



# CIVIL DISCOURSE

*An American Legacy Toolkit*

## ■ **Module:** Women's Rights

# Structured Academic Controversy (SAC) Plan

### Pre-Deliberation Content

#### Launch Activity

Ask participants to jot down and discuss the following questions: *How has the Women's Rights movement evolved since 1848? What goals have been achieved? What still needs to be done?*

#### Background Information

While listening to the third podcast series of Civil Discourse: An American Legacy titled [Women's Rights](#), take notes about the evolution of women's rights since 1848. Provide copies of the [Declaration of Sentiments](#), Sojourner Truth's speech "Ain't I a Woman?," the [19th Amendment](#), the [Equal Rights Amendment](#), a summary of the [Roe v. Wade decision](#)\*, and a summary of the [Dobbs v. Jackson decision](#)\* (found in the [American Legacy](#) text) to read and look for additional pieces of evidence about the evolution of women's rights since 1848. Have participants research key figures from the Seneca Falls Convention and their work between the convention (1848) and the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920. Have them reflect on the work's implicit and explicit goals and related timelines. While listening and reading,

participants should take notes and be able to summarize the key ideas of each podcast and document.

#### Vocabulary

Have participants share the words and phrases they found unfamiliar while a volunteer lists them on the (interactive) whiteboard. Be sure to include:

- [constitutional amendment](#)
- [Declaration of Sentiments](#)
- [dissenting opinion](#)
- [equity](#) and [equality](#)
- [majority opinion](#)
- [precedent](#)
- [suffrage](#)

Assign the words and phrases to groups of participants to research and define. Then, have the groups share with the entire class and discuss until all participants are comfortable with the surface meaning of the text.

## Pre-Deliberation Process

### **Describe the Responsibilities of the Facilitator and Participants**

“As the facilitator, my biggest responsibility is to keep time and ensure that each group stays on task within their allotted time. Equal time distribution is crucial as part of a structured academic controversy (SAC) because it ensures that both sides of the discussion are given an equal opportunity to speak and react. I will also provide sentence stem prompts to guide each segment of the SAC. Lastly, I will listen to small group discussions to redirect to a focus on evidence-based discussion when possible.”

“As the participant, your responsibility is to work with your partner or group to stay within the allotted time by providing concise, evidence-based responses. If it is your group's turn to speak, your focus should be on using specific examples of evidence from the readings that support your claim and providing context that connects the evidence to your reasoning about your claim. While the other group summarizes what you said, your role is to listen for accuracy and provide clarification when necessary.”

“If it is your group's turn to listen, your responsibility is to listen closely and take notes while the other side speaks. When it is your turn to summarize, you should provide a concise overview of the key points made by the other side, focusing on specific statements that they made, and be open to them providing clarification as needed.”

### **Define and State the Purpose of the Seminar**

“In the structured academic controversy (SAC), participants are assigned a stance on a question and work to reach a consensus on a contentious issue. The strategy reinforces the idea that people should seek to understand the other side's argument before committing to a side. Remember that the goal of a SAC is not to win; rather, SACs should give participants adequate time to present content knowledge and diverse perspectives as well as time for clarification questions, small group discussion, large group discussion, and consensus building. The predetermined format allows for structure and support for multiple viewpoints to be heard, understood, and validated while informing everyone's views on the question.”



## Structured Academic Controversy Process

### Overarching Statement Provided For the Group

- The Seneca Falls Convention clearly met its goals.

### Learn and Prepare

#### Initial Preparation

- Participants are provided central text(s) to read in preparation. This is often done during the previous class period or as homework leading up to class.

#### Groups are Created

- Participants break into groups. Half of the group is assigned “A” in favor of the statement/question, and half is assigned “B” against the statement or question.

#### Final Preparation (Can be done during the previous class if time allows.)

- Each side of the discussion, “A” and “B,” find a space separate from the other group to meet and prepare. If either group is large enough, the “A” and “B” groups can be broken into smaller groups.
- During this preparation phase, participants work together to share evidence and ideas that can be used during the small-group discussion. The goal is that each participant leaves the large group planning phase with an understanding of the critical points supporting their claim. (Usually 3-5 minutes)
- During this time, break all the “A”s into pairs (there can be a group of three if there is an odd number) and then do the same with the “B”s.
- Give each pair time to discuss their plan for the small group discussion. (Usually 5-10 minutes)

### Show and Tell

#### Small Group Creation

- Each “A” pair/group is paired with a “B” pair/group.
  - Groups meet up and introduce themselves to the others.
  - Sentence stem prompt: “Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I look forward to talking with you today.”



## Show and Tell

### Timed Share-Out

- Group “A” takes 1-3 minutes to deliver an opening statement. The opening statement is to focus solely on the resources that they were provided, with emphasis on providing direct quotes.
  - Sentence stem prompt: “The Seneca Falls Convention clearly met its goals because...”
  - During this time, group “B” cannot speak. They are to listen and take notes.
  - Time allotted depends on participants' ability, how much preparation time they were given, and how many resources they were provided as supporting research.
- Group “B” is given between 15 seconds and one minute to summarize what group “A” said during their opening statement.
  - Sentence stem prompt: “What I heard you say is...”
  - Time allotted depends on how much time was provided for the opening statement. Give approximately one-quarter of the time of the opening statement to summarize. Emphasis is on being concise in highlighting key points.
  - During the summarize portion, group “A” should not speak unless something provided by group “B” is incorrect. Then, clarification can be provided.
  - At the end of the summary time, the facilitator will ask, “Group A, did Group B understand you correctly?”
    - If yes, we move on; if no, additional clarification can be provided.
- The process is repeated with the two groups switching roles:
- Group “B” takes 1-3 minutes to deliver an opening statement. The opening statement is to focus solely on the resources that they were provided, with emphasis on providing direct quotes.
  - Sentence stem prompt: “The Seneca Falls Convention **DID NOT** clearly meet its goals. because...”
  - It is important to note that even though group “B” is second, their opening statement cannot directly address or refute anything said by group “A” as part of their opening statement. The opening statement by group “B” should be the same that they would have given even if they had gone first. The facilitator will emphasize this point.
  - During this time, group “A” cannot speak. They are to listen and take notes.
  - Time allotted depends on participants' ability, how much preparation time they were given, and how many resources they were provided as supporting research.
- Group “A” is given between 15 seconds and one minute to summarize what group “B” said during their opening statement.
  - Sentence stem prompt: “What I heard you say is...”
  - Time allotted depends on how much time was provided for the opening statement. Give



## Show and Tell

approximately one-quarter of the time of the opening statement to summarize. Emphasis is on being concise in highlighting key points.

- During the summarize portion, group “B” should not speak unless something provided by group “A” is incorrect. Then, clarification can be provided.
- At the end of the summary time, the facilitator will ask, “Group B, did Group A understand you correctly?”
  - If yes, we move on; if no, additional clarification can be provided.
- The process is repeated, with the two groups switching back to their original roles. The number of rounds is determined by how much time the facilitator wants to dedicate to the discussion and how much background material was provided at the start. The more time and material, the more rounds can and should be provided for deeper discussion.
- Things to note for rounds two and beyond:
  - Unlike the opening statements, in rounds two and beyond, the groups can directly address or refute statements made by the other group as part of their opening statement or at any point in SAC.
  - Emphasis is given to using direct quotes from the material provided. The more rounds provided, the more likely participants will start bringing “outside information” to the conversation. Background knowledge can be useful, but be careful about the academic rigor of the source. For example, having knowledge of specific writings or speeches by suffragettes can be helpful. Sharing a meme that you read on Facebook is not helpful. The facilitator will be listening in to as many small group conversations at a time as possible to help ensure that the conversations stay at an academically rigorous level.



## Talk and Think

### Open Conversation

- For 1-3 minutes, the group drops their assigned “role,” and each member participates in an open discussion about what they have heard.
- Sentence stem prompts:
  - “I think the most persuasive argument in favor of is....”
  - “I think the most persuasive argument against is...”

## Taking a New Approach

### Perspective Switch

- Each group takes the opposite stance in the discussion.
- Group “A” will claim that the Seneca Falls Convention **DID NOT** clearly meet its goals, and group “B” will claim that the Seneca Falls Convention **DID** clearly meet its goals.
- Each pair will have 3-5 minutes to decide the main points of their new argument.

### Timed Share-Out

- At least one round of a timed share-out occurs in the same format as previous rounds.
  - Both groups can respond to or rebut previous statements, including their own.
  - The number of rounds is determined by how much time the facilitator wants to dedicate to the discussion and how much background material was provided at the start.
  - Both sides must have the same number of opportunities to speak.

## Come Together

### Open Conversation

- For 3-5 minutes, the group drops their assigned “role,” and each member participates in an open discussion about what they have heard.
- Sentence stem prompts:
  - “I think the most persuasive argument in favor of is....”
  - “I think the most persuasive argument against is...”

### Final Vote

- Each participant casts a vote based on what they have learned and what they believe.
- Sentence stem prompt: “I am voting **yes/no** that the Seneca Falls Convention clearly met its goals.”
- Each small group tallies their votes.

## Come Together

### Voting Share Out

- The facilitator asks each group to share their vote tally and if they were for/against the statement/question.

### Full Group Discussion

- The facilitator asks if they noticed anything about the voting (this is especially powerful when you have a 4-0 yes AND a 4-0 no in the same room) and why they think the voting went that way.
- The facilitator then leads a full group discussion that focuses on the two sentence stems:
  - “I think the most persuasive argument in favor of is....”
  - “I think the most persuasive argument against is...”
- Time of the final discussion depends on how much time is available and how much time the facilitator wants to spend on the discussion. The full group discussion can take place during the following class period.

## Post-Seminar Content

### Transition to Writing

Participants are encouraged to revisit notes they captured on their selections, personal recording space, etc., and during the Launch Activity.

### Writing Task

The Women's Rights movement has been a long journey. Many trace its roots to the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, but progress has been inconsistent, and sometimes felt like it has moved backward. What should the future of the Women's Rights movement in America focus on? Write an argumentative essay (or other expressive work like a PowerPoint presentation or a Public Service Announcement video) that provides the key reasons why you believe your suggested next steps to advance women's rights would strengthen American democracy. Focus on the included texts and podcasts, issues raised in related readings and during the SAC, and your background knowledge on your stance.

### Extension Task

Outline an advocacy campaign or legislative bill that you believe would be critical in supporting the future of the Women's Rights movement. Identify key stakeholders, respond to counter-arguments, and highlight messaging reflecting what you hope to accomplish.



## Main Text Selections

- [The Declaration of Sentiments](#)
- Sojourner Truth's speech, "Ain't I a Woman?"
- [The 19th Amendment](#)
- [The Equal Rights Amendment](#)
- A summary of the [Roe v. Wade](#) decision\*
- A summary of the [Dobbs v. Jackson](#) decision\*
- The third episode of the 60-Second Civics podcast series on Women's Rights, titled "[Minor v. Happersett](#)"

*\*Note: All content, such as that summarizing the court cases above, on [oyez.org](http://oyez.org) and other sites and projects maintained by Oyez is released under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License. See [www.oyez.org/license](http://www.oyez.org/license).*

## Additional Sources

- [Signers of the Declaration of Sentiments](#)
- [Seneca Falls and Building a Movement](#)
- [The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848-1898](#)
- [Women's Suffrage and the 19th Amendment](#)
- [The National Park Service: The 19th Amendment](#)