

Facilitation Guide

Using Animated Virtue Explainer Videos in the Classroom

Overview

These short animated videos offer accessible, thought-provoking definitions of individual virtues drawn from philosophy, literature, and the voices of thinkers and practitioners who have written or spoken compellingly about them. They are designed not as final or authoritative definitions, but as a starting place: a shared conceptual ground from which students and faculty can engage more deeply with what a virtue is, what it demands, and what it looks like in practice.

The videos work well both as pre-class preparation and as an in-class launching point. They can stand alone as the basis for a focused discussion, or serve as an orienting frame when used alongside other resources—such as narrative case studies featuring characters who exhibit or struggle with a virtue, or documentary-style videos following a professional who embodies virtue in their everyday work.

These videos differ importantly from lecture content or textbook definitions. They are deliberately selective and impressionistic, presenting several perspectives on a virtue rather than a single comprehensive account. The goal is to open questions, not to stifle them.

What Makes These Videos Different

Faculty familiar with definitional or introductory content will notice several important differences in how these videos function:

- **A starting point, not a summary.** Each video gestures toward a virtue rather than exhausting it. Students should leave the video with more questions than answers—and that is by design.
- **Multiple voices, not one authority.** Each video draws on several thinkers or perspectives. Students may find themselves drawn to one voice and resistant to another. That tension is productive and worth exploring.
- **Definitional work as a form of inquiry.** Asking "what is this virtue?" is itself a serious philosophical question. The videos model the practice of approaching a concept from multiple angles rather than settling it.
- **Virtues as interconnected.** Although each video focuses on a single virtue, many virtues are related. A video about hope may raise questions about courage. Similarly, a video about integrity may touch on compassion. Instructors should feel free to surface these connections.

General Discussion Questions

The following questions are designed to apply to any of the explainer videos and can serve as a basic starting point for discussion. They are meant to open inquiry, not to direct students toward

particular conclusions. Instructors should feel free to draw on them selectively, adapt them to the specific virtue, or set them aside when students generate better questions of their own.

1. Which of the thinkers or perspectives in the video felt most compelling to you, and why? Was there one you found yourself resisting?
2. How would you define this virtue in your own words? How does your definition compare to the ones offered in the video?
3. How does this virtue differ from related concepts or qualities that might be confused with it? What does the distinction reveal?
4. What does this virtue demand? Is there a cost or difficulty to practicing it?
5. What questions does this virtue leave open for you? What does the video not resolve?

Best Practices Before the Discussion

Assign the video in advance

If possible, ask students to watch the video before class. This will provide time for them to sit with the virtue and form initial impressions before jumping into discussion. Consider providing one or two orienting questions to focus their viewing.

Know your video

Before facilitating, watch the video yourself—more than once if possible. Identify which thinkers or framings appear, and consider what each one contributes or omits. Note where you yourself feel uncertainty or resistance. These can be fruitful places for discussion. Consider some ways in which the class discussion might drift away from the virtue itself, and think in advance about how you would redirect students.

Set expectations with students

Many students expect definitional content to yield a clear, stable definition they can write down. It helps to name the shift explicitly: the goal here is not to arrive at the correct definition of the virtue but to understand what it means, what it demands, and why it matters. Students may initially find the open-endedness uncomfortable. Reassurance that substantive disagreement is welcome and productive can help with this.

Sit in a circle

If possible, position students in a circle. This greatly facilitates a more free-flowing discussion in which students speak to one another, rather than just to you. Small groups or pairs can also be effective if a circle is not possible.

Consider showing the video in class

Even if students have watched the video in advance, opening class by showing it together can be a valuable shared experience. A second viewing often surfaces details students missed, and watching together creates a common reference point for discussion.

During the Discussion

Open with observation before interpretation

Begin by grounding the discussion in the video itself. Ask students what they noticed: Which voice or perspective stood out? Was there a phrase or image that stayed with them? This keeps early discussion concrete and prevents the conversation from jumping immediately to abstract pronouncements. Good opening questions tend to be descriptive: "What did you take away from the video?" or "Which of the thinkers in the video felt most compelling to you, and why?"

Move from the video to the virtue

After grounding the discussion in the video's content, invite students to engage more directly with the virtue itself. What do they think the virtue actually is? How does it differ from related concepts or virtues, i.e. compassion from sympathy or hope from optimism? Where do they see it showing up, or failing to show up, their own professional or everyday life?

Invite students to complicate their own claims

When a student offers an interpretation—"integrity just means doing what you say you'll do" or "hope is basically optimism"—invite them, or another student, to examine it from another angle: "Does the video give us any reason to push back on that?" or "What would someone who disagreed with you say?" This builds the habit of holding multiple perspectives simultaneously, which is itself a form of intellectual virtue.

Resist the pressure to resolve

Facilitated discussion of virtue should not end with consensus on a final definition. If the room arrives too easily at agreement, it may signal that the complexity of the virtue has not yet been fully engaged. Productive discomfort is not a problem to be managed, it is often the sign of good discussion. Be ok with some pauses or silence in the discussion. This can give students time to consider what has been said, and opens space for all to participate. Relatedly, resist the urge to move too quickly through the discussion.

Allow the discussion to flow

Allow the students to drive the discussion. Resist the urge to interject and facilitate between each student's comment. Be comfortable with moments of silence while students consider the question at hand. These practices can allow students to go deeper and develop more personal insights and connections to the virtue.

Common Facilitation Pitfalls

- **Treating the video as a complete definition.** Remind students—and yourself—that the video is meant to open discussion more than provide answers. If discussion collapses into simply restating what the video said, push further: "What does this leave out?" or "Where does this definition break down?"
- **Over-identification with one thinker or framing.** Students may latch onto a single perspective from the video and treat it as definitive. Encourage them to engage with the others: "The video offered a few different angles—what do the other voices add?"
- **Uneven participation.** In a seminar or discussion-heavy format, a few voices can dominate. Use structured techniques (think-pair-share, written reflection before discussion) to ensure broader participation.

Closing the Discussion

Reserve a few minutes at the end to ask students to name one thing that will stay with them from the discussion: a question, a phrase from the video, or a tension they haven't resolved. This does not need to be a takeaway or a lesson; the goal is simply to mark that something worth thinking about has occurred. Brief written reflection at the end of class can deepen individual processing and give the instructor useful feedback on where students are.

It can also be valuable to close by returning to the virtue itself and asking students to articulate in a sentence or two what they now understand about it that they did not understand before the video or discussion.

Adapting Videos Across Contexts

Although each video is organized around a single virtue, they can be used in sequence—watching several videos to explore how different virtues relate to one another. They can also be paired with the documentary videos following moral examples, which show what it looks like to actually live by a virtue over time. Used together, the definitional and exemplar videos offer complementary lenses: one asks what a virtue is, the other asks what it looks like. They can also be paired with virtue case studies, and can be particularly useful to provide a grounding and shared framework for the class from which to begin a more applied discussion.