

Four Corners Confidence Scale Exercise

This basic exercise can be useful as a warm up or introduction exercise at the beginning of a workshop or class to help people get comfortable working together and to help them assess their knowledge and experience of the material that will be covered.

For Center for Political Education's Marxism 101 class, we used this exercise as an icebreaker and to help us get a sense of some of the areas in which the participants felt confident and where they could use a boost. It also gave the participants an opportunity to get to know each other a bit and to do some self-reflection before jumping into the material. This is also an opportunity to begin foregrounding some of the key concepts of the class and some of the political orientations of the class (e.g. Marxism is not strictly the purview of white European men, etc.)

Depending on the size of the group and how deeply you want to explore participants' responses, this can either be a very short exercise or a lengthy one. For a class of 50 as a warm up exercise, CPE took about 20 minutes to do this activity.

Goals:

- help facilitators learn about participants' levels of knowledge, experience, and confidence with course material
- provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on their own relationship to the course material and to get to know each other

Materials:

- four signs with different levels of confidence on them (e.g. VERY CONFIDENT; KIND OF CONFIDENT; NOT CONFIDENT; WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?)
- list of statements to read to the group

Method:

- post one sign on the wall in each corner of the room (make sure you're leaving enough space for people to physically be able to gather around the sign) *NOTE:* you may want to have additional sets of signs available for people to hold up if they deal with mobility issues.
- Tell participants that you will read out a single statement at a time and ask them to physically move to the sign that best reflects their confidence level in relationship to the statement based on their initial reaction, or to hold up the sign that best applies to them if they are unable to easily move to the signs. *NOTE:* you may want to tell the participants that they should interpret the statement the best they can and base their decision on that—sometimes participants worry about having the “right” answer.
- Read a statement
- Once people have gathered under the respective signs, ask for volunteers or select a couple participants to describe why they chose that sign. *NOTE:* This is an opportunity to draw people out, to ask follow up questions if they are relevant, etc.
- Repeat statements one at a time, giving participants enough time to position themselves under the sign that best applies to them, and soliciting explanations from a few participants each round.

Sample Statements:

- I have studied Marxism within an academic setting
 - I have studied Marxism in an organization or in community settings.
- I can describe what capitalism is to my neighbor or co-worker in under 5 minutes.

- I can describe what Marxism is to my neighbor or co-worker in under 5 minutes.
- I can name 1 Marxist thinker/doer alive and working today.
 - I can name a Marxist thinker/doer who comes from the 3rd world.
 - I can name a Marxist thinker/doer who isn't a cis-gender man.
- I have read 1 piece written by Marx.
 - I have read 5 pieces written by Marx.
 - I have read more than 5 pieces by Marx.
- Someone close to me has warned me against Marxism and/or communism at some point in my life.
- I have been involved in political work of any sort that has been influenced by Marxism.
- I think that Marxism is intimidating.
- I can explain political economy.
- I can explain historical materialism.
- I can explain dialectics.