

## **Culture Wars 01: The Pilot - Standing for a Principled Culture**

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This past weekend on January 14-15, CARP hosted its second “Culture Wars” pilot seminar with the slogan, “Standing for a Principled Culture,” at East Garden in New York. A group of approximately 40 people – current college students, young professionals, CARP staff, and expert presenters – from New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Illinois, California, and even Germany attended this special two-day seminar.

So, what are the *culture wars*? Some participants expressed that the topic was intriguing and interesting and something they wanted to learn about, having never heard of such a term or seminar focus before. [“A Prelude to the Culture Wars”](#) discusses more about the essence of the *culture wars*.

The seminar included six 40-minute presentations, each followed by a Q&A session and then table discussions around the content of the presentations. Presenters included Prof. Gerry Servito, Mrs. Wetzstein, Dr. Robert Beebe, and Christine Froehlich. A weekend of learning and discussing also brought about new friendships and connections as participants, staff, and presenters got to know one another better.

An introductory session on thought trends, or the history of philosophy, allowed the participants to start off the seminar with an overview of how ideas have been shaped and adopted throughout the past 400 years especially. These thought trends played a big part in cultivating the cultural divide in our society today.

*“I enjoyed the outline of trends. It gave me perspective on how the environment of America got to where it is right now.”*

### **Education and the Culture**

On the foundation of a historical perspective, another session focused on the deterioration of civic and moral education in schools today which have contributed to family breakdown and a deteriorating society. Concepts such as pluralism, moral relativism, and values-neutral norms and their effects on education were introduced in the context of elementary education to higher education.

*“I enjoyed hearing about the proper role of education. I think that it’s super relatable to how I was educated in my school.”*

The case was presented for a balanced two-dimensional education including career education and character education where schools need to prioritize civic and moral education in order to raise up responsible, well-adjusted, and active members of society.

### **Marriage, Sex, and Family**

Another topic of the weekend was around the origins of the sexual revolution and its effect on society as well as the case for marriage at a time of high divorce rates, an increase in cohabitation, and an increase of one-parent households.

One session focused on specific influences that have contributed to the sexual revolution of the 1960s which in turn has influenced current social and cultural values in the US and internationally.

In discussion, the participants could explore the intended and unintended consequences of the sexual revolution as well as how this has played out in their own lives with a rampant hook-up culture.

Following the discussion around the sexual revolution and the current culture, another session presented the case for promoting a marriage culture as a tool for countering the current free sex environment. This session discussed the benefits and opportunities of a lifestyle in a committed conjugal relationship.

*“I liked this presentation because it presented the facts of why marriage is important. These days there aren’t many expanses of successful happy couples and families and it inspired me to find ways to help connect people on campus with happily married couples.”*

### **Media and Feminism**

In the wake of the recent “fake news” phenomenon and the crisis in media, one session delivered some practical tips on how to identify “fake news” and how to approach the media to get worthwhile news.

Navigating the media can be a challenge. This session allowed the participants to delve into the current state of the media and identify some issues as well as some opportunities in dealing with the media on a personal level and on an industry level.

*“I found this presentation surprisingly relevant as a writer and editor, but also greatly appreciated that someone at my table was an experienced journalist with a different view of things -- this helped reveal the complexities and the opportunities for action or growth more clearly.”*

The final session introduced a history of feminism in the US and opportunities for shaping feminism in our society today. With a multitude of viewpoints within the second and third waves of feminism especially, some could be seen as more constructive than others.

The participants could discuss the state of feminism according to what they see on their college campuses and debate the costs and benefits of varying feminist viewpoints.

### **What the Participants Have to Say**

The ideologies behind each topic discussed at this seminar are still malleable and under continuous debate in our society. These are just a few subjects that are currently part of the social, cultural discourse.

As a pilot seminar, the focus of this event was to garner interest in the *culture wars* and what this means to us as individuals and as members of society and to receive feedback on what college students want and need from a seminar like this.

*“I think it’s great that this is happening. I wish it would have existed when I was a student, would have made my experience with CARP on campus so much more relevant and empowering and tie directly into a lot of what I was studying or experiencing in my classrooms. I hope it continues.”*

*“I like doing the discussions and getting other people’s perspectives. Typically I wouldn’t talk to others about these topics so it’s nice to do it here.”*

Some students were even inspired to continue educating themselves on these topics and even take action on their campuses and in their classes.

*“I need to educate myself more to be able to truly talk about issues not on a superficial level and also have people listen because people respect my intellect.”*

*“I want to start study groups for some of the suggested books and also have more conversations with my friends on campus about these issues.”*

*“I know I need to educate myself, on all of these topics, especially if I want to be able to articulate my beliefs with confidence. There is a lot I still don’t know, but a lot that I want to discover. I also can see that there is even some things I can do in the smallest ways, like participating in class, to build my confidence in standing up for what I believe. I want to reach out more and talk to the people (like these presenters) who have stores of knowledge and wisdom to share.”*

Students at this pilot seminar expressed that they felt their education was pigeon-holed due to a liberal echo chamber environment. Nicholas Kristof of the *New York Times* wrote about this unbalanced exposure to worldviews at universities in his article “[A Confession of Liberal Intolerance](#).”

Through these seminars, CARP is offering students access to the missing perspectives often shunned on college campuses or at least a safe space for students to express their viewpoints and ideas.

CARP is planning a few more of these pilot seminars throughout the country to continue to grow the program based on student and young adult feedback especially.

If you’re interested in hosting a Culture Wars seminar in your area, contact [teresa@carplife.org](mailto:teresa@carplife.org)