

MODULE 4: POLITICAL POLARIZATION AND DIALOGUE

Aim: To explore the causes, consequences, and potential solutions to political polarization. Participants will learn how to foster effective, inclusive dialogue and understand the role of political discourse in managing divisions within society. This module will equip participants with the necessary knowledge, skills, and strategies to address polarization, promote empathy, and create spaces for constructive dialogue.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the concept of political polarization and its impacts on democracy.
- Analyze key factors contributing to polarization, including political populism, disinformation, and cognitive biases.
- Learn about effective dialogue techniques and the importance of empathy and perspective-taking in reducing polarization.

Skills Objectives:

- Develop critical thinking and argumentation skills.
- Strengthen the ability to manage conflicts and foster respectful dialogue.
- Learn to identify and challenge unconscious biases that contribute to divisive rhetoric.

Attitudes Objectives:

- Foster empathy and an open-minded approach to understanding diverse viewpoints.
- Promote values-based collaboration and compromise in the face of political disagreement.
- Encourage responsible political participation and discourse for the health of democratic practices.

Methodology

- Lecture: 30%
- Discussion: 40%
- Simulation: 15%
- Group Work: 15%

4.1: Combating Political Polarization

Aim: To consolidate knowledge about the threats to democratic practices in contemporary Armenia and to understand the importance of a common values-based approach to combat these threats.

Objectives:

- Systematize knowledge of the threats to democracy posed by de-ideologization, political populism, demagoguery, political hatred, and polarization.
- Encourage a values-based approach to effectively address the threats to democracy.

Discussion Topics:

- Manifestations of political populism, demagoguery, and polarization in the Armenian political landscape.
- The role of political parties and civil society organizations in combating polarization.
- The impact of political polarization on democratic processes and governance.

4.2: Dialogue vs. Debate vs. Discussion

Aim: To provide theoretical and practical knowledge on the concepts of dialogue, debate, and discussion, and to develop skills for engaging in effective political communication.

Objectives:

- Develop critical thinking, argumentation, and political communication skills.
- Understand the differences between dialogue, debate, and discussion, and apply these concepts in real-world political settings.

Discussion Topics:

- The role of dialogue in building consensus versus the competitive nature of debate.
- How discussion can foster understanding across political divides.
- The relationship between political communication and trust in democratic institutions.

4.3: Foundation of Effective Dialogue

Aim: To understand the principles of effective dialogue, enhance communication skills, and develop strategies for navigating challenging conversations.

Objectives:

- Learn techniques for active listening and asking open-ended questions.
- Explore strategies for handling difficult dialogue situations, especially in polarized environments.

Discussion Topics:

- Key principles of constructive dialogue.
- How to maintain respect and empathy in discussions with opposing viewpoints.
- The role of dialogue in conflict resolution and bridging ideological divides.

4.4: Diverse and Inclusive Dialogue: Recognizing and Addressing Unconscious Biases

Aim: To develop awareness of unconscious biases and their impact on dialogue, and to learn strategies for fostering inclusive and respectful conversations.

Objectives:

- Identify common unconscious biases that affect communication.
- Develop strategies for mitigating biases and promoting inclusive dialogue.

Discussion Topics:

- Examples of unconscious biases in everyday interactions and political discourse.
- The impact of bias on collaboration and decision-making.
- Techniques for fostering inclusive and empathetic dialogue in polarized contexts.

4.5: Conflict Resolution

Aim: To explore the dynamics of conflict, identify triggers, and develop strategies for resolving political conflicts through dialogue.

Objectives:

- Define different types of conflict and understand their causes.
- Learn conflict resolution techniques that can be applied in political and social settings.

Discussion Topics:

- Triggers of political conflict and early warning signs.
- Strategies for mediating conflicts in politically charged environments.
- Case studies of successful conflict resolution in political settings.