

# Communication Skills for Controversial Topics



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# Controversial Topics



- Abortion
- Affirmative Action
- Affordable Care Act (aka Obamacare)
- Animal Rights
- Barack Obama
- Drug Legalization & Medical Marijuana
- Gay Marriage
- Gun Rights
- Global War on Terror
- Homeschooling
- Torture (e.g., waterboarding)
- What else?

# What makes these topics difficult to discuss?



# Barriers to Effective Communication



- **Cognitive biases**
  - E.g., dichotomous thinking (e.g., black-and-white thinking)
- **Poor emotional regulation**
  - E.g., Related to frustration tolerance, anxiety
- **Us-versus-Them mentality**
- **Leading to...Negative verbal and non-verbal reactions**
  - Aggressive, passive, and passive aggressive

# Communication Skills



- Attending, listening, and observing
- Open-ended questions
- Restatements and paraphrasing
- Challenges / Confrontation
- Assertiveness

# Communication Example



- Piers Morgan interviews Larry Pratt on CNN
  - Look for examples of effective and ineffective communication
  - Look for the barriers to effective communication

# Assertiveness



- Assertive behavior
- Passive / Non-assertive behavior
- Aggressive behavior
- Passive-aggressive behavior

# Four Corners Exercise





# When Can You Be More Assertive?



- Individually, write down one academic or CMA-related situation where you can be more assertive
- In small groups (3-4), share and discuss your example

# Role Play Practice



- In your same small groups,
  - Design a situation to role play and assign roles
  - Demonstrate 1 non-assertive response and 1 assertive response
    - ✦ Use the Types of Assertiveness handout for the assertive response
  - Feedback and discussion from the class

# Action Plan



- Reflecting on today's lecture and exercises, identify one or two types of assertion that you can use in a specific situation in this class in the next 1-2 weeks.
  - You will then share with your small groups, but not with the entire class

# Questions or Comments?



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# Assertive behavior



# Passive / Non-assertive behavior



# Aggressive behavior



# Passive-aggressive behavior

