UIC DIALOGUE AT A GLANCE

What is Dialogue?

Dialogue is a form of communication focused on building connection and understanding between people. Unlike debate, which aims to determine a winning side, or discussion, which often centers on exchanging ideas, dialogue emphasizes finding common ground and creating bridges between different perspectives. In dialogue, participants are encouraged to bring their full identities and experiences into the conversation, making respect, openness, and shared understanding essential parts of the exchange.

Dialogue @ UIC

The Dialogue Initiative at University of Illinois Chicago began in 2009 after campus leaders attended the University of Michigan National Institute of Intergroup Relations and brought the idea back to UIC. The Dialogue Initiative offers courses, workshops, trainings, and national presentations.

Today, the Dialogue 120 course is the Initiative's signature program. Dialogue 120 is a 1-credit course enrolling approximately 450 students annually through small, discussion-based classes that help students build confidence engaging across differences, reflect on identity, and strengthen understanding of others.

Dialogue 120 Student Learning Outcomes

go.uic.edu/Dialogue

In academic year 2025-26:

95% of respondents would recommend Dialogue 120 to their peers

Students showed statistically significant improvement in their ability to:

- Identify key components of dialogue
- Distinguish dialogue from other modes of engagement, such as debate and discussion
- Apply active listening techniques
- Name strategies that can help ensure that a dialogue is successful

What our students are saying:

> “I had a great time in this class, I thought it was incredibly valuable to have taken, especially during the first 8 weeks of college. It helped me open my mind towards others and get a feel of how truly important it is to hear from everyone that has come from different walks of life.”

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What our students are saying:

"This course surprised me in a good way. I went in thinking it would just be another required class, but it actually pushed me to slow down, listen better and understand where people are coming from. Dialogue felt very different from normal class discussions, it wasn't about defending a point but actually trying to connect. The biggest thing I'm taking with me is learning how to pause my assumptions and really hear someone before reacting. That's something I know will help me outside the classroom too."

"I really enjoyed taking this class. I appreciated having the opportunity to practice active listening skills and engage in an intentional manner in group dialogues. Everything learned in this class is a great life skill to have. I would recommend everyone at UIC to take this class, it can only [improve] how we communicate as a community."

"My overall experience in Dialogue 120 has been really positive. I've learned how to communicate more, listen actively, and respond in ways that build onto others ideas rather than just waiting for my turn to speak. The class gave me a space to understand different perspectives and practice having respectful conversations about important topics. Something I am taking with me is the skill of building dialogue rather than just debating and learning to ask questions and connect ideas and to understand others even when there's a disagreement."

"In this course, I became more aware of myself. I learned just as much about others as I did about myself. I'm taking away a sense of understanding about the importance of dialogue and conversation. I'm taking away new tactics to have more meaningful dialogue. I've wanted to be better at conversation, and I think the building blocks and active usage of these tools will help me to do so. This class has helped me be more conscious of how I interact with others."

What our instructors are saying:

"Teaching dialogue is transformative. I love watching students find their authentic voice, connect to their social and personal identities, and realize they have the power to reshape conversations and their relationships. It's deeply moving to facilitate the spark of building connections and engagement practices in the classroom, which will help them to shape the world around them." - Norma Ramos, College of Urban Planning & Public Affairs

"Co-facilitating the Dialogue 120 course has been an absolute pleasure and honor. The curriculum allows for students to develop meaningful connections and essential skills that they will need in life. We all have to navigate conflict, being able to learn tools to do that respectfully and meaningfully is important, and students learn and practice this in class." - Cecilia Macias, School of Public Health

"I am extremely grateful to have this opportunity to connect with students around a meaningful topic and skill such as dialogue. Every semester we challenge the students to think deeper about the world around them and to learn new skills to take with them into their communities. These opportunities to engage difficult topics from a learning perspective become more and more valuable every day." - Keith Ellis, Student Affairs

"I have taught eight semesters of Dialogue 120, and each one has reminded me of the importance of introducing college students to the concepts and skills of dialogue. I love when students say that they appreciate how Dialogue has helped them build their confidence to speak up, know their importance and value in sharing their experiences and opinions, and be more willing to step out of their comfort zone and explore their learning edges." - Rae Joyce Baguilat, Student Affairs