



WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
Center for the Study
of Ethics in Society

“Engaging Communities in Difficult Conversations: Dialogue, Deliberation, and Engaged Scholarship”



5 p.m., Wednesday, February 6

1028 Brown Hall, WMU

Light reception to follow from 6-6:30 p.m. in Clifford Center

Laura Black

**Associate Professor of Communication Studies
Ohio University**

As communities face complex and difficult problems, many are turning to public dialogue and deliberation processes to engage citizens in collective decision making. These efforts often include group and community meetings that are carefully designed to promote thoughtful, inclusive, and rigorous discussions of controversial issues. Drawing from Dr. Black’s work with the Athens City School Board’s Faculties Steering Committee, this presentation highlights the discursive practices community members use to articulate conflicting values, manage disagreements, and engage the wider community in difficult dialogue about the future of the schools. It conceptualizes the role of “deliberative catalysts” who help move deliberative discourse from public meetings into other community spaces, and it offers personal reflections on the challenges of doing locally situated engaged communication scholarship about contentious issues.

Co-sponsors: School of Communication, Visiting Scholars and Artists Program, Center for Civil Discourse at WMU Cooley Law School

Free and open to the public.



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