating Seniors (Nov, March, May & Walkers), Total N=1881, Responded N=1682, Response Rate: 89.4%

Question Text	Survey Year	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel free to express personal feelings and beliefs about controversial topics	2024	1667	10%	14%	15%	28%	24%	9%
	2023	1690	6%	10%	12%	26%	31%	15%
I feel comfortable expressing opposing views on controversial topics IN MY COURSES	2024	1662	8%	13%	17%	27%	25%	10%
	2023	1686	7%	13%	19%	26%	24%	12%
I feel comfortable expressing opposing views on controversial topics IN MY RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY	2024	1666	9%	12%	17%	27%	26%	10%
I only like to engage SOCIALLY with individuals who share political or social viewpoints similar to mine.	2024	1662	8%	21%	20%	25%	19%	7%
I would attend a talk by A CONTROVERSIAL SPEAKER WHOSE VIEWPOINT IS DIFFERENT THAN MINE on a topic that is important to me.	2024	1659	4%	7%	12%	23%	33%	21%
I have expressed opposing views on controversial topics WHEN I FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO DO SO	2024	1659	3%	5%	11%	29%	37%	15%
	2023	1687	3%	9%	13%	31%	30%	13%

Source: FAS Institutional Research, Harvard University

Distribution of University Free Speech Questions (2024 Senior Survey only)

Question Text	N	I would be very comfortable giving my views.	I would be somewhat comfortable giving my views.	I would be somewhat reluctant giving my views.	I would be very reluctant giving my views.
Think about discussing a controversial issue outside of the classroom, such as in dining or residential spaces or at a Harvard gathering open to all community members (including faculty and staff). How comfortable or reluctant would you feel about speaking up and giving your views?	1611	16%	44%	27%	13%
Think about discussing a controversial issue in the classroom at Harvard. How comfortable or reluctant would you feel about speaking up and giving your views?	1610	11%	38%	35%	16%
You indicated you were somewhat or very reluctant to express your views on a controversial issue. If you were to speak up and give your views on a controversial issue, would you be concerned that any of the following would happen? (out of students responding somewhat reluctant/very reluctant)					
Seniors (N=916)					
Other students would criticize my views as offensive.					69%
Other students would make critical comments about me with other people afterward.					72%
A professor or other university official would say my views are wrong.					26%
A professor or other university official would criticize my views as offensive.					30%
A professor or other university official would give me a lower grade or otherwise damage my academic record because of my views.					35%
Someone would post critical comments about my views on social media.					45%
Someone would file a complaint claiming my views violated a campus harassment or antidiscrimination policy or norm.					23%
I would cause others psychological harm.					16%
Other concerns of consequences?					7%

Source: FAS Institutional Research, Harvard University

2. Mid-Year Surveys, Academic Year 2023-24:

- Residential Life survey (Sophomores, Juniors, Seniors), Total N=5589, Responded N=3559, Response Rate: 63.7%
 - Response rates by Class:
 - Sophomores: 66.4%
 - Juniors: 62.7%
 - Seniors: 62.2%
- Advising Network survey (First Years), Total N=1648, Responded N=1204, Response Rate: 73.1%

Q Text	YIS	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I feel comfortable expressing opposing views on controversial topics in my residential community	FY	1121	5%	10%	16%	29%	26%	13%
	So	942	8%	9%	18%	27%	23%	15%
	Jr	1082	11%	11%	16%	25%	20%	17%
	Sr	950	11%	13%	18%	23%	17%	18%
	All	4095	9%	11%	17%	26%	22%	16%
I feel free to express personal feelings and beliefs about controversial topics	FY	1128	6%	9%	14%	28%	29%	14%
	So	945	8%	9%	15%	26%	25%	17%
	Jr	1087	10%	10%	13%	24%	23%	20%
	Sr	954	10%	11%	14%	26%	20%	19%
	All	4114	8%	10%	14%	26%	25%	18%
I have expressed opposing views on controversial topics when I felt it was important to do so	FY	1118	5%	11%	15%	30%	26%	13%
	So	934	7%	13%	16%	26%	24%	15%
	Jr	1068	9%	14%	15%	26%	19%	16%
	Sr	932	9%	17%	14%	24%	19%	17%
	All	4052	8%	14%	15%	27%	22%	15%
I only like to engage socially with individuals who share political or social viewpoints similar to mine.	FY	1118	14%	31%	19%	18%	11%	7%
	So	939	13%	23%	20%	21%	13%	10%
	Jr	1077	14%	20%	20%	24%	10%	12%
	Sr	941	13%	23%	19%	21%	14%	10%
	All	4075	13%	24%	20%	21%	12%	10%
I would attend a talk by a controversial speaker whose viewpoint is different than mine on a topic that is important to me	FY	1119	2%	4%	9%	25%	34%	25%
	So	939	3%	5%	9%	30%	29%	24%
	Jr	1078	3%	6%	12%	28%	26%	26%
	Sr	939	4%	10%	10%	25%	26%	25%
	All	4075	3%	6%	10%	27%	29%	25%
In general, I can comfortably accept when others reach different conclusions on a politically or socially charged issue that I do not agree with.	FY	1122	1%	2%	3%	17%	45%	32%

Source: FAS Institutional Research, Harvard University

3. Q survey: Undergraduate course results, Spring 2024

- Overall response rate: 81.1%
- Distribution of course-level means (undergraduate courses) by enrollment

	<i>In this course, most students listen attentively with an open mind and a willingness to change their point of view as they learn more about the topic.</i>					<i>In this course (including sections), I feel comfortable expressing my views on controversial topics.</i>				
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Overall	1193	4.60	0.34	3	5	1189	4.50	0.40	2.5	5
<10	396	4.73	0.37	3	5	393	4.64	0.46	2.5	5
10 - <25	550	4.60	0.31	3	5	549	4.47	0.37	2.67	5
25 - <50	125	4.48	0.25	3.87	4.93	125	4.37	0.29	3.5	5
50 - <100	86	4.39	0.25	3.78	4.85	86	4.31	0.23	3.67	4.8
100+	36	4.24	0.20	3.86	4.64	36	4.19	0.17	3.91	4.5

Source: FAS Institutional Research, Harvard University

4. CSCC Undergraduate survey, Summer 2024

- Invited N=6920, Responded N=182, Response Rate: 2.6%

	<i>N</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>n/a</i>
In the courses I have taken, most other students listen and participate with an open mind and a willingness to change their point of view as they learn more about the topic.	181	6%	18%	15%	46%	12%	2%
In the courses I have taken, I feel comfortable asking clarifying questions during class when I am having difficulty following the material being taught.	182	4%	13%	12%	51%	20%	0%
In the courses I have taken, I feel comfortable expressing my views on controversial topics.	182	16%	26%	20%	28%	9%	1%
In the courses I have taken, I feel my contributions to class discussions are valued by the teaching staff, including instructors and teaching fellows/assistants.	182	2%	4%	10%	50%	34%	0%
In the courses I have taken, I feel my contributions to class discussions are valued by other students in the class.	182	3%	7%	34%	45%	12%	1%
The courses I have taken incorporate diverse perspectives and allow for exploration of different viewpoints.	182	7%	15%	15%	42%	18%	2%

Appendix B: Graduate Surveys

1. GSAS PhD Exit Survey, Academic Year 2023-24

- Graduating PhD Recipients (Nov, March, May & Walkers), Response Rate: 79%

Question Text	N	I would be very comfortable giving my views.	I would be somewhat comfortable giving my views.	I would be somewhat reluctant giving my views.	I would be very reluctant giving my views.
Think about discussing a controversial issue outside of the classroom, such as in dining or residential spaces or at a Harvard gathering open to all community members (including faculty and staff). How comfortable or reluctant would you feel about speaking up and giving your views?	338	26%	37%	27%	11%
Think about discussing a controversial issue in the classroom at Harvard. How comfortable or reluctant would you feel about speaking up and giving your views?	340	24%	37%	26%	13%

You indicated you were somewhat or very reluctant to express your views on a controversial issue. If you were to speak up and give your views on a controversial issue, would you be concerned that any of the following would happen? (out of students responding somewhat reluctant/very reluctant)	PhD Candidates (N=151)
Other students would criticize my views as offensive.	54%
Other students would make critical comments about me with other people afterward.	58%
A professor or other university official would say my views are wrong.	31%
A professor or other university official would criticize my views as offensive.	36%
A professor or other university official would give me a lower grade or otherwise damage my academic record because of my views.	15%
Someone would post critical comments about my views on social media.	38%
Someone would file a complaint claiming my views violated a campus harassment or antidiscrimination policy or norm.	20%
I would cause others psychological harm.	16%
Other concerns of consequences?	11%

Source: FAS Institutional Research, Harvard University

2. Q survey: Graduate students, Spring 2024

- Overall Q Response Rate: 53%
- Distribution of course-level means by enrollment

	<i>In this course, most students listen attentively with an open mind and a willingness to change their point of view as they learn more about the topic.</i>					<i>In this course (including sections), I feel comfortable expressing my views on controversial topics.</i>				
	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
Overall	319	4.63	0.39	3	5	314	4.51	0.49	2	5
<10	151	4.72	0.39	3	5	146	4.58	0.56	2	5
10 - <25	120	4.60	0.35	3	5	120	4.49	0.43	3	5
25 - <50	42	4.45	0.36	3.5	5	42	4.40	0.34	3.6	5
50 - <100	6	4.05	0.32	3.46	4.29	6	4.09	0.28	3.57	4.32
100+	n/a					n/a				

Source: FAS Institutional Research, Harvard University

3. CSCC Graduate Student survey, Summer 2024

- Invited N=4532, Responded N=167, Response Rate=3.6%

	<i>N</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>n/a</i>
In the courses I have taken, most other students listen and participate with an open mind and a willingness to change their point of view as they learn more about the topic.	166	4%	13%	13%	46%	20%	4%
In the courses I have taken, I feel comfortable asking clarifying questions during class when I am having difficulty following the material being taught.	166	4%	11%	13%	47%	24%	1%
In the courses I have taken, I feel comfortable expressing my views on controversial topics.	166	16%	16%	27%	27%	7%	7%
In the courses I have taken, I feel my contributions to class discussions are valued by the teaching staff, including instructors and teaching fellows/assistants.	166	2%	5%	13%	54%	25%	2%
In the courses I have taken, I feel my contributions to class discussions are valued by other students in the class.	166	2%	7%	25%	48%	17%	1%
The courses I have taken incorporate diverse perspectives and allow for exploration of different viewpoints.	166	7%	11%	27%	37%	12%	6%
In the courses in which I have served as a teaching fellow, most students listen and participate with an open mind and a willingness to change their point of view as they learn more about the topic.	101	5%	3%	11%	53%	22%	6%
In the courses in which I have served as a teaching fellow, my students ask clarifying questions during class when they are having difficulty following the material being taught.	101	3%	7%	14%	54%	22%	0%
In the courses in which I have served as a teaching fellow, I feel comfortable teaching controversial topics.	101	10%	19%	17%	28%	10%	17%

In the courses in which I have served as a teaching fellow, I feel that it is important to present and elicit diverse viewpoints.	100	0%	0%	7%	41%	44%	8%
In the courses in which I have served as a teaching fellow, I have been asked to teach material that I find objectionable and believe should not be on the syllabus.	101	40%	30%	4%	11%	3%	13%

Appendix C: Faculty Surveys

1. Open Inquiring and Constructive Dialogue Working Group Faculty Survey, Summer 2024

- FAS N=118, Response Rate for FAS Faculty=9.9%

Overall comfort or reluctance to engage in controversial issues	N	I would be very comfortable giving my views.	I would be somewhat comfortable giving my views.	I would be somewhat reluctant giving my views.	I would be very reluctant giving my views.
Leading a classroom discussion on a controversial issue	118	18%	36%	31%	15%
Pursuing research on a controversial topic	101	40%	31%	23%	7%
Discussing a controversial issue outside the classroom	118	16%	30%	33%	21%

You indicated you were somewhat or very reluctant to teach about a controversial issue. If you were to lead a discussion on a controversial issue, would you be concerned that any of the following would happen?	Faculty (N=55)
I would receive unwanted attention outside the University, such as on social media or in the press	71%
Someone would file a complaint that the discussion violated a campus harassment policy	69%
A student would say negative things about me to peers and others at the university	67%
I would be criticized after the discussion by others at the University	65%
My teaching evaluations would suffer	55%
I would be criticized during the course of the discussion by a student	49%
Other teaching and/or course objectives would be negatively affected by the discussion	47%
Other	16%
The discussion could result in psychological harm for students in the classroom	15%

You indicated you were somewhat or very reluctant to research a controversial subject area. If you were to pursue a controversial research topic, would you be concerned that any of the following would happen?	Faculty (N=30)
I would receive unwanted attention outside the University, such as on social media or in the press	83%
My research would be criticized as offensive by colleagues and others at the University	67%
I would jeopardize professional relationships that are important to my career	53%
Colleagues and others at the University would say my research is incorrect	43%
I would jeopardize opportunities such as grants and fellowships	43%
Someone would file a complaint claiming my work violated a campus harassment policy	37%
Other	10%
I would cause others psychological harm	10%

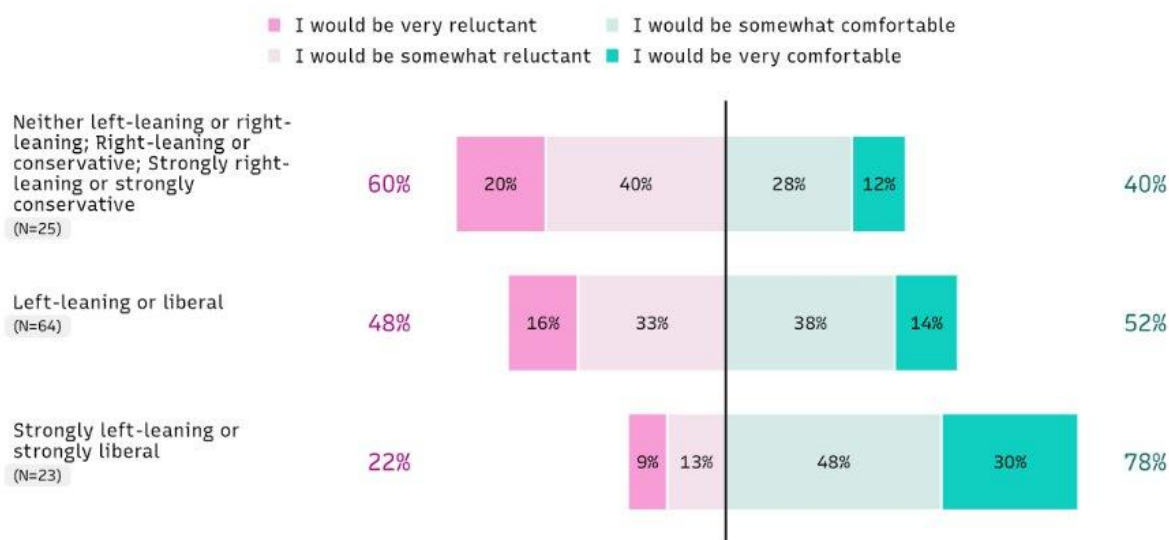
You indicated you were somewhat or very reluctant to discuss a controversial issue with others in the Harvard Community. If you were to discuss a controversial topic, would you be concerned that any of the following would happen? Faculty (N=63)

My views would be criticized as offensive by colleagues and others at the University	67%
I would receive unwanted attention outside the University, such as on social media or in the press	60%
A manager or University official would penalize me or otherwise jeopardize my career	49%
Someone would file a complaint claiming my work violated a campus harassment policy	46%
Colleagues or others at the University would say my views are wrong	32%
Other	19%
I would cause others psychological harm	6%

Source: Harvard University, Office of the Associate Provost for Institutional Research and Analytics

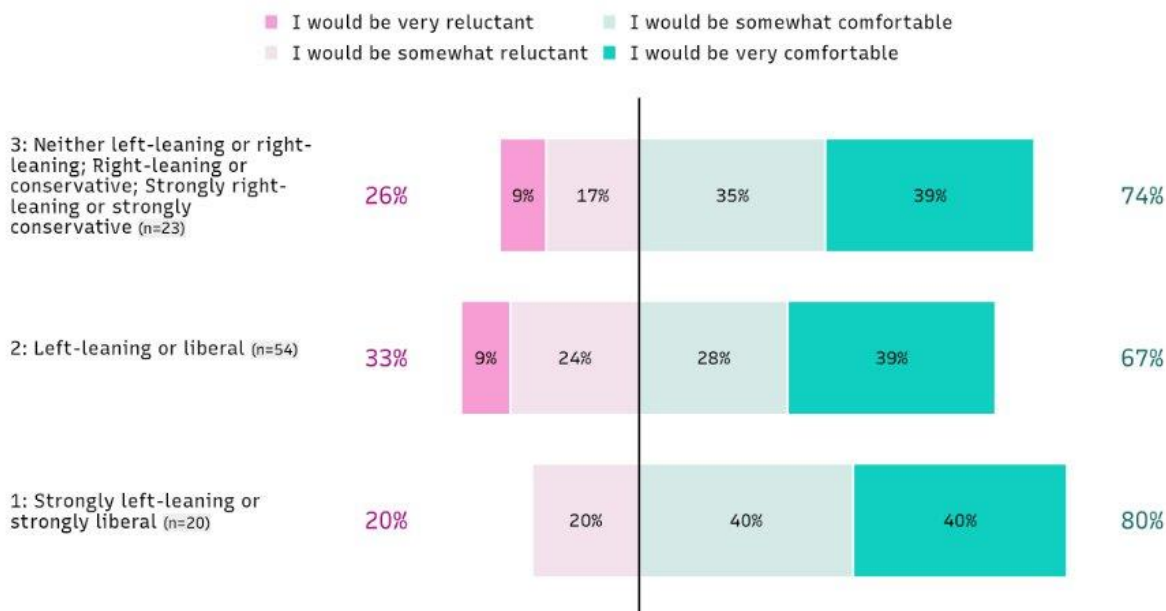
2. Distribution of Free Speech Questions by Political Affiliation (Source: Harvard University, Office of the Associate Provost for Institutional Research and Analytics)

Think about teaching a controversial issue in a class at Harvard. How comfortable or reluctant would you feel leading discussion on this topic?

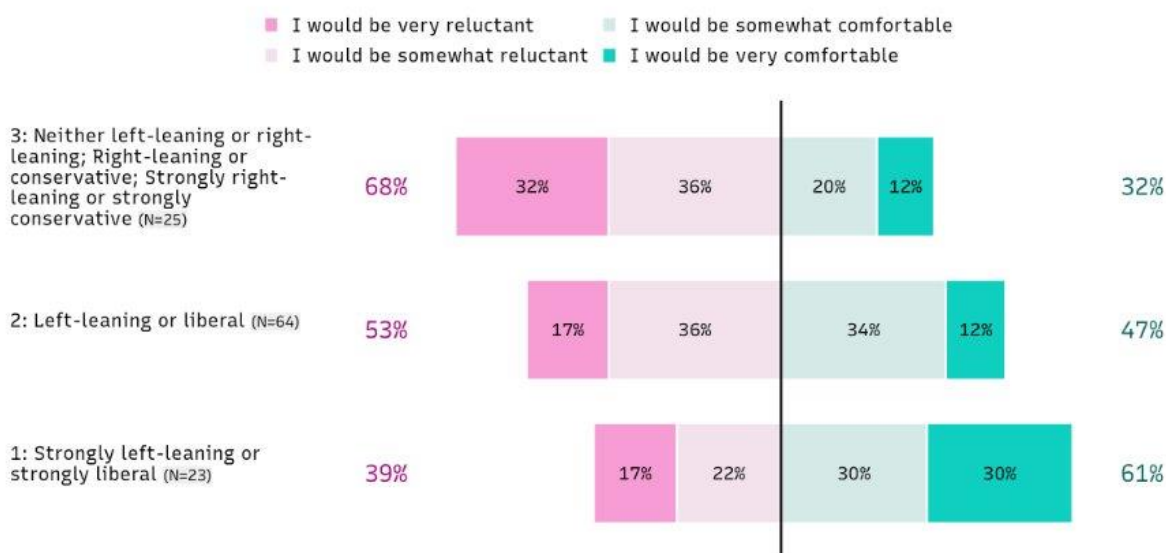


Neither left-leaning or right-leaning, Right-leaning or conservative and Strongly right-leaning or strongly conservative have been combined due to small Ns.

Think about researching a controversial subject area. How comfortable or reluctant would you feel pursuing this topic?



Think about discussing a controversial issue in the Harvard Community OUTSIDE the classroom, such as with colleagues in the workplace or at an event or location open to students, faculty, and staff. How comfortable or reluctant would you feel speaking up and giving your views on this topic?



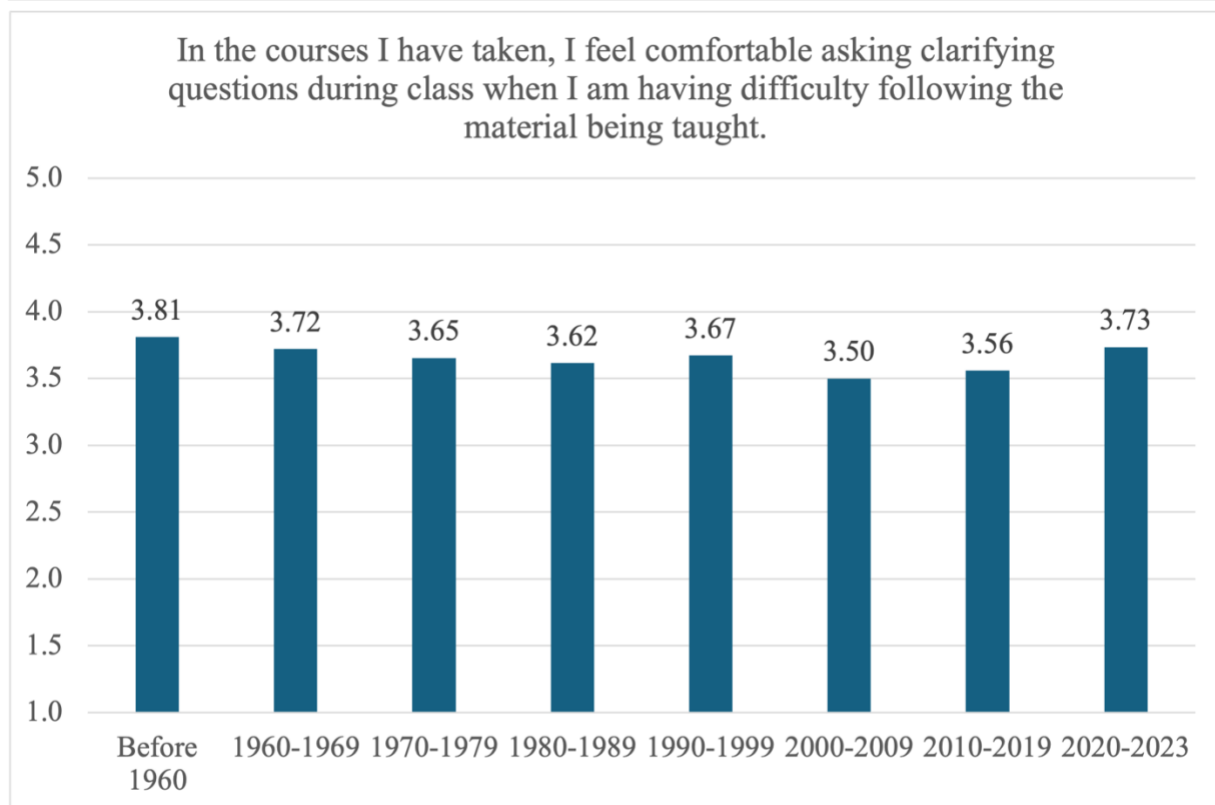
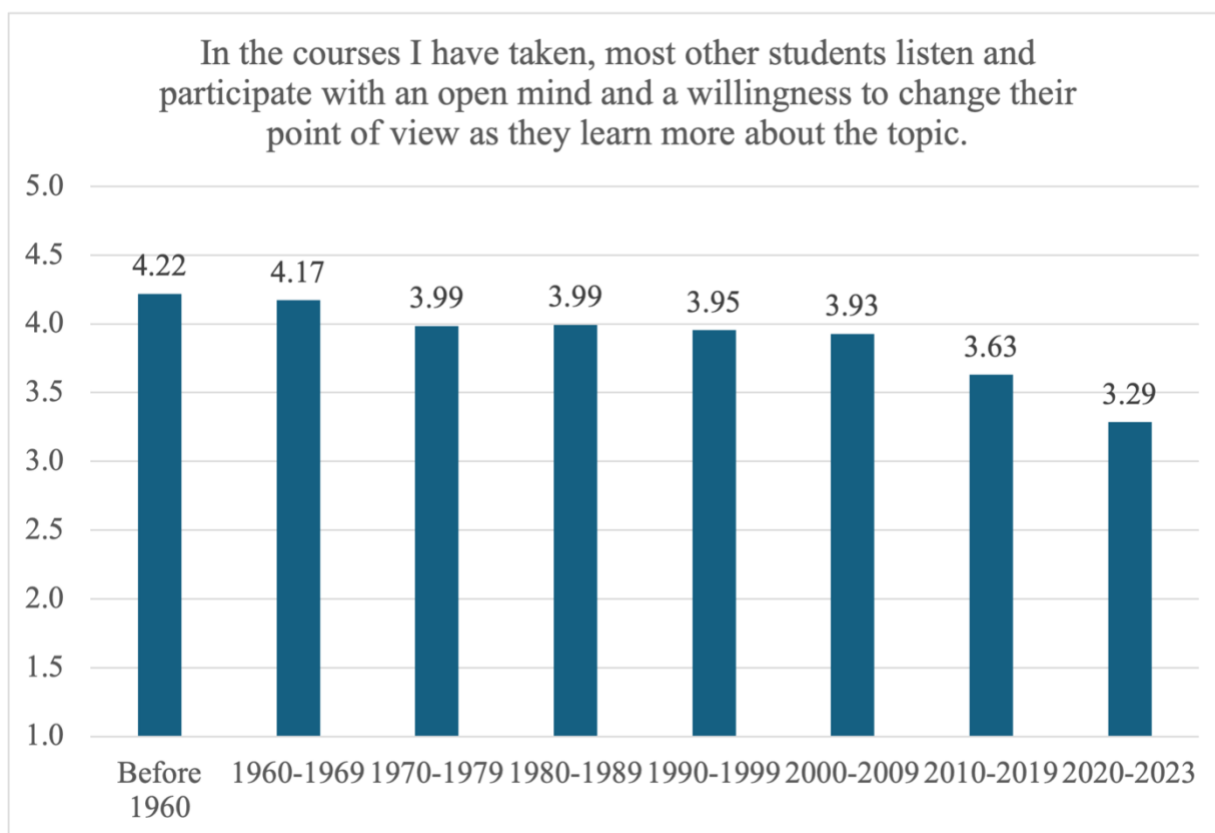
Appendix D: Alumni surveys

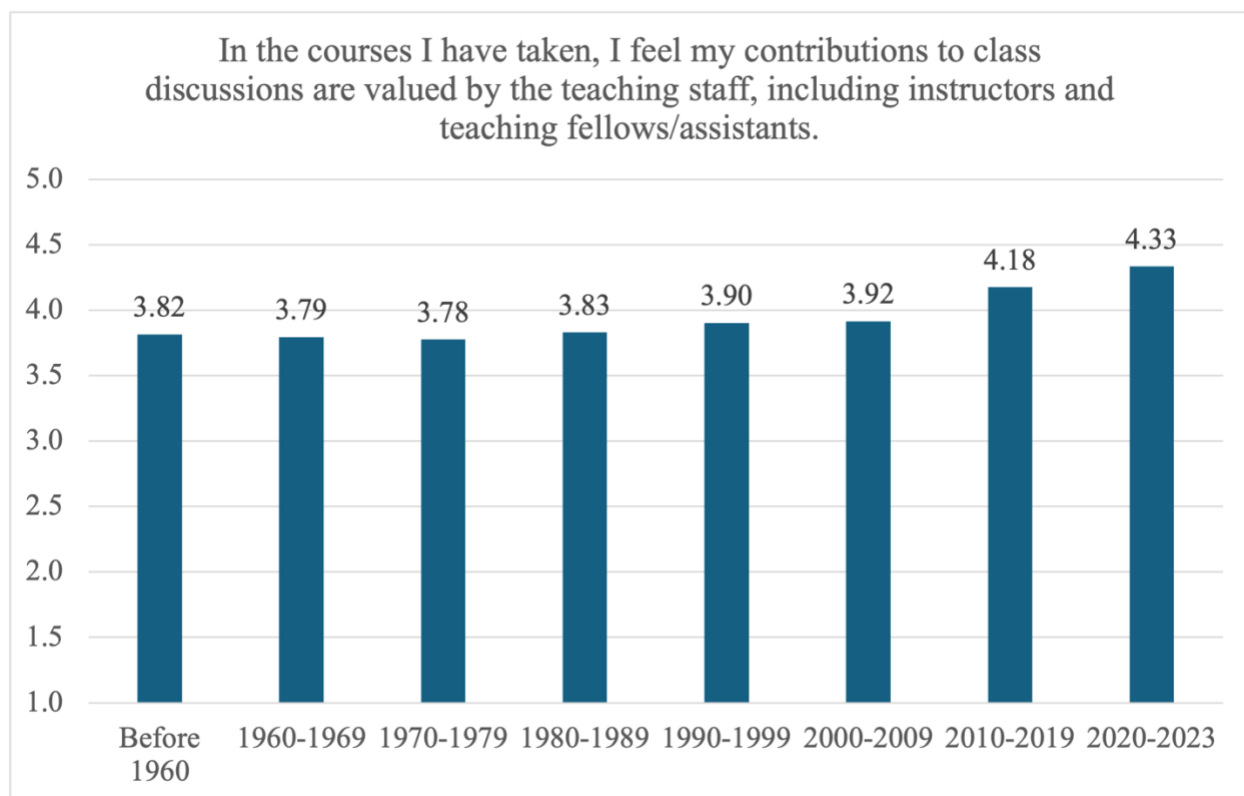
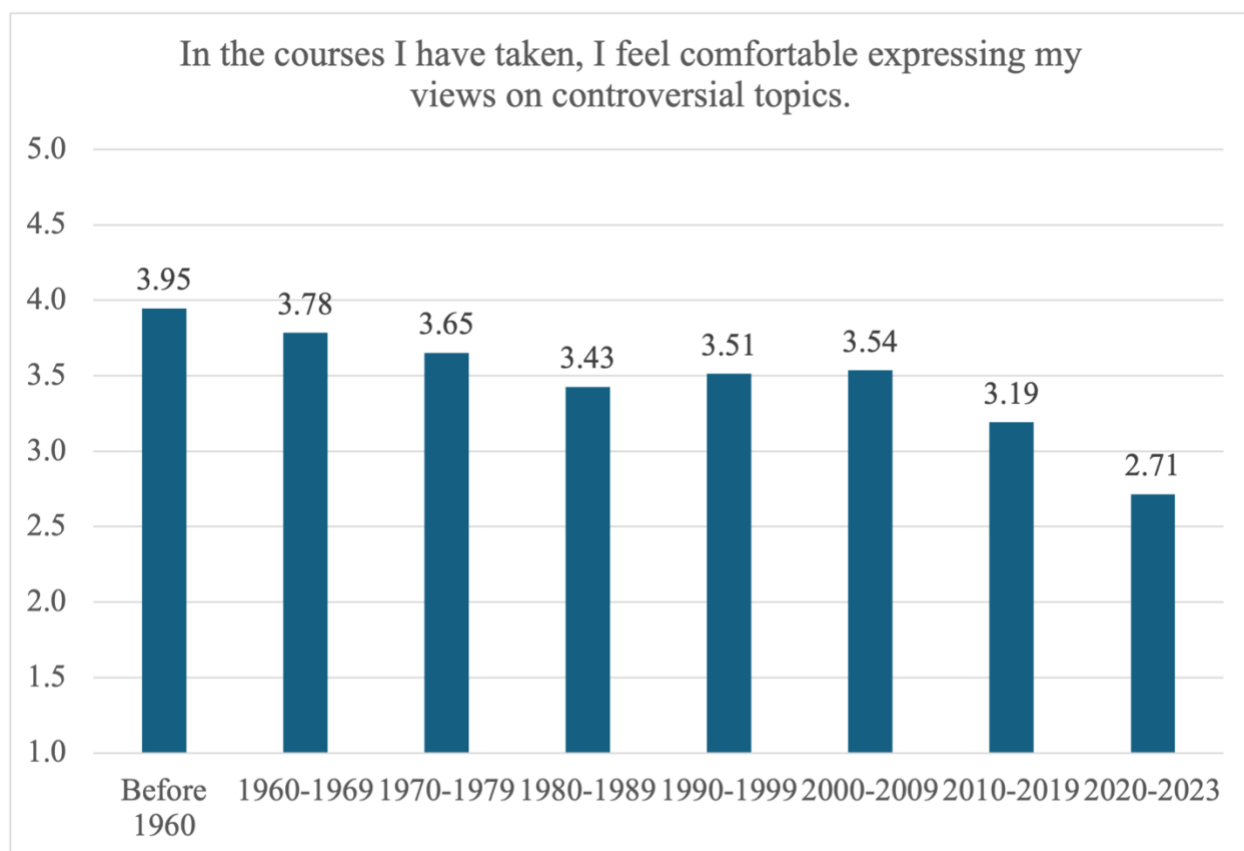
1. Harvard College Alumni, Summer 2024

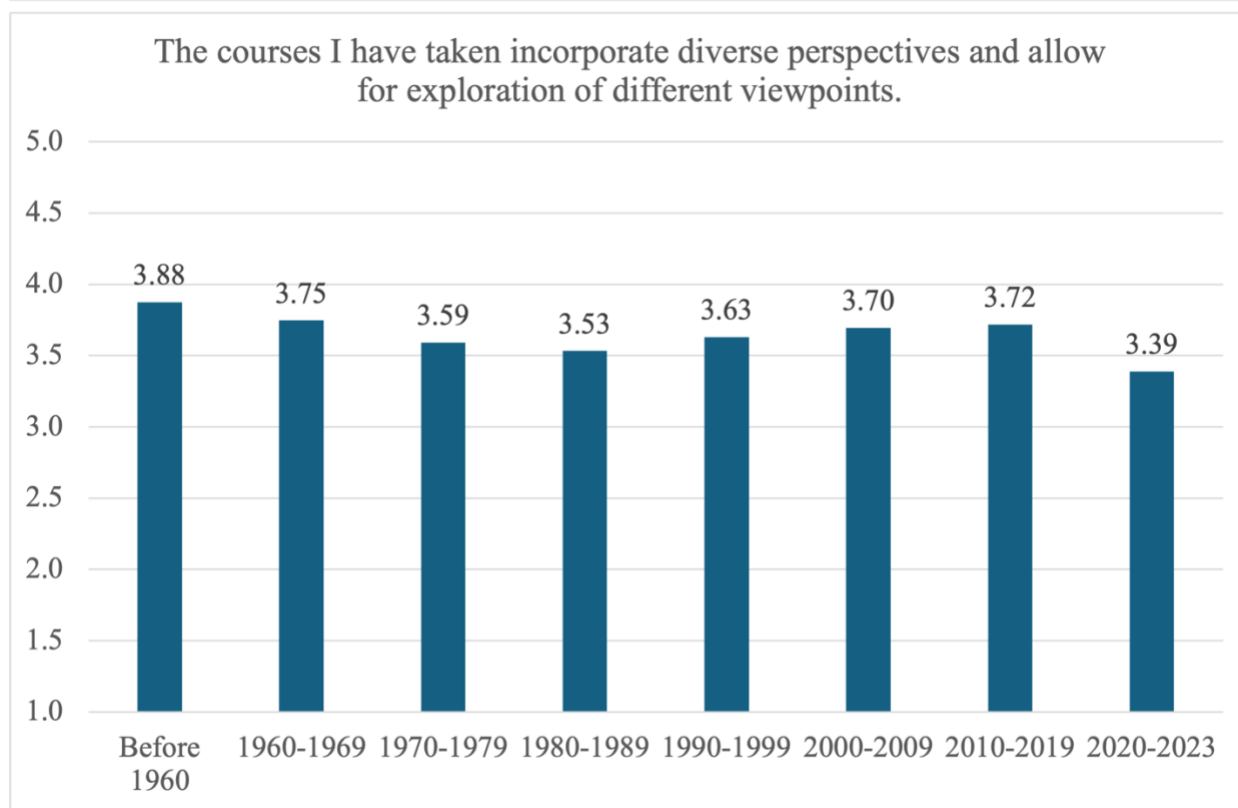
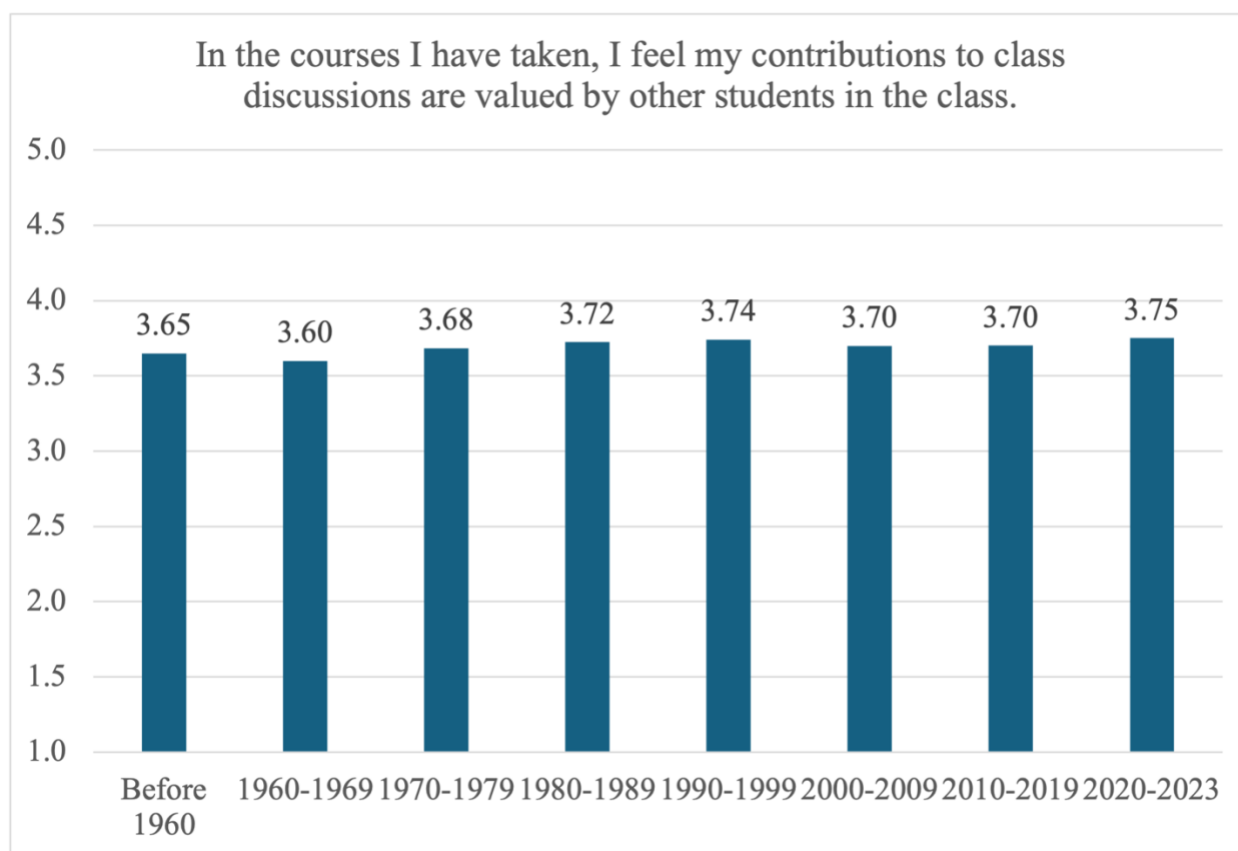
- Invited N~73000, Responded N=1520, Response Rate=2.0%

	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	n/a
In the courses I have taken, most other students listen and participate with an open mind and a willingness to change their point of view as they learn more about the topic.	1520	1%	6%	14%	52%	24%	3%
In the courses I have taken, I feel comfortable asking clarifying questions during class when I am having difficulty following the material being taught.	1522	4%	16%	14%	40%	24%	1%
In the courses I have taken, I feel comfortable expressing my views on controversial topics.	1521	5%	14%	20%	37%	18%	7%
In the courses I have taken, I feel my contributions to class discussions are valued by the teaching staff, including instructors and teaching fellows/assistants.	1520	2%	6%	18%	48%	24%	2%
In the courses I have taken, I feel my contributions to class discussions are valued by other students in the class.	1515	1%	5%	32%	47%	14%	2%
The courses I have taken incorporate diverse perspectives and allow for exploration of different viewpoints.	1517	4%	11%	22%	41%	19%	5%

2. Survey means by graduation year







3. GSAS Alumni, Summer 2024

- Invited N~14000, Responded N=180, Response Rate=1.2%

	N	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	n/a	Total
In the courses I have taken, most other students listen and participate with an open mind and a willingness to change their point of view as they learn more about the topic.	180	3%	3%	8%	42%	38%	6%	100%
In the courses I have taken, I feel comfortable asking clarifying questions during class when I am having difficulty following the material being taught.	180	2%	15%	8%	36%	37%	3%	100%
In the courses I have taken, I feel comfortable expressing my views on controversial topics.	180	7%	9%	19%	29%	20%	15%	100%
In the courses I have taken, I feel my contributions to class discussions are valued by the teaching staff, including instructors and teaching fellows/assistants.	180	0%	4%	17%	43%	31%	5%	100%
In the courses I have taken, I feel my contributions to class discussions are valued by other students in the class.	180	0%	2%	21%	50%	24%	3%	100%
The courses I have taken incorporate diverse perspectives and allow for exploration of different viewpoints.	180	4%	12%	21%	34%	17%	12%	100%