

The Open Discourse Lecture & Discussion Series

One of the causes and consequences of polarization in American politics is the tendency for the left and the right to avoid discussion, and to avoid listening to each side's positions. Universities should, ideally, be a venue for the open exchange of ideas, where those with different thoughts can deliberate and learn from each other rather than cloister among those of like mind. The Open Discourse & Lecture Series brings speakers from different perspectives, and hosts discussions between those of contrasting viewpoints, not to debate, but to listen and engage in order to break down the ideological bubbles that form as easily on university campuses as throughout social media.

The core principle, and indeed the only core principle for the Series comes from John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*. "To refuse a hearing to an opinion, because they are sure that it is false, is to assume that their certainty is the same thing as absolute certainty. All silencing of discussion is an assumption of infallibility."

Socrates was tried and convicted for corrupting the youth of Athens, his crime being that he subjected the wise to questioning, and unable to withstand scrutiny, they were revealed not to be wise. Socrates, himself, claimed no wisdom beyond the knowledge of his own lack of wisdom. If all ideas are to be scrutinized, though, then the most dangerous mistake is to avoid those questions, one's self. The way to face those questions is to listen, and that is the purpose of The Open Discourse Lecture & Discussion Series.

Attendants of all beliefs are welcome, good faith questions are welcome, and learning requires listening.