

heterodox^x conversationsTM



Organizer's Guide

*Everything you need to know about
hosting a Heterodox Conversation*



What Are Heterodox Conversations?	3
How Heterodox Conversations Work	4
How to Host a Heterodox Conversation	5
Heterodox Conversation Run of Show	11

What are Heterodox Conversations?

Heterodox Conversations are campus events that pair two scholarly experts with divergent viewpoints on a topic. These events showcase the power of academic dialogue and constructive disagreement in the shared pursuit of knowledge.

Heterodox Conversations:

- Demonstrate how viewpoint diversity and constructive disagreement improve critical inquiry into complex topics
- Serve as a model of The HxA Way; showcase how academic conversations can work in a style that distinctively differs from competitive debates or one-sided lectures
- Ignite intellectual curiosity and continued growth toward becoming critical and independent thinkers

Currently, only Heterodox Academy Campus Communities can host our signature Heterodox Conversations.

How Heterodox Conversations Work

Heterodox Conversations have three distinct sections, with the event lasting 75-90 minutes.

Speaker Presentations (15 minutes per speaker):

Each speaker has 15 minutes to present their scholarship on the topic.

Speaker Conversation (15 minutes total):

Speakers engage in dialogue with each other about their work for 15 minutes.

Audience Conversation and Questions (30-45 minutes):

The audience is invited to pose questions and comments for the speakers for 30-45 minutes. Audience members can determine questions individually or in groups.

How to Host a Heterodox Conversation

Hosting a Heterodox Conversation Involves Five Steps:

- 1** Select the topic
and speaker pair
- 2** Consider partnering with
other campus groups or
organizations
- 3** Book a room
- 4** Advertise your event
- 5** Execute the event

1

Select the Topic and Speaker Pair

HxA has a menu of topic and speaker pairs that host campuses will choose from. (Find this information in the Quad.) Speaker pairs reflect thoughtful and deliberate efforts to ensure that speakers engage in constructive disagreement, follow The HxA Way, and can spark curiosity in others. Our topic options for Heterodox Conversations reflect the nuance of the issue being discussed and provide a real opportunity for curiosity and critical inquiry.

2

Consider Partnering with Other Campus Groups or Organizations

Partnering with other groups or organizations on your campus can elevate the attendance of your event, diversify your audience, and broaden your impact. Partnering with student groups can be particularly valuable. Often they are eager to partner on events. They may also offer insight into what students on campus are interested in learning about. You can also ask groups you're partnering with to volunteer with hosting the event – greeting attendees, helping with set up, introducing speakers, and marketing your event.

To find potential partner groups or organizations on your campus, find the office that manages these groups, typically it's housed within Student Affairs, the Dean of Students office, or your campus student government office. Obtain a list and see which student organizations are linked to the topic addressed at your event. Contact these student organizations, let them know about your event, and even ask them to get involved.

3

Book a Room on Campus

We suggest finding a room on campus that can be set up banquet or classroom style with chairs and tables that will seat approximately 40-50 people for your first event. Proximity to others in the audience encourages participation and prevents disruptions. As your events grow, you can select larger rooms that hold upwards of 100 people.

We recommend against holding your event in huge a lecture hall, if possible. Often they are too large, create distance between attendees, and don't encourage participation.

Campus event spaces fill quickly, especially in high-traffic areas like the student union. Begin planning early to confirm space and get the word out about your event.

4

Advertise your Event

People can only come to your event if they know about it. Here are key ways to ensure people know of and attend your event:

Plan Early:

Having your event room, time, and speakers confirmed as early as possible allows for more time to advertise your event on campus.

Print Flyers:

Use our event flier template to print 8.5 x 11 fliers to hang up around campus.

Get Online:

Get your event on your campus' online calendar for students and faculty to learn about.

Let HxA Know:

Once your event is fully finalized (date, time, location, speakers), we can help promote the event in our emails and website.

5

Kick-off your Event

Ideally, your event will offer a hybrid element via live-stream, or at a minimum be recorded for posting online after the event. Talk to your campus events team about setting up a camera to allow live-streaming and recording of the event (HxA's speaker pairs have already agreed to this). Position the camera so that only speakers and moderator are filmed, since audience members will not have consented to being recorded.

On the day of your event, arrive early to the location to ensure the room is set up correctly and recording is ready. Ask any event helpers and speakers to arrive early as well.

When the Event is Ready to Start:

- Have the event host welcome all to the event.
- Introduce yourself as host and acknowledge any partners or sponsors of the event, including Heterodox Academy.
- Use the **provided slide deck** to introduce the audience to Heterodox Academy, the Campus Community Network, Heterodox Conversations, and The HxA Way.
- Throughout, set a constructive tone for the event exemplifying HxA values.



1 Make Your Case with Evidence

2 Be Intellectually Charitable

3 Be Intellectually Humble

4 Be Constructive

5 Be Yourself

heterodoxacademy.org

Here is a Sample Opening:

Thank you for coming to our event this evening where we are discussing _____. Before we begin, I'd like to thank our sponsors for their commitment to open academic inquiry on our campus. Our sponsors are _____. Without them, this conversation would not be possible. (Add a short description of your HxA Campus Community here.)

What distinguishes Heterodox Conversations is our approach and our purpose. We focus on the process of academic inquiry, not on opinions. Our speaker pairs will surely disagree on some things, but this isn't about identifying a winner and loser. Rather, this process highlights how scholars investigate their topic and reach informed conclusions with the available evidence. The goal of the Heterodox Conversations is to reveal the process of discovery and reasoning that result in a conclusion. Of course, at the end of our conversation, you may find one person's evidence or argument relatively more compelling. That's fine! But we hope you learn more about academic inquiry and continue the process of inquiry by asking more questions and engaging in further study and exploration.

This is why we want everyone in the room to understand the guidelines for today's event, including the HxA Way.

These guidelines are not just for our speakers but for everyone, including me. When we ask questions or challenge ideas, we need to use evidence, in addition to being charitable, humble and constructive.

Before I introduce our speakers, I would like to give you an idea about the format for our time together. There are three parts:

Part 1: Each speaker will offer a 15-minute presentation that takes us through their own study of this topic, the evidence they find important, and how they arrived at the conclusions they hold.

Part 2: Speakers will engage in a conversation and ask each other questions about their choices, evidence, and conclusions for 15 minutes.

Part 3: Then we have 30 minutes for audience discussion and questions: This may be a bit different from what you're used to. We will be asking you to break into groups of 4-5, with the people sitting around you. As a group you will come up with a question that your group would like to ask or an issue your group would like one or both speakers to talk about.

Finally, before you leave I encourage you to take one minute to answer a few short survey questions at the end of today's event. (HxA provides the survey and a QR Code to this link.)

Now, it's time to introduce our speakers.

6

Concluding your Event

To the Organizer/Emcee:

Before break-out groups for Part 3, use something like this:

We would like you to break out into groups of four or five people with those sitting around you. As a group, come up with a few questions you'd like to ask one or both speakers. It could be about something one or both speakers said or something the group thinks is related to this issue. Please be clear about who your question is directed to.

Be a strong moderator.

- Must be willing to politely interrupt anyone who goes overtime.
- Must be able to host/emcee the event
- Must execute audience conversation and questions (see Run of Show)

After the Audience Conversation and Question period has ended there are two suggested ways to end the event on a high note.

Speaker Question 1:

Ask each speaker to name a single book or article that was important on their journey to researching this issue that the audience may find insightful follow up material. Be sure to alert speakers of this beforehand so they have something ready.

Speaker Question 2:

Ask each speaker what they appreciate about the other speaker's approach, questions, or conclusions. Doing this sets the tone for how people leave the conversation. Ending with a question that shows curiosity and generosity encourages people to leave with a spirit of inquiry, not rancor.

Remember: **Display the QR code for the audience survey at the end of your event on the projector.** This allows attendees to provide feedback to help us all improve our events.

Heterodox Conversation Run of Show

Heterodox Conversations are based on a premise that two scholars in different disciplines, with different methodologies, and different perspectives can have a productive and insightful conversation about a topic or question. The event format is such that it brings the audience alongside the scholars on a journey of discovery and academic inquiry.

Speakers should emphasize the process of academic inquiry and how it leads to a particular conclusion or perspective. This is not a debate. Instead, the goal in Heterodox Conversations is to reveal the process of discovery, analysis, and reasoning that result in a conclusion. Each speaker highlights either different methods or disciplinary approaches for the purpose of understanding, demonstrating how different scholars ask questions and come to different conclusions.

Importantly, the scholars are not locked in a battle for supremacy but are raising different questions because they have different interests, focuses, and approaches. They disagree constructively with a shared pursuit of truth or knowledge as their common goal.

How the speakers should approach each section of the event is detailed on the following page.

1

Speaker Presentations

A Heterodox Conversation Involves Three Parts:

- 1 Speaker Presentations
- 2 Speaker Conversation
- 3 Audience Conversation and Questions

Each speaker has 15 minutes to present their scholarship on the topic, following the format outlined below:

Why?

Share with the audience your route to studying this topic and why it is of interest to you. Share what sparks your curiosity and why people should take this topic seriously.

Passion gets the audience invested.

When someone is passionate about a topic, members of the audience get invested and pay attention.

What?

Explain core concepts, key facts, or data necessary to understand your perspective or approach. Share the evidentiary basis for your perspective and why such evidence is important.

What are the key facts or data that people need to know?

Explain the evidentiary basis for your conclusions.

Talk about why the particular evidence matters.

How do you connect the dots between the evidence?

So What?

Demonstrate how the evidence presented leads to your conclusions. Explain to the audience how you came to this conclusion through evaluating the evidence you presented, and what the implications are.

Think about it like:

“I discovered X which led me to think about Y. Then I started to consider how X and Y played a role in Z.”

2

Speaker Conversation

Following each individual 15-min presentation, speakers engage in dialogue with each other about their work for 15 minutes. The conversation between the speakers should focus on the following areas:

Questioning:

Question the different disciplinary or methodological approaches of both speakers and how those aspects can lead to differing conclusions.

Consider the following framing: Discipline X focuses on these kinds of questions because Y. Because of this, my discipline does not really ask that because our focus in inquiry is D & E.

Highlighting:

Highlight points of agreement among the approaches, evidence, or conclusions.

Try: "I noticed that this evidence led you to think _____. I wonder why you couldn't also come to this conclusion _____. Are there other possibilities or conclusions you could draw? If so, what makes you confident in your conclusion?"

Understanding:

Understand how different disciplines approach the same topic and how those approaches can lead to differing conclusions.

Consider what you like about the other's approach to this topic. What do they do right, or do better than you or your discipline? What questions is the other speaker asking that your study or discipline really hasn't asked?

2

Audience Conversation and Questions

Heterodox Conversations aren't just conversations between two scholars; they also invite audiences into the conversation. It's necessary to allow at least 30-45 minutes of audience discussion and Q&A. There are a number of ways to engage your audience, and it will depend on how large the audience is and the configuration of your event space. There are two main ways to structure the Q&A period:

Option 1: Individual Questions:

Give the audience a few minutes to reflect on the presentations and speaker conversation and write down a question, comment, or concern. Then proceed with fielding questions for the remainder of the Q&A period.

Option 2: Group Question:

Have people in the audience break up into groups of 4-5. Folks can either turn in their seats or work with the people at their table if the room is set up that way. Allow 5-10 minutes for groups to come up with questions or comments, then field one question from each group as time allows.

Tips to get the discussion rolling:

- Group questions are more likely to get questions rolling as it feels easier for students especially to work in a small group first.
- If individuals don't readily begin offering questions, event organizers should be ready with a thoughtful question to get the discussion started.
- If all groups are finished, open the floor for individual questions.
- If all individuals or groups have asked their questions, invite second questions from those who have already asked a question.
- At the beginning of the Q&A period, suggest areas that attendees could ask about such as the presenter's academic process, specific evidence presented, their conclusion from their evidence, something they are just curious about, or a request for recommended reading on the topic.

Heterodox Conversations help fulfill HxA's mission to improve research and higher education by showcasing the value of constructive disagreement as scholars pursue open inquiry alongside those who have differing viewpoints.

This guide was developed by Heterodox Academy in consultation with Dr. Jeff Motter of Jm Communications.

Have questions?

Reach out to HxA's Member & Campus Engagement team at

campuscommunities@heterodoxacademy.org

Heterodox Academy

82 Nassau Street #646

New York, NY 10038

www.heterodoxacademy.org

