

FORMS OF DISCOURSE

VERBAL BRAWLING:

- war of words
- no consequences for violations of decency or truth
- "loose cannons" -- not responsible to adversaries or teammates
- what counts: does a tactic lead to victory?

DEBATE:

- highly polarized pro-and-con sides
- each seeks monopoly on truth -- one right, one wrong
- geared towards victory -- not compromise or common ground
- doesn't allow questioning of assumptions
- increasingly uncivil in current culture

DISCUSSION:

- open ended, unstructured discourse
- more chaotic and directionless than debate
- often not inclusive: some dominate, some withdraw
- usually no particular goal or outcome

NEGOTIATION:

- resolving disputes through compromise
- organized and coherent, with all participants aligned with one or other position
- assumes a willingness to give up something in order to compromise
- interest-based negotiation (including interest-based mediation--use of a third party)
focuses more on collaboration and inquiry

COUNCIL:

- highly structured bridge from debate to dialogue culture
- inclusive of each person offering personal perspective on issue
- no opportunity for immediate reactivity or rebuttal
- fosters attentive and empathic listening
- can utilize advocacy or inquiry modes of discourse

DIALOGUE:

- inquiry, not advocacy
- participants suspend judgements & positions temporarily to explore issues
- acknowledge value of others' positions
- develops a knowledge base that exceeds any of its members
- leads to creative new avenues for solving problem