Demagoguery and Democracy
Introductory Discussion Questions
Office of Undergraduate Studies

1. How can you tell if someone is a demagogue?

2. What factors go into creating the narrative of the alternative “reality”? What is needed to create an environment that produces “alternative realities”?

3. The author warns against an “us or them” mentality. Can you think of the reasons why this might be dangerous?

4. The author states that an underlying problem in discussion is that we do not argue politics; we argue identity. What does this mean? (p. 12)

5. On page 20, the author states that one problem with demagoguery is that it breaks all the rules of public discourse. What does she mean by public discourse? How can we create an environment that fosters effective public discourse?

6. Can you give an example of how not to define demagoguery from chapter 2? Can you explain this? What are the dangers of using that definition?

7. On page 27, the author claims that each of us think we would never be suckered into believing what demagogues say. How do we prevent this from happening?

8. How can you distinguish between sincerity and truthfulness? What do you do if you are unable to tell the difference?

9. Can you think of a public figure (whether or not you support this person) who speaks in a demagogic way? Can you give an example of what they said and why it might be considered demagogic?

10. Why is it important to talk with others with whom you disagree? Can you think of ways to begin that conversation?

11. If you have something controversial to say, do you say it online or in person? Do you respond differently online or in person? Why do you think you might respond differently online or in person?